

The Rapid Start, Same Day, Same Week Initiative

Deborah Morris-Harris, MD, *Prism Health North Texas, Dallas, Texas*

Prism Health North Texas employs a patient-centered model to fully engage newly diagnosed and reestablishing patients living with HIV. By implementing the *A Rapid Start, Same Day, Same Week Initiative*, we have consolidated serial appointments from various locations to a centralized clinical location and welcome visit appointment. Incoming calls for care are routed to a triage nurse who determines the urgency of a patient's need for an initial visit. The nurse screens for acute and febrile illnesses, hospitalizations, date of HIV diagnosis, and knowledge of their CD4+ count or AIDS diagnosis. This assessment provides the nurse with the information needed to schedule a welcome visit with the *Rapid Start, Same Day, Same Week Initiative*. The welcome team, comprised of Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program eligibility specialists and case managers, ascertains the patients' residence, insurance status, and financial status, and begins pharmaceutical assistance planning. A psychosocial assessment is performed to determine potential barriers to care, including food, housing, transportation, substance misuse, and mental illness. Following these assessments, the welcome team members provide a warm handoff to a nurse medical case manager (MCM). The MCM performs a screening exam, schedules the initial practitioner visit, orders

laboratory tests, and escorts the patient to the laboratory. The patient is then discharged with a date for the first practitioner visit. Patients with urgent needs can be seen by a practitioner on their first visit to the clinic. All patients are seen within 1 week of their first call to the agency. Practitioners have access through the Electronic Health Record to nurse triage notes, psychosocial screens, medical screening exams, and laboratory results at the time of the first visit. This carefully orchestrated flow of information makes prescribing antiretroviral therapy (ART) possible for 50% of the 244 patients that complete the welcome visit. An effective regimen is prescribed and ready at our co-located pharmacy within 7 days of a patient's completed welcome visit. The mean time to ART prescription is 9 days.

Previously, patients waited 2 to 3 months for their first appointment. This initiative promises not only reduce the time to viral suppression but the community viral load as well. Other consequences of the *Rapid Start, Same Day, Same Week Initiative* include a reduction in the no-show rate among this cohort of patients and an increase in the use of the patient portal.