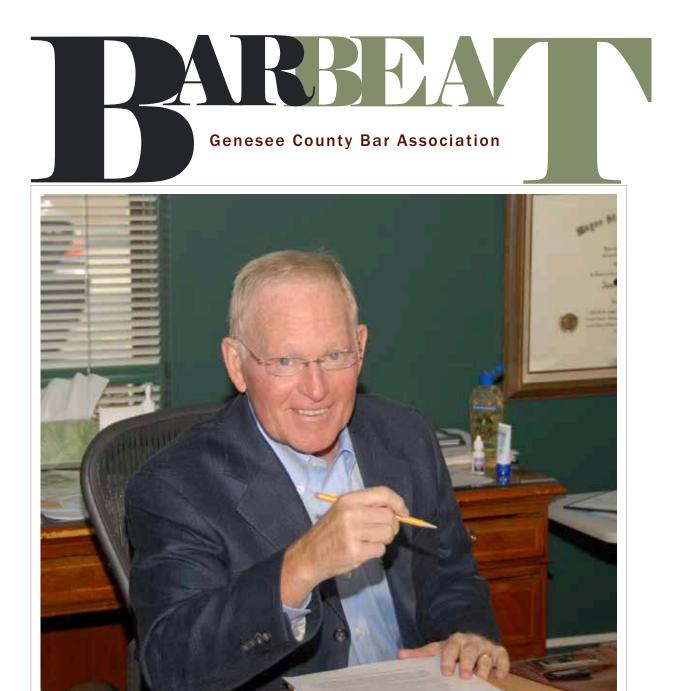
July/August 2012



James J.Wascha 2012-2013 Genesee County Bar President

Employee Drug Testing for Prescription Medications After Dura Automotive and the ADA Amendments Act

The FTLA: Fighting for Justice and Equality for Over 50 Years

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Moving Foward 2012-2013

By James J. Wascha, President

s the new president of the GCBA, (in the current national political climate) it would seem that we might follow suit and push for "change": cut spending, increase revenue and have hearings on everything. Although ever mindful of two out of these three, the GCBA continues to function generally under a charge as found within its mission statement: "The Genesee County Bar Association exists to serve the professional needs of our members, improve the justice system, and educate the public about the law and the role of lawyers." Although a laudable and relevant mission, one must be mindful to avoid complacency.

I believe creativity, even outside the box, may be essential for the continued health of the association.

The Association must continue to identify the needs and difficulties presented by changing times, demographics and economic downturn. Influenced by these changing parameters, "value" to our members must be the consistent goal of the association. Value may take many forms. It may be an enhanced interactive web site, expanding social events, or even being more active and verbal on significant issues affecting the legal system and access to justice.

Current areas for attention are not difficult to find. The district court system seems in a partial state of disarray; the pool of local attorneys seems to be declining and the influx of out-of-county counsel is on the march.

The Supreme Court has implemented significant changes in trial rules of procedure. Education may be paramount as the courts transition to these rules. (MCR 2.513)

Many areas of law, both legislative and common, are being systematically encumbered to a point of partial extinction. This not only affects citizens' rights, but the need for counsel is diminishing. The impact on the local economy is slow but certain.

Public perception of the legal profession and judicial system has been eroded by those potentially having economic or ideological motives distant from our system of judicial redress.



James J. Wascha

This list of topics and concerns affecting the bar can be rather extensive. One might well conclude that the bar association is not the vehicle to attempt change. This may or may not be correct. However, to actively search out potential targets for change may be a worthy endeavor. Pursuing ideas and having discourse may well serve the bar and bench. More community outreach may improve public perception.

The Genesee County Bar Association membership has always been imbued with talent, creativity and stamina. I believe creativity, even outside the box, may be essential for the continued health of the association. With this and many existing long term traditions, the organization may continue to mature and serve the professional needs of our members, improve the justice system, and educate the public about the law and the role of lawyers.



Photo to Share?

Do you have a lovely picture to share? Send it/them to *barbeat@gcbalaw.org* in digital form. Include a short description of the picture: who took it, who is in the picture (if there are people), when and where you took it. Perhaps you would want to include why you took it?

Selected pictures will be featured in future issues, some of which have a theme. For example, the May/June issue promotes our Golf Outing, the September/October issue kicks off the fall, and November/December issue celebrates the holiday seasons. Share theme-related or other photos. (Please do not submit any pictures that would require a copyright waiver.) Since *Bar Beat* goes to print thirty days prior to the publication date, earlier submission is better than late!

Employee Drug Testing for Prescription Medications After Dura Automotive and the ADA Amendments Act

By Sean M. Siebigteroth



Sean M. Siebigteroth

2008 study found that nearly half of Americans aged 20 to 59 used at least one prescription drug in the past month and that more than 10% take prescription medications for pain relief.¹ Employers know that many employees regularly use powerful but legal drugs and must balance employees' legal rights with legitimate interests in workplace safety and productivity. This article discusses the evolving state of the law regarding employer drug policies under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") and the effect on this difficult balance.

In 2010, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Dura Automotive*² considered an employer's prescription drug policy under the ADA.³ Concerned about a high rate of workplace accidents, Dura implemented a policy prohibiting employees from using legal prescription medications⁴ with effects it deemed dangerous to safety or job performance. Dura began to test employees for those medications, including Oxycontin, Xanax, and Vicodin.

The plaintiffs all had legal prescriptions for a prohibited medication and tested positive.⁵ Dura gave them an opportunity to "transition" to different medications but refused to consider evidence that the prohibited drug would not affect the employees' work performance. Dura terminated the employees when they continued taking the prohibited medications.⁶

The U.S. District Court denied Dura's motion to dismiss Plaintiffs' claim that Dura's drug testing policy violated the ADA. The issue on appeal was whether an individual must be disabled to pursue a claim under ADA §102(b)(6).⁷

The Sixth Circuit analyzed the case under Section §102(b)(6) as it then existed, before the 2008 ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) revisions, and employed "a straightforward reading" of §102(b)(6) to conclude that only"qualified individual[s] with a disability" are protected from the use of tests tending to screen out disabled individuals.⁸ Because the plaintiffs were not disabled, the Sixth Circuit reversed the trial court's denial of Dura's motion to dismiss.⁹

However, blanket drug-testing policies like Dura's are now legally impermissible after the ADAAA revisions. The ADAAA requires that the existence of a disability be evaluated without mitigating measures¹⁰ and by making it easier for plaintiffs to demonstrate they are "regarded as" disabled." The ADAAA also revised Section 102(a) to protect from discrimination "qualified individual[s] on the basis of disability," not just individuals "with a disability."12 The ADAAA allows many prescription drug users to show they are, or are regarded as, disabled.

Prudent employers will substitute blanket exclusions with individualized assessments of employees' ability to work safely. Under the ADAAA, an employer may still require that employees "not pose a direct threat to the health or safety of other individuals in the workplace."¹³"Direct threat" means "a significant risk of substantial harm to ... health or safety" that accommodations cannot acceptably reduce.¹⁴ The employer's "direct threat" determination must be an individual assessment of the employee's ability to safely perform job duties based on objective evidence and "reasonable medical judgment[.]"¹⁵ Such an individualized "direct threat" assessment is found in an EEOC discussion of a hypothetical applicant for a saw operator position who takes a medication that affects coordination and concentration for a psychiatric condition:

The company doctor determines that the individual experiences negligible side effects from the medication because she takes a relatively low dosage. She also had an excellent safety record at a previous job, where she operated similar machinery while taking the same medication. This individual does not pose a direct threat.¹⁶

Employers must be mindful of obligations under state and federal antidiscrimination law when they implement drug policies including drug testing for legally prescribed medications. Employers must consider medical judgment and the relevant job history to assess whether legal prescription drug use poses a direct threat in the workplace.

Endnotes

I

Qiuping Gu, et al, Prescription Drug Use Continues to Increase: U.S. Prescription Drug Data for 2007-2008, NHCS Data Brief No. 42, Sept. 2010, at 2, 4, available online at

Continued on next page

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http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/ db42.pdf.

- 2 625 F3d 283.
- 3 Bates v Dura Automotive Systems, 625 F3d 283.
- 4 A current user of *illegal drugs is not* an "individual with a disability" under the ADA when the employer acts on the basis of such use. 42 USC 12114(a).
- 5 Supra note 2, 625 F3d at 284.
- 6 Id.
- 7 42 USC 12112(b)(6).
- 8 Id.
- 9 Supra note 2, 625 F3d at 285-87.
- 10 42 USC 12102(4)(E). Medication is a listed "mitigating measure." 42 USC 12102(4)(E)(i)(I).
- 11 42 USC 12102(3)(A).
- 12 42 USC 12112(a).
- 13 42 USC 12113(b).
- 14 26 CFR 1630.2(r).
- 15 Id.
- 16 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, ADA Division Office of Legal Counsel, EEOC Enforcement Guidance on the Americans with Disabilities Act and Psychiatric Disabilities, EEOC Notice No. 915.002, Mar. 25, 1997, available online at http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/psych. html.Although this Enforcement Guidance predates the ADAAA, the Guidance analysis on this issue should be unaffected.

Article to Share?

The Bar Beat Committee is interested in "human interest" and "travel" articles featuring GCBA members. Length should be 300-500 words. Include a head shot, if not on file, and an appropriate other photo if you have one. Submit your article to barbeat@gcbalaw.org.

The FTLA: Fighting for Justice and Equality for Over 50 Years

By Michael A. Kowalko, President of the Flint Trial Lawyers Association 2012

The Flint Trial Lawyers' Association (FTLA) is alive and well in 2012, a half century after it began in the early 1960's. Original founding members included Mort Leitson, Clifford Hart and Robert Abrams. The initial meetings took place at the former Peppermill Restaurant on Kearsley Street in downtown Flint.

The focus of the FTLA then, as now, is to fight for individual liberty and equal access to the court system. The organization seeks to achieve these objectives in several ways including, especially, through legal education. Successful veteran trial attorneys willingly share the keys to their success, ranging from highly specialized knowledge of the law to advocacy techniques. Also, trial court and appellate judges from throughout the state frequently appear as guest speakers to share their observations and insights about law and advocacy.

Additionally, the FTLA continues to galvanize its membership to achieve balance in the political arena. It is not easy to counter well-financed special interest groups who seek to diminish individuals' legal rights and remedies. The FTLA is continuously striving to achieve equal justice under the law for everyone, particularly including the weak, the injured, the powerless and those without a voice.



Michael A. Kowalko

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the FTLA is not always all business. It is also about camaraderie and friendship. We have a lot of fun sharing our experiences in the law and getting to know one another beyond just waving hello while passing each other in the court hallways. Our membership consists of attorneys who mainly participate in civil litigation representing plaintiffs, and criminal defense. The FTLA in 2012 is still growing after 50 years in existence, and we wholeheartedly welcome new members.

March in Mexico

By Sally Shaheen Joseph

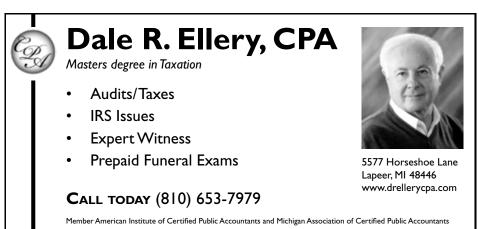
Did you ever think of taking off for a few weeks in March and going somewhere warm, and doing something worthwhile while you were enjoying the sunshine? You can, you know. I did. I went down to San Carlos, in the Baja Peninsula, as a volunteer with Rotary International.

One of our international projects is called "Avoidable Blindness" and it means just that. In conjunction with VOSH, Michigan, (Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity) we volunteer to go to Mexico every year in March to examine the eyes of the natives in the interior who do not have access to eye care. Most of them are farmers and their families. They are exposed to extreme temperatures and sun like we almost never experience here. Without Rotary and VOSH, Michigan, the people who live in the interior would not have access to eye care.

Dr. Brad Habermehl, an optometrist from Burton, came to our club to explain the program to us quite a few years ago. One of our former presidents, Omar Odette, and his wife, Victoria, volunteered with the program for two years. When it was my term as President, I thought it was about time I did some international volunteering myself. What kind of an example was I setting if I just asked our members to do things I was not willing to do myself?

We flew into Phoenix, spent the night there and departed by bus the following morning. At the Mexican border, we changed busses and headed into the interior. We stayed at a beautiful resort in San Carlos. The first two days there were spent recuperating

Continued on next page



from our travels and lying in the sun or shopping. Meanwhile, Dr. Habermehl and his student volunteers were assisting the local ophthalmologist in performing 120 surgeries on the eyes of some of the patients.

Every day thereafter we were driven to a different location where the people had been forming lines for hours, waiting to be seen. They were so patient and grateful. My job this year was to assist at the intake desk, obtaining information from the patients for the doctor and his student volunteers. I had learned a little Spanish since my first trip there so I was a little more useful than previously. However, even those who do not speak any Spanish can be very helpful doing the initial screening. All I did the previous year was ask them, basically in sign language, to cover first one eye then the other to determine what they could or could not see.

Last year, on my first volunteer trip, we had 36 volunteers including three

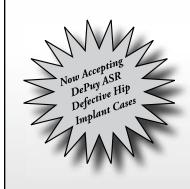


optometrists and students from two different schools of Optometry. We saw over 2011 patients. The patients' eyes were all examined and glasses were provided, if necessary. Everyone, whether they needed glasses or not, was provided sunglasses. If they needed glasses for seeing whether close, far, or both, they received them.

This year, we had only 21 volunteers, many of whom were students of optometry in their senior year, and only one doctor, Dr. Habermehl. As a result, we were only able to accommodate around 1700 patients. The last day we had to turn away so many, it broke my heart.

I returned feeling refreshed, exhilarated, exhausted, and ready to go back again next year.

Although I am probably the oldest volunteer ever, you are never too old to do something good. If you have the inclination and the time, consider joining us next year when we go back to Mexico. You will not regret it.



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By Walter P. Griffin, President Genesee County Bar Foundation



Walter P. Griffin

Walter J. Barkey, Brian M. Barkey and Hon. Jennie E. Barkey are members of a family dedicated to contributing to the Genesee County Legal Community. The dedication of the Barkeys and others makes our community special.

The Genesee County Bar Foundation believes in recognizing those who have demonstrated professionalism, volunteerism and passion for the community.

Please save the date.

The Genesee County Bar Foundation is pleased to announce a tribute to the Barkey Family.

Walter J. Barkey, Brian M. Barkey and Hon. Jennie E. Barkey are members of a family dedicated to contributing to the Genesee County Legal Community. The dedication of the Barkeys and others makes our community special. The Barkey Family has shown this commitment.

Walter J. Barkey (1919-1999) was a prominent member of our legal community. He was a graduate of St. Michael High School in Flint, held undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Michigan and was a World War II Veteran of the U.S. Army. Walter, besides being an avid golfer and talented pianist, was the father of seven children, two of whom will be present at the tribute.

Brian M. Barkey is no stranger to the legal community. Former GCBA

President Randy Piper named him a "Saint" of the bar. He is a graduate of Flushing High School, Western Michigan University and Wayne State Law School with honors. He has been on the Board of Trustees of Genesee Memorial Hospital, participated in Flushing Township government, is an advocate for the Crim, and Founder and Director of the Genesee County Bar Association Holiday Dinner.

The Honorable Jennie E. Barkey has been Probate Judge since 2006, served as Friend of the Court for 17 years, was in private practice for ten years, and a Circuit Court Referee for six years. She received a Bachelor of Science from Oakland University and her law degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School (1979). Judge Barkey is an advocate for the mentally ill and helped establish the first mental health court in Michigan.

Social Media Will

By LindaLee Massoud

You are familiar with a last will and testament that states your preferences for the disposition of your estate upon death. In our new electronic world, with social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, new discussions are arising about what should happen to a person's social media pages upon death. Bloggers are promoting the creation of a "social media will" to state one's preferences for the disposition of these sites. Even the USA.gov website discussion of wills includes a section on social media wills!

Recommendations are that the testator appoint an "online executor" to be in charge of closing or locking the accounts. Examples of accounts are: social media profiles, blogs, PayPal, and email. In order for the person to have access to these accounts, he/she will need to know the current username and password. Of course, the account list should be stored in a known secure location and be kept up to date.

The online executor will need one or more copies of the death certificate to accomplish these tasks, and the will should specify that the person be given the copies. Each site has specific policies in this regard, which should be reviewed under "Privacy Policy" link on



LindaLee Massoud

the front page. (The client could do this if computer savvy.) Finally, there is even an app for that, believe it or not. Facebook has an "If I Die" app that allows a person to leave final words and wishes.

As an attorney, you might want to notify your estate-planning clients of this new issue. A search at ICLE did not reveal any current clauses or para-

Continued on page 11

hy did you decide to become an attorney? When I was a kid, my favorite show was *L.A. Law.* I have wanted to be a lawyer ever since.

In what area(s) of law do you practice? Bankruptcy, Consumer Litigation, Real Estate (transactions and litigation), Landlord/Tenant, and Estate Planning

Which area of the law do you like the best and why? I like litigation the best. I like the challenge of trying to determine the opponent's arguments and the counter-arguments to them. The best part is trying to use your opponent to prove your side of the argument.

What do you like best about being an attorney? The best part of being an attorney is when I am able to help a person who really needs help.

What part of being an attorney can you do without? The stress. After ten years, I still need to learn how to deal with the stress.

What words of advice could you offer to new lawyers? Do not make the legal system your world. You need to have other outlets to remove the stress and free your mind. Find

Social Media Will continued

graphs to be included in a standard will, but the author believes it could be handled similarly to a holographic will. This is new, uncharted territory, but given the number of pictures and other media available on the web it is certain to become an important issue in the near future. To find additional information, try a search pattern of "social media will die".

References

http://preview.tinyurl.com/7c5w6e8 http://preview.tinyurl.com/7nwozb3 http://www.usa.gov/topics/money/personal-finance/wills.shtml balance. And when you do, can you share it with me?

What suggestions do you have to improve the legal system? Require mediation more often. I like how the 7th Circuit Court requires mediation in some cases. In most of the cases that I had go to mediation, it worked. A good mediator, in my opinion, helps resolve the dispute by listening and offering suggestions that clarify issues for both parties. Sometimes, clients just need to hear the suggestions from someone other than their attorney.

Offer one suggestion for improving our local Bar. Attorney Volunteers. As the Chairperson for the Law Day Committee, we work with Genesee County Schools on observance of Constitution Day (September 17) and Law Day (May I). These two activities provide an opportunity to meet with high school students and create a positive interaction with members of the legal community. Attorneys who participate in these events and



Sherri L. Belknap

the community seminars bring positive awareness to themselves, to the Genesee County Bar Association, and to the other attorneys involved in it. We all have busy schedules but it is rewarding for the attorneys who volunteer, as well as for the community.

Tell us about your life outside of the law. There is life outside the law? I am not sure that there is life outside the law. This is why I suggest that new attorneys find a balance. When I have time I like to write, research my family tree, and read. I also love to bake.

If you had not become an attorney what career would you have chosen? If you asked me when I was in high school, I would be a doctor. Now, I would like to own my own bakery/cafe.



July/August 2012

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