



Outer Cape Health Services

Ciarra Nickerson

University of Massachusetts Medical School, Class of 2020



Outer Cape's Mission

To provide a full range of care and supportive social services that promote the health and wellbeing of those living in and visiting the Lower and Outer Cape.

Patient Population

- Outer Cape Health Services (OCHS) is a federally qualified community health center serving the people of the 8 outermost towns on Cape Cod – Harwich, Chatham, Brewster, Orleans, Eastham, Truro, Wellfleet, and Provincetown.
- The Outer Cape is an **isolated region** and experiences extreme healthcare shortages. **OCHS is the primary healthcare provider** in this area.
- 25% of the population is ≥ 65 years**
- Unique challenge – population nearly triples during summer months with tourists and summer residents.
- Rates of unemployment are significantly higher than the state and national rates

Community Based Services

- 1) Community Resource Navigators
 - Works with clients to connect them to different resources available in the community
 - Help clients to establish and maintain a relationship with local agencies
 - Coordinates medical and behavioral health care
 - Works with other local agencies to identify community members in need of assistance
- 2) Office Based Opioid Treatment
 - Medication Assisted Treatment program for substance abuse disorders involving heroin, morphine, and other prescription narcotics
 - Medications used – Suboxone, Vivitrol
 - Includes behavior health therapy
- 3) Care Coordination
 - RN case manager organizes and coordinates the care of patients that have highest risk of deteriorating health, avoidable hospital/ER visits, and poor outcomes
 - Promotes patients' self-management, adherence to treatment plans, disease prevention, and decreased hospital/ER use



My Role

- Participated in marketing meetings to discuss challenges of marketing to multiple target audiences - vacationers, summer residents, and year-round residents
- Developed a "summer safety tips" brochure
- Shadowed Community Resource Navigators
- Evaluated data on patient visits and demographics of the patient population
- Analyzed data from the **Chronic Pain Case Management program (CPCM)** –RN case manager tracked and monitored patients on opioids for chronic pain, and supported **changes in prescriber habits**.
- CPCM – **over 20 patients were tapered off of opioids** in 1 year

Future Opportunities

- CPCM RN Case Manager position has been discontinued. I would like to work on a project on how to better integrate this program so that it is sustainable.
- May look at whether incorporation of monitoring/regulatory steps into patients' electronic health record will provide sustainability

Thank you to Dr. Suzanne Cashman, Andy Lowe, Pat Nadle, Leo Bandford, and Dr. Heather-Lyn Haley