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Jan Gerber

THE HEALER OF THE HIGH SOCIETY

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Jan Gerber, CEO of Paracelsus Recovery, runs a treatment center in Zurich catering to the ultra-wealthy battling burnout, addiction, or depression. As the head of the world's most exclusive rehab clinic, he knows: a life of luxury rarely brings real fulfillment — in fact, it often contributes to serious illness.

Words: Reinhard Keck
Photos: Paracelsus Recovery

Three years ago, the healer Jan Gerber became a patient himself. Over time, something had built up inside him that broke through with full force during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gerber, CEO of Paracelsus Recovery — the world's most exclusive rehab clinic — was exhausted. He felt both empty and overwhelmed. Depressive episodes and panic attacks followed. His relationship was strained, and his son was struggling at school. Some days, Gerber didn't even have the strength to get out of bed. He needed help.

And so, the therapy expert became a patient — an experience that he describes as both humbling and transformative. It gave him a deeper, clearer understanding of his work. "Mental health issues affect everyone, regardless of wealth or status," says Gerber. "We need to meet mental illness with empathy and openness, and talk about it without shame."

On this spring day, during his interview with Forbes at the club of London's luxury hotel The Langham, Gerber appears in excellent mental and physical health. He still occasionally experiences depressive episodes, he says, but now has the tools and strategies to manage them — and maybe one day, leave them behind entirely.

In his early 40s, Gerber is tall, charismatic, and approachable. Twelve years ago, he founded Paracelsus Recovery and remains its CEO. It is perhaps the most elite luxury clinic in the world, treating the global elite with a team of leading psychiatrists, physicians, and wellness experts. Among the clientele: royalty from the Middle East, billionaire entrepreneurs and heirs, Fortune 500 CEOs, and powerful politicians — in short, the high society.

Gerber's clients come to Zurich to treat depression, addiction, obesity, panic attacks, and a range of other mental health issues. His specialists have also observed emerging, unique addictions — particularly among their exclusive clientele. One of them is "opulomania": the compulsion to acquire luxury goods or indulge in extravagance. It's more than a shopping addiction — Gerber has seen clients who feel compelled to keep buying Lamborghinis, artwork, superyachts, and lavish estates. Some are extremely young, even teenagers, constantly seeking new, extreme cosmetic procedures.

Heirs and young founders who come into vast wealth early in life are especially vulnerable. Extreme luxury, Gerber explains, floods the brain with dopamine hits — and these hits must keep increasing to satisfy the craving. The desire for ever-greater dopamine surges forms a classic cycle of addiction.

This addiction is particularly insidious because compulsive Lamborghini shopping is more likely to be celebrated — not condemned — in elite circles. Opulomania is seen as a symbol of success, socially acceptable unlike heroin or



crack use. Because these disorders affect only the richest of the rich, they receive less attention — and less compassion — in mainstream medicine. Paracelsus Recovery was built to fill that gap.

Demand for psychological support is booming — and not only among the super-rich. According to the OECD, the global rate of mental illness has risen by 25% over the past two decades. The market for mental health services, wellness, and therapy has exploded in parallel. In 2023, the global mental health industry exceeded $400 billion in revenue, according to McKinsey. Zurich is a leading hub for luxury clinics — Kusnacht Practice also serves a similar clientele alongside Paracelsus Recovery.

Treatment in Switzerland doesn't come cheap. Paracelsus Recovery charges around 120,000 CHF for an "Executive Detox." A four-week stay can cost well over a quarter million. The clinic treats only three clients at a time, hosting them in lakeside penthouses, luxury hotels, or the client's own home. A dedicated 20-person team supports each individual — including doctors, psychotherapists, chefs, butlers, chauffeurs, nutritionists, yoga instructors, masseurs, and concierges.

"Money doesn't make you happy — quite the opposite," says Gerber, who witnesses this truth daily. Billionaires and ultra-rich clients often show more risk factors for mental illness than average earners. Many feel trapped in a gilded cage. Some speak of lacking a sense of purpose. Others carry deep childhood wounds of neglect and loneliness, growing up with nannies instead of parents and being sent off to boarding schools. This can lead to attachment issues, helplessness, trauma, or low self-esteem — all fertile ground for addiction. One emerging condition: crypto addiction — compulsive, high-risk trading of cryptocurrencies, which resembles gambling addiction.

Paracelsus Recovery aims to be a safe space where people can show vulnerability and receive the compassion they're often denied in their high-achieving worlds. Therapy in Zurich can last anywhere from six weeks to six months. Therapists are available around the clock, share meals, watch Netflix, and offer company. Some even accompany clients to their villas in Saudi Arabia or townhouses in London's Mayfair, becoming part of the household to help prevent relapse.

Gerber originally planned a different career. The only child of a psychiatrist and a nurse, he grew up in Schaffhausen. Instead of following his parents into healthcare, he studied Accounting and Finance at the London School of Economics (LSE), became a business consultant,

and founded several companies in Switzerland.

Everything changed when a family friend introduced him to a top executive suffering from alcoholism who needed discreet help. As the head of a publicly listed company, his condition had to remain secret. Gerber leveraged his parents' network to create a bespoke therapy solution tailored to the needs of a top-tier executive. "That's when I realized the business opportunity," says Gerber.

In 2021, Gerber nearly lost his clinic. On paper, the company was bankrupt. Expenses were too high, and Gerber was legally required to file for insolvency. But the clinic was his "baby" — he fought to save it. During the lockdown, international clients couldn't travel to Switzerland. Like many Swiss companies, Paracelsus Recovery received government aid. "That helped us survive and rebuild," says Gerber. The stress surrounding the clinic's future triggered the depression that would peak a year later.

Gerber still runs the business but no longer treats patients directly. Like its namesake, the clinic embraces innovation, offering treatments like acupuncture, breathwork, and yoga. There's also equine, art, and canine therapy, along with nutritional plans based on potential vitamin deficiencies or hormonal imbalances. For diagnostics, the clinic uses cutting-edge tech and artificial intelligence.



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"To overcome addiction, we need to identify and treat its root causes," says Gerber. "We must look at both medical and emotional factors — trauma, childhood neglect, personality disorders." But physical causes can also play a role: biochemical or hormonal imbalances, gut flora issues, dysfunctional glands, or chronic pain.

Confidentiality is paramount. Gerber has treated active politicians who dialed into cabinet meetings from therapy rooms; athletes addicted to medication after injuries; media personalities juggling between a Zurich treatment suite and a TV studio.

Clients' identities are always protected. Apartment addresses are undisclosed. Limo windows, which transport clients from private jet terminals, are tinted. Emails are encrypted, and every visitor to the clinic's penthouses must sign a strict NDA.

Still, some ask: if Paracelsus Recovery is the most luxurious clinic on Earth, isn't it part of the very problem it aims to solve — opulomania?

Gerber is aware that in an era of rising inequality, society shows less compassion toward those whose problems stem from excess. Yet he believes everyone has a stake in the mental wellness of the ultra-rich. His argument: when the wealthy are healthy and balanced, everyone benefits. They invest in startups, create jobs, fund research and philanthropy.

Such contributions, Gerber says, come from those in sound mental health — people who want to make a positive difference. Improving others' lives, he's learned from experience, brings more lasting joy and purpose than buying another luxury car.

Jan Gerber studied Accounting and Finance at the London School of Economics. In 2013, he founded Paracelsus Recovery and has since helped the world's elite confront their mental health struggles.