

THE NOTE BOOK



Where the City's big thinkers get a few things off their chest. Today, CEO of Paracelsus Recovery **Jan Gerber** takes the pen.

Silent struggles in the boardroom as mental health battles erupt

HERE'S an epidemic of mental ill health in boardrooms around the world – and we're at the cutting edge. My clinic Paracelsus Recovery is based in London and Zurich and specialises in treating executives for mental health and addiction problems.

In our experience, the same traits that enable people to climb to the top of successful companies also predispose them to mental health conditions.

Adrenaline junkies and those on the narcissism spectrum are more likely to scale the cooperate ladder quickly.

Bipolar disorder, which is characterised by periods of mania in which people can experience moments of creative genius, is so common among the people we see that we call it 'the CEO disease'. Anxiety disorders, burnout and depression are also increasingly identified.

In a survey we conducted with

Campden Wealth of ultra-high net-worth families, we found that in over 70 per cent of cases at least one member of the inner circle is struggling with substance or alcohol abuse.

Referrals to Paracelsus Recovery for executives with mental health and addiction issues have increased tenfold since 2013. We also estimate, based on our experience of treating high-profile businesspeople, that 50 per cent of the top executives gathering at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where our lead psychiatrist Dr Thilo Beck is speaking this week, will be dealing with clinically relevant mental health or addiction issues. Too many corporate leaders still regard admitting to mental health or addiction problems as a sign of weakness and treat their own health as an afterthought. That needs to change, for all our sakes.

CUTTING-EDGE TREATMENTS

Psychedelics will transform psychiatric and addiction care over the next decade. A recent study showed that past use of psilocybin, a naturally occurring psychedelic compound produced by more than 200 species of fungi, creates a significantly reduced risk of opioid use disorder. We have been administering ketamine therapy to patients for over a year now and it has been transformational for those suffering from treatment resistant depression. Ketamine is different to anti-depressants and has been shown to help regenerate a depressed brain.

● **The drug of choice for young professionals at the moment is Gamma Hydroxybutyrate (GHB). The drug – a clear liquid dispensed with a pipette – enhances libido and produces a potent mix of euphoria and tranquillity. It's so widely abused in London circles that it's being referred to as 'the new cocaine'.**

● **While other drugs typically take years to become addicted to, GHB gets people hooked within two weeks. A tiny overdose can produce a coma and death and many people trying to come off the drug experience suicidal thoughts. GHB is a menace and medical professionals and policymakers should take note.**

● **Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common neurodevelopmental conditions in childhood. It affects behaviour: sufferers can seem restless, may have trouble focusing and act impulsively.**

Typically this condition has been associated with childhood, but we are seeing more and more adult cases. It's a myth that children grow out of it, though the symptoms may change. It appears that fewer than one in ten cases is being correctly diagnosed by the time people reach adulthood. Unfortunately, many teachers, and some parents, still think ADHD is about bad behaviour and that can inhibit their willingness to get children the help that they need.



IN ADVERSITY THERE LIES OPPORTUNITY



I've been reading "Upside - The New Science of Post-Traumatic Growth" by Jim Rendon after a very painful period in my own life that saw me lose my marriage and spend a few weeks in a clinic for acute depression myself. I have experienced first-hand that "what doesn't kill us, can indeed make us stronger". In adversity lies opportunity, pain and suffering can transform us and the way we relate to others lead to new possibilities, personal strength, spiritual change, and renewed and deeper appreciation for life.



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