SUNY DOWNSTATE RECEIVES $16 MILLION TO FUND ONGOING STUDY INTO LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF HIV

SUNY Downstate Medical Center received a seven-year, $16 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to fund a new study to expand our understanding of the physical, mental, and psychosocial impacts of HIV and prolonged exposure to anti-retroviral therapy on long-term survivors with HIV. The study provides a unique perspective on how HIV and its treatments make patients more susceptible to chronic conditions or worsens their symptoms from these diseases. Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced the award on June 5, 2019, HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day.

“New York State set a nation-leading goal to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic by the end of 2020, and funding to support studies like this is critical to achieving that goal,” Governor Cuomo said. “By researching the impact of both HIV and its treatments on the aging population, we can gain a better understanding of the long-term impacts of this disease and ensure those living with HIV are given the best care and resources possible.”

“We’re committed to investing in cutting-edge research to help and treat New Yorkers,” said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul. “This funding will enable SUNY Downstate Medical Center to analyze the long-term effects of HIV and help those with HIV/AIDS to ensure they have the resources and support they need. These efforts build on our overall goals to end the epidemic and do everything we can to make sure all New Yorkers are healthy and safe.”

The grant will help fund the Brooklyn Clinical Research Site at Downstate where two important prospective cohort studies—the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS) and Women’s Interagency HIV Study (WIHS)—were integrated and expanded into the MACS/WIHS Combined Cohort Study (MWCCS) in January after decades of working separately. Through this study, researchers are examining multiple focus areas, including the intersection of HIV with mental health and well-being; social, environmental, and psychological factors associated with engagement in care; and frailty.

The MWCCS at SUNY Downstate will be led by Deborah Gustafson, PhD, MS, Professor of Neurology in the Department of Medicine, and Tracey Wilson, PhD, Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences, School of Public Health.

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workshops, HIV testing and STD screening by the HEAT Program, refreshments, raffle prizes and giveaways. The keynote speaker was Ms. Darcel Turner, an author, poet and motivational speaker who discussed self-love, empowerment and healthy decision-making concepts for young people. Harmonica Sunbeam (pictured above), one of the performers on the FX Network television show POSE was the afternoon entertainment and Theater Festival Mistress of Ceremonies. She is an LGBTQ activist and creator of the Drag Queen Story Hour. The House of Versace Vogues Team performed and lit up the stage with their dance and posing techniques.

Aging with HIV Event
On June 5, 2019, Mary Cymes, RN, ACRN, STAR Program Charge Nurse, and 5 STAR patients attended an event entitled, "We’re Still Here: A Celebration of Aging Positively With HIV." The event, conducted in collaboration with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and The Long Term Survivors Wellness Coalition, took place at Baruch College. The STAR Program’s Survivors’ Quilt was on display, Activities included a survivor’s panel discussion, a T-shirt decorating activity in which participants wrote the number of years of survival, a cooking demonstration, safer sex workshops, a photo booth, acupuncture, giveaways, raffles, networking, lunch and dining. The event ended with a Soul Train Line.

STAR Program at Brooklyn Pride
On June 8, 2019, a team of STAR Program staff, volunteers, patients, interns, and Community Advisory Group members attended the annual Brooklyn Pride Parade. STAR’s photo booth was a big hit with the crowd and drew many to the table for program information and giveaway items. The Hispanic AIDS Forum (HAF) (profiled in this issue) collaborated with STAR on the Pride Parade.
COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: Hispanic AIDS Forum

The Hispanic AIDS Forum (HAF) was founded in 1985 in response to the devastation that AIDS was causing among Latinos in NYC and the alarming lack of public attention to the crisis. The mission of HAF (www.hafnyc.org) is to improve health outcomes for Latinos in NYC who are affected by HIV and other chronic illnesses. HAF fulfills this mission by integrating prevention and education into a set of multi-faceted wellness programs designed to improve access to care, services and other available resources for Latinos affected by chronic illnesses. HAF offers HIV testing, LGBT services, counseling, case management and special events. Alain Gauthier, PreP Benefits Case Manager at STAR, works closely with HAF on PreP education and referrals. HAF staff collaborated with the STAR Program at the recent Brooklyn Pride Parade.

Michael Silver, MS joined SUNY Downstate in September 2018 as a biostatistician, with a joint appointment at Maimonides Medical Center. He has an MS in statistics and has been working as a statistician for the last 12 years in academic, government, and industry settings. His focus will be on supporting resident and fellow research at Maimonides Medical Center as well as assisting investigators at SUNY Downstate.

Ragavan Sivanesathurai, BS joined the STAR Program’s Teens Helping Each Other (THEO) Program in May 2019 as a Health Educator for the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP). He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in public health from Hunter College. Ragavan has extensive experience in public health and education. He was a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) teacher at the Boys Club of New York and City Science. His experience as a research assistant at NYU Langone Medical Center on a study of Asian American health was featured in an upcoming article about Alzheimer’s disease in the Asian American population.

Ethe1 (“Taz”) Tazewell joined the STAR Program in April 2019 as a Peer Navigator in the SAMHSA Integrated Program. Her duties include enrolling, escorting and advocating for clients, along with providing appointment reminders and referrals and conducting wellness checks. She previously worked at Brightpoint Health and ASCNYC/Alliance as a peer wellness coach and peer navigator.

Jennifer Todd, LMSW joined the STAR Program as a Counselor for the new SAMHSA funded Brooklyn Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Treatment Center for High-Risk Populations in April 2019. Jennifer earned her Bachelor of Science degree at the University of South Florida, and her Master of Social Work degree from the University of Michigan. She has experience working with individuals with substance abuse disorders and co-occurring mental health diagnoses. She also has experience advocating for patients within an integrated healthcare setting. Jennifer is looking forward to counseling STAR patients in order to reduce high risk behaviors and provide ongoing behavioral health support.

Anthony Zavala joined the STAR Program in May 2019 as a Benefits Specialist on the PreP Team. Prior to joining STAR, Anthony worked as a Care Navigator at Interfaith Medical Center in Brooklyn. Before Anthony relocated to Brooklyn, he worked as a Prevention and Education Specialist at Tapestry Health in his hometown of Holyoke, Massachusetts.

The STAR Program received $6,000 from the NYC Council for operational support for Back to Brooklyn, the STAR Program’s reentry program (Yager, PI).

The STAR Program received $238,000 in HRSA funding for the AIDS Education and Treatment Center (AETC) program, via a subcontract with Columbia University.
Three years’ personal experience with telephone counseling

Russell, MPH, JD
Pierce, MS; Christine Rucker, MA; Kathleen CASAC; David Odegaard, MPH; Adrienne

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Patient Care, Community and Medical Education, and Research Programs are listed below. For more information, please call the numbers listed below or the STAR Program at: (718) 270-2690 OR visit our website at: www.starprogram.nyc

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

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

COMMUNITY AND MEDICAL EDUCATION
Prevention Services for Adolescents and Young Adults – SUNY Adolescent Education Program (AEP): (718) 270-3203
HIV Residency Track: (718) 270-6747
Physician Assistant HIV Track: (718) 270-4752

RESEARCH
Women’s Interagency HIV Study (WHIS): (718) 270-4435

JOB OPENINGS

Part Time Peer Leader
Duties: Introduce the clients to STAR Health Center (SHC) as well as all services that may be beneficial to clients. Assist clients to attain their goals by identifying appropriate methods of achieving full program and medication compliance. Educate new and existing clients on basic HIV/HCV transmission, disease and treatment. Identify resource materials for medication adherence. Document all services provided within 24 hours. Work closely with the team to develop a plan for providing telephone and face-to-face support to assigned clients. Assist clients to alter their attitudes and behavior that cause or aggravate barriers to full adherence to their medication regimen. Maintain professional relationships with clients and ensure clients confidentiality. Complete administrative work related to the program. Tasks may be modified over time. Provide client support and assistance through monitored field work which include general education, client escort and other peer support. Required Qualifications: Lived experience with target population, experience working with HIV+, substance abuse and/or high-risk populations. Experience working with families (with children) and available to work evening clinics. Ability and willingness to attend required trainings. Ability and willingness to share personal experiences of living with HIV/AIDS to help educate, provide emotional support and offer practical self-care strategies to clients. Excellent interpersonal and communication skills; reliable, able to advocate for self and others. Computer skills and familiarity with office software applications. Hours: Part-time (10 hours/week); days of the week and work schedule varies. Evening clinic required. Salary Range: $15.00 per hour. To apply, mail cover letter and resume to Magna Robinson, MA, LMHC, CASAC, ICADC, ADS, Assistant Director of Care Management, STAR Program, magna.robinson@downstate.edu

Part Time Nurse Practitioner/Physician’s Assistant
Duties: Complete medical/physical examination on all patients and provide appropriate documentation in the electronic health record. Order indicated laboratory tests, review all patient and laboratory data and follow-up of all abnormal results as per STAR Health Center policies. Participate in the development and implementation of multidisciplinary case management plans. Refer to sub-specialty medical and surgical evaluations as indicated, and communicate with consultants regarding treatment recommendations. Identify and refer patients for treatment of mental health, substance abuse, domestic abuse/trama and adherence problems. Provide appropriate interventions in the form of prescription and non-prescription drugs, education, referrals and follow-up care. Provide PrEP/PEP, STI screening and primary medical care to clients in LGBTQ-specific evening clinic. Participate in STAR Health Center outreach and community education. Function as a teaching professional clinician for STAR Program’s clinical education projects. Participate in quality improvement activities of the STAR Health Center. Adhere to SUNY Downstate’s Principles of Behavior and the STAR Program’s Code of Conduct. Required Qualifications: New York State nurse practitioner or physician assistant license. Preferred Qualifications: Three years’ experience in a primary care setting; two years’ experience in the provision of HIV/HCV care, women’s health and medical care to LGBTQ and/or reentrant populations. Experience in the provision of PrEP/PEP. Bilingual Spanish/English or English Haitian Creole. Hours: Part-time, M-F, 12:00pm to 8:00pm (variable), 20 hours per week. Salary Range: $50,000-60,000. To apply, send cover letter and resume to Jameela Yusuff, MD, MPH, FACP, Medical Director, STAR Program, Jameela.yusuff@downstate.edu

Part Time Research Support Specialist
Duties: Assess barriers to linking patients to care; develop, implement and monitor strategies for overcoming any barriers to linkage and retention; educate, coach and empower patients. Provide HCV rapid counseling and testing. Provide hepatitis c related education, counseling, and patient support. Work closely with HCV team to target, identify, like, and retain clients in program. Provide client follow-up, care coordination, and referrals to ensure comprehensive care delivery. Follow-up with patients and provide appointment reminders via phone or text; provide or refer for appointment accomplishment. Participate in ongoing quality improvement processes; participate on an interdisciplinary team, contribute to patients’ care plan development, and attend case conferences. Required Qualifications: Personal experience with hepatitis C virus required. Must be available to work evening clinics. Effective computer, verbal, organizational, and interpersonal skills. Must be proficient in Microsoft office applications, including Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Preferred Qualifications: AA/AAS degree in a healthcare related field and at least one year of case management or relevant experience. Experience working with adult HIV positive, HCV positive, substance use and/or high-risk populations preferred. Knowledge of CBOS and training in Motivational Interviewing preferred (may be acquired upon employment). Rapid HCV testing training preferred (will be provided upon employment). Record patient care coordination effort, and patient follow-up in the EHR. Complete encounter forms for entry into database and billing systems as required. Participate in outreach events. Hours: 18.75 hours/week. Salary Range: $20,000-21,000. To apply, send cover letter and resume to Alecia Charles, MPH, Hepatitis C Program Coordinator, alecia.charles@downstate.edu

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“Continuous advances in HIV treatment and management have enabled more people to live longer with this once-fatal infection,” said SUNY Chancellor Kristina M. Johnson. “With nearly half of all infected Americans now over the age of 50, it’s critical that we understand how HIV and its treatment affects the health of these adults, especially ethnic populations who have been underrepresented in previous studies. Our skilled researchers at SUNY Downstate stand ready to use these findings to uncover new therapies that treat both HIV and other chronic diseases that come with advancing age.”

“We are very excited about this new study that will allow us to recruit a greater number of African Americans and Hispanics. It will also help us to better understand the racial and ethnic disparities in HIV, associated co-morbidities, and the distinct chronic disease challenges for those living with HIV,” said SUNY Downstate President Wayne J. Riley, MD. “As the only academic medical center in Brooklyn, we are committed to supporting research that recognizes the unique needs of the people we serve. We will leverage resources of the MACS/WHIS Combined Cohort Study to improve care and support the training of the next generation of health professionals and research scientists.”

#BeHealthyForYou

STAR Community link