

Matthew Nenadovich has only been in the nursing profession for five years, but he already speaks like a seasoned veteran. Warm, affable and humorous, the 28-year-old Nenadovich found his calling as a nurse at the Windsor branch of the Ontario Addiction Treatment Centres. The OATC has treated over 10,000 patients country-wide since its inception, and its centres have become some of the most well-known methadone maintenance treatment programs in North America. It is reported that the OATC is currently treating one third of the entire patient population in Ontario consuming methadone, and its staff is committed to optimizing methadone maintenance therapy by working not only with its patients, but also with its community partners, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. Here, Nenadovich has found gratification in the treatment of those struggling with physical addiction and mental afflictions.

“I didn’t come out of school thinking that this was the exact field I wanted to focus on,” admits Nenadovich. “I just thought it would be interesting to apply to an addiction centre.”

When he got the job, Nenadovich quickly learned how “naïve I was about addiction in this area being a problem,” he says. “I see on a day-to-day basis how addiction affects every individual. It’s literally different for every single person, and as a caregiver, I have to be sensitive to that.”

Working with a highly volatile population, Nenadovich says, can be quite challenging. “I’m a frontline worker when it comes to mental health. I deal with patients on a weekly basis, or sometimes even on a daily basis – it’s not like I see them once every few months when they feel a little sick with a cold or something hurts... it’s ongoing.

“It’s a high-stress, high-paced job sometimes – but it’s pretty rewarding.”

Nenadovich says that in his field, there’s no such thing as a routine day. He begins most days by checking into his computer for doctors’ orders on specific patients, then runs urine samples, routine blood work, and assessments. But because the centre is a walk-in clinic, Nenadovich never knows how many patients to expect on any given day.

“It’s pretty spontaneous – one minute you’re waiting for something to happen, the next minute you’re just running like crazy with patients coming in to see you.”

Since having been employed at the centre, Nenadovich says he’s only too aware of the importance of methadone clinics and in-patient programs for afflicted people in this community. “People need this,” he stresses. “We need psychiatrists, physicians, support programs.

“In the city of Windsor, there are a lot of people who have mental health issues, and I urge them to get out and see what’s out there that can help you. Don’t ever think there’s nothing out there – there are lots of us who seeking to help.