Allegheny Health Network, Gateway Health Launch New Holistic Program for Patients with Chronic Pain and Opioid Addiction

New program takes a novel, holistic approach to treating patients and restoring their quality of life.

PITTSBURGH (PRWEB) April 17, 2019 -- To better address opioid addiction related to chronic pain management in Western Pennsylvania, Allegheny Health Network (AHN) and Gateway Health have launched a new program that takes a novel, holistic approach to treating patients and restoring their quality of life.

AHN’s Enhanced Pain Management Program brings together a range of alternative, non-opioid therapies and support services to help patients successfully manage physical pain and address underlying issues which might be contributing to their opioid dependence. The program is made possible with the generous support and guidance of Gateway Health, given its long history of facilitating treatment for opioid-addicted members.

More than 25 million Americans suffer from daily chronic pain, which is defined as pain lasting more than 12 weeks, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Opioid therapy was at one time the standard of care for severe pain management, which is thought to have fueled the opioid epidemic. An estimated 2.1 million people had an opioid-use disorder in 2017 according to figures from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Following a physician referral to the Enhanced Pain Management Program, patients undergo a comprehensive assessment by board-certified pain and addiction medicine physicians Jack Kabazie, MD, and Till J. Conermann, MD. A nurse navigator connects patients with the prescribed services which could include behavioral therapy, physical therapy, medication-assisted treatment (MAT), acupuncture, massage, nutritional counseling, smoking cessation and more.

The caregivers collaborate to create individualized treatment plans which are focused on meeting the patient’s short- and long-term health goals. All services are conveniently provided onsite at the AHN Institute for Pain Medicine near West Penn Hospital (5124 Liberty Avenue). Plans to expand the program to additional locations across AHN’s footprint are underway.

Following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s guidelines for opioid prescribing released in 2016, AHN implemented its own system-wide policy in effort to curb the number of opioids being prescribed. Since the policy went into effect in June 2017, the quantity of prescribed opioids has decreased approximately 40 percent at 10 primary care practices that historically prescribed the most opioids across the network.

“The opioid prescribing policy has been extremely effective in ensuring that the right amount of opioids is prescribed at the right time and to the right patient. However, we know that for chronic pain patients in particular, opioid therapy cannot be taken away without a sufficient replacement,” said Dr. Kabazie, System Director, AHN Division of Pain Medicine. “The Enhanced Pain Management Program not only meets this need by providing a range of proven, non-opioid therapies to treat chronic pain, but also sees patients through to healthier living based on their complete health picture.’”

Similarly, Gateway Health implemented prior authorization requirements limiting high-dose and extended...
duration opioid regimens to ensure the safe and appropriate prescribing of these medications. As a result, over an 18-month period, the number of Gateway members with opioid prescriptions decreased by 43 percent. In addition, more than 1,700 Gateway Health members’ high-dose opioid regimens were reduced, with an average dose reduction of 22 percent.

According to Steven E. Szebenyi, MD, Chief Medical Officer at Gateway Health, the Enhanced Pain Management Program is poised to serve as an effective model of care for those who live with chronic pain and opioid dependency.

“The Enhanced Pain Management Program truly provides patient-centered, team-based care. This approach strategically aligns with Gateway Health’s focus on treating the ‘whole person’ through integrated care models. By combining the clinical expertise, best practices, and resources of each organization, we are poised to have an even greater impact on the opioid epidemic,” said Dr. Szebenyi.

In addition to collaborating on the Enhanced Pain Management Program, last fall AHN and Gateway Health announced a partnership with Allegheny County and Highmark Health to open a 45-bed unit at the Kane Community Living Center in McKeesport. The post-acute unit, which opened in November 2018, is for patients with medical conditions and co-occurring substance use disorders.

About Allegheny Health Network

Allegheny Health Network (AHN.org), a Highmark Health company, is an integrated healthcare delivery system serving the greater Western Pennsylvania region. The Network is composed of eight hospitals, including Allegheny General Hospital, its flagship academic medical center in Pittsburgh, Allegheny Valley Hospital in Natrona Heights, Canonsburg Hospital in Canonsburg, Forbes Hospital in Monroeville, Jefferson Hospital in Jefferson Hills, Saint Vincent Hospital in Erie, West Penn Hospital in Pittsburgh and Westfield Memorial Hospital in Westfield, NY. The Network provides patients with access to a complete spectrum of advanced medical services, including nationally recognized programs for primary and emergency care, cardiovascular disease, cancer care, orthopaedic surgery, neurology and neurosurgery, women’s health, diabetes and more. It also is home to a comprehensive research institute; Health + Wellness Pavilions; an employed physician organization, home and community based health services and a group purchasing organization. The Network employs approximately 20,000 people, has more than 2,400 physicians on its medical staff and serves as a clinical campus for Drexel University College of Medicine, Temple University School of Medicine, and the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine.

About Gateway Health

Gateway Health (GatewayHealthPlan.com) is a leading managed care organization that believes total health and wellness cannot be attained by simply providing access to health care. In addition to physical health, Gateway Health addresses behavioral health and socioeconomic challenges of nearly 550,000 members across Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina, Delaware, and West Virginia. Gateway Health’s 1,800 associates enhance the lives of plan members through innovative care models and tailored approaches to health management, delivered in partnership with a network of more than 80,000 primary care physicians, specialists, hospitals, and other ancillary providers. On a broader scale Gateway Health is embedded in neighborhoods, providing meaningful programs and outreach to the community-at-large. Meeting members where they are, coupled with a commitment to treating the whole person is what enables each of them to say “I’m Good with Gateway”.

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