

## *Wishing You a Prosperous New Year*

As we close out this calendar year, we would like to update you on one of our on-going LACES projects aimed at further improving treatment in Los Angeles County.

## *Telepsychiatry at the Antelope Valley Rehabilitation Center (AVRC) in Acton, CA*

Since April 2011, UCLA Integrated Substance Abuse Programs (ISAP) has partnered with the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health, Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC) office to provide Telepsychiatry services for in-patient substance use disorder clients admitted to the County operated Antelope Valley Rehabilitation Center (AVRC) in Acton, CA. Telemedicine is defined as “the practice of health care delivery, diagnosis, consultation, treatment and transfer of medical data and interactive tools using audio, video and/or data communication with a patient at a location remote from the provider” and has been in use for over 20 years. As technological advances rapidly develop, so too has the development and expansion of telemedicine – which encompasses a number of medical disciplines including Telepsychiatry/Telemental Health. Telepsychiatry has been practiced within the University of California (UC) system since the late 1990’s and since 1996 UC Davis has provided over 5000 clinical consultations and has been awarded 10+ grants in this area. This project is the first of this nature between UCLA and Los Angeles County.

The AVRC is located in the high desert of Los Angeles County where access to psychiatric services is limited due to the remoteness of the facility. Throughout the project, UCLA ISAP psychiatrists provide services related to substance use disorders and other mental health issues to AVRC patients one day a week using a secure web-based, mobile telemedicine cart and accompanying software. The freestanding cart includes a direct computer connection to the internet, a high definition camera and a high quality microphone. This system allows the psychiatrist and patient to clearly see and hear each other. Once the psychiatrist meets with the patient, they make notes which are stored with their UCLA patient record and copies are sent via a secure line to the medical personnel at the Acton facility for placement in the patient’s AVRC file. Prescriptions are written by the UCLA psychiatrist and filled at a local Acton pharmacy.

As of December 2011, 42 unique clients have been seen. Most patients have had a number of follow-ups and depending on their needs, some are seen on a weekly basis. Using a low-cost medication formulary, psychiatrists prescribe psychotropic medications for a number of issues including depression and anxiety. As a result of the low-cost formulary and increased medication management, more patients are now able to incorporate psychotropic medications in their treatment.

So far, this project has resulted in a number of positive outcomes including: a reduced barrier to access for those in remote areas and an increase in efficiency for the AVRC and UCLA systems. We hope that improved mental health outcomes will be noted as a result of the continuous care. Other potential benefits include opportunities for enhanced cultural competency (i.e. increased interaction with traditionally underserved ethnic groups). This project has been well-received by UCLA staff, AVRC patients and staff alike. Future efforts include possible expansion of activities such as additional hours of services.

For more information on this or any other of the many LACES projects, please go to the LACES web site (see below) or contact Desiree A. Crevecoeur-MacPhail Ph.D. at [desireec@ucla.edu](mailto:desireec@ucla.edu).