



The Newsletter of the HIV Center for Women and Children

## Bringing together care and research in service to families in need

### Transgender Health Care at the HEAT Program

The Health and Education Alternatives for Teens (HEAT) Program has provided services to transgender youth since 2004. HEAT formalized such services in 2009 in the HEAT Transgender Treatment Protocol, and since then, many transgender youth across NYC and Brooklyn have entered into care at HEAT. Given the already small number of health facilities that provide adolescent-friendly care, there is almost a complete absence of health services for transgender youth, especially in Brooklyn.

In the early years of serving transgender youth, there was little guidance available in the medical literature; most treatment information available for providers was anecdotal. New transgender patients at HEAT come in asking for hormonal treatments in excessive doses because of misinformation from peers. Many youth take “street hormones” and silicon injections from illicit sources. HEAT began providing transgender services to help prevent youth from taking street hormones of uncertain nature, quality and dosing as a form of harm reduction. The idea was that the spread of HIV as well as hepatitis B and C could be reduced if patients were not injecting hormones outside of appropriate medical supervision. In addition, the overall safety of hormonal therapy is greatly enhanced by taking such treatment under a doctor’s care, as opposed to getting it from “the street.”

Over the years, more formal guidance for providers has become available (e.g., the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care; Endocrine Society Clinical Practice Guidelines for Transsexual Persons; Vancouver Transgender Adolescent Care

Guidelines). HEAT has also obtained treatment protocols from providers of transgender care such as NYC’s Callen-Lorde Community Health Center. HEAT’s Transgender Treatment Protocol is very youth-focused with a heavy emphasis on mental health assessments, which are necessary at the outset to determine if the person has a transgender identity and whether there are any untreated mental conditions. The mental health aspects of transgender treatment for youth are as fundamental to care as the medical aspects of treatment. Case management issues also need to be addressed early in treatment. HEAT’s transgender youth are often homeless, uninsured and engaged in sex work for day to day survival – all are issues that must be addressed early on in engaging a youth in care in order for the care to be successful. A major obstacle for case managers to help youth address is the gender marker on their insurance card. Medicaid, in particular, will not pay for cross gender hormonal treatment if the gender on the Medicaid card does not match the hormone being given. Case managers need to know the process by which a person’s gender can be changed on their Medicaid card in order to access the appropriate hormonal treatment.

Medical treatment for transgender persons is often intimidating for medical providers. Jeffrey M. Birnbaum, MD, MPH, Director of the HEAT Program, states, “Transgender hormonal treatment really needs to be de-mystified for many medical providers before they can feel comfortable prescribing such treatment.” The Endocrine Society Clinical Practice Guidelines for Transsexual Persons has

really given medical providers a comfort level not seen prior to their publication in 2009. Dr. Birnbaum notes that trainings are available for providers to learn the basics of transgender hormonal treatment through a variety of venues. He has many patients who are both transgender and HIV+, and his ability to provide treatment for both jointly has facilitated keeping some of the most challenging patients in care. Dr. Birnbaum is part of the NYS Department of Health AIDS Institute’s Clinical Guidelines Working Group that has been developing transgender treatment guidelines for HIV+ individuals, including youth. He is presenting at the Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference in June 2011 and at the World Professional Association for Transgender Health Conference in September 2011.

While some research about the health of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) populations has been conducted, researchers and clinicians still have a great deal to learn. To help assess the state of the science, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) asked the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to assess current knowledge of the health status of LGBT populations; to identify research gaps and opportunities; and to outline a research agenda to help NIH focus its research in this area. A committee of experts was convened by the IOM to consider this task, and its findings are presented in its report, *The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People: Building a Foundation for Better Understanding* (<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2011/The-Health-of-Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender-People.aspx>).

# JOB OPENINGS

## NYS Department of Health Empire Clinical Research Investigator Program (ECRIP) Two-Year Research Fellowship Opportunity in Non-Invasive Cardiology

**Goal:** To develop clinical research skills to study the cardiovascular and cerebrovascular manifestations of HIV disease. Program Features: Exposure to clinical trial design, grant writing, and manuscript production through mentoring activities and didactic trainings; training in cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diagnostic and imaging modalities; formalized instruction in clinical research is available; competitive stipend and benefits; option to maintain clinical skills; two years full-time (contingent upon funding); individual mentoring; research projects, publications, and conference presentations. **Eligibility:** Candidates must be a physician who is enrolled in or has completed a residency in any specialty. Such physician shall be: (a) a U.S. citizen; national; or permanent resident of the United States; and (b) a graduate of a medical (allopathic or osteopathic) school located in NYS; a resident or graduate of a residency training program sponsored by an institution located in NYS; or currently reside in NYS. **Application Procedure:** For more information, contact: Jason M. Lazar, MD, Director, Non-Invasive Cardiology & Cardiovascular Fellowship Program, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, 450 Clarkson Avenue, Box 1199, Brooklyn, NY 11203-2098 E-mail: jason.lazar@downstate.edu; Tel: (718) 221-5222; Fax: (718) 221-5220.

### Education Specialist (Clinical Research Associate I)

**Salary Range** (based upon experience): \$35,000 - \$50,000

**Duties:** Provide prevention education regarding HIV & substance abuse; conduct rapid HIV counseling & testing. Administer substance use screens and provide brief interventions. Conduct structured interviews for evaluation as required for the intervention. Refer clients for drug treatment, primary care and other needed services, and provide follow-up. Make home visits to ensure follow-up as needed. Ensure completeness and accuracy of programmatic and GPRA data and perform ongoing quality assurance checks. Conduct focus groups to obtain input on intervention. Monitor program data on an ongoing basis to ensure that the intervention is meeting objectives. Ensure timely delivery of data. **Required:** Bachelor's degree in health education, social work or related field. Minimum of three years' experience in health care, health education, mental health, substance abuse treatment, social services, research or related field required Bilingual in English/Spanish/French/Haitian

Creole preferred. Send cover letter and resume to: Yolene Gousse, STAR Program, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, 450 Clarkson Avenue, Box 1240, Brooklyn, NY 11203.

### Senior Counselor

**Salary Range** (based upon experience): \$45,000 - \$65,000

**Duties:** Provide evaluation, assessment, intervention and counseling services to inpatients and outpatients identified as having drug and/or alcohol problems. Conduct individual and group counseling sessions for patients on chemical dependency, mental health disorders and integrating Seeking Safety into treatment. Conduct comprehensive intake and assessments on clients needing mental health and/or substance abuse care; develop comprehensive treatment plans and reassessments. Provide leadership to the quality improvement process related to substance abuse assessment and treatment. Obtain informed consent and administer patient interview in accordance with SAMHSA program evaluation protocols. Participate in interdisciplinary case conference and weekly mental health meetings and serve as a resource for staff & patients on chemical dependency and its treatment. Record session notes and patient follow-up in the electronic medical record and database systems, as required by funders. Maintain close collaboration with MDs for those patients receiving buprenorphine treatment. Maintain close collaborations with offsite treatment providers. Ensure referral for services not available at SUNY Downstate, such as inpatient detox and methadone. Serve as a resource for staff and patients on issues related to chemical dependency and its treatment. **Required:** Master's degree in social work or related field. NYS licensed social worker or mental health provider. Experience with harm reduction and relapse prevention counseling and time-effective, solution-focused and cognitive behavioral treatment models. Experience with dually diagnosed population and group counseling skills a must. Effective written, organizational and interpersonal skills. Experience with HIV+ populations preferred. Bilingual in English/Spanish strongly preferred. Familiarity with buprenorphine treatment preferred. Experience with integration of Seeking Safety intervention preferred. Experience using electronic medical records preferred. CASAC or CASAC Eligible preferred. **Send cover letter and resume to:** Michelle Melendez, STAR Program, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, 450 Clarkson Avenue, Box 1240, Brooklyn, NY 11203.

### Clinical Research Associate I

**Salary Range** (based upon experience): \$35,000- 50,000

**Duties:** Provide prevention education regarding

HIV & substance abuse. Provide rapid HIV counseling and testing. Administer substance use screens and provide brief interventions. Conduct structured interviews for evaluation as required for the intervention. Refer clients for drug treatment, primary care and other needed services, and conduct follow-up. Make home visits as needed. Ensure completeness and accuracy of programmatic and GPRA data and perform ongoing QA checks. Conduct focus groups to obtain input on intervention. Monitor program data on an ongoing basis to ensure that the intervention is meeting objectives. Ensure timely delivery of data to the STAR Health Center. **Required:** Bachelor's degree in health education, social work or related field. Minimum of three years' experience in health care, health education, mental health, substance abuse treatment, social services, research or related field required Bilingual in English/Spanish/French/Haitian Creole preferred. **Send cover letter and resume to:** Yolene Gousse, STAR Program, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, 450 Clarkson Avenue, Box 1240, Brooklyn, NY 11203.

### Social Worker (Sr. Research Support Specialist)

**Salary Range** (based upon experience): \$34,000-55,000

**Duties:** Provide evaluation, assessment, intervention individual and group counseling services to patients identified as having problems related to drug or alcohol use at an off-site facility. Obtain informed consent and administer patient interviews in accordance with SAMHSA program evaluation protocols. Participate in interdisciplinary case conferences and weekly mental health meetings and serve as a resource for staff & patients on chemical dependency and its treatment. Record session notes and patient follow-up in the medical record and database systems, as required by funders. Maintain close collaboration with physicians and other staff to ensure appropriate services for patients receiving buprenorphine treatments. Maintain close collaboration with physician and other staff to ensure appropriate services for patient receiving buprenorphine treatments. **Required:** Bachelor's degree in social work or related field with at least three years experience working with harm reduction and relapse prevention counseling required. Effective written, verbal, organizational, and interpersonal skills required. Experience with HIV+ populations preferred. Bilingual in English/Spanish strongly preferred. Familiarity with buprenorphine treatment preferred. CASAC or CASAC Eligible preferred. **Send cover letter and resume to:** Michelle Melendez, STAR Program, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, 450 Clarkson Avenue, Box 1240, Brooklyn, NY 11203

## FACULTY AND STAFF UPDATES

**Dr. Jack A. DeHovitz** was appointed as Distinguished Service Professor, the highest system honors conferred upon SUNY instructional faculty, by the SUNY Board of Trustees in May 2011. Dr. DeHovitz has been on the faculty of SUNY Downstate since 1985. He is the founding director of the STAR Program, established in 1991, as well as the HIV Center for Women and Children, established in 1993. He was promoted to full professor in 1999. In recognition of his HIV work, Dr. DeHovitz received the SUNY Chancellor's Research Recognition Award in October 2003. A leader in the field of AIDS early in the epidemic, Dr. DeHovitz continues to occupy a position at the forefront of AIDS research, care, and policy today. A key liaison between SUNY Downstate and the problems of HIV around the world, his highly successful Fogarty fellowship program's influence has been felt from the old Soviet Republics, to Eastern Europe and into Africa and Haiti. He has been a leader in the evolution of clinical care, as a member of an initial committee established by the State of New York to develop statewide standards of HIV care. This latest honor is the pinnacle in his long and illustrious career that will continue to develop research, service and educational programs to reach populations most underserved.

**Nadia Jamal** joined the STAR Program care coordination program in 2010 as a Patient Navigator. Ms.

Jamal earned a Master's Degree in International Relations from an accredited university in Pakistan, and has worked internationally in programs focusing on women's and children's issues. She also worked at the Church Avenue Merchants Block Association (CAMBA) providing case management services to HIV patients with mental health and substance use histories.

**Rex Jones** joined the STAR Program as a Patient Navigator. Mr. Jones is certified by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to conduct HIV pre and post-test counseling and testing, and is a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor in NJ. Previously he worked with Harlem United as a Peer Mentor, and with the NYCDOHMH as a consultant and educator. He is a founder and current president of the Table Spread Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization that advocates for persons with HIV/AIDS, recovering addicts, and those re-entering society from prison.

**Ghislaine Laurent** joined the STAR Program as a Patient Navigator. Ms. Laurent earned a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from York College and has provided social services to children and families since 1999. Prior to joining STAR, Ms. Laurent worked as a case-worker helping to reunite children placed in foster care and their families, and as an advocate working to prevent children from being placed into foster care.

**Saana Malik, CASAC-T, CCMA**, joined the STAR Program as a Patient Navigator. Ms. Malik earned her

CASAC-T in 2011 and Certified Medical Assistant accreditation in 2009. She has many years of health education and outreach experience, including driving a mobile mammography vehicle at Project Renewal and working with mental health and substance abuse patients.

**Deanna O'Sullivan-Pearlman** joined the STAR Program as a Patient Navigator in 2010. She interned with the Women's Interagency HIV Study (WIHS) at SUNY Downstate during high school. She attended the College of Staten Island's undergraduate nursing program and is certified as an emergency medical technician.

**Laurie Sadofsky** joined the STAR Program as a Patient Navigator. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from SUNY Geneseo. In high school, she was an adolescent HIV educator. In college, she participated in FACE AIDS, which creates awareness about and raises funds for people living with HIV in Africa.

**Christelle Sommervil** joined the STAR Program as the STAR Health Center (SHC) Clinical Trials Coordinator. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Hunter College, a Master of Public Health from SUNY Downstate and a Master of Science in Clinical Research from New York University. Prior to joining STAR, she worked at NYU Medical Center as a research program manager managing liver and kidney transplant trials.

## PROGRAM UPDATES

### STAR Program Raises Funds at Annual AIDS Walk

On May 15, 2011, the STAR Program raised nearly \$1,000 at the annual AIDS Walk in NYC. The "STAR Walkers" included staff, patients and family members. They conducted outreach to other groups during the walk and highlighted the work of the STAR Program.



### STAR Program Recognizes Outstanding Employee

This year the STAR Program has initiated a process to honor STAR employees for excellent job performance. Every 4 months, one STAR employee will receive a Staff Recognition Award and a \$100 gift card. Employees are nominated by their colleagues and must meet at least two out of the following four criteria: 1) providing

exceptional customer service; 2) outstanding teamwork; 3) high level of quality service, productivity and performance; or 4) creativity, innovation and initiative. The winner is selected by a committee of STAR senior staff representing administration, information systems, research, care, and clinical education.

The STAR Program's first honoree is **Linda Latoni**. Ms. Latoni has been a member of the STAR staff, working as an interviewer with the Women's Interagency HIV Study (WIHS), since 1994. She is a true team player, extends herself beyond the boundaries of WIHS and is helpful and courteous to STAR Health Center patients and staff alike. Her dedication to her job is also demonstrated by her willingness to arrive early or stay late at work to accommodate WIHS participant schedules. Of the six WIHS sites, Brooklyn maintains the highest participant retention rate (nearly 90%), and Ms. Latoni's efforts have been instrumental to this achievement.

### 20th Annual BATES Youth Jam and Conference

The Adolescent Education Program successfully sponsored its 20th annual Brooklyn Association of Teen Educators (BATES) Youth Conference at SUNY Downstate on May 14, 2011. Over 300

young people, service providers, parents and community residents attended this year's event. The theme of the conference was "Letting Your Inner ART Shine: Young People are Agents For Change!" The special guests were R&B artist Maya Azucena and rap artists, The Black Jackets. Workshops included Healthy Relationships, Bullying Prevention, Hip Hop Dance, Capoeira-Martial Arts, Yoga/Meditation and Healthy Cooking for Young People. Over 75 young people received screening for sexually transmitted infections and HIV counseling and testing at the conference. The Theater Festival featured performances by the Teens Helping Each Other (THEO) Social Drama Project, El Puente, The Truth, and CUNY's Creative Arts Team. Conference co-sponsors and supporters included: the NYS Department of Health AIDS Institute; STAR Program; Brooklyn College Community Partnership; FACES; El Puente; and Community Counseling and Mediation (CCM).



## PHONE LINK

All of the programs listed below are part of SUNY Downstate's HIV Center for Women and Children. For more information about the services each program provides, please call the numbers listed or the HIV Center for Women and Children at:

(718) 270-2301 or 4736  
OR visit our website at:  
[www.hivcenter.org](http://www.hivcenter.org)

### PATIENT CARE AND SERVICES FOR ADULTS

Out-Patient Care  
STAR Health Center (SHC):  
(718) 270-3745

Mental Health Services:  
(718) 270-3745

Family-Centered Care Program (FCCP) (718) 270-2357 or 3745

### FOR ADOLESCENTS

Family, Adolescent & Children's Experience at SUNY (FACES):  
(718) 270-3826

Health & Education  
Alternatives For Teens (HEAT) Program:  
(718) 467-4446

### FOR CHILDREN

Infant and Child Learning Center (ICLC):  
(718) 270-2598

Family Care Center (at KCHC):  
(718) 245-2562

### COMMUNITY AND MEDICAL EDUCATION

Prevention Services for Adolescent and Young Adults – SUNY Adolescent Education Program (AEP):  
(718) 270-3203

Educating People at Risk (EPAR):  
(718) 270-3897

HIV Clinical Education Initiative:  
(718) 270-4752

### RESEARCH

Adult Clinical Trials:  
(718) 270-4487

## PUBLICATIONS

Yi T, Cocohoba J, Cohen M, Anastos K, **DeHovitz JA**, Kono N, Hanna DB, Hessol NA. The impact of the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) on use of highly active antiretroviral and antihypertensive therapy among HIV-infected women. *J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr*. 2011 Mar 1;56(3):253-62.

Delwart E, Bernardin F, Lee TH, Winkelman V, Liu C, Sheppard H, Liu A, Greenblatt R, Anastos K, **DeHovitz J**, Nowicki M, Cohen M, Golub ET, Barbour J, Buchbinder S, Busch MP; NIAID Center for HIV/AIDS Vaccine Immunology (CHAVI). Absence of reproducibly detectable low-level HIV viremia in highly exposed seronegative men and women. *AIDS*. 2011 Mar 13;25(5):619-23.

Tsertsvadze T, Chkhartishvili N, Sharvadze L, Dvali N, Chokoshvili O, Gabunia P, Abutidze A, Nelson K, **DeHovitz J**, Del Rio C. Outcomes of Universal Access to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) in Georgia. *AIDS Res Treat*. 2011;2011:621078.

Aumakhan B, Gange SJ, Beyrer C, Gaydos CA, **Minkoff H**, Merenstein DJ, Cohen MH, Anastos K, Greenblatt R, Nowicki MJ, Quinn TC. Quantitative and qualitative correlates of cervicovaginal herpes simplex virus type 2 shedding among HIV-infected women in the Women's Interagency HIV Study. *Int J STD AIDS*. 2011 May;22(5):273-7.

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Paredes R, Cheng I, Kuritzkes DR, Tuomala RE; **Women and Infants Transmission Study (WITS) Group**. Postpartum antiretroviral drug resistance in HIV-1-infected women receiving pregnancy-limited antiretroviral therapy. *AIDS*. 2010 Jan 2;24(1):45-53.

Workowski KA, Bauer H, Bachman L, Burstein G, Eckert L, Geisler WM,

Ghanem K, Golden M, Gorgos L, Hammerschlag M, Hollier L, Leone P, Marrazzo J, Mayer KH, Nyirjesy P, Rompalo A, Sanchez P, Stoner B, Wald A, Wendel G, Wiesenfeld HC, Cates W Jr, Holmes KK, Martin D, Handsfield H, **McCormack W**, Geisler WM, Adkinson NF, Andrews W, **Augenbraun M**, Batteiger B, Bolan G, Coles B, Deal C, Fortenberry JD, Hook E 3rd, Schwebke JR, Schulte J, Soper D, Stanberry L, Trigg B, Wimberly Y, Zenilman JM, Aaron K, Bachman L, Barclay L, Blythe MJ, Deal CD, Dimitrakov J, FitzGerald M, Fortenberry D, Hook EW 3rd, Jack N, Kerndt P, Marrazzo J, Ndowa FJ, Parkinson M, Piepert J, Reams P, Salhi B, Shea K, Soper D, Stoner B, Swann A, Tan L, Wong T, Workowski KA, Voigt R, Datta D, Dunne E, Hogben M, Holmberg S, Koumans E, Newman L, Aral SO, Ballard R, Branson B, Brooks J, Douglas J, Friedman A, Hu D, Kilmarx P, Papp J, Spradling P, Kelley B, Barner V, McElroy D. Sexually transmitted diseases treatment guidelines, 2010. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *MMWR Recomm Rep*. 2010 Dec 17;59(RR-12):1-110. Erratum in: *MMWR Recomm Rep*. 2011 Jan 14;60(1):18.

Hoffman S, Higgins JA, Beckford-Jarrett ST, **Augenbraun M**, Bylander KE, Mantell JE, **Wilson TE**. Contexts of risk and networks of protection: NYC West Indian immigrants' perceptions of migration and vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases. *Cult Health Sex*. 2011 May;13(5):513-28.

## GRANT AWARDS

The STAR Program was awarded a two-year **Empire Clinical Research Investigator Program (ECRIP)** fellowship from the NYS Department of Health. The proposed project, "Cerebrovascular Reactivity Impairment among HIV Infected Women," includes a fellowship award of up to a maximum of \$75,000 per year, at University Hospital of Brooklyn. The ECRIP fellowship program

has successfully survived a very difficult review process through the Governor's Executive Budget and then Medicaid Redesign Team, which reduced State funds for Medicaid by \$2.85 billion in 2011. Fortunately, the importance of ECRIP – in terms of clinical research training, generating clinical investigators who remain in New York after training, and seeding new initiatives in clinical research – has been recognized as a good investment for the future of New York State.

The STAR Program's **Adolescent Education Program/Teens Helping Each Other (AEP/THEO)** was renewed by the NYS Department of Health AIDS Institute for \$581,205 over three years.

The STAR Program's **Family-Focused HIV Health Care for Women** program was renewed by the NYS Department of Health AIDS Institute for \$350,000 over the next year.

## HIV link

### The HIV Center for Women and Children

SUNY Downstate Medical Center, 450 Clarkson Avenue, Box 1193, Brooklyn, NY 11203

**Director** Jack A. DeHovitz, MD, MPH

**Associate Director** Kathleen A. Russell, MPH, JD

**Coordinator** Christina Sferruzzo, MS

**Editorial Board** Mary Crymes, RN, Ellen Honey, LMSW, Jennifer Irwin, Ron Najman, David Odegaard, MPH, Adrienne Pierce, MS, Christine Rucker, MA, Kathleen Russell, MPH, JD, Derrick B. Weekes

**Design** Biomedical Communications **Photos** Sandrine Nicholson (AIDS Walk); Troy Griffith (BATES)

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