

Health Clinic Gets Funding for HIV Care

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kbrannon@tulane.edu

With funding from a Ryan White grant through the City of New Orleans, the Tulane University School of Medicine is now providing HIV/AIDS care within the Tulane Community Health Center at Covenant House. Dr. MarkAlain D'Arcy, an instructor of clinical medicine, opened the new clinic in early April to provide ongoing care to patients regardless of their insurance status.



Dr. MarkAlain D'Arcy says placing HIV care within an “ordinary health clinic” is part of an overall trend to destigmatize HIV. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

“We are very excited about this as it will allow us to become more involved in the community management of HIV, offer HIV clinical trials to the community and provide more learning opportunities for students,” says Dr. David Mushatt, chief of [adult infectious diseases](#) at Tulane.

HIV/AIDS is a persistent public health issue in New Orleans, which ranks third in the nation (behind Baton Rouge, La.) for AIDS case rates among metropolitan areas, according to 2008 figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[DÃ©ry](#) and medical students will staff the clinic from 3 to 7 p.m. on Thursdays and noon to 4 p.m. on Fridays. DÃ©ry, who previously served as medical director for a community-based HIV clinic called NR PEACE, has been able to transition several of his former patients to the new clinic.

Because of the tremendous advances in HIV treatment, DÃ©ry says that the disease has become a manageable condition for many. But unlike other chronic diseases like diabetes or hypertension, HIV still carries a social stigma that makes it harder for some to seek care. One of his goals is to normalize HIV care.

“This is part of an overall trend to destigmatize HIV by placing it in an ordinary health clinic,” DÃ©ry says.

The clinic is one of several HIV projects for DÃ©ry, a passionate advocate in the fight against AIDS. Last year, he founded the New Orleans Society for Infectious Disease Awareness. He also organizes the HIV Awareness Music Project, an annual music festival that promotes HIV education, awareness and empowerment.