



Imagine Hope

Quarterly Report | October - December 2021

Early Intervention Services

A program of DBHDD / Office of Addictive Diseases.



A Light in the Dark

***"Attitude matters. A sour attitude can drag down those around you.
It's a choice – whether to discourage others or to inspire them."***

- Marcus Lucas, Highland Rivers Infection Control Nurse

From January 2020 until January 2022, Marcus Lucas led the Highland Rivers EIS (Early Intervention Services) team. During that time, agency nurses screened 3,699 clients for HCV and performed 3,517 HIV tests – diagnosing 4 individuals HIV-positive and identifying 260 clients as HCV/RNA-positive.

We spoke to Marcus just before he left about his legacy. But the legacy, he insisted, belongs to the nurses of Highland Rivers. "Diane Sutphin is by far our biggest tester. After Diane, Lynn Williamson and Martha Elischer do the most; they are self-motivated, diligent, and great to work with. Last but not least, Holli Seals and Carla Hix also do testing. Together, they regularly make Highland Rivers the top testing EIS site in Georgia."

Asked what makes a great team, Marcus offered this: "In nursing or any job, whatever you put your hand to, do it with heart. I see that in our nurses – and it's not always about fixing something. Listening is a big part of nursing – spending time with people and listening. Letting them know that you really do care – not that you can fix the problem but that you care and that you'll do whatever you can to help."

"At any job, people can sit around and grumble. Everybody's struggling with something. But if you're complaining, that's not going to help our clients. Our job is to be a light in a dark place."





Whole Health Approach at The Athens Clinic

"I think we have a much better chance to engage a patient in substance use treatment if we're engaging the whole person."

- Ali McCorkle, The Athens Clinic Program Director

This quarter (October – December 2021) The Athens Clinic (aka DM & ADR) performed 104 HIV tests; conducted 107 HCV screens; and identified nine new HCV/RNA positives. "Since the pandemic, we've seen a huge uptick in heroin and fentanyl use," says Program Director Ali McCorkle, "along with a lot of new HCV positives."

Last year, during the same quarter, at the height of the pandemic, 11 patients were diagnosed with chronic HCV. In contrast, during the same quarter in 2019, well before Georgia's initial stay at home order, 5 patients were diagnosed with HCV. Ali thinks we're past the worst. "We're still seeing a lot of new diagnoses, but I think it's probably the aftermath – so many people were alone and suffering."

One of 5 partner agencies providing in-house HCV treatment, The Athens Clinic has 23 cured patients – with several more currently undergoing treatment.

Ali measures success in relation to holistic health. "I think for me it's about treating the person as a whole - not just their opioid dependence. On day one we assess each patient's needs and then we provide ongoing counseling to help the patient identify needs as they emerge – including things they need to keep working on after they leave treatment. We may focus on prescribing methadone or buprenorphine but there are so many aspects to treatment beyond just addressing substance use issues.

We also want to help them cure their hepatitis. It means a lot to someone entering treatment to know that we can address their hepatitis C infection. I think we have a much better chance to engage a patient in substance use treatment if we're engaging the whole person."

Pictured below with Ali McCorkle is Data Specialist Ryan Petty. "Having Ryan to handle the data is amazing," says Ali. "It lets me focus on getting people their medication - which accelerates the process of in-house treatment dramatically."



Program Director Ali McCorkle with Data Specialist Ryan Petty, The Athens Clinic.



A Golden Opportunity: HCV Screening & Treating In-House

"How often do we have the opportunity to tell a patient that if they take their medication, in 8 weeks or 12 weeks, they will be cured?"

- Shannon Corda, ARC/Athens Program Director

Alliance Recovery Center in Athens is an MAT (medication assisted treatment provider) that performed 97 HIV tests and 106 HCV screens this quarter. The clinic confirmed 10 individuals HCV-positive and in need of treatment.

HCV is common, it is deadly, and it is curable. In fact, it is the first virus for which there is a cure. In early 2020, ARC/Athens began providing HCV treatment in-house. To date they have treated 16 HCV-positive individuals - 2 who have just begun taking medication and 14 who have completed the medication and been confirmed cured.

Program Director Shannon Corda sees the HCV screening and treatment program as a golden opportunity. “There are so many conditions that we don’t know how to treat, so many diseases for which there is no cure, or the treatment makes people so sick it’s hard to tolerate. But with HCV we know what the solution is – it’s a pill a day. And we are able to provide HCV-positive patients who have no insurance access to medication that would otherwise be prohibitively expensive. How often do we have the opportunity to tell a patient that if they take their medication, in 8 weeks or 12 weeks, they will be cured? And with each cure, the risk to others is eliminated.”

“People who come here to recover from addiction – especially opioid addiction – are weighed down by stigma and shame. Our syringe services are another way that we reduce the risk of spreading infection and at the same time counter societal messages about lack of value, lack of worth. In essence, we’re saying to that patient: ‘We realize that you may not stop using right away and we want you – and your partners – to be as safe as possible while we help you get better. Because we care about you; you matter to us.’ Their reactions are a beautiful thing to witness.”





INSTI HIV Testing & Prevention Counseling / Part 1 - March 3, 2022



INSTI HIV Testing & Prevention Counseling / Part 2 - March 30, 2022

The data below represents the individual and cumulative efforts of the statewide DBHDD HIV / HCV Early Intervention Services Project.

October - December, 2021

REGION 1	HIV	Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Avita	20	20	0	0	0	0
		Cobb CSB	18	18	0	0	0	0
		Douglas CSB	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Highland Rivers	128	128	0	0	0	0
		Lookout Mountain	29	29	0	0	0	0
		Pittard Clinic*	50	50	0	0	0	0
	Total	245	245	0	0	0	0	
	HCV	Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory			
Total			Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care	
Avita		94	16	16	14	9	1	
Cobb CSB		27	1	1	1	1	1	
Gateway Tx Services		19	3	3	3	1	0	
Highland Rivers		310	39	39	28	13	6	
Lanier*		9	0	0	0	0	0	
Lookout Mountain		19	2	2	1	1	0	
Pittard Clinic*		93	16	16	5	4	0	
Ringgold*		32	7	7	3	1	1	
Total	603	84	84	55	30	9		

* MAT

REGION 2	HIV	Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Advantage	42	42	0	0	0	0
		Alliance Athens*	97	97	0	0	0	0
		CSB Middle GA / Ogeechee	0	0	0	0	0	0
		DM & ADR*	104	104	0	0	0	0
		Oconee	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Serenity BHS	42	42	2	2	0	0
	Total	285	285	2	2	0	0	
	HCV	Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory			
Total			Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care	
Alliance Athens*		101	13	13	5	9	3	
Brand New Start/Loganville (Walton County)*		1	1	1	1	1	1	
DM & ADR*		107	10	26	9	6	5	
Total	209	24	40	15	16	9		

* MAT

REGION 3	HIV	Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Ascensa (St. Jude's)	31	31	0	0	0	0
		Clayton Center	0	0	0	0	0	0
		DeKalb CSB	30	30	0	0	7	7
		Fulton BHS	47	47	0	0	0	0
		MARR Inc.	33	33	0	0	0	0
		Newport	19	19	0	0	0	0
		Odyssey	0	0	0	0	0	0
		ViewPoint Health	47	47	0	0	0	0
West Care	24	24	0	0	0	0		
Total	231	231	0	0	7	7		
HCV	Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory				
		Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care	
	Ascensa St. Jude's	31	7	7	5	5	1	
	Clayton	28	1	0	0	0	0	
	Imagine Hope Linkage Sites	2	2	10	10	10	9	
	North Fulton Tx Ctr*	7	4	4	3	3	1	
	ViewPoint Health	66	2	2	2	1	0	
	WestCare	38	0	0	0	0	0	
Total	172	16	23	20	19	11		

* MAT

REGION 4	HIV	Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Aspire	72	72	0	0	0	1
		Legacy	1	1	0	0	0	0
		New Beginnings	80	80	0	0	0	0
	Total	153	153	0	0	0	1	
	HCV	Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory			
			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care
		Aspire	82	4	4	4	5	5
		Total	82	4	4	4	5	5

REGION 5	HIV	Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		CSB of Middle GA / Quentin's Place	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Gateway	425	425	1	1	1	0
		Pineland	18	18	0	0	0	0
		Recovery Place	109	109	0	0	0	0
		Unison	174	174	0	0	0	0
		Total	726	726	1	1	1	0
	HCV	Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory			
			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care
Brunswick Drug Court		3	0	0	0	0	0	
CSB of Middle GA / Quentin's Place		205	17	17	16	0	0	
Gateway		514	42	42	28	9	7	
Recovery Place		99	8	8	8	5	4	
Reliance Tx*		2	2	2	1	1	0	
Unison		73	8	8	4	3	1	
Unison MAT*		41	14	14	8	8	4	
Total	937	91	91	65	26	16		

* MAT

REGION 6	HIV	Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		McIntosh Trail	60	60	1	1	1	1
		Middle Flint	84	84	0	0	0	0
		New Horizons CSB	33	33	0	0	0	0
		Pathways	40	40	0	0	0	0
	Total	217	217	1	1	1	1	
	HCV	Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory			
			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care
		McIntosh Trail	54	4	4	4	2	0
New Horizons CSB		24	1	1	1	1	1	
Total		78	5	5	5	3	1	

Statewide	HIV	Statewide	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Total	1857	1857	4	4	9	9
	HCV	Statewide	HCV Ab Screening		HCV RNA Confirmatory/LTC			
Total			Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care	
Total		2076	220	235	153	99	51	

HIV Totals, 1,857 HIV Tests, 4 New Confirmed HIV+ Diagnosis

From October - December 2021, DBHDD's EIS Program screened 1,857 individuals for HIV, including 61 during outreach. Of those tested, 100% received their results and 4 newly diagnosed HIV-positive clients were linked to care. This quarter nurses and counselors provided on-going support to 99 HIV+ clients and re-linked 9 previously diagnosed HIV+ clients who had fallen out of care to medical treatment.

HCV Totals, 2,076 HCV Tests, 153 New HCV/RNA+ Diagnoses

From October - December 202, DBHDD's EIS Program screened 2,076 individuals for HCV. Of those, 153 were confirmed RNA+ or chronically infected with HCV. During the same period, 51 individuals in need of treatment for HCV were referred and confirmed to have attended their first medical appointment.



D·B·H·D·D

Imagine Hope manages the Early Intervention Services Program
on behalf of DBHDD / Office of Addictive Diseases