



HIV/AIDS Services

BACKGROUND

Occidental Area and Russian River Health Centers were founded in 1976 and 1974 respectively. In January 2000 a merger took place to create West County Health Centers (WCHC). In 1984, early in the HIV epidemic, our health centers began providing specialized primary care services for people with HIV and AIDS. In 1991, with the aid of federal Ryan White funding, our HIV/AIDS program was expanded to include counseling, dental and case management services.

PHILOSOPHY

Our philosophical approach is to empower patients and encourage the provider/patient relationship through education and dialogue. We believe that the more informed patients are, the better prepared they are to make decisions about their health.

SERVICES OFFERED

WCHC offers the following to individuals infected with or concerned about HIV:

- Medical Care
- Mental Health Services
- Dental Care
- Confidential HIV Antibody Testing
- Medical HIV Case Management

MEDICAL CARE

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus undermines the body's ability to fight off illness. Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the diagnosis given to HIV infected persons who show symptoms of certain "opportunistic" infections, or those whose immune function decreases beyond a certain point. It can take many years after infection for a person to be diagnosed with AIDS. To maintain the best possible health, access to ongoing medical care and updated information are essential. WCHC medical staff keeps abreast of the latest developments in HIV treatment and care.

WCHC offers a full range of consultation, diagnostic and treatment services for all stages of HIV disease. Individuals may enter our primary care practice at any point in the disease process and know that WCHC providers will maintain responsibility for their lifelong clinical care. All services are offered by highly qualified, licensed professionals with extensive HIV training and experience.

MENTAL HEALTH CARE

The HIV epidemic has brought with it new and extreme levels of mental stress and emotional distress. Words like *multiple loss, unsafe sex, unresolved grief, antibody status, survivor guilt and pandemic* have become commonplace in our vocabularies – so much so that we may lose sight of the non-normalcy in which we live.

Common reactions to inordinate levels of stress are social isolation, loneliness, alcohol and drug abuse, and emotional numbness. While these responses may help to carry some of us through short-term crises, they can become debilitating when stress is chronic.

WCHC offers individual counseling to people infected with or affected by HIV. Individual counseling involved ongoing, biweekly sessions to explore personal issues and provide one-on-one support. Group counseling is available for: men with HIV/AIDS. The group experience is designed to help offset the isolation that many living in the epidemic feel, as well as providing a “safe place” to express some of the feelings being withheld in other relationships.

DENTAL CARE

For the HIV-positive individual, dental care is extremely important. Many of the beginning stages of dental problems may go unnoticed until they become severe. These conditions become serious more quickly in people with HIV, making them more difficult to treat.

Early intervention can reduce or even eliminate many of the problems associated with poor oral health. Learning what to watch for and what to expect is the key to self-empowerment in your dental care. WCHC is committed to quality, specialized oral health care for persons who are immunocompromised. Our staff is trained and experienced in providing HIV dental care. Services offered include preventative care general dentistry, single crowns, root canals and dentures.

OTHER ON-SITE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO HIV PATIENTS

- Diagnostic procedures including: skin biopsies, microscopic examination for skin conditions, measurement of oxygen saturation, full gynecological and obstetrical services
- Preventative treatments
- Treatments for HIV associated conditions
- Alternative treatment information
- Specialty care referrals
- Home visits when necessary
- HIV testing of partners and/or children of HIV positive individuals

If you are interested in serving on WCHC’s HIV/AIDS Advisory Panel, please call Jennifer, HIV Program Coordinator, at 869-2849, ext. 235.

WCHC HOURS OF OPERATION

Medical appointments are available weekdays, evenings and Saturdays.

Dental appointments are available Monday-Friday.

Mental Health appointments are available Monday-Friday.

Occidental Area Health Center
3802 Main St., Occidental
874-2444

Teen Clinic at CASA
6570 First St., Forestville
887-0427

Russian River Health Center
16319 3rd St., Guerneville
869-2849

**Russian River Dental and Mental
Health Services**
16312 3rd St., Guerneville
869-2933, 869-2961

