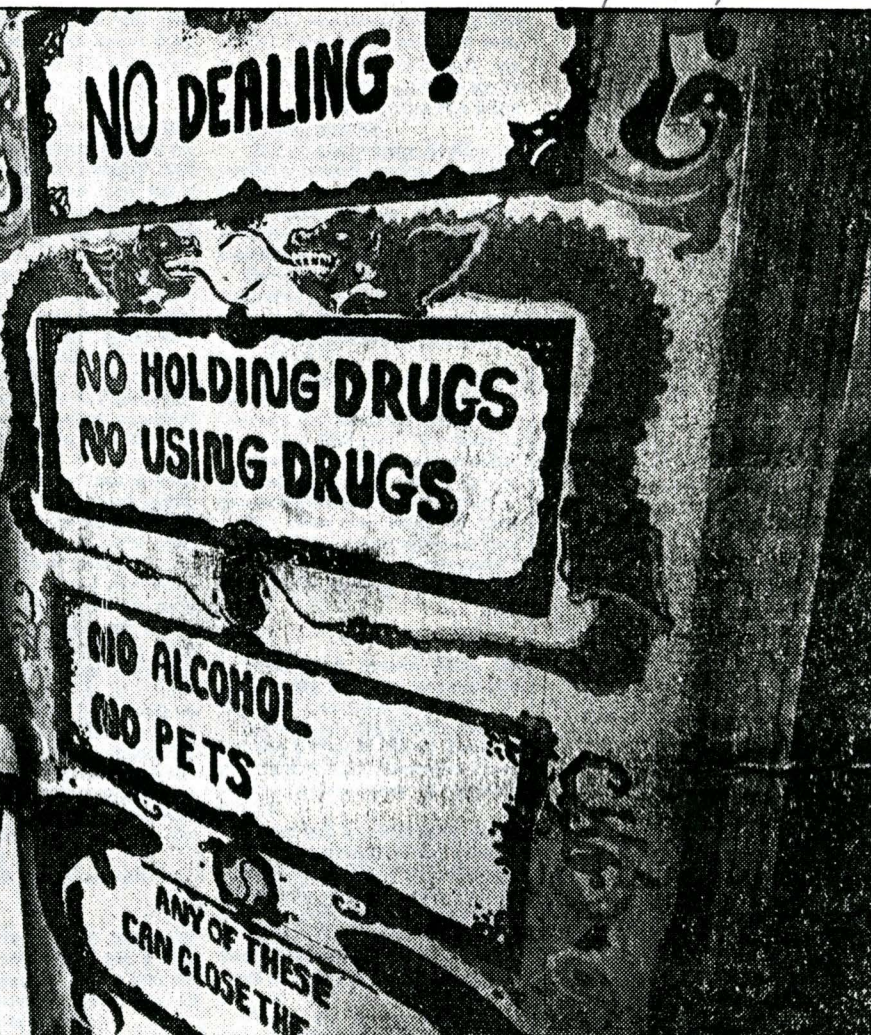


SUMMER OF LOVE



Examiner/Chris Hardy

Dr. David Smith, a medical outcast when he founded the clinic, now helps formulate drug policies

Haight clinic's 20 years of struggle to stay free

By Lisa M. Krieger
EXAMINER MEDICAL WRITER

Twenty years ago in the Haight's cool fog, hundreds of poor and sick hippies lined up to await the opening of a radical new street clinic.

Today the hippies are long gone — but the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic is still open and its doctors continue to treat those who don't want, or can't afford, mainstream medical care.

"And we're still free, after all these years," said its director, Dr. David Smith.

The drug epidemic has long since spiraled out from places like the Haight into congressional corridors and suburban shopping centers. Once shunned, abusers are now lured to expensive high-tech treatment centers.

But the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic — unlike hundreds of similar free clinics of the '60s — has survived. Through 20 years

of social idealism, burnout, poverty, closure, persistence and change, it has emerged as the most widely imitated free clinic in the country.

Unlike other clinics, the Haight Clinic seized the chance to expand its vision of care, applying the lessons of the '60s to problems of the '80s — PCP, designer drugs, alcohol, cocaine. Its survival is a study in adaptation, evolution and compromise.

It treats aging Flower Children and their children — but also gay businessmen, new Third World arrivals, holistic health adherents and anyone else who seeks an alternative to expensive and impersonal '80s medical care.

As its patients' needs have changed, so have its services.

The clinic now offers AIDS testing, jail psychiatric treatment and counseling to adult children of alcoholics. The Women's

— See CLINIC, A-7



Examiner file photo

A PATIENT IN FREE CLINIC'S EARLY YEARS
Most avoided conventional doctors, hospitals

CLINIC

— From A-1

Midlife Resource Center provides information on alternative health care to "women who were in their 20s during the Summer of Love, now in their 40s."

Its Rock Medicine clinic helps out not just at Grateful Dead concerts, but at AC/DC and David Bowie concerts as well.

Once dependent on handouts and rock concert benefits, it now gets city and federal money.

Once an outcast, its doctors now help legislators with drug policy. A Haight project — educating street addicts about AIDS — was featured at last week's Third International Conference on AIDS.

Patients and volunteers no longer share joints and good times. Its staff is made up of respected medical professionals whose approach, while still casual, is organized and efficient.

The clinic still offers walk-in care — but also keeps a computerized appointment book. It once occupied five dingy rooms; it now fills five buildings.

While some former patients, including Janis Joplin, ended up in the morgue, others went on to become lawyers, businessmen, corporate executives. One former patient is vice president of a Fortune 500 corporation.

Its once-controversial ideas — more preventive care, a humanistic attitude and a curative, not punitive approach to drug treatment — have been adopted by mainstream medicine.

Through waves of gay power and AIDS, sexual revolution and venereal disease, from Kennedy progressivism to Reagan retrenchment, the clinic has stayed true to its '60s motto: "Health Care For Everyone — A Right, Not A Privilege."

★ ★ ★

In 1965, as hippies in beads and gowns gathered in Golden Gate Park, 27-year-old Dr. David Smith was up the hill in a UC-San Francisco lab, experimenting with rats.

He was intrigued by his findings: a brand-new substance called LSD made the animals twitch and jump in drug-induced psychoses.

Walking home through the park to his Waller Street apartment, Smith saw the same drug's effects on humans.

"It was totally shocking," he recalled.

By 1967, the Summer of Love was transforming the Haight into the psychedelic equivalent of Fort Lauderdale at spring break: Thousands of teen-agers, many far from home, experimenting with sex and mind-bending drugs for the first time.

Lacking adequate housing, food and health care, the Haight became a medical disaster area. Drug use was casual, careless — and lethal. Kids got high in a hurry on unknown doses of unknown substances.

An estimated 75,000 kids — many of them upset, unhappy, unwanted by their families — were looking for instant answers to life's problems. These weren't savvy Bohemians: they were naive teen-agers, easy prey to the elements and the street.

"They knew how to spout the philosophy, but they couldn't take care of themselves. Kids from all over the country arrived in the Haight with absolutely nothing," recalled John Luce, who worked with Smith at the clinic.

San Francisco's existing drug treatment centers were filled with alcohol and opiate patients, and their

usual prescription for an LSD overdose — a shot of the potent drug Thorazine — felt like "hitting a brick wall at 60 miles an hour," in one doctor's words.

Fearful of authority, the kids avoided doctors and hospitals. As minors, they could be shipped back home. Marijuana possession was a felony; if convicted, a narcotics addict could be committed to the state mental hospital.

"Physicians seemed unwilling to help the young people in the area, especially those who had problems stemming from drugs," Smith said. "Public health officials looked down on young people as subhuman beings. When they came to Park (Hospital) Emergency, doctors assaulted them with sermons or reports to police."

Unless someone set up a link between the straight and hippie world, Smith knew that lives would be lost.

"The prevailing thought was: Why cater to these people? It was thought, wrongly, that if they needed help, there were perfectly good clinics at the hospitals, all within walking distance," said Dr. Paul Scholten, then of UC-Med Center and now at S.F. State.

But Smith figured kids would be more likely to seek help from a young doctor in a neighborhood clinic than walk to a hospital to be treated by a older, unapproving, doctor in white jacket. There was a serious need for non-judgmental and humanistic care.

He decided to fill that need.

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Born in Bakersfield with Okie dust bowl roots, Smith got a middle-class upbringing — one that did little to prepare him for a future of radical medical activism.

He was a jock and a "square" who loved to play basketball and study real estate investments. And he had a bright future in academic pharmacology.

But instead of staying in the lab, Smith put his knowledge of drugs to work.

"Word got out that he could take care of people with drug problems," recalled Luce. The Diggers and others in the new Haight community encouraged Smith to bring his skills up to the Haight.

Others tried — unsuccessfully — to discourage him. "Everyone told me I was making a big mistake if I opened up free clinics," recalled Smith. "I'd be ostracized from the medical establishment. Someone would try to kill me."

A few private donations paid the first month's rent on a five-room suite in a run-down Victorian at the corner of Haight and Clayton. Volunteers made repairs and improvements. An architect offered free services.

There was no advertising, just a sign on the weathered door saying: "David E. Smith, MD, and Associates: Haight Ashbury Free Medical Clinic and Happening House."

The response was overwhelming. Forty physicians and 45 nurses volunteered in their time off, and patients flooded in.

"It was a madhouse," Smith said, recalling June 7, 1967. "The day we opened the clinic, the line went around the block — just by word of mouth!"

"We worked around the clock," he said, shaking his head, still disbelieving two decades later. They treated more than 250 patients that first day. "That summer was a blur."

There were shy hippie mothers with malnourished babies, frantic speed freaks with swollen abscesses, surly bikers with broken arms and runaways with infectious diseases. The clinic treated hepatitis, heart ailments and pregnancy problems.

In five hours one day, they treated a girl who thought her hands were purple and 17 other people for acute toxic psychosis brought on by a type of LSD called "Pink Wedges."

When one popular patient died of a heroin overdose, the clinic held a party to raise funds for his cremation.

"What was remarkable was that (Smith) anticipated that need coming. Courageously, he said we couldn't whistle this problem under the carpet," said Dr. John Piel, a San Francisco physician.

"Just on a shoestring, Smith started giving needed services. The place had this aura, an atmosphere of people pulling together and caring, while he worked his wisdom in pharmacology."

The clinic's reputation as a drug treatment center grew. But it was more than that — it was a place to find friends, counseling, and new political ideals.

Doctors were not mere medical technicians, but social visionaries: "We're a new social institution," said Smith that first year. "We want to tackle the basic problems that lead to medical crisis: bad housing, lack of jobs, and the hopelessness of ghetto."

The vision was bold, the need clear. But after three months of non-stop work, "broke and exhausted," the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic closed.

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Drugs and disease were the Haight's big problems 20 years ago. The clinic's was money.

A concert by Big Brother and the Holding Company raised \$5,000 to get it going again; Creedence Clearwater Revival gave it another \$15,000.

It was just the beginning of the clinic's long struggle to stay afloat.

The City wouldn't help. The clinic's unique volunteer structure did not meet city requirements for public funds, the Health Department said. Young people who needed help could go to existing hospitals or clinics.

"We're not getting into hippie clinic business," Dr. Albert Clark told The Examiner in 1969, when he was San Francisco Medical Society director. The clinic's medical insurance was canceled.

Rumors spread that the CIA was collecting addresses of clinic volunteers because of their connection with illicit drugs, that city police were hauling off patient records to find names of drug dealers.

Then speed arrived on Haight Street — with a vengeance.

The mood became angry, aggressive, agitated. Two days before Christmas 1969, a 19-year-old girl was raped, kicked in the head and left to die. Storefront windows were boarded over and the streets filled with panhandlers, pushers, thieves and young speed freaks.

Crime doubled in 1970, when 17 murders, 100 rapes, and 3,000 burglaries were reported to the Park Police Station.

Broke once again, the clinic was forced to close; then it reopened with shorter hours. A 1970 benefit by stars from "Hair," "Oh, Calcutta," and "Woodstock" revived it.

The lights went out in mid-'71 when there was no money to pay the electric bill. Guitarist Jorma Kaukonen came to the rescue.

Ironically, it took another drug disaster to finally get the clinic on its feet: Heroin brought its deadening quiet to the Haight in the mid-70s.

"There was a new type of addict: the 25-year-old junkie, home from Vietnam," said Smith.

Blacks and Latinos began coming to the clinic. So did people from the Tenderloin, Mission, Western Addition, and Fillmore districts. So did an Army corporal and a prominent businessman's 18-year-old daughter who had a \$100-a-day heroin habit.

The crisis jolted the federal government awake.

"With incredibly limited resources, free clinics have succeeded in doing the job at which the medical establishment has been less than successful," said the National Institute of Mental Health. By the late 1970s, Smith was named drug adviser to President Jimmy Carter.

Smith eagerly took government money — then faced charges by the left that he had sold out to the establishment. The clinic became more structured, staffers became savvy at

Cyprus booby trap

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

NICOSIA, Cyprus — A former prison governor died here Sunday when his booby-trapped car exploded. Cypriot sources said.

HAIGHT ASHBURY - HISTORY 6/10/87



Examiner file photo

Dr. David Smith was overwhelmed with work in the clinic's original dingy rooms

CLINIC

— From A-1

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writing grant proposals.
"I had to develop a tough skin," said Smith.
Spurred by drug overdose deaths and a desire to clean up the Haight, The City began to subsidize the clinic, too.
Many other clinics and the National Free Clinic Council, now defunct, rejected government money — a move Smith now says "meant the end of the national free clinic movement. They turned down a tremendous opportunity to develop new programs and ideas for their local communities."
It was another beginning for the Haight clinic.

Today, Smith's hair is grayer, although it still hangs in curls around his collar. The clinic's psychedelic posters have been replaced by Oriental wall hangings.
Its slick Journal of Psychedelic Drugs circulates to 800 medical center libraries. Its predictions of soci-

ety-wide drug abuse borne out, it is a national authority on addiction.
The '60s and its problems have given way to the '80s, whose problems Smith finds even more troubling and profound.
"People today don't do drugs to find spirituality. They want to escape spirituality," he said. "We are in a materialistic phase. Cocaine is a sign of success: You talk a lot, think fast, have social status."
One young "punk" patient recently slashed himself, up and down his arms. "He wanted to inflict pain! He wanted to feel something!" said Smith. "Unlike the '60s, kids today describe a feeling of emotional deadening. It worries me — there is a very nihilistic philosophy."
Times are still tight for his clinic. With AIDS placing new demands on government budgets, it gets less money from The City. "We have a very aggressive donation policy," said Smith.
At the same time, more and more

people need the clinic's care.
Changing economics of health care are forcing major changes in who gets care. Businesses are cutting insurance coverage, and state government is reducing its Medi-Cal assistance.
Emerging is a whole new class of "medical indigents." Stanford University health economist Victor Fuchs called it "the anti-egalitarian mode of the '80s."
An estimated 15 percent of Americans have no health insurance, and many more have only limited coverage. As people lose coverage, they seek free care.
Once again, the Haight clinic is the safety net.
"We can still do it," said Smith, a million patient-visits after his clinic doors first opened. "The humanism of the '60s is still alive, a very viable concept."
"We just have to update, combining the values of the '60s with the technologies of '80s."