

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER TACKLES OPIOID EPIDEMIC WITH MAT PROGRAM AND FREE LIBRARY LECTURE

TORRINGTON, CT, January 7— The latest available statistics show that 2017 was the worst year ever for drug overdose deaths in the state of Connecticut as well as the entire country. Community Health and Wellness Center (CHWC), Torrington, CT, is proactively addressing the opioid epidemic, which is considered the worst public health crisis in American history.

CHWC initiated Medicated-Assisted Treatment (MAT) services in the third quarter of 2017. MAT incorporates the use of FDA-approved medications, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to provide a “whole patient’ approach to the treatment of substance use disorders.

“We made the decision to offer MAT services to assist with access to treatment in an area where the opioid addiction and deaths related to overdoses has reached epidemic levels,” says Joanne Borduas, chief executive officer of CHWC. “We went into the program with a strong foundation and knowledge base, and started building it by hiring Katrin ‘Kat’ Moskowitz, an APRN who had her DATA 2000 Waiver in place, which is a MAT requirement. By October we had put together a comprehensive program with evidenced-based protocols for patients who desired treatment from substance abuse.” The program now has more than 100 patients enrolled, and CHWC has added two more providers who are waived to provide MAT.

CHWC’s program provides holistic care, allowing patients battling addiction to combine MAT with primary healthcare and behavioral health services. “Our MAT program offers prescription medications which can help individuals stay clean and sober, as well as counseling and other support for successfully navigating the path to recovery,” says Moskowitz, who is the assistant clinical director of medical services at CHWC and member of the Litchfield County Opiate Task Force.

Moskowitz will be giving a free presentation at The Torrington Library on Thursday, January 10th, at 6 pm (snow date January 17th) entitled “The Opiate Epidemic and our Community.” She will give an overview of how the opiate epidemic has taken a grip within Litchfield County, share recent statistics, and explain how Medication Assisted Treatment options can help. The presentation will be followed by a question and answer session.

CHWC’s MAT program just celebrated the success of its first patient, who was in the program for the entire year and was successful in remaining opiate free. The patient expressed his

gratitude to the providers by saying, “Thank you for doing what you do. Thank you for saving my life.”

CHWC is committed to offering hope and help to individuals who are struggling with addiction. “We have a strong community support system and have a great relationship with community providers offering residential care and intensive outpatient program services so that our patients get the treatment they need,” says Borduas. “The northwest corner realizes the importance of linkages to care and strives to ensure the system works for those in need. It is recognized that coordination of care is the means to ending the horrible opioid crisis that has taken the lives of so many and has hit so close to home.”

Healthcare organizations and agencies continue to focus on solving the opioid epidemic by joining forces and pooling resources. Moskowitz attended the most recent National Prescription Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit in Atlanta, Georgia, and participated in the plenary session featuring Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In the session, Dr. Collins discussed the NIH’s launch of an integrated research initiative termed HEAL: Helping to End Addiction Long-term.

“HEAL’s mission is provide scientific solutions to the opioid crisis and offer hope for individuals, families, and the communities affected by the epidemic,” Moskowitz says. “It’s very exciting to be on the forefront of the absolutely amazing things that are being developed by NIH. We are gaining ground, and have the knowledge, experience, resources, and treatment options to help patients create a healthier life filled with possibilities and new beginnings.”

ABOUT COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER

The Community Health & Wellness Center of Greater Torrington is committed to keeping communities healthy. The center, its employees, volunteer practitioners, board members, officer, and independent contractors are deemed to be employees of the Federal Public Health and Human Services. In a compassionate, patient-centered environment, CHWC services are accessible and provided without discriminations, with cultural competence, and where all people matter regardless of their ability to pay.

CHWC offers and continues to develop a range of healthcare services for the underserved throughout northwest Connecticut, including medical, dental, chiropractic, and counseling services. It strives to achieve the reputation of “provider of choice” for affordable, high quality services that achieve positive patient outcomes in a welcoming and caring environment.

CHWC collaborates and advocates with other organizations to increase the region's capacity to meet the communities' health and wellness needs. It is the only Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Connecticut to receive a Health Services and Resource's Association's (HRSA) Health Center Program 2017 Quality Leader Award.

CHWC is located at 469 Migeon Avenue, Torrington, CT, and 115 Spencer Street, Winsted, CT, with the following satellite locations: FISH of Torrington, 332 South Main Street, Torrington; Sullivan Senior Center, 88 East Albert Street, Torrington, CT; The Open Door Soup Kitchen, 160 Main Street, Winsted; YMCA Emergency Shelter, 480 Main Street, Winsted; Torrington Soup Kitchen, 220 Prospect Street, Torrington; and Oliver Wolcott Technical School, 75 Oliver Street, Torrington. Telephone 860-489-0931, visit at www.chwctorr.org and on Facebook.

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