We are very excited to introduce you to Dr. Harold C. Urschel, MD, the acclaimed author of the New York Times Bestseller, *Healing the Addicted Brain: The Revolutionary, Science-Based Alcoholism and Addiction Recovery Program*.

In his book Dr. Urschel shows readers the state-of-the-art, scientifically proven addiction treatments and helps them tap into the approaches to treatment that really work.

For a long time some, accepted treatment protocols for mental illness and addiction have simply bypassed the rigors of scientific testing and adherence to exacting standards that all other types of health care has been subject to. More and more mental health professionals agree that evidence-based psychotherapy techniques and scientifically proven psychotherapy techniques and medical treatments are improving treatment standards. Sure, the use of proven methods in mental health and addiction care has been around a long time, but the commitment to this approach—in addition to sensitive and creative psychotherapeutic work—is an idea whose time has come.

Yet, there is some confusion about what these approaches are and why they should be used. Because of space considerations we will summarize: Simply put—in mental health and addiction care, as in any other health profession—some treatments are proven to work, and others aren’t (again, this doesn’t take away from the talented and committed psychotherapist who has developed his own technique based on his clinical experience + proven methods).

Dr. Urschel is a committed advocate for the use of scientifically proven treatments for addiction and mental health. He beautifully articulates why the use of scientifically-proven treatment for addiction and mental illness is important and humane. When you speak with Dr. Urschel, you can’t help but get caught up in his passion for helping patients.

**Welcome, Dr. Urschel. Can you tell us a little bit about the numbers of people who are dual-diagnosed with addiction and mental illness?**

Let’s focus on just alcoholism. There are 17-20 million alcoholics in America and at least 50-75 percent of alcoholics have major depression. Alcoholism is the 800 pound
gorilla in the addiction space. But people don’t focus on it because drinking is legal. That’s why when we talk about addiction we tend to only talk about drugs.

Alcoholism is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. The top three killing diseases’ order is usually heart disease, cancer, alcohol. But sometimes it is cancer, heart disease, alcohol. Alcoholism is always at number three and kills over 100,000 Americans a year. To put that in perspective, let’s consider the Iraq war. During the past six years in Iraq we lost 5000 Americans, which is terrible, and I regret each and every one of those lives lost. But in the past six years we lost 600,000 Americans to alcoholism. People are needlessly dying of this brain disease.

What are some of the important treatments for alcoholism?

The anti-addiction medications are critical to long-term sobriety. The addiction medications that treat alcoholism and drug addiction have all been approved by the FDA and are an important part of any successful recovery program. But most physicians and patients haven’t heard of them. That is why I wrote the book, Healing the Addicted Brain. It’s not just about the addiction medications, but how to treat addiction effectively overall using a comprehensive set of scientifically proven treatments.

Healing the Addicted Brain is detailed and easy to read and we highly recommend it. It explains scientifically proven treatments and makes practical recommendations specifically to patients and their families.

But it seems that many patients and even therapists and physicians aren’t comfortable with these treatments.

There is an archaic attitude that you should not treat addiction with medications. This myth could not be farther from the truth. That kind of thinking is left over from the 1960s. The CAT scan was invented in the mid 70s, the MRI in the 80s. But prior to the 1970s, we had no way of looking at a live brain, we could only look at dead brains. We weren’t able to see that alcoholism and other addictions are brain diseases similar to bi-polar disorder and major depression. All we had before that was Freud—not that I am knocking him.

Back in the 1960s and 70s, physicians used to treat alcoholism with Valium, then the patients would get addicted to the Valium. So what happened is that people extrapolated from that the fallacy that medicines will only make addiction worse. That bias still remains today, over 50 years later.

But since then, all the scientific breakthroughs and discoveries show that this isn’t the case. That is why I wrote the book to empower patients and their families to make them educated consumers.

Now, after reading the book, I see the patients and the family members pulling the whole field into the twenty first century.

Yes, patients and their families are often the best advocates for progress! We just did an interview with Katie Cadigan whose film When Medicine Got
It Wrong documents the founding of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, which was started by family members of those with mental illness.

Part Two coming soon!

About Dr. Urschel: Dr. Harold C. Urschel, MD, author of the New York Times bestseller, Healing the Addicted Brain, is a board certified physician in both addiction and general psychiatry as well as the Chief Medical Strategist for EnterHealth, LLC, the leading alcohol and drug addiction disease management company in the U.S. Dr. Urschel is also the founder & CEO of the Urschel Recovery Science Institute in Dallas. He has been featured on Dr. Phil, Extra, Fox News, CNN, MSNBC and has provided his expertise in medical journals such as the Mayo Clinic Proceedings, The Journal of Psychopharmacology, Treatment, Recovery Today, Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Weekly.

Richard Zwolinski, LMHC, CASAC is the author of Therapy Revolution: Find Help, Get Better, and Move On Without Wasting Time or Money and is an internationally licensed psychotherapist and addiction specialist with over 25 years experience as well as a consultant to organizations and companies in the fields of mental health and addiction.