

# THE COMMUNITY MONITOR

## A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE HOUSTON MEDICAL MONITORING PROJECT

### THE HIV/AIDS COMMUNITY HAS A VOICE



The Houston Medical Monitoring Project (HMMP) is a special HIV/AIDS surveillance project funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in collaboration with the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS). The project will link patient reported behavioral data collected by questionnaire with clinical data abstracted from medical charts. These two sources of information will be used to get the most accurate picture of the use of health care service and illnesses experienced by people with HIV/AIDS in Houston and Harris County.

A Local Community Advisory Board (CAB) was established. Representatives from local health care organizations, health planning groups, and community-based organizations comprise the 18 member CAB. Steven Walker, President of SLW Consulting, has been elected as the chairperson of the CAB.

“The CAB will begin by establishing a charter and creating a mission statement,” Walker said. “Additionally, it will determine meeting agenda items, provide feedback and recommendations regarding HMMP and develop reports and publications with staff support from HDHHS and a consulting group comprised of leadership from area local health departments,” Walker said.

Houston is one of 26 project sites around the nation and Puerto Rico. Information obtained by HMMP will help identify service gaps for people in care for HIV/AIDS and help focus more on provision of preventive services, thus benefiting the HIV infected community.

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### CAB ELECTS HIV ADVOCATE AS CHAIRPERSON

Steve Walker has more than 15 years of extensive experience as an activist, educator and administrator for public health programs. He is currently chair of the Houston Area EMA Ryan White Planning Council,

which plans and prioritizes services for people living with HIV/AIDS in the Houston area, and community co-chair of the Urban Coalition for HIV/AIDS Prevention Services (UCHAPS), a coalition of metropolitan areas heavily impacted by

HIV/AIDS. His past experiences include serving as director of the Donald R. Watkins Memorial Foundation, and manager of HIV Prevention Programs for the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS).

**Houston Medical Monitoring  
Project Local Community Advisory  
Board**

- Steven Walker, Chairperson, *SLW Consulting*
- Hunter Hammill, MD
- Cathy Wiley, *HDHHS*
- Dan Snare, *Berring Omega Community Services*
- Joe Fuentes, Jr., *HACS*
- Maria Rodriguez-Barradas, MD, *VA Medical Center*
- Marlene McNeese-Ward, *HDHHS*
- Beau Mitts, *HDHHS*
- Tom Giordano, MD, Medical Director, *TSC*
- Nancy Miertschin, *HCHD*
- Porfirio Villarreal, *HDHHS*
- Terence O'Neill, *AVES*
- Roberto Andrade, MD, *TSC*
- Sharonda Wright, *NAACP*
- Tina Megdal, *Legacy Clinic*
- Kelly McCann, *AIDS Foundation Houston*

**Houston Medical Monitoring  
Project Provider Advisory Board  
Representative**

Hunter Hammill, MD

**Houston Medical Monitoring  
Project Consultants**

- Raouf Arafat MD., MPH, Assistant Director, *HDHHS*
- Osama M. Ibrahim, MD, Msc, Dr. PH, Bureau Chief, *HDHHS*
- Charles Henley, *HCPHES*
- Herminia Palacio, MD, *HCPHES*
- Jan Galloway, *Fort Bend County Health and Human Services*
- Kaye Reynolds, MPH, *Fort Bend County Health and Human Services*
- Lupita Thornton, *HDHHS*
- Umir Shah, MD, *HCPHES*
- Marcia Wolverton, MPH, *HDHHS*

**AND HE WANTED TO BE A COWBOY.....**



**Hunter Hammill, MD**

Dr. Hammill serves as HMMP's National Provider Advisory Board member! A native of New Jersey and aspiring cowboy, Hammill received his medical degree from the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons New York, New York in 1976. He completed an internship in internal medicine at the Montefiore Hospital, University of Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1977 and an internship and residency in obstetrics and gynecology at the UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles. He completed a fellowship in gynecologic infectious diseases at the Wadsworth VA Medical Center in Los Angeles, California. Hammill is a diplomat of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and a fellow in the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Hammill is presently an associate professor in the Departments of Pediatrics and Family/Community Medicine at the Baylor College of Medicine. He has held several academic and leadership positions in obstetrics and gynecology at various academic institutions during the course of his career.

He maintains a practice with the Associates in Infectious Diseases in Ob/Gyn in Houston. Hammill is an attending physician at the St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, the Memorial Hermann Hospital and the Women's Hospital Houston Texas. Hammill received the Barbara Jordan Leadership Award in 1993 and the AVES Pyramid award in 1998. He is a clinical instructor in residency training and also actively participates in the training of medical students, physician assistants and midwife students. Hammill has served as principal or co- investigator for various HIV/AIDS research projects and has been cited in numerous scientific journals both locally and internationally. He has also co-authored numerous publications. He is a member of many medical and scientific societies, but is best known for his work with pregnant women infected with HIV.

**WHAT IS HMMP?**

Approximately 16,635 people live with HIV/AIDS within Houston and Harris County. Over the next 4 years patients will be asked to share their experiences about their medical care. HMMP team members will visit patients during regular appointments to their providers. Patients will be asked questions regarding treatment, quality of care, access to care, social support, prevention services, funding and various quality of life issues. Houston is using a two-stage sampling scheme. The first stage will randomly sample providers; the second will sample patients from within providers. The sampling frame of providers will be defined so that the likelihood of selection will be based on the number of cases reported. A provider is defined as a hospital, clinic or health facility that keeps patient medical records. The sampling frame will be based on providers identified in the HIV/AIDS Reporting System (HARS). From each list, all patients who meet the eligibility criteria determined by the protocol will be included for sampling in the study. Eligibility variables will be determined with CDC. The information obtained from this project will provide a consistent method for state and city health departments to measure important aspects of morbidity, access and use of preventive services. It will help identify service gaps for people in care for HIV/AIDS infection and help focus more on provision of preventive services. Participation in this project is voluntary, but imperative. It is the only way to ensure that everyone will be represented. Please participate if asked. Everyone will benefit in the long run.



HMMP works within the medical community to reach out to people with HIV and AIDS.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A NAME

**WHO:** The HIV/AIDS Surveillance Program is part of the Bureau of Epidemiology within the HDHHS.

**WHAT:** By law, HIV/AIDS Surveillance Programs has collected and reported AIDS data since 1983. Reporting HIV data by name began on January 1, 1999. Information is received from private physicians, hospitals, blood banks, laboratories, correctional facilities, clinics, death certificates and other registry databases. Once a report of an HIV infection or an AIDS diagnosis is received, all the necessary information is gathered to report that case to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). The necessary information includes demographics, risk factors, test dates and medical service referrals to name a few. Once the report is complete, it is sent to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) for review. DSHS reports each case, without identifying information, to the CDC, in order to track the HIV/AIDS epidemic nationally.

**WHY:** HIV reporting tells us which areas are being hardest hit by HIV and ensures that resources get to the communities that need them most. HIV reporting helps improve prevention and education programs. Advocacy agencies agree that it is critical to have better monitoring of HIV infection. Reporting by name allows public health staff to work with providers to ensure that all individuals who have been reported as HIV positive: 1) Know their status; 2) Are offered appropriate referral to health and social services; and 3) Are offered assistance in telling their sex and drug use partners of their possible exposure to HIV.

## HOUSTON'S SEX DETECTIVES-ANOTHER OLD PROFESSION

The HDHHS provides partner notification services to those who have tested positive for Syphilis and HIV. A professional Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS) specializes in notifying people who have STDs. This is a 50 year old profession. DIS are dedicated, and highly trained in the area of STDs and partner notification and operate under strict confidentiality. The DIS receives intense training on how to discreetly notify people of positive STD tests, and those who were exposed to STDs. The DIS takes his/her work seriously and will go to great extents to protect confidentiality and privacy while doing the contact notifications. The DIS will not give the name or any information regarding the sexual encounter. This is an excellent service since many people are afraid or too embarrassed to notify their partners themselves.

It's common practice to contact the physician for locating information. The DIS is specially trained to motivate people to get tested and to discuss treatment of contacts to STD with doctors, so the contacts get the recommended testing and treatment. The DIS is knowledgeable of all different lifestyles, and can do the job smoothly in any social, cultural environment. It is critical to cooperate with the DIS during this process to make sure that it goes smoothly. And what about the steady partner? This can be a challenge, but the truth is this person is also at risk and will find out sooner or later. It's the duty of the DIS to notify *all* partners. As long as contacts are in the US, DIS notification services can be arranged. The person being notified will not be told that the information came from the Houston area. If the contacts don't live in the US, international follow-up may be possible.

## A HOUSE BUILT FOR LOVE

Dan Snare, Director of Bering Omega Community Services, lead the HMMP team on a tour of the facilities. The cornerstones of the organization consist of an adult day care, dental services, and residential hospice care.

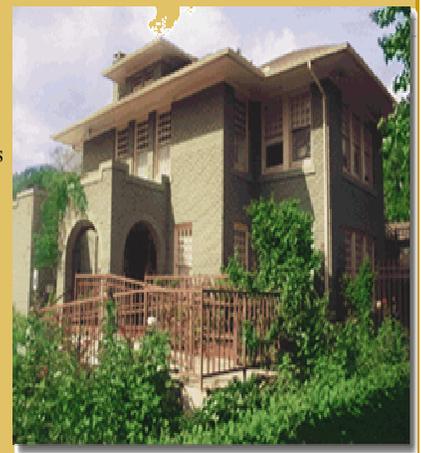
Day care is available for individuals at all stages of HIV disease. There are hot meals served along with field trips, physical therapy, games, and Internet access.

Bering Omega offers yearly dental exams, emergency care, treatment for lesions, dentures and other services. The clinic is the first of its kind and is directed by world renowned dentist, Mark Nichols, DDS.

Omega House is an eight bed facility which offers medical care as well psychosocial and bereavement services. There is social activity with housemates and extremely dedicated volunteers. There is pet therapy and other recreational activities. Omega House offers a safe environment filled with love where people with AIDS may live out their final days in dignity. If you are in need of these services or maybe you would like to make a donation or become a volunteer please contact Bering Omega at: 713-529-6071

Or visit them on the web at:

<http://www.beringomega.org>



## HMMP'S COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

# LAZARUS HOUSE

One morning, the HMMP staff was greeted by Danielle Sampey, executive director of the Lazarus House.

Although Ms. Sampey presented with a petite stature, her dedication to her clients is colossal. The certified personal trainer was once on the path to becoming a medical doctor. Today, she still has the opportunity to work with and motivate patients. She helps people with various conditions that may cause wasting. Ninety percent of the clients of the nonprofit organization are HIV positive.

Danielle explained that this nonclinical comfortable environment provides a complete and low cost wellness program to clients. She said

that muscle wasting or cachexia robs a person of the energy and ability to live independently.

The programs created by her and her staff provides their clients with the ability to train, build muscle, and achieve a better quality of life.

They have a capacity of 35 clients and there is a nominal fee for services.

As we toured the two story house we noticed the beautiful decorating done by volunteers, massage room and the multiple pieces of cardio and weight training equipment. We observed her staff motivating clients working out appearing to enjoy themselves. We also met a Paralympics hopeful.

*Note: Clients will need a referral from their doctor.*

If you would like more information about the Lazarus House contact them at:

713-526-5071 or e-mail them at:  
[questions@thelazarushouse.org](mailto:questions@thelazarushouse.org).



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POSTAGE

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