



WELCOME BACK, COMMUNITY MEMBERS!

Thank you for your continued support of the UMass Psychotic Disorders Clinical and Research Program. The Central Massachusetts Psychosis Network was developed to create a more inclusive community among patients, family members, mental health advocates, local organizations, and providers within the Greater Worcester Area. Over the past year, we have shared groundbreaking research, local services, various events, and connected over 300 community members with mental health providers and related organizations. We hope that this net-

RESOURCES

Facilitating Real Homes, Real Jobs, and Real Relationships contributed by *Andrea Long*

Established in 1976, Alternatives began as a three-program agency with 15 employees dedicated to compassion and community involvement. Since its foundation, it has become one of the leading providers of services for adults with developmental or psychiatric conditions within Central Massachusetts. Now with over 600 professionals, Alternatives supports the recovery of more than 2,000 individuals through 60 residential, employment, and day programs across the region. To learn more about the services provided at Alternatives,



(From left to right): Radhika Natarajan, Project Manager, Andrea Long, Director of Clinical Services, Domenico Lombardi, Clinical Research Coordinator, and Maya Duffy, Research Intern

At Alternatives, adults with developmental or psychiatric disabilities find a wide array of services which offer skills and support to help patients navigate successful lives in the Central Massachusetts community. For adults with psychiatric disabilities, services include residential options, social and employment programs, psychiatric rehabilitation and various clinical services. By providing strength-based and goal-oriented programs with a focus on recovery, Alternatives emphasizes the idea that people can recover from mental illness and assist them in developing meaningful lives. “We provide a person-centered approach in which we focus on individual patient recovery and fostering relationships within the community,” said Andrea. For example, not only does Alternatives help individuals obtain real homes and real jobs, but they also facilitate initiatives which partner with local organizations to strengthen relationships between individuals and the community. These collaborations have included sponsoring art and yoga classes, hosting events like concerts and neighborhood gatherings, and initiating volunteer projects that meet community needs.

Recognizing that transportation is essential for people to participate in community life, Alternatives offers assistance with door-to-door transportation for patients to access day programs, jobs, and other activities within the service area. For individuals living in the Greater Worcester area, Alternatives offers group residence programs, supportive living apartments, as well as employment and day services. For more in-

Assisting Patients Achieve Sobriety, Sustain Recovery, and Reclaim their Lives contributed by *David Nefussy*

Founded in 1969, Spectrum Health Systems is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals impacted by substance use and mental illness. Helping more than 5,000 individuals each day, Spectrum offers a variety of treatment services across Massachusetts, including clinical stabilization, inpatient detoxification, residential rehabilitation, medication-assisted treatment, outpatient counseling, and peer recovery support. To learn more about the outpatient programs offered at Spectrum, we interviewed David Nefussy, Vice



David Nefussy explains, “At Spectrum, we provide patients with a full continuum of care. It is not a ‘one size fits all’ program. We evaluate and assess each patient so that we can work together to determine which program would be most appropriate.”

Spectrum’s outpatient counseling program serves adults and adolescents with substance use disorders and/or mental health issues at various stages of recovery. After a comprehensive intake evaluation, providers and staff develop an individualized treatment plan for each client. Acknowledging that substance use disorders often include underlying behavioral health issues, Spectrum provides outpatient counseling services alongside their medication-assisted treatment programs. In these programs, Methadone, Vivitrol or Suboxone may be available for detoxification or long-term maintenance. While receiving daily onsite medication dispensing, patients also receive a complete medical evaluation, educational services, and individual, group, and/or family counseling. As Spectrum understands how early intervention is critical for recovery, they offer same-day walk-ins for medication-assisted treatment at all outpatient treatment centers. The intake process involves a physical examination, toxicology screening, and if appropriate, the first dose of medication at that time.

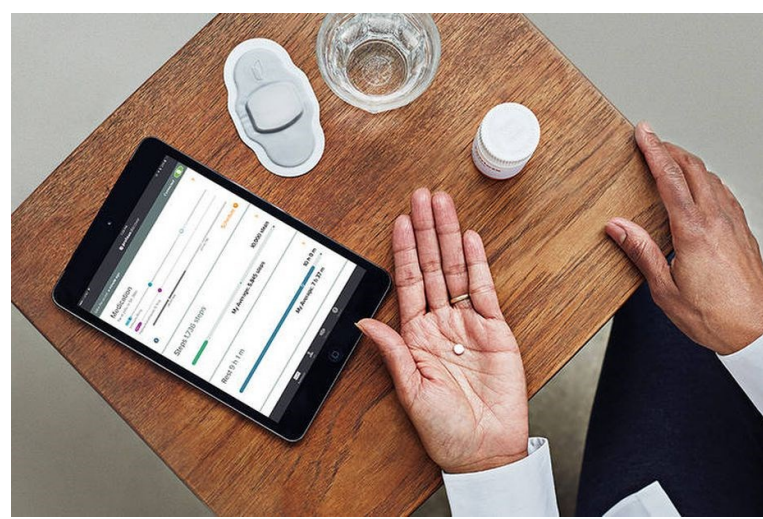
Spectrum also offers three levels of inpatient care including clinical stabilization, inpatient detoxification, and residential rehabilitation at their Westborough and Weymouth locations as well as three peer recovery support programs, one of which is located in Worcester. For more information about Spectrum’s services and locations, please visit their website [here](#). If you would like to learn more about their services,

IN THE NEWS

FDA Approves Abilify Digital Pill to Improve Medication Compliance contributed by *Domenico Lombardi*

Due to the chronic and debilitating nature of the illness, effective management of schizophrenia requires continuous long-term treatment in conjunction with antipsychotic medication in order to reduce symptoms and prevent relapse. Despite the critical importance of medication, nonadherence to prescribed drug treatments remains a national problem and may be the most challenging aspect of treating patients with schizophrenia. There are serious consequences of nonadherence to antipsychotic medications among populations with severe mental illness including increased risk of relapse, dangerous behavior and suicide, use of emergency services and hospitalization, and overall poor outcomes. Improving medication compliance could reduce the humanistic and financial burden of schizophrenia on both patients and society.

Recently, the US FDA has approved Abilify MyCite, the first drug with a digital ingestion tracking system marking significant advancement in technology and healthcare.



About the size of a grain of salt, the ingestible sensor is activated by stomach acid to send a signal to a wearable patch on the patient. Patients who consent to taking the digital medication are able to track their medication compliance through a mobile app and can allow doctors and up to four other people (such as family members) to receive electronic data showing the date and times pills are ingested. However, the ability of the product to improve patient compliance within their treatment regimen has not yet been shown and the financial cost of the drug has yet to be determined.

The product is currently approved for the treatment of schizophrenia, acute treatment of manic and mixed episodes associated with bipolar I disorder, and for use as add-on treatment for depression in adults. For more information, please visit the US FDA release of information about the drug’s approval [here](#).

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

The UMass Psychotic Disorders Research Program aims to elucidate the etiology of each facet of the triple jeopardy (devastating mental illness, medical co-morbidity, and substance use). The goal of our research is to develop innovative intervention strategies combining pharmacological and psychosocial approaches to ultimately improve the quality of life those living with psychotic disorders. It is our patients and their stories that inspire the research that we do and drive us to apply the findings to patient care.

Research studies are located at **26 Queen Street, Worcester, MA 01610**. **You will be compensated for your time**. If you are interested in participating, please contact us by phone at **508-856-MIND (6463)** or by e-mail at **mind@umassmed.edu**.

We are very excited to share our newest study for patients with schizophrenia who do not respond well with currently available medication and still present persistent symptoms (so called treatment-resistant schizophrenia). Treatment-resistant schizophrenia occurs in about one in three patients diagnosed with schizophrenia.



The Treatment Resistant Study

The purpose of this study is to see whether LuAF35700, an experimental drug, is safe and effective for the possible treatment of treatment-resistant schizophrenia.

In addition, here are two of our current ongoing studies listed below.



The Memory Study

This study seeks to see if exenatide, an investigational drug when used in people with schizophrenia, can improve memory, thinking, and possibly promote weight loss in individuals with schizophrenia.



The Early Treatment Study

The purpose of this study is to help understand if the experimental drug, paliperidone palmitate, or oral antipsychotic medication is better at preventing a worsening of symptoms of schizophrenia or schizophreniform disorder.

SEEKING STORIES AND SUBMISSIONS

We are continuously drafting and editing future newsletters to be sent to community members throughout the Central Massachusetts area. If you have a personal story, local resource, recent publication, or upcoming event regarding psychosis or schizophrenia that you would like to share, then please reach out to us to be featured in an upcoming issue. We would love to hear from the members of our community network!

*The Central Massachusetts Psychosis Network aims to create a community space to build knowledge, develop skills, and share resources regarding psychosis, schizophrenia and severe mental illness. Please share with us your novel ideas, useful resources, upcoming events, research updates and inspiring stories. If you know of anyone who is interested in joining the network or if you prefer not to be part of the network, please let us know. You may reach us by phone at **508-856-MIND (6463)** or by e-mail at **mind@umassmed.edu**. This network was developed by the UMass Psychotic Disorders Clinical and Research Program, which includes four major components: clinical care, research, community outreach, and global initiatives. To learn more about us, click [here](#). Like our [Facebook page](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#)!*