



## Business Leadership Network



# CONVERSATION CAFÉ: CLARINDA

October 11, 2017

Clarinda, Iowa, was the site of the UI College of Public Health Business Leadership Network's first Conversation Café. Local businesses, public health professionals, and community members were invited to the Garrison Coffee House on October 11, 2017, for a conversation with Paul Gilbert, Assistant Professor in Community and Behavioral Health at the UI College of Public Health.

Gilbert spoke about his research on overcoming alcohol addiction without formal treatment. The conversation centered on what recovery means to people, especially in rural Iowa, and the reasons some change their alcohol use.

Iowa is rated higher than the national average in alcohol consumption and sales. Gilbert emphasized that his research looks at the problem of alcohol abuse from a population perspective by reviewing the high number of Iowans who drink to excess. Of that number, only 10 to 15 percent use clinical rehabilitation programs to assist with recovery, while others use a support program such as a 12-step program. Another segment of the population just quits drinking without ever receiving treatment. Gilbert's research attempts to find out why people choose to forego treatment, the strategies they use to change alcohol use, and how their experiences might help others with an alcohol problem.

Several factors may play a role in excess alcohol consumption. As drinking is a legal and acceptable social activity, alcohol is often the center of celebrations and religious ceremonies. Parents often contribute to the problem by buying alcohol for their underage children.

**About Paul Gilbert:** Paul Gilbert is an Assistant Professor in Community and Behavioral Health at the UI College of Public Health. He conducts research to understand and address alcohol-related disparities. He is particularly interested in the ways that gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation shape drinking patterns, risk of alcohol use disorders, and utilization of treatment services. Current projects include a study to test a model of alcohol treatment disparities, a study to identify and describe the strategies people use to overcome alcohol problems when they don't utilize treatment services, and a study looking at effects of the state-wide social host liability law as a strategy to curb underage drinking.



Some of the reasons those addicted to alcohol do not seek treatment include:

- » There is a stigma with seeking treatment, and some do not want to admit addiction. They see those seeking treatment as worse off than themselves.
- » Lack of treatment facilities, psychologists, and psychiatric services, especially in rural areas, makes it difficult to find the help they may need.
- » Alcohol consumption in rural Iowa is ingrained in the culture, where it is common to “gravel travel” when consuming alcohol by driving on gravel roads instead of main highways.
- » Alcoholism is generational, with addiction being passed down through family members.

Some reasons those with alcohol addiction change their behaviors without formal treatment include:

- » Additional responsibilities, such as a job, marriage, or a family relationship, may necessitate change.
- » Some are motivated to change behavior and use informal cognitive therapy on themselves to change behaviors.
- » Some overhaul their social lives and change family relationships as it relates to alcohol. Creating new connections or routines allows behavior change.
- » A point of crisis may precipitate a behavior change.
- » Some couples recover together by providing a mutual support system.

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*Conversation Cafés will be held in communities across Iowa in the spring and fall each year.  
If you wish to invite the UI College of Public Health's BLN to your area to discuss an issue important to your community,  
contact Tara McKee at [tara-mckee@uiowa.edu](mailto:tara-mckee@uiowa.edu).*



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