



Bridging the gap between primary care and behavioral health

When Molly Engle fields a call on her two-way radio, she heads into an exam room. As she sits down with the primary care provider and patient, what began as a doctor's appointment pivots to a conversation about mental health.

It makes a huge difference for a conversation about depression, anxiety or any mental illness to unfold with a trusted primary care provider at a patient's side.

"Many patients tell me, 'This is really amazing that I can meet with a counselor while I'm at the doctor. That's why I love coming here,'" says Molly, LICSW, a behavioral health specialist at Country Doctor.

Over the past year, "warm hand-off" visits like these are one of many ways we've sharpened our focus on meeting every facet of our patients' healthcare needs as seamlessly as possible.

That's exactly what longtime Country Doctor patient Lynn Johns experienced during a low point last winter, when she'd been feeling so ill, in so many ways, it

took all the energy she could muster just to make it to a doctor's appointment.

Her primary care provider, Katie Hester, could tell Lynn was suffering physically and emotionally, and that it was time to see if counseling could help her process some traumas that had haunted her for years. Katie had a hunch that Lynn would hit it off with Molly. She was right.

"Molly was really good at helping me focus on what I wanted to get out of therapy and steps to get there," Lynn explains. "For me, the mental health piece was a life-saver."

During six months of therapy, Molly helped Lynn process the grief of losing both parents and other traumas that had haunted her for years. Molly also helped Lynn get prompt medical attention for a

gastrointestinal infection, when she noticed during one of their counseling sessions that some of the physical pain that had been dogging Lynn had grown worse.

"It was pretty magical, because Katie was able to see Lynn right there," Molly says.

It came as a huge relief to feel better physically. Lynn continued with counseling for several weeks after the infection cleared up. And with a renewed sense of joy and self-confidence, she did a happy dance as she wrapped up her last session with Molly.

"I started going to Country Doctor when I didn't have any money and I couldn't pay," Lynn says. "Now I have Medicare and can go anywhere, but I keep coming to Country Doctor because I feel like I matter here."

Dear friends,

Primary care clinic systems that integrate behavioral health into their day-to-day operations provide tremendous value to their patients, providers, and community. That's precisely what we've done at Carolyn Downs, Country Doctor and our school-based clinic sites.

It's team-based care that meets the needs of patients right when they need it, not after a referral from a family physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant goes through, or after an insurance company determines a patient's eligibility for care.

When a patient is identified to be in crisis, whether with mental health or social service needs, our teams mobilize and coordinate to make a comprehensive care plan while the patient is still in the clinic. This may mean setting up urgent counseling, chemical dependency intervention, address food or housing insecurity or any number of life stressors that befall the population we serve.

Our staff are experts in acute interventions and linking people to community resources. This can be for issues as diverse as linkage to shelters, food, post-incarceration services, chemical dependency counseling, and medication assistance or paving the way into the community mental health system.

Integrated care like this is a win-win on every level and has always been a high priority of our community board of directors. The decision to do the right thing has always preceded the certainty of how we would pay for it.

As the community health organization with the highest percentage of uninsured and underinsured patients in the area, this is no small feat, but with the support of donors like you, we find a way. This integrated system has been a long time in coming, and we are grateful that we now have the staffing and physical space to make it happen.

Warmly,



Richard Kovar, MD
Family physician, past Medical Director



Country Doctor and Carolyn Downs embrace a shared commitment to lowering barriers, making it easier to get the high-quality care we all need to be healthy — both physically and mentally.

PROVIDER Q&A

Meet Taj

a member of our in-house counseling team at Carolyn Downs and Country Doctor

Name: Taj Gill (he/him)

Job Title: Behavioral Health Consultant

Credentials: Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW), Mental Health Professional (MHP)

Counsels patients at Carolyn Downs three days a week, Country Doctor one day a week

Joined our staff: October 2018

What drew you to your work in the behavioral health profession?

I started out as a biology and chemistry major in college, but wasn't sure what career would be right for me. I thought about becoming a dentist, but didn't really like my classes. Then I took my first psychology class, and everything clicked from there. I started working at an in-patient psychiatric hospital. What drew me in was the one-on-one therapy. I did the master's program (in social work) at UW ... did outpatient work with teens at Renton Area Youth and Family Services and I realized this is what I want to do.

What do you like about working one-on-one with people?

Everyone has a unique, complex story. I feel good that people trust me enough to open up and share ... I had a brief time in counseling in college, when I was stressed and didn't know what I wanted to do. When I met and talked with my therapist ... it helped me realize what a difference it can make to talk to someone. It felt like, 'I want to do what this guy is doing,' ... to be an active listener and give people that space. ... I'm very blessed and honored to be in this position to give back.

What do you like about counseling patients in a primary care setting?

It makes everything more efficient and effective. I've learned a lot about medication management by working so closely with my primary care colleagues ... like what medications are going to be more effective for depression or bipolar disorder. ... With "warm hand-offs," we can meet with patients and quickly assess their needs. If they want to get into counseling, we can schedule an appointment right then and there.

FIGHTING FOR EQUITY AND JUSTICE
THROUGH COMMUNITY HEALTH



Plan for your future — and fuel ours

You can ensure that more people in our community receive the high-quality healthcare they deserve, for many years to come, by writing us into your will.

It's easier to leave a legacy gift than you might think.

Here's a simple statement you can share with your attorney and estate planner, then simply add as an amendment to your will or living trust.

"I bequeath \$_____ or _____% of my estate to Country Doctor Community Health Centers, 500 19th Ave. E., Seattle WA, 98112."

If you've already included us in your will, please let us know so we can thank you for your generosity!

For more information about legacy giving, please connect with us!

Michael Craig
Director, Development & Marketing
MLCraig@cdchc.org
206.299.1614



Your gift provides:



Low barrier healthcare



Innovative partnerships



A lifeline for the next generation



Healthcare as a human right

Writing by Liz Murtaugh Gillespie

Graphic design by RRD Design



**COUNTRY DOCTOR
COMMUNITY CLINIC**



**CAROLYN DOWNS
FAMILY MEDICAL CENTER**



**AFTER HOURS
CLINIC**

COUNTRY DOCTOR COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Carolyn Downs & Country Doctor clinics serve all patients with compassionate, comprehensive care, regardless of their ability to pay.

As a nonprofit healthcare provider, we treat each person's unique medical, mental health, and dental needs in a safe and supportive environment. We provide a warm and welcoming healthcare home to members of our community who are often marginalized elsewhere. Some struggle with mental illness, addiction, or homelessness. Others face discrimination because of their immigration status, gender, sexual orientation, or because of time served in prison. All of our patients have one thing in common: They are human beings we value and are honored to serve.

cdchc.org