



*ASAM Weekly: What does ASAM mean to you?*

**Dr. Lawrence S. Brown:** As a former President of ASAM and more importantly as a member, I view ASAM's importance on many levels. First and foremost, ASAM is the leading physician society advocating for the care of persons at risk of and suffering from a substance use disorder. Second, ASAM operates on the basis that ASAM members are the owners of the Society and its leaders are temporary custodians of the welfare of the member owners. Third and because of the first two items, ASAM advocates for the practice of addiction medicine and the education of the public and policy-makers.

*AW: If you could trade places with any other addiction professional for a week, famous or not famous, living or dead, who would you choose and why?*

**LB:** Over my many years of practice, I have come to know and meet many of the giants in addiction medicine, clinical research, and public policy related to harmful substance use or substance use disorders. The challenges incurred by these individuals are not envied by me so I would not desire to trade places with them. Nonetheless, I admire the manner in which they overcame these obstacles to advocate and advance the care of those with substance use disorders. One such person is my mentor, Beny J. Primm, MD, who completed medical school in Geneva, while learning French and then returned to the US to lead one of the largest community-based and free-standing addiction treatment agencies in the US.

*AW: What in your professional life are you focusing your energies on currently?*

**LB:** Presently, my current efforts involve three major areas:

- 1) Addiction-related clinical and health services research;
- 2) Administrative oversight of addiction treatment personnel;
- 3) Participation in public venues pertaining preventing substance use disorders or their consequences and treating persons with substance use disorders.

I am able to pursue these efforts through participation in professional societies or on governmental or private industry advisory committees.

*AW: If you had a million dollars to spend on increasing access to and improving the quality of addiction treatment, how would you spend it?*

**LB:** Regrettably, a million dollars today will do little other than serve as a pilot to justify the commitment for further investment. As such, I would use these limited funds to finance a pilot of having addiction treatment personnel on-site for referrals from primary care physicians performing screening, brief interventions and referrals to addiction treatment personnel. This is critical to reduce the stigma of associated with addiction treatment, enhance access to care, and potentially reduce the consequences of addiction.

*AW: What motivates you to work in the field?*

**LB:** While monumental in many respects, the obstacles in this field are intellectually stimulating. However, most rewarding is when I see patients succeed in their recovery or when I am teaching friends, family, or colleagues.



**Dr. Lawrence S. Brown, Jr., MD, MPH, FASAM** is a former ASAM President, and the current Interim Executive Director at the Addiction Research and Treatment Corporation in Brooklyn, New York.

*AW: If you could choose a super power, what would it be, and why?*

**LB:** This is a tough question, especially for someone like myself who has followed super heroes since my childhood. Because of the harmful use of many substances, the consequences of substance use disorders, and stigma associated with substance use disorders, the superpower I would choose would be the ability to reverse these harmful use and substance use consequences and stigma. I know of no fictional super hero with such powers.

*AW: What are you most proud of?*

**LB:** There are many accomplishments for which I am proud so it would be difficult to choose just one. I am certainly proud of my family, the individuals who honor me by calling me their friend, my professional efforts, (including my service as ASAM President during some challenging times), and the enjoyment I receive in my hobbies of coin collecting, basketball, and football (obviously, the latter two as a spectator at this stage of my life).

*AW: What is the last book you read, film you watched, and who is your favorite artist or musician?*

**LB:** The last film I watched was “The Help”. This film is both entertaining and has a redeeming message of what life was like for many Black women in the South prior to the 1980s. I recommend it to all. As for favorite artist, it is Romare Bearden, a famous African American artist--unfortunately his fame is such that I cannot afford anything but reprints. As for music, it is jazz and R&B--I am an eternal fan of the Temptations!

*AW: What publications do you subscribe to?*

**LB:** Most of my publications are professional including the NEJM, JAMA, Annuals of Internal Medicine, Journal of Addiction Medicine (of course), American Journal of Medicine, American Journal of Public Health, the Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, and Drug and Alcohol Dependence. Outside of medicine, I subscribe to Coin World and the Numismatist related to my hobby of coin collecting.

*AW: What do you see as the next trends in the field?*

**LB:** There are many developments underway with implications for this field. First, changes in the regulatory environment and the financing of health care will impact access to and the quality of treatment for substance use disorders. Secondly, technological advances including electronic medical records will change the practice of addiction medicine; it has already changed the medical student education and physicians in training. While there are potential benefits of these changes, there are also at least short-term, unintended consequences that may impair addiction treatment access and quality of care. While I am not the most technologically astute provider, I am excited and remain cautiously optimistic.

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