

Huseyin Djemil travels to the Isle of Man for his column on the addiction-recovery world.

Manifesting recovery

ADDICTED, TREATED + LIVING RECOVERY

Graham Clucas, founder and CEO of Quing is an interesting guy: in long-term recovery himself, he conceived and organised a conference in just six weeks. He engaged 15+ speakers from several continents, for the first international conference about recovery on the Isle of Man. It signalled that the Manx Recovery Community is established and here to stay.



residential rehabilitation providers and others. Conspicuous by their absence were representatives from local drug and alcohol treatment providers, prisons or probation. The word on the Manx street is that they were boycotting it! If so, it's a shame as these are the service areas likely to be most positively affected by Quing's development.

Quing is a Manx word for the bit of wood that connects a plough to a horse or ox. If the Quing is not in balance, then the plough won't work properly. Another meaning for the word Quing that I have come across is to "yoke together". The Quing community is striving for this balance and Clucas, and the board of trustees of the Quing charity chaired by Ralph Peake MHK, has worked diligently over the last couple of years to build something from the ground up. This conference is evidence that the Quing community is on the move.

I don't know why they wouldn't support the conference but, if so, I think it says more about them and where they are at as a treatment system than it does about Quing, which is trying to help shift the island from a medicalised model of treatment to a more balanced treatment system that helps people move from addiction through to recovery and from recovery to discovery.

Attending as a supporter, speaker and friend of everything Quing, I was heartened to see such a cross section of people and professions from the island. There were people in recovery as well as parents, carers and friends affected by someone else's recovery journey. There were members of the House of Keys – the equivalent of MPs – including Peake. The conference foreword was written by the Isle of Man treasury minister, Alfred Cannan MHK, the lieutenant governor attended for part of the day, as well as professionals from the police, Department of Health and Social Care and a smattering of academics and other professionals, therapists,

Recovery can often be seen as a threat to people working in a medically dominant treatment model because the shift to a recovery focus can represent a threat to the status quo. The reality for most people with an addiction is not "recovery to discovery", but rather from addiction to addiction management. Recovery can be a far-off shore for some currently in addiction treatment – it doesn't have to be if more 'professionals' can be more open minded.

The basis of scientific thinking is challenging the status quo and/or current orthodoxy. Let's hope that the commissioned addiction services get on board soon, if not as early adopters of this new paradigm (like MHKs, DHSC and the police etc have) then at least in the next wave.

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When Galileo discovered that the earth revolved around the sun rather than the other way around, as was the orthodoxy at the time according the evidence from biblical text, the christian scholars of the day refused to even look into his telescope to see the evidence. They were stuck in an earth-centric view.

Whenever professionals hang onto their orthodoxy – for example, an addiction-centric, offender-centric view that refuses to even look at recovery, never mind discovery – it leads to people being defined by their problems and deficits which has a disabling effect across the board for those who need help and professionals.

Moving forward – addiction, recovery, discovery – is often a step, by step, by step process where we mak assumptions, use evidence to form a judgment, discover our evidence wasn't quite right or better evidence emerges, that allows more accurate assumptions and judgments to be formed. In other words, failure is the key to success or, as the book *Black Box Thinking* puts it, "error was turned from disaster to advantage". We spend too much time and effort denying our errors to avoid disaster instead of turning those errors into advantage.

We can ask why and there are many reasons. A key theme is usually power, status, and place in the pecking order. Upton Sinclair succinctly described this as "It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it". That one sentence sums up much in the UK 'treatment' field.

So when we talk about "recovery to discovery", we are actually talking about moving from the thinking that defends and keeps to the current orthodoxy/received wisdom, opinion – for example, the best we can hope for addiction is to manage it – to a mind set where we are actively seeking to challenge societal norms (in this case about addiction, crime, etc.) and make new "discoveries" so that we can iterate our way to greater success, whether that's in drug policy and practice, supply reduction operations, crime reduction, recruitment and employment practice, and the like.

Quing does this by helping people address the underlying trauma of their addiction, offending behaviour etc. and in doing so they use a Strengths Based or Asset Based approach combining these with trauma informed therapy, peer support, associational and community life. Mainstream treatment has a part to play in this but it can't be the dominant voice. Treatment has to take its place in the balanced approach or the plough just doesn't work properly and our effort results in a patchy crop that can't sustain us.

Treatment services on the Isle of Man beware: at the end of the conference there was talk of a possible symposium in the future where recovery communities and others in the recovery sector from across the UK and Europe would be invited to the Isle of Man to share their stories, their struggles, their good practice and to network and get to know each other. I wouldn't bet against Clucas because if anyone can achieve this then Clucas can.

About the author:

"I entered treatment for addiction to heroin and freebase cocaine in 1986. I was 23 years old and had been using daily for seven years. I spent two years in rehab, then re-started my life without drugs. Today, I describe myself as being in long-term recovery from addiction. I have worked in the substance misuse treatment, criminal justice, and social care sector since 1993, have been a freelance consultant since 2007 – living through radical policy change."