



James Smith, MD, Psychiatrist

The Doctor is in. . .



National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI

Wake County



Allow me to introduce myself. I am Dr. James A. Smith, the Medical Director of Carolina Partners in Mental HealthCare, PLLC. We are a private practice that serves the Triangle area and beyond. I have been asked to be a guest columnist for the NAMI Newsletter, with the hope that I can provide you timely and interesting information that will assist our readers and their loved ones. I have given thought on how to frame this column and I have several topics that I plan to present, but I am also willing to address topics that our readers are interested in. Therefore, please send your ideas to the newsletter and I will provide a response.

African American psychiatrists in my life, as my father was also a psychiatrist. Both of these men had a profound impact on how my career would evolve, in addition to others like Dr. Nicholas Stratas, Dr. Robert Harper, and Dr. Wilma Betts.

Dr. Carter asked me what areas of psychiatry and what patient population I wanted to work with. After my experience in the Army

I found a real home at the ATC as it was the first of its kind in the state. It was not a 28 day program like the Walter B. Jones or our own Dr. R.J. Blackley Treatment Center at Butner. Dr. Howie and our Executive Director Mr. John Jaquette had a different vision. They knew well that relapses could be part of recovery and that most patients at the time who had insurance had a lifetime benefit of 30 days of substance abuse treatment. They, along with a very able staff, developed a 10 day program that would allow up to 3 inpatient treatments within the 30 day benefit, pairing it with an intensive outpatient program run by many committed substance abuse professionals.

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Send to aakland@nami-wake.org

As this is my first column, allow me to go back historically and to provide you my perspective of where I have come from when I first arrived here in Raleigh in July of 1982. It was an exciting time for me as a young psychiatrist. I was two years out of my residency as I had just completed two years at Womack Army Hospital working the inpatient, outpatient, and substance abuse programs. While at Fort Bragg I had the good luck to meet Dr. James Harvey Carter, who was a psychiatric professor at Duke Medical Center. Dr. Carter became like a second father. I was blessed with two influential

I knew I wanted to work in substance abuse and have an impact on African American men. Dr. Carter pointed me in the direction of the Wake County Alcoholism Treatment Center and to a fine psychiatrist named Dr. John Howie. ATC, as we fondly called it, did not have an open position, but I was persistent. After several letters, Dr. Howie had me interview with the entire staff and found a space for me in the outpatient program. This led to the chance to take over the position of Outpatient Medical Director when the good Dr. Wilson Comer moved to private practice.

ATC opened in 1976 and closed on July 1, 2013! While it was a real loss to our community and comes at a time when opiate use is at its highest, there is hope. Our hardworking MCO, Alliance Behavioral Health, continues to build resources to help the public to address the severe and destructive addiction epidemic that faces this community. While we cannot go back, we have many committed mental health and substance abuse professionals that are fighting the good fight as we address the needs of this great community!