

CRHS Implements HIV Testing As the Fifth Vital Sign



CRHS provider Dr. Tonya Wanko administers a rapid HIV test by collecting a sample of oral fluid from the patient's mouth.

Washington, DC has the dubious distinction of being America's AIDS capital, with an HIV infection rate of 3%, the highest rate in the United States. This virus has touched lives and decimated communities around the world, particularly in Africa, but it is often overlooked that we face a serious HIV/AIDS epidemic in our own backyard.

When living in a new country, low-income immigrants may encounter fear, stigma, and language barriers that prevent them from accessing HIV education and treatment services. Because of these obstacles, many such people discover they are infected only after the disease has begun to ravage

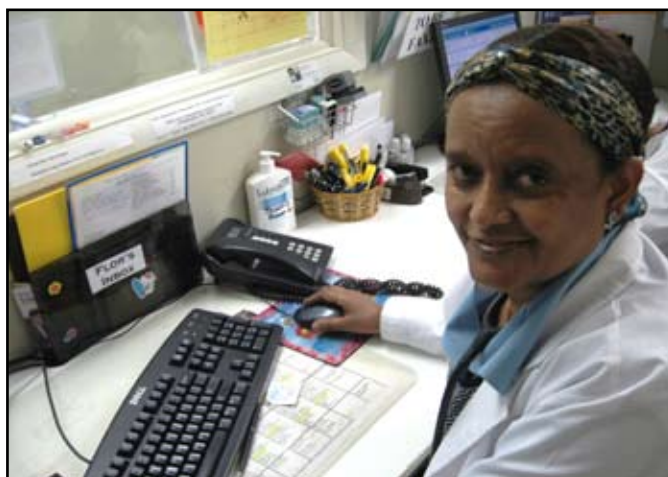
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CRHS Welcomes Licensed Practical Nurse Alemush Mulugeta

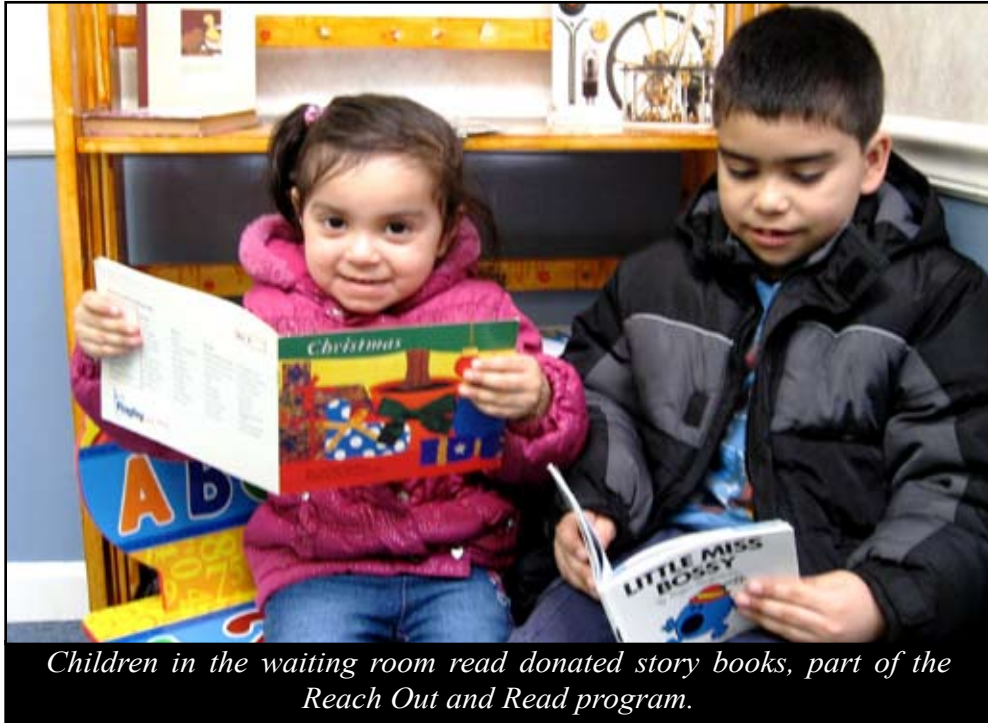
Alemush Mulugeta is the newest face at CRHS, but she is not new to our mission. Alemush is a licensed practical nurse who came to CRHS in February after nine years working as a medical assistant/HIV care associate at Upper Cardozo Health Center, another Unity health center located in the Ward 1 community of Washington, DC. During this time Alemush also worked evening sessions as a medical assistant at CRHS from 2002 and 2005.

Alemush says, "For the past nine years I have lived and worked in this community, and I am very happy and privileged to work with patients in my own community that can benefit from primary care services."

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Licensed Practical Nurse Alemush Mulugeta reviews some lab results in her office.



Children in the waiting room read donated story books, part of the Reach Out and Read program.

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Teresa Rosa, a social worker at Upper Cardozo, first discovered Alemush in 2001 when Alemush served as an interpreter for a family member who was being seen as a patient at Upper Cardozo. The very next day, Unity hired Alemush as a medical assistant. In 2004, Alemush was promoted to the first ever HIV care associate for Unity Health Care at Upper Cardozo.

Alemush's work with patients inspired her to attend the University of the District of Columbia, where she earned a licensed practical nurse certificate while working full-time at Upper Cardozo. Shortly after, Alemush transferred to CRHS.

Alemush speaks Amharic, her native language of Ethiopia, and Spanish fluently. Alemush learned Spanish when studying in Cuba, where she earned a medical degree. Alemush traveled extensively after obtaining her medical degree,

providing primary care services in Ethiopia and South Africa. Alemush enjoys being able to converse with patients directly in Amharic or Spanish.

As part of Alemush's role, patients receive detailed guidance about diet, exercise, medication, and treatments to help them live healthier lives and experience fewer medical crises. "Health education is important because it can lead to a healthier life. I really value this community and look forward to continuing my relationship with a community that accepted me when I first immigrated to the United States of America and allowed me to make an impact in patients' lives." CRHS is thrilled to have Alemush join us to help our patients understand and embrace a healthier lifestyle. 🌟

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their bodies. Many of CRHS' patients are immigrants who come to us ignorant of basic facts of HIV and unaware of their own HIV status. HIV testing and prevention education are crucial elements of CRHS' contribution to the fight against HIV.

In our efforts to support the District's focus on prevention and knowing one's HIV status, CRHS has successfully integrated the "fifth vital sign," where HIV testing is done as part of the intake process when patients are present for routine appointments.

CRHS has acquired a new tool to support its approach to HIV testing: a non-invasive test that provides results with 99.6% accuracy in as little as 20 minutes. This type of test can be done using a saliva sample, a small droplet of blood from a finger, or blood drawn from a vein. The simplicity and speed of this test will allow patients to receive their results during the same visit. This, in turn, will increase the number of patients who learn of their status and who are able to more promptly receive counseling and treatment and make behavioral changes.

CRHS providers are encouraged by the potential of this new rapid HIV test. According to nurse practitioner Bill Jordan, "About two thirds of our patients accept the test when offered it." HIV prevention education combined with a rapid HIV test completed in a single visit has been successfully implemented in numerous settings in the United States over the past several years. CRHS is playing its part to reduce the HIV infection rate in Washington, DC and improve the quality of life of our patients. 🌟

Meet Luis*

Luis recently returned in the spring of 2010 to CRHS for the first time since his last medical visit in 2003. Unemployed for the past two years, Luis has lived in this community his whole life and as a child was seen by CRHS providers. By the time he returned to CRHS, Luis was suffering from a variety of painful symptoms and had recently been diagnosed by a local hospital in Washington, DC with type 2 diabetes.

Most notably Luis had been enduring fatigue, increased hunger, blurred vision, and increased thirst. Luis informed me that he wanted to improve his health. He explained

that his family had a history of type 2 diabetes and that throughout his childhood he was overweight, due to poor diet and inactivity.

I talked with him about how to manage this condition, which would require taking diabetes medications, making wise food choices, exercising regularly, and controlling his blood pressure and cholesterol.

I explained that with moderate strength training and aerobic fitness, Luis's muscles will take up glucose at almost 20 times the normal rate. Exercise will also improve his body's use of insulin and help improve his HDL and LDL cholesterol levels, protecting Luis against heart and blood vessel disease.

I also referred Luis to our social

services counselor to help him address the financial problems he has experienced due to his unemployment. CRHS has had the opportunity to help Luis through this financial hardship, as well as with the medical treatment and health education needed to manage his new lifestyle.

I am happy that Luis has reconnected with our clinic, which can serve as his medical home. 🌟

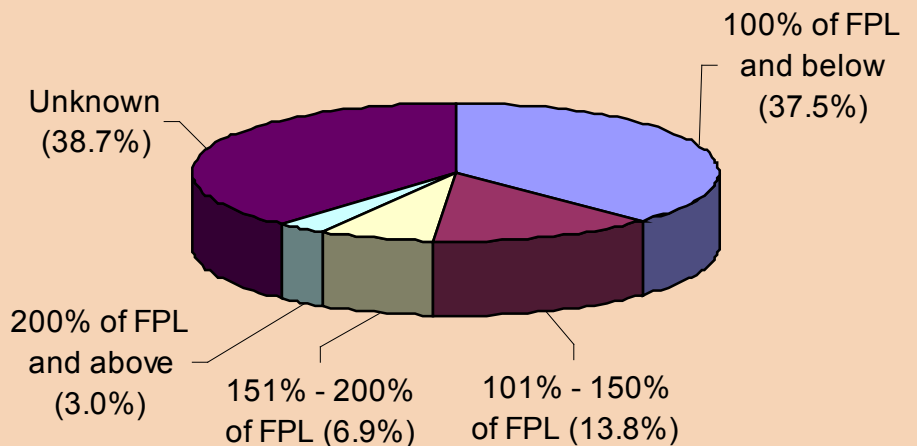
-Bill Jordan
CRHS Nurse Practitioner

*In order to maintain confidentiality, this patient's name and certain other identifying details have been changed



CRHS Patients by Income Level in 2010

Federal Poverty Level (FPL) in 2010 was \$22,050 for a family of four.



CRHS provides quality health care regardless of a patient's ability to pay. Your support helps make this possible. Thank you.

We thank the following organizations for their in-kind and logistical support to our wellness program:

- Sarah's Circle
- Organic India
- Madhava Agave
- Transformational Acupuncture
- DC Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs
- Aveda Institute
- Wilson Aquatics
- Firehook Bakery
- Smithsonian Latino Center



Wellness program participants practice yoga at their Saturday session!

Coming Soon!



Family Health and Wellness Classes

Learn how to eat healthy, maintain a healthy weight, exercise together, and HAVE FUN!

Who? Parents and Children Ages 5-15 years old



A young patient reads in the second floor waiting room.



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