

A Call To Action! Our Veterans Need Us

"America's veterans deserve the very best health care because they've earned it." -Jim Ramstad, U.S. Congressman

My husband died eight years ago and I took the opportunity to go on a journey of self-discovery that, for a time, led me to Austin, Texas, and then back home to Oklahoma City.

Within days of returning home, I learned that an old political buddy, Bill Duncan, was in town, doing something interesting. So who is Bill Duncan, you ask? He's the fellow my Fifth District Congressman, Ernest Istook, hired in 1995 to clean up the medical system. At the time, I served as head of Ross Perot's Reform Party Health Committee so this gave me a good reason to pay attention to what was going on with Bill. Reformers were in the business of finding ways to clean up government.

A third of Bill's job was to make sure the new Office of Complementary and Alternative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health wouldn't get screwed up. When the NIH Director attacked it, Bill created the legislation, passed by Senator Tom Harkin, that created the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM). It's very existence was as welcome as ants at a picnic because our American medical system is based on using drugs, surgery and other high tech (read expensive) modes of treating illness and injury. Technically, the medical philosophy that our medical establishment practices is called "allopathy". Consequently, the CAM department had many enemies, and still does.

As an economist by training, Bill's overall assignment was to make the U.S. healthcare system more effective, more efficient, and less expensive. His doctorate is in political science, economics, and public law, but he also has an MBA

from Boston University. In his program, which he took in Germany, Harvard professors came to Germany and taught the program from Harvard's books. This gave him a great basis for understanding the mandate from Rep. Istook. This included reducing regulatory burdens, increasing market availability of affordable health insurance, and driving new and effective treatments and technologies, including ones with no patent, into use.

To put this in perspective, in 1920, Oklahoma citizens voted to repeal a law that would have allowed the state allopathic medical board to outlaw what we, here in Oklahoma, call "natural healing arts". Some of the healing arts on the chopping block included homeopathy, naturopathy, Chinese Medicine, herbalism and an assortment of other methods of healing our Indian Medicine Men and others also practiced. Changes in law made in 1994, thanks to major citizen action, clarified the fact that those who did not practice allopathy practiced "non-allopathic" healing arts, duh! It's a technical point that matters in certain circles.

So, translation, Bill's job for 10 years was to find stuff that worked that didn't cost an arm and a leg because it was basically cheap, and, or it might not be allopathic. Along the way, he became a walking encyclopedia of all sorts of healing modalities, many that are readily available in other parts of the world and the reason other nations have lower costs and better outcomes.

After five years of searching, Bill stumbled across was hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) which is basically oxygen pressed into your body at up to two times sea level atmospheric pressure. It is an old technology from 1937 you may have heard of because it was first used for deep sea divers who rose to the surface too quickly and got the bends. A quick infusion of high pressure oxygen normalized the blood oxygen levels needed to clean things up. It directly prevented brain injury caused by these nitrogen bubbles

disrupting the brain's delicate circulatory system. That is why when you go into a hyperbaric oxygen chamber your session inside is called a dive.

Rep. Istook was the leader of the Amputee Coalition, thanks to [Oklahoma's own John Sabolich](#), — the world's foremost innovative prosthetics designer. Bill discovered that HBOT would prevent 75% of all amputations, and forced Medicare to begin paying for HBOT for diabetic foot wounds. He has been credited by Jane Orient, M.D., Executive Director of the American Association of Physicians and Surgeons, with preventing the amputation of more feet and limbs than anyone else. Today, every hospital with a hyperbaric center can directly thank Bill for making foot salvage possible.

In recent years, HBOT treatments have been approved in the US for 14 types of conditions, from three kinds of brain injury (including the bends, carbon monoxide poisoning, and brain infection), and three kinds of chronic non-healing wounds (crush injury, arterial insufficiency, including diabetic foot wounds, radiation necrosis and compromised flaps and grafts.) It is also used for burns and bone infection and sudden hearing loss. How does it work? Physics. It uses pressure to drive oxygen into the fluids of the body, which allows them to achieve levels 7 to 12 times what you and I are breathing right now.

In China and Russia, they have whole hospitals set up with nothing but [rows of chambers on each floor of the hospital](#).

It is particularly helpful in [treating drug and alcohol addiction](#). The British offer HBOT as a private sector treatment and consider it so safe that no physician prescription or supervision is required all the way to 2.0 atmospheres or 15 pounds of pressure. That was by act of Parliament. The Israelis replicated the U.S. brain injury work at Louisiana State University, and offer HBOT to every citizen because it is so effective in treating traumatic brain injury (TBI) and blast injury. Keep in mind Israel is

basically a war zone with intermittent [shelling from people who want to blow the country off the map.](#)

So what is TBI, you ask? It is when you you get a whack in the head or when your brain matter gets sloshed around when you are in a car wreck and you get whiplash. It is everything from being dazed to being unconscious. Work done at UCLA in the 1960s demonstrated that a nine mile per hour collision is enough to cause unconsciousness, thus leaving a brain injury. As these injuries accumulate over a lifetime, eventually the person's quality of life, social interactions, economic productivity and other areas of the life suffer.

Bill realized that the largest number of people with TBI here in the states were veterans. Like blind people after World War II, these people were "normal" before they served our country at great personal sacrifice. They are often diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is actually a brain injury, because you have to have 2 of 3 mild traumatic brain injury symptoms, built into the diagnostic questionnaire, in order be diagnosed with PTSD. Thus PTSD is NOT a moral issue, or not being "man" enough to "take the blast" or the pressures and stresses of combat. HBOT treatments heal the brain cells. There are three kinds of brain injuries. A whack in the head which includes whiplash as your brain matter gets sloshed around. A sudden change in air pressure like bomb blasts, cannon fire, tornadoes etc... AND all manner of toxic stuff, Mercury being the most prevalent and the hardest to clean up.

Today over one million Vets are suffering from PTSD from the current war. According to extensive study by the Veterans Administration in the 1980s, 38.5% of all who served in Vietnam have brain injury or PTSD. They have very debilitating symptoms, from a loss of executive function (like thinking clearly or being able to plan ahead), to a 15+ point IQ loss, to debilitating headaches, light sensitivity, depression, and inability to sleep. They often lack emotional

control, traceable directly to the injury to the membrane on the frontal lobe that gives us impulse control. They self-medicate with alcohol and other substances to quiet their overactive amygdala (the place in your brain involved in a wide range of normal behavioral functions and psychiatric conditions). There are millions of them who are living in the streets, in jail, living lives of quiet desperation hiding in the back room of their homes literally in the dark afraid to come out. They are a burden to their families and society because they are often not breadwinners. The cost is estimated at an economic and government burden of up to \$60,000 per year, on average, because their families, especially if they are National Guard, often results in families needing to depend on charity and/or public assistance just to survive. The national average for suicide among current war vets is 29/100,000 or 22/day. In Oklahoma, the rate is 61/100,000 or twice the national average.

Bill, having a Ph.D. in Economics and Political Science, had the ability to put the numbers together. When he discovered HBOT, he realized if fully implemented, to its potential, it would lower hospital costs by 20%, through both reduction in long term injury and disability when used acutely, and through greatly improved surgical and burn outcomes. There is 78 years of world-wide scientific evidence and studies to show that this implementation is massively cost effective. Further, by treating both acute and chronic brain injury with the only effective treatment discovered in the past 78 years, mandatory and entitlement spending on everything from prisons to welfare to education to disability payments, and to great increases in individual productivity, would benefit every city, county, state and federal budget. That is because the 73 agencies whose budgets that Bill oversaw when he worked for Rep. Istook in Congress, contained the safety net and other services that untreated brain injured people wind up using.

After Rep. Istook left office, he was replaced by Mary Fallin

(now Oklahoma governor) who understood the implications of setting up a mass production HBOT system of clinics in cities and towns across the country. Four times the TBI Treatment Act passed the U.S. House floor, unanimously, but each time it was killed in the Senate by forces connected to the Veterans Administration. Why VA officials don't want HBOT for vets one can only chalk up to politics that is conducted in cloakrooms and wherever else special interest groups lurk. Some VA hospitals already have HBOT chambers collecting dust in the basement.

When Mary Fallin came home and was elected governor she still liked the idea so Bill wrote legislation that was passed unanimously by the Oklahoma legislature. A key new twist to the story was that in order to pay for free services for all vets, he located a federal law passed after WWI that said that if a state paid for military service-related injuries, the federal government must pay back the state. Thus, one of the features of the Oklahoma legislation was to set up a revolving account managed by Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, that would pay the HBOT clinic and then be replenished by the federal government. This was a great idea. However, the lurkers in the cloakroom did it again. At the last minute, during the rush at the end of the legislative session, an amendment to the final bill was added, cutting the seed money to set up the funding system. The next year, the current legislation was passed, but still without funding.

To normal people, this should have been the end of the project...but not Bill. He knew what he had and, for all the right reasons, he plunged ahead cobbling together a project that no Harvard Business School scholar could have laid out in a formal business plan in advance.

Bill began the Patriot Clinic as a non-profit demonstration project so treatment would be delivered effectively and safely, and show governments and society and the medical system how, by creating a high volume specialty HBOT clinic,

he could start making a big dent in helping restore the health and the shattered lives of millions of vets. It was further discovered that police officers and fire fighters are also subject to many of these same kinds of injuries, and many of them were treated successfully as well. To lawmakers, he could show how the numbers added up when vets, once burdens on the State, could be sources of revenue when they were restored to health able to work and get back to taxpayer status. Each veteran or other person we return to work is \$4,000 in annual tax revenue to the state government, and \$16,800 income to the Federal government. Better yet, a \$25,000 one-time treatment cost results in about 80% of the young people who could not work being able to return to work. For those who were working, the gain of 15 to 25 IQ points is the equivalent of \$20,000 to \$30,000 increase in wage income.

So the Patriot Clinics organization was born and Bill set out to establish the headquarters clinic here in Oklahoma City. He borrowed several chambers, rented space in an old indoor tennis court, scrounged basic furniture, got somebody to donate hundreds of scrubs for patients to wear in the chambers. Several civic groups wrote him some checks to pay for the rent, electricity and the like. Then Bill put the word out to let every one know he was open for business.

Patients first came in trickles. Then they came in droves all grateful that, finally, somebody wanted to really help them get well. Then something unexpected happened. Since the clinic was obviously not some slick, well-financed medical facility, grateful patients and their families started to help out. Some brought toilet paper, bottled water and cleaning supplies. Somehow a washer and dryer appeared and the mountains of laundry (scrubs, towels, sheets and pillowcases for the chambers) that piled up every day, managed to be taken care of by whoever was there that day. Still others would pick up a broom or do other maintenance. One lady insisted that she be the official bathroom cleaning lady and kept the

facilities as pristine as any professional cleaning service.

And, Bill, who had started this project for all the right reasons and on a wing and a prayer, achieved a miracle. Over the past three years, on donations of \$280,000, Patriot Clinics delivered \$12,000 hyperbaric treatments per patient, without cost to people who were trapped in their brain injury and had no escape from this life-destroying condition. Slightly over \$4 million in hyperbaric treatment was delivered for \$280,000. In addition, they were able to deploy other therapies to help those with PTSD, such as an 11- needle acupuncture protocol, developed with the help of the head of the local acupuncture school, that turns off the emotional charge in PTSD in most patients with just a few treatments. Further, this deployment replicated the results of the Louisiana State University, Oklahoma State University, and experience in Israel, where people, in the first 40 treatments, got back 15 IQ points (the difference between a high school dropout and a college graduate), a 39% reduction in post-concussion syndrome (sleep disorder, light sensitivity, executive function difficulty), 30% reduction in PTSD (the largest of any published treatment), a 51% reduction in depression, and a 96% improvement in emotional control.

Anyone doing public policy or education, or dealing with incarcerated individuals can realize the significance of this set of normal and routine medical improvements. It's a non-invasive treatment as easy as breathing and flying up and down in an airplane. HBOT, at these low-pressures, is one of the safest practices in medicine, as Carol Henricks, MD, recently told the American Association of Physicians and Surgeons. It has the second lowest medical malpractice rate next to acupuncture.

You can see a lot of the science at www.HBOT.com.

The science proving that HBOT does repair TBI is also on the [Patriot Clinics website](#) with a mountain of other key

information. Now as many as 40 private HBOT clinics are doing their bit providing free treatments to vets when they can but the need is so great, many have nearly gone out of business providing compassionate care. Bill's plan from the beginning was to build a prototype model here in Oklahoma City so similar clinics could be reproduced in every city and town in America, to help clean up the PTSD crisis. It also would provide direct relief to police officers, fire fighters, National Guard, and other first responders who serve under difficult circumstances every day.

The bottom line is that Bill, for all his years of public service as a Congressional aide, has accomplished what he was assigned to do. He has found EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT AND COST EFFECTIVE CARE THAT CAN BE EASILY PROVIDED IN EVERY COMMUNITY ACROSS THE NATION. Or, in Harvard Business School parlance, Bill Duncan has created a new business model for treating America's Number One health problem....PTSD.... With effective care at a reasonable price.

BILL NEEDS YOUR HELP – ASAP

After tweaking his organizational model into a proven reality, he now needs to step back and hire real staff to run the place so he can have the time necessary to write regulations to finish the job set forth by the legislature. He also needs time to work out the paperwork so that patients with whiplash can file claims with their auto insurance companies. Fire fighters, policemen and other first responders can also be covered by their insurance companies once the required endless paperwork can be organized to fit into the payment system. Tornado victims, and kids with autism, and kids who got bopped in the head playing soccer also have benefited from treatment at Patriot Clinics, so insurance claim arrangements need to be worked out for them, also. Why, because the way the law was written, all citizens of Oklahoma are to be served even if they are not vets.

Bill needs a quick infusion of \$100,000 to hire full time staff to run the clinic. Firefighters and EMTs (including those from the National Guard), can be quickly trained to man the chambers for the next several months so he can put into place these other sources of revenue. This tangle of paperwork to insure that the clinic will be able to stand on its own from now on without constant fund drives to keep the lights on takes time to complete.

Most of all, Bill needs the time to answer requests from people all over the country who want to establish Patriot Clinics in their towns. This has turned into a grass roots movement and Bill needs your help to make it grow.

So, [please take a look at the website](#) and consider making a donation for real healthcare for our vets and everyone else. And...be sure to encourage everyone you know to help, too. This is the time to act. It DOES MATTER.

Elissa Meininger became a noted health policy historian as well as a political activist after almost dying from years of mercury poisoning caused by mercury leaching from the "silver" dental amalgam fillings in her teeth. Bedridden and unable to carry on a coherent conversation, (and unable to obtain a diagnosis from any of the MDs she had consulted), she turned to a traditional naturopath who had no difficulty recognizing and explaining the source of the large array of chronic problems from which she had suffered most of her life. This diagnosis saved her life, but even today, such consultation remains illegal in many states.

Committed to reforming the medical system, Elissa embarked over 20 years ago on an array of projects geared to bringing enlightened medical treatment to the American people, including providing prepared statements for various U.S. Congressional and White House Commission hearings on health

freedom legislation and policy, and testifying numerous times before the Oklahoma state legislature.

She is the former Vice President of Friends of Freedom International and co-columnist, with Carolyn Dean, MD/ND, of many articles posted on the NewsWithViews.com.

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