



LIVING WELL

Integral Care's peer support specialists have lived experience with mental illness or substance use disorder. In this newsletter, they share stories about recovery and offer hope for tomorrow.

Lead Editor: Nathaniel Hall, Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team Peer Support Specialist

An Interview with Dr. John Nguyen, Addiction Psychiatrist

Dr. John Long H. Nguyen received his medical degree at Stanford. He completed psychiatry residency in New York City. He then completed an addiction psychiatry fellowship in San Francisco. He is a well-rounded doctor, with a Bachelor's degree in music from Brown University. He is Integral Care's Associate Medical Director.

Nathaniel: What is meant by an "opioid epidemic"?

Dr. Nguyen: The current opioid epidemic refers to a large rise over the past 15-20 years in the use of opioids, such as codeine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, morphine, fentanyl, and heroin. As use of these substances has increased, so has the rate of deaths from overdose. In the United States, there were more than 70,000 drug overdose deaths in 2017, and about 68% involved an opioid. Compared to 36,000 drug overdose deaths in 2007, that is almost a 200% increase over 10 years.

Nathaniel:

How serious is the opioid epidemic in Austin?

Dr. Nguyen: There are other parts of the country and Texas that have been hit harder by the opioid epidemic. However, in Travis County alone, more than 415 people died of a drug overdose between 2014 - 2016. Only 4 other counties in Texas had more drug overdose deaths than Travis County.

Nathaniel: Could you talk a little bit about the services and resources that are available at Integral Care for people who are living with an opioid use disorder?

Dr. Nguyen: Integral Care has several programs that help people living with an opioid use disorder. Those services include medication assisted therapy (which uses medicine like buprenorphine or methadone to reduce or stop withdrawal symptoms), outpatient medically-supervised withdrawal treatment, intensive

outpatient counseling, peer support services, overdose and prevention education and access to naloxone (which reverses an opioid overdose). Our staff works closely with clients to create individualized treatment plans that support recovery. People can learn more by calling 512-472-HELP (4357).

Nathaniel: Do a lot of people living with an opioid use disorder also have some type of mental illness?

Dr. Nguyen: Mental illness and substance use disorders often share underlying causes, including genetics and exposure to stress and trauma. 40-60% of people with a substance use disorder also have a co-occurring mental illness. For some people, substance use has become an unhealthy strategy for coping with emotional struggles or mental illness. For other people, substance use itself can cause them to experience symptoms of a mental illness, including depression, anxiety and psychosis.

Nathaniel: Is an opioid use disorder more of a medical issue or a psychological issue?

Dr. Nguyen: Opioid use disorder and substance use disorders in general are both medical and psychological issues. Both the mind and the body need care and healing. Research shows that

substance use causes changes in the brain that may persist even after stopping use, and substance use disorder should be recognized as a brain-based disorder rather than a character flaw. Thus, for many people, treatment and recovery should be approached like a chronic illness, similar to high blood pressure or diabetes, which needs some form of ongoing care and support. Opioid use disorder in particular has very effective treatments that promote recovery in a variety of aspects of life. Therapy, counseling, peer support, social supports, and housing support are extremely important to the healing process, which often involves addressing the emotional turmoil around substance use.

Nathaniel: What do you anticipate will happen with the opioid epidemic in Austin over the next five years?

Dr. Nguyen: There has been progress over the last 10 years in slowing down some aspects of the epidemic. We hope to reverse the opioid epidemic. To accomplish that, more efforts will be needed locally and nationally to promote public awareness, reform government policies, improve clinician practices and advocate for expanding access to prevention services, naloxone, substance use treatment and medications, supportive housing and recovery supports.

Program Highlight - Outpatient Detox

This is a 6-week outpatient counseling and detox program. The program uses medicine to assist with detox. This helps individuals who are physically dependent or experiencing withdrawal from opioids or alcohol. You also receive mental health support, nursing services, group education and counseling, individual counseling, service coordination and planning, chronic disease education, and life skills training.

The program has served over 120 individuals since September 1st. It also provides training, education and access to overdose prevention (naloxone) to help combat the opioid epidemic.

Location: 1165 Airport Blvd Austin, Texas 78702 **Open:** 7 days a week

For Admission: Call 512-472-HELP (4357) and ask about Outpatient Detox.

Stigma

So much in our society today
You find people who just don't understand
Can we open up their eyes?
Can we lead them to realize?
That mental illness is stigmatized

How long will it be?
Before all the people
Who make all the decisions
Change all the mistakes that we have made

I don't believe in war
I don't believe in hate
I do believe in empathy
I do believe in recovery
We are all in need

Plant that seed and watch it grow

My Dim Light

In the darkest hour of the night my
dim light shall not fade away.

The wind may blow and the rain may
fall but my dim light shall not fade.

It leads me down dusky corridors and
it guides me down the right path.

Through all of the difficult times of
my life my dim light has yet to fade.

Surely it will continue.



Poetry by Nathaniel Hall

Integral Care Peer Support Specialist



SLEEP

- Improves memory and sharpens attention
- Helps maintain a healthy weight and lowers stress
- Prevents accidents due to sleepiness



Limit caffeine in the
afternoon and evening



Keep room a cool and
comfortable temperature



Avoid screens an
hour before bedtime



Set a regular
sleep schedule

How much sleep do you need every night?



Preschool-aged child
11-12 hours



School-aged child
10 hours



Teenager
9-10 hours



Adult
7-8 hours

If you feel that sleep problems are affecting your work or personal life, talk to your doctor.

Client Highlight - Tommy

My name is Tommy. Receiving treatment at Integral Care really opened up doors for me. I have been chronically homeless since 1982. But now, thanks to being put on a housing list, I have a home. Not being homeless anymore feels great. I see light at the end of the tunnel. I enjoy reading in my spare time and I've found a connection with my religion again. Right now, I can smile and be honest and truthful with myself. I don't have to worry about looking back. I don't worry about what's behind me. I worry about what's in front of me. I used to be homeless, but now I am hopeful.

For more Integral Care success stories, visit Integral Care's YouTube page: youtube.com/IntegralCareAustin.



WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

We're accepting submissions for future issues of Living Well. Share your creative writing, artwork or personal story of recovery with us for consideration. Please send submissions to Nathaniel.Hall@IntegralCare.org. We can't wait to hear from you!

Please note: unfortunately, not all submissions will be printed.

Resources

Psychiatric Emergency Services

Walk-in mental health urgent care for adults and children | 1165 Airport Blvd., 2nd Floor, Austin, 78702

Hours Monday – Friday, 8am to 10pm
Saturday, Sunday and Holidays, 10am to 8pm

24/7 Helpline

512-472-HELP (4357) | A helpline for anyone who needs immediate emotional support

Self-Help and Advocacy Center (SHAC)

Free peer support, mentoring and classes, like yoga, art and tai chi.

3205 South 1st St. | 512-442-3366
www.austinmhc.org

About Integral Care

We support adults and children living with mental illness, substance use disorder and intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our services include a 24-hour helpline for anyone who needs immediate support, ongoing counseling to improve mental health, drug and alcohol treatment to help with recovery, and housing to regain health and independence.



Facebook.com/IntegralCareATX



Twitter.com/IntegralCareATX

IntegralCare.org
24/7 Helpline: 512-472-HELP (4357)