

Welcoming A New Service

Join us in welcoming Dr. Diana Sylvestre and a cure for Hepatitis C

"One of the essential qualities of the clinician is interest in humanity, for the secret of the care of the patient is in caring for the patient."

— Sir William Osler

In August, MCAVHN welcomed a pilot program for our clients with Hepatitis C. Heading it up is Dr. Diana Sylvestre, a long time specialist on hepatitis C (HCV) and liver disease. She hails from Harvard Medical School, trained at the Brightman & Women's Hospital and the Sloan Kettering Institute, as well as working with UCSF. She never had to battle with an addiction of her own; she watched family and friends battle with alcoholism. Dr. Sylvestre found her niche working with people who are and were addicted. She started the OASIS Clinic in Alameda County back in 1998. When asked what her motivation was for the career path she has chosen, she explained that her actively using clients weren't getting proper treatment; they were being pushed aside. She also said at first many of her clients were coming in with "liver abnormalities," and she at first didn't understand. When more information began coming to light; just how many of her clients were coming in with Hepatitis C; a path was naturally chosen. Dr. Sylvestre has helped our county in the past; helping to train other physicians and mid-levels regarding Hepatitis C and treatment protocols. With a light chuckle Dr. Sylvestre said the struggle at first was just getting people through the treatment. Now it's all the paper work that we must face to get the medication.

Diana Sylvestre and Libby Guthrie are no strangers to one another, they have worked together for upwards of 12 years, as an extension of the California Hepatitis Alliance, sharing the same goal; a cure for Hepatitis C. According to Libby our epidemic in this county is not HIV; rather it is Hepatitis C. One in twelve, or 8 % of our population has been exposed, and are either antibody positive or are chronically infected. Baby-boomers (those born between 1945 and 1965) are 8 times more likely to be infected than other populations (except for Vietnam veterans and injection users). Most still don't even know, and are not symptomatic. In the past, in order to get treatment there were hoops to jump through, clean time required; in some cases as long as 2 years. That in itself is hard enough, but then insurance companies require a certain amount of liver damage. With all this there was also the doctor's discretion (and personal judgments). At one point being a level 4 (the highest level of damage) was the only way you could get the new treatment. Much lobbying has been done on behalf of treating people before there is liver damage and disease.



Beginning in July of this year, a measure was passed in California, that injection drug users are to be treated. According to Dr. Sylvestre, "we need to reduce reinfection by treating everyone in our clients' social circle." She also stated "there's going to be that one time in maybe a year that they run out of clean syringes, and they try to clean a 'shared' syringe and they do not clean it right, and they can get infected again." So by treating their social circle, we are preventing it on many levels."

Top: Dr. Diana Sylvestre with Mike and Ziggy

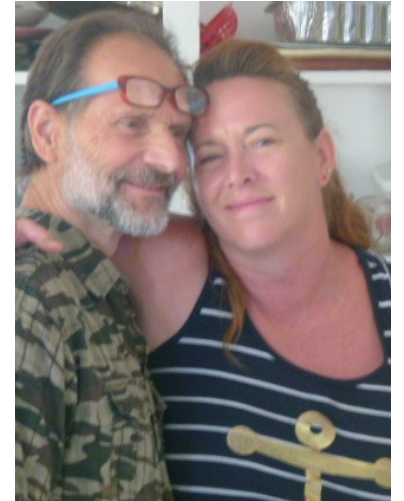
After receiving the news of a cure

Bottom: Left to right

Amanda Coggins, John Weber, Dr. Sylvestre, Joann Brewer



Caring, kind and compassionate
 That's how the staff at MCAVHN serve our clients
 Pictured: staff and volunteers



20 Years of Incredible Pharmacology

Part of an ongoing series featuring the recollections of Rosalie Anchordoguy, co-founder of MCAVHN

Since the advent of antiretroviral medicines, the mission of Mendocino County AIDS Volunteer Network has evolved to serve members of our community with another potentially deadly blood-borne illness, Hepatitis C.

2016 marks 20 years of incredible pharmacology which has changed the face of the AIDS epidemic.

Before 1996 AIDS was still a death sentence. Rosalie remembers seeing 8 to 10 deaths per year at MCAVHN. But then the antiretroviral medicines hit Mendocino County and that all began to change.

"I remember when it really became apparent. There was a World AIDS Day event, Elizabeth (the MCAVHN executive director) had organized an art show at the museum in Willits and people showed up at that art show, people who had looked like ghosts the last time I'd seen them, so ill and thin, like ethereal bodies, were now walking into the museum to see the event. People really came back from the brink of death."



Since then we have had no more than 0-2 deaths per year related to AIDS/HIV. Our clients who are HIV positive are no longer progressing to full-blown AIDS. The virus is sensitive to the meds and if people are stable enough to be able to care for themselves, they are no longer dying of AIDS but are living into old age.

Antiretroviral medications-bringing people back from the brink of death

MCAVHN SERVICES

- Care Management/Advocacy
Including Specialty Mental Health
- Food Resources
- Behavioral Health Court
- Transportation Assistance
- Client Social Events
- Drop-in Center
- Consumer Education
- Support Groups
- Hep C and HIV Treatment Support
- Syringe Exchange/Overdose Prevention
- Educational Presentations
- Community Health Outreach
- ROSOC Case Management*
- Training for Interns
- Community Service Hours

*ROSOC - Recovery Oriented Systems of Care,
Helping individuals reduce harmful practices
and meet their life goals.

Ways You Can Help

- Volunteer at MCAVHN House
(training provided)
- Donate at Any Time
(use PayPal online or send us a check)
- Donate an Auction Item for Event of the Heart
(see insert)
- Become a Sponsor for Event of the Heart
(see insert)
- Buy Tickets Early for Event of the Heart
(available in January)
- Watch for Other Events During the Year
- Consider Serving on the Board of Directors
(contact Libby or Judy at 462-1932)



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AT THE
DOOR**

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29TH

8PM - 12AM

REDWOOD VALLEY GRANGE

8650 EAST RD,

REDWOOD VALLEY

MCAVHN's Mission: To provide services & comfort to persons & families affected by HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C and/or the co-occurring disorders of mental illness & substance abuse.