



The Miriam Hospital
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OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

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Open Society Institute Awards \$600,000 to The Miriam Hospital to expand treatment for drug and alcohol addiction

Grant is part of national initiative to increase access to treatment

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Miriam Hospital announced today it has received a \$600,000 grant from the Open Society Institute (OSI) to expand access to high-quality treatment for drug and alcohol addiction for individuals who need it.

Rhode Island has one of the highest reported rates of alcohol and drug dependency in the country. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Rhode Island also ranks among the highest in the country for the number of residents who need but are not receiving treatment for an alcohol or drug problem.

The OSI grant will help clinicians from The Miriam Hospital establish a more efficient and effective model in the city of Providence to treat individuals who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. This includes the launch of a comprehensive initiative aimed at generating new addiction treatment funding, providing much-needed treatment services, and encouraging lasting systems change to help close the treatment gap.

“It’s important to remember that addiction is a chronic disease, not a choice. Unfortunately, the majority of those in Rhode Island and across the county who need drug and alcohol treatment are unable to get it, and overall there are very few resources equipped to provide these services,” said project leader Josiah D. Rich, MD, MPH, an infectious disease specialist at The Miriam Hospital. “Although we are still in the planning stages, we are very hopeful that this collaborative initiative will help expand addiction treatment funding and more efficiently utilize our state’s resources in order to get individuals the treatment that they need.”

A number of state and local organizations are partnering with The Miriam Hospital on this initiative, including Providence Mayor David N. Cicilline’s Substance Abuse Prevention Council; Providence City Emergency Medical Services; Stanley Street Treatment and Resources (SSTAR); Rhode Island Department of Human Services; the Rhode Island Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals; and the Rhode Island Hospital Emergency Department.

“This grant from the Open Society Institute will go a long way towards strengthening families and improving the lives of those struggling with substance abuse,” said Mayor Cicilline. “I look forward to partnering with The Miriam Hospital on this very important initiative.”

“Americans are slowly coming to the realization that addiction is a disease and that treatment works. In Rhode Island, we need to continue building our resources to ensure that individuals struggling with addiction can find help when they need it. I was pleased to support The Miriam Hospital’s OSI grant proposal to launch an innovative partnership that will enhance access to treatments and reach more individuals. This initiative, and last week’s passage of mental health parity, requiring all insurers to equally cover mental and

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physical illness, are working to bridge the unnecessary treatment gap and provide critical care for those who need it,” said Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy

A major part of this initiative is the development and implementation of an emergency department (ED) diversion program for the treatment and evaluation of individuals with addiction. This will be coupled with a novel strategy to train EMT staff to screen substance users before transporting them to the ED. Traditionally, individuals in the community with significant intoxication are referred directly to the ED, a process that translates into enormous costs for both the hospital and the city.

“We believe implementing a model of more efficient addiction care and appropriate diversion will yield significant savings to the city, local hospitals, and insurers – savings that can be dedicated and reallocated to expanded treatment services. But most importantly, patients are also likely to get the necessary treatment and have improved outcomes,” said Nick Zaller, PhD, a researcher and epidemiologist at The Miriam Hospital and the program’s director.

The initiative will also establish the Providence Treatment Advisory Council that will be tasked with increasing public awareness around substance use and addiction, identifying new prevention and treatment funding sources, and publicizing the treatment gap and possible solutions. It will also explore and seek policy change around the Rhode Island Medicaid reimbursement policy.

The OSI grant to The Miriam Hospital is one of eight demonstration grants totaling \$4.8 million given to organizations across the country, including a university research center, a state government agency and advocacy groups. The grants are part of a \$10 million initiative supported by OSI to close the treatment gap, expand comprehensive treatment systems and improve the quality of treatment. The initiative aims to mobilize public support for expanded treatment by increasing public funding, broadening insurance coverage and achieving greater program efficiency.

The alarming treatment gap observed in Providence mirrors a national problem. In 2007, 23.2 million Americans needed treatment for drug or alcohol addiction, but only 10 percent of them were able to get treatment for this chronic health condition. The vast majority of those who need help are unable to get addiction treatment, either due to lack of health insurance, inadequate insurance coverage or a lack of treatment services in communities.

“If this disease had any other name, the residents of Providence would not tolerate seeing thousands of neighbors, family members, and coworkers remaining untreated,” said Victor A. Capoccia, director of the Closing the Addiction Treatment Gap initiative. “Addiction is a chronic health condition, and it can be treated effectively. This important initiative in Providence will enable more residents who need addiction treatment to get it.”

The Miriam Hospital was selected from a pool of 35 applicants after a competitive, rigorous selection process. Each proposal was evaluated by a panel that included national experts in addiction treatment advocacy and financing. Twelve organizations were selected for full-day site visits. A review team then evaluated the projects’ strengths, financing, and advocacy strategies and recommended the final eight.

Known for its long-standing tradition of community involvement, advocacy and teaching, The Miriam Hospital is also a leader in the field of addiction, both as a provider and an advocate. The hospital was one of the first in the state to have an onsite needle exchange program and was a key partner in ensuring syringe decriminalization and legalization of over-the-counter sale of syringes in Rhode Island. The Miriam Hospital is also home to The Center for Prisoner Health and Human Rights (www.prisonerhealth.org), which has a strong emphasis on policy change to decrease reliance on the correctional system to deal with addiction in our society.

The Miriam Hospital, established in 1926 in Providence, RI, is a private, not-for-profit hospital affiliated with The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. The Miriam Hospital offers expertise in cardiology, oncology, men's health, and minimally invasive surgery and is home to the only robotic surgery program, Women's Cardiac Center and Joint Commission-certified Stroke Center in the state. One of 18 designated Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) sites, the hospital is a leader in the treatment, research and prevention of HIV/AIDS. The Miriam Hospital's Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine attracts nearly \$14 million in federal research funding annually to address the leading lifestyle causes of disease burden and death, including weight control, physical activity, and smoking cessation. The Miriam Hospital is a founding member of the Lifespan health system. For more information about The Miriam Hospital, please visit www.miriamhospital.org

The Open Society Institute, a private operating and grantmaking foundation, works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve its mission, OSI seeks to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. OSI works in over 60 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, as well as in the United States. <http://www.soros.org/>

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