In Life-Or-Death Situations, BHCHP is Up for the Challenge

A message from Chief Executive Officer, Barry Bock, and President, Dr. Jim O’Connell

In our collective 60+ years of caring for Boston’s homeless individuals, we have never been faced with such urgent medical emergencies and potential health crises in the city.

Our experience has taught us that the core of good medicine is the personal relationship. Over 30+ years, we’ve built trusted relationships with our patients and partners from all corners of Boston—clinicians to legislators, social service agencies to donors—relationships that empower us to deliver consistent, compassionate, and expert health care to our vulnerable patients.

Those same strong relationships recently allowed us to mobilize to vaccinate 3,000+ patients and staff in just three weeks during a recent meningococcal (a bacteria that can cause serious infection including meningitis) outbreak as well as to create a safe space to monitor individuals struggling with our city’s opioid epidemic.

Every day we respond to Boston’s healthcare emergencies with innovative and compassionate solutions that bring relief to our patients.

While these times can be challenging for our program and our patients, they are also very exciting times. We continue to improve needed patient services by expanding our integrated mental health program and substance use disorder treatments. We are thrilled with our vibrant Emerging Leaders board, enthusiastic young professionals eager to bring support and awareness of our program to the next generation. Our Consumer Advisory Board, comprised of our dedicated patients, counsels us on best practices to help our patients survive and more importantly, thrive.

We could not deliver our medicine that matters without your help. Thank you for making this possible.

The mission of Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP) is to provide or assure access to the highest quality health care for all homeless men, women and children in the greater Boston area.

We Offer: Primary Care, Behavioral Health, Oral Health, Family Services, Case Management, Substance Use Disorders Services, Medical Respite Care, and Street Outreach

Where We Are:
Boston Medical Center · Bridge Home · Bridge Over Troubled Waters · Cardinal Medeiros Center · Casa Esperanza · Casa Nueva Vida · Crittenton Women’s Shelter · Crossroads Family Day Center · Entre Familia · Families in Transition · Father Bill’s Place · Friends of the Unborn · Hope House · Jean Yawkey Place · Kingston House · Kit Clark Adult Day Health · Lindemann Mental Health Center · Massachusetts General Hospital · Nazareth Residence · New England Center & Home for Veterans · Pilgrim Shelter · Pine Street Inn · Portis Family House · Project Hope · ReVision House · Rosie’s Place · Safe Harbor · Salvation Army · Shepherd House · SOAR · Sojourner House · Southampton Street Shelter · St. Ambrose · St. Anthony Shrine · St. Francis House · St. Mary’s Center for Women & Children · Temporary Home for Women & Children · The Night Center · Transitions · Women’s Hope · Women’s Lunch Place · Woods Mullen Shelter · Multiple hotels & motels

Connect With BHCHP Online
Read our patient stories and learn how to get involved at www.bhchp.org

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BHCHP’s Rapid Responses to Boston’s Crises

BHCHP strives to provide care when and where our patients need it most. That often means being flexible and using our 30+ years of experience to address any crisis as soon as possible.

BOSTON’S HEALTH CRISIS

Meningococcal Disease Outbreak Hits Homeless Population

In January, February, and March of 2016, the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) confirmed five serious cases of infectious meningococcal disease in the Boston adult homeless community, two cases resulting in death. The last three patients’ illnesses were not related to the first two cases making this a serious outbreak, but thankfully not an epidemic.

BHCHP Mobilizes to Inoculate 3,000+ Patients

BHCHP, in coordination with the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), engaged in mass vaccination of all homeless guests and staff at city shelters. Since we already have BHCHP staff in place at our partner shelter clinics, we were able to immediately mobilize, distribute vaccines and offer a one-time dose vaccine to the shelters’ guests and staff.

Within 5 days, our BHCHP nursing staff had administered 1,200+ vaccinations. As of March 15, 2016, 3,000+ patients had been vaccinated. Our staff also identified and located 291 close contacts of the five confirmed cases, screened for symptoms and provided antibiotics. In addition, we held educational forums for staff and guests and posted information in English and Spanish at our partner shelter sites throughout the city.

Subsequently, BHCHP is working directly with epidemiologists from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help perform an evaluation of the 5 cases of meningococcal disease in our population. The CDC plans to administer surveys to a small group of homeless shelter guests in order to assess any risk factors that may have contributed to infection in the 5 cases.

Since our mobilization, there have been no further cases of meningococcal disease. We thank our nursing staff, our community partners, the BPHC, and the CDC for their tremendous efforts in thwarting this meningococcal outbreak.

Opioid-Related Deaths Increase in Massachusetts

In the past two years, suspected opioid-related deaths increased by 50% in Boston. A 2013 study published by BHCHP clinician-researcher Travis Baggett, MD, MPH et al. in JAMA Internal Medicine identified overdose, 80% of which is opioid-induced, as the leading cause of death among BHCHP patients. Currently, we are responding to two to five overdoses per week at our main site, Jean Yawkey Place at 780 Albany Street, where the lobby is often occupied by over-sedated people with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD).

BHCHP Opens SPOT Program at Epicenter of Opioid Crisis

BHCHP has created a safe space program called the Supportive Place for Observation and Treatment (SPOT) in an existing conference room to open in late April.

The SPOT will offer engagement, support and medical monitoring and will serve as an entry way to primary care and treatment on demand for 8 individuals at a time who are at high risk of overdose from the use of substances and who would otherwise be outside on a street corner, alleyway, or alone in a public bathroom.

We believe the SPOT could not be more timely as we all struggle to seek at least a partial solution to this crisis. Governor Charlie Baker, Mayor Marty Walsh, Senator Edward Markey, and other community officials are actively seeking relevant legislation. Our staff are the first responders in this fight to save lives, and we believe the implementation of the SPOT Center is a strong step. Over the past two years we have also markedly increased our ability to provide medication assisted treatment for patients with OUDs.
CAB Member Makes Support Possible for BMH Respite Patients

BHCHP’s Consumer Advisory Board (CAB), comprised of our patients, knows all too well the struggles of homelessness, and the support that is needed to cope with them. One of our CAB members, Andrew Maier, has taken on the task of making sure our Barbara McInnis House (BMH) respite patients don’t miss a single day of support groups by coordinating additional weekend substance use disorder support meetings.

After BMH patients requested more weekend groups, therapist David Rachlin, LICSW, approached the CAB for their advice. Andrew readily volunteered to help. Since September 2015, Andrew has spent about 40 hours a month coordinating speakers for our Alcoholics Anonymous (a secular, abstinence-based program) and SMART Recovery (a non-secular, skill-based program) meetings, in addition to his attending monthly CAB meetings at BHCHP and St. Francis House. Thanks to Andrew, these groups of speakers from other support groups come to BMH on Saturdays and Sundays to share their stories and give hope to those in recovery in our respite program.

In addition to coordinating the speakers for these weekend meetings, Andrew sets up the BMH cafeteria with a podium, coffee, and chairs, meets and introduces the speakers, and personally reaches out to engage the BMH respite patients. “I go from room to room and knock on every door,” says Andrew. “I tell [the patients] what group is coming in and invite them to the meeting.”

Andrew feels that coordinating these meetings has helped him with his own recovery and self-confidence. “It has helped me with my recovery a lot,” he says. “It gets me around positive people. It gets me to go to at least two meetings per week because I sit in on them. It also gets me to network a lot because I had a lot of trouble going up to people and talking to people and things like that. And in booking the commitments, that’s one of the things you have to do. The first time I went with David I was real scared about going. I go by myself now.”

Andrew has also identified other ways to improve needed support services by booking Spanish-speaking commitments and Narcotics Anonymous commitments, both of which are in high demand throughout the city.

Along with two other CAB members, Andrew plans on attending the 2016 National Health Care for the Homeless Conference in May. We are so grateful to Andrew for his commitment to BHCHP. David speaks for all of BHCHP when he says, “It’s really great to have the CAB involved. They do so many great things [for our program].”

Stories from the Shadows Receives Wide Acclaim

Dr. O’Connell’s book, Stories from the Shadows: Reflections of a Street Doctor continues to be a very popular read all over the country. This poignant and transformative collection of stories and essays, penned during 30 years of caring for homeless persons in Boston, gently illuminates the humanity and raw courage of those who struggle to survive and find meaning and hope while living on the streets.

Since its publication, Stories from the Shadows has received wide acclaim from the Boston Globe, Fresh Air with Terry Gross, National Public Radio, and many more outlets, resulting in standing room-only book readings by Dr. O’Connell.

“It’s beautifully written. He captures these characters with the same delicacy of touch that I imagine he uses in his practice.” – James Parker, editor of The Atlantic and The Pilgrim

Book Club BINGO: Are you part of a book club? Many book clubs have been reading Dr. O’Connell’s book and telling us it’s a wonderful book to discuss. Some book clubs are going one step further and coming for a tour of our program at Jean Yawkey Place and following it up with a volunteer activity. If you have a book club, we’d love to invite you and your group to read Stories from the Shadows then come down to Jean Yawkey Place for a tour of our bustling clinic, followed by a game of bingo with our respite care patients. At a recent visit, one reader had a particularly moving experience:

“After reading Stories from the Shadows together, my friends and I recently visited Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, where I met Michael, age 57, who only has 11 months to live. Looking into his face, and listening, I realized that he was just like any of us and we were able to share joy in the middle of difficult circumstances.” – Mary I.

For more information on book signings and readings or to purchase the book, please visit our website here: bit.ly/StoriesShadows or contact Sara Pacelle at spacelle@bhchp.org or 857.654.1052.
Toasting for Turkeys
Success
for BHCHP!
November, Toasting for Turkeys, raised over $6,000
Our Emerging Leaders Board’s first annual event in
skin infections and frostbite which can
weeks at a time increases the risk of
socks. Wearing damp socks for days or
and have limited access to shoes and
homeless men and women spend their
Why are socks so important? Many
24,000 pairs of socks were collected.
for our patients
individual collections collected over 24,000 pairs
Don’t have tickets to the games?
Participate in Sox for Socks by
coordinating your own sock drive. Join
over 100 groups, including our largest
sock drive supporter, the Boston Red Sox,
in a seasonal drive to collect new
socks for men and women living in
shelters and on the streets. Hosting
a sock drive at your company, with a
school group, or on your own is a simple,
fun way to make a difference. No sizes
to worry about. No colors to choose
between. Just new white socks.
To coordinate your sock drive, please
register online at bit.ly/Soxforsocks and
join the momentum of Sox for Socks
anytime during the Red Sox season!
Thank you!

For more information about the drive or
to request collection materials contact:
Alyssa Brassil at abrassil@bhchp.org
or 857.654.1046. For corporate drives,
please contact Denise Comeau at
dcomeau@bhchp.org or 857.654.1053.

Emerging Leaders’ Success
Last year, our generous Sox for Socks weekend
donors, community groups, corporate drives, and
individual collections collected over 24,000 pairs
of socks for our patients!

Each year, dedicated community
groups, corporate partners, and
individuals collect thousands of socks
for our patients—in 2015 alone, over
24,000 pairs of socks were collected.
Why are socks so important? Many
homeless men and women spend their
days outside in all kinds of weather
and have limited access to shoes and
socks. Wearing damp socks for days or
weeks at a time increases the risk of
skin infections and frostbite which can
lead to more serious health problems.
Keeping feet clean and dry is the best
way to prevent such conditions.

The Red Sox Foundation and NESN
will team up with Boston Health Care
for the Homeless Program for the 11th
year to collect new white athletic socks
from fans attending the Red Sox vs.
Toronto Blue Jays games at Fenway
Park from June 3rd to 5th, 2016. The
games are great fun, with thousands
of socks collected and distributed each
year. If you are attending the games
that weekend, please consider bringing socks
with you! We will have collection tables
just inside each of the entrances.

Don’t have tickets to the games?
Participate in Sox for Socks by
coordinating your own sock drive. Join
over 100 groups, including our largest
sock drive supporter, the Boston Red Sox,
in a seasonal drive to collect new
socks for men and women living in
shelters and on the streets. Hosting
a sock drive at your company, with a

hosted a kickoff event for our annual
Sox for Socks community sock drive at
Champions Sports Bar in Copley Square
and ignited a healthy competition
among local companies to raise the
most socks for the homeless men and
women we serve. Be on the lookout
for details regarding upcoming events,
including our first annual Emerging
Leaders Gala to be held in September,
which will include awards to honor
companies, community members and
young professionals who have made
a difference in the lives of homeless
men, women and children in Boston,
as well as our second annual Toasting
for Turkeys event in November 2016!

“I was thrilled by the chance to get
involved with BHCHP’s Emerging
Leaders Board. BHCHP staff and
leadership keep us up-to-date about
the great work BHCHP is doing
in the Boston area and new projects
and needs on the horizon. I’ve really
enjoyed working with other young
professionals to raise awareness of
BHCHP, and I’m looking forward to
finding new ways for the EL Board to
support BHCHP!” – Board Vice Chair,
Rachel Irving Pitts
OUR STORY

When you support BHCHP you reach children and adults throughout greater Boston’s entire safety net community when they are not only homeless but also sick.

Founded in 1985, BHCHP employs the professional medical staff that manages the clinics and delivers the comprehensive health care at most of greater Boston’s adult, family and domestic violence shelters (Pine Street Inn, The New England Center and Home for Veterans, St. Francis House, and more than 60 others). BHCHP represents the hands and face of health care for over 12,000 homeless adults and children each year at sites as diverse as Crittenton Women’s Union and the crawl space under the Longfellow Bridge. BHCHP has operated in-the-black while delivering medicine that matters to Boston’s most vulnerable population for 30+ years.

In addition, BHCHP staffs, manages and operates our own Barbara McInnis House at Jean Yawkey Place, a 104-bed medical respite facility for homeless adults with complex conditions like cancer, heart disease, pneumonia and diabetes who are too sick to live in a shelter or on the street and would otherwise require prolonged and costly hospitalization in the acute care rooms of Boston’s hospitals.

When you support BHCHP you reach children and adults throughout greater Boston’s entire safety net community when they are not only homeless but also sick.

Your support will bring...

❖ the Healing comfort of a respite bed for a woman with severe skin abscesses with no other place to recuperate.
❖ the Dignity of a talking glucometer for a newly blind young man enabling him to independently manage his diabetes.
❖ the Trust developed between a nurse practitioner and her Transgender patients who feel disconnected from mainstream health care.
❖ the Hope that a behavioral health clinician can instill in a patient who is struggling with addiction, and getting treatment at our suboxone clinic.

Donate now at www.bhchp.org

SEE THE WIDE SCOPE OF OUR PROGRAM

Time after time our visitors tell us they are amazed at the care we provide our patients here at our 77,000 square foot clinical and respite facility at Jean Yawkey Place.

“We want to thank you for an excellent tour. It was an informative look at a place that I had heard and read much about, but could not visualize until now. It is important to us to know that the organization is achieving results and reaching an underserved population. Having the opportunity to tour the clinics brought everything into sharper focus.”

~ Ellen and John O’Connor

Please RSVP for a tour at your convenience by contacting Sara Pacelle at spacelle@bhchp.org or 857.654.1052. We await your visit!

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The View From the Bridge is a publication of Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, bridging the gap between homelessness and health 24/7/365.

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Therapy Dog Thursdays at BHCHP’s Barbara McInnis House

Every Thursday morning in our atrium at Jean Yawkey Place, shrieks of delight and laughter can be heard coming from our Barbara McInnis House patients who are spending quality time petting and playing with our special guests: Charlie, a feisty and adorable Boston terrier, and Rylie and Maestro, loving and mellow black and yellow labs. All three are smart, sweet therapy dogs, trained at local correctional facilities as part of the successful NEADS program which allows model inmates to train puppies for life as working dogs. Rylie, Maestro, and Charlie are part of the 11-dog Boston Medical Center (BMC) Healing Paws program, which brings comfort to patients and families at BMC and BHCHP.

With the advocacy of Nurse Practitioner Heidi Groff, Volunteer Coordinator Allison Seitz and AmeriCorps Member Lynn Zhao created the partnership with BMC’s Healing Paws in November 2015 for our McInnis House patients who are here recovering from an acute issue. The most amazing part of the dogs’ presence, Allison says, is the “ability for the dogs to bring sheer joy to people. Folks laughing, talking about their childhoods—not from a place of pain or trauma but remembering fondly.”

The dogs’ handlers, Kathy Harkins, Sheryl Katzanek, and Suzanne Woolston Bossert, are amazed at how quickly the dogs have become part of the fabric of BHCHP. “It’s very humbling,” says Sheryl. “The dogs connect on a different level than we’re able to.” Sheryl, BMC’s Director of Patient Advocacy and creator of Healing Paws, notes that the dogs are benefitting both BHCHP patients and staff by bringing joy and alleviating stress. BHCHP staff often stop by on Thursdays and are delighted to see the smiles on their patients’ faces.

After a recent visit with the dogs, McInnis House patient Bryan says, “It just made me feel like I have another chance. They can recognize your pain and suffering. Now I feel so happy. I wish I could see them every day.”

Besides brightening up our patients’ days, Allison says the dogs give our patients hope. “Some patients can recognize that maybe their current situation doesn’t lend itself well to pet ownership, but there’s that hope that not only could they find a stable space, but a stable space to take care of someone else.”

Photo Credits: BHCHP staff, Roger Farrington, Christian Kazowsky