

Baylor Black Sea Foundation
Romania



2022
Annual Report



Global Health
Network



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Network In Action



Global Health Network

Baylor College of Medicine

Summary statistics

- Program Funding
- People Reached
- Foundation Staff Employed

Botswana

- \$3,182,347
- 10,021
- 90

Romania

- \$873,790
- 10,357
- 39

Tanzania

- \$3,298,911
- 31,761
- 121

Colombia

- \$1,528,829
- 16,763
- 58

Lesotho

- \$19,190,668
- 334,859
- 383

Uganda

- \$35,050,896
- 3,351,247
- 520

Malawi

- \$18,229,632
- 675,473
- 1,332

Argentina

- \$691,734
- 2,657
- 24

Eswatini

- \$2,538,246
- 28,863
- 113

Collective Impact

\$84,585,054
Total Network Funding

2,680
Total Staff Employed

4,462,001
Total People Reached

10,561
Total Health Personnel Trained

As implementing partners of the Texas Children's Global Health Network, each foundation collaborates and shares knowledge for the purpose of collectively solving complex health problems both locally and globally.

THANK YOU

Sponsors

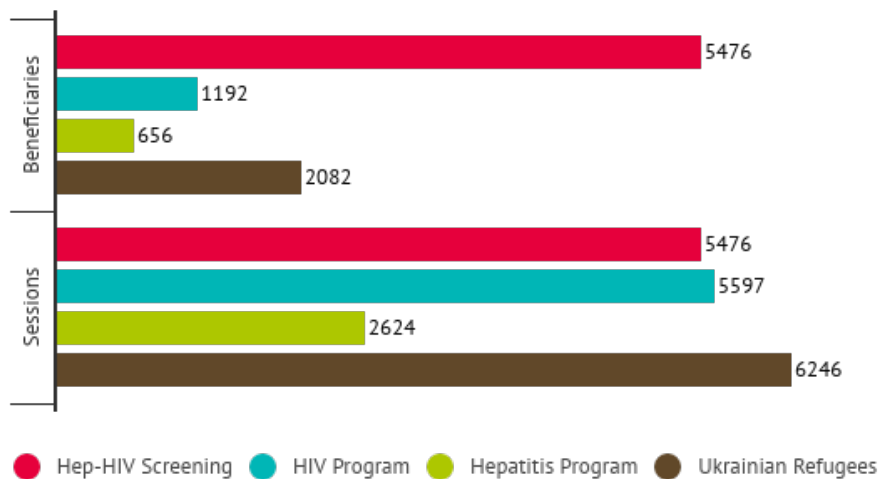
The generosity of our donors is what allows us to embrace projects that improve health and deliver quality health care in our community. Professionalism is the way we honor the financial support we receive. The secret to our long-standing partnerships with funders lies in the delivery of results that either meet expectations or go above and beyond expectations, demonstrating that our model may be successfully replicated. We cannot thank you enough for the generous contributions that support the operations of Baylor Black Sea Foundation in Romania: they make our work possible, our results reachable, and the lives of our beneficiaries better. Without this focused partnership, there can be no change!

“The results Baylor Black Sea Foundation gets each year in terms of improving the quality of life for people living with chronic infections is possible thanks to all our funders. Our donors share the same interest in living in healthier communities and support our programs ensuring the available resources to respond appropriately as challenges arise. Professionalism is the way we honor the financial support we receive.” – Monica Frangeti, Financial Manager.

The Way We Helped the Community in 2022



Total expenses: USD 873 790
= LEI 4 096 765





**Long-term
Supporters**



Global Health
Network



**Local
Community
Supporters**



Redirecting of 3.5% of tax, redirecting of 20% of tax.



**Community
donations**



In-Kind Supporters (goods/services)

Here's how you can help **Donate today!**

Baylor Black Sea Foundation

Fiscal code: 16810410

IBAN bank account: RO34 UGBI 0000 0320 1470 2RON
Garanti Bank Constanța

Garanti Bank clients can donate to Baylor Black Sea foundation directly through their online account (Payments/NGO donations)

We would like to thank to individual persons and private businesses who donated 3.5% of the income tax, respectively 20% of the profit tax to Baylor Black Sea Foundation.

You may choose to support one of our campaigns by making recurrent or one-time donations here: <https://www.fundatiabaylor.ro/campanie/>



Foundation Background

The Center for HIV Clinical Excellence or the Romanian American Children's Center was founded on April 6, 2001, and the Baylor Black Sea Foundation was legally established in 2004.

Baylor Foundation Romania is part of Texas Children's Global Health Network, a partnership between Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital, headquartered in Houston, Texas. It is the largest care and treatment network based at an academic institution supporting programs for children living with HIV. Texas Children's Global Health Network provides pediatric and maternal healthcare for vulnerable populations around the world.

The Clinical Center of Excellence was created to help the HIV-infected children of Romania in the late '90s. At the time of its establishment, the center was the largest pediatric clinic in Europe to provide care and treatment for HIV infected children.

The Clinical Center of Excellence of Baylor Black Sea Foundation furthermore extended its services, by employing the HIV/AIDS long term care experience, reaching out to people living with viral hepatitis, diabetes, COVID-19. Following the Russian military aggression over Ukraine, the Clinical Center of Excellence became in April 2022 an emergency care hub which facilitates access to medical care for the Ukrainian refugees, both in Constanța and at the Isaccea checkpoint.

Baylor Black Sea Foundation provides complex services at the Clinical Center of Excellence in Constanța and operates two counseling and testing centers in the Dobrogea region, as well as a mobile voluntary testing laboratory. Over the years, Baylor Black Sea Foundation has provided free-of-charge testing and counseling for approximately 100,000 people (96,408), long-term medical and psycho-social care for over 4,000 patients with HIV and hepatitis and supported the healthcare system with donations of medicines as well as professional training courses for healthcare professionals. 2022 marked the launch of the Ukraine Refugees Response program, which aimed to facilitate access to medical care for the population displaced by the horrors of war in the neighboring country.

The team of the Clinical Center of Excellence of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation specializes in providing the following services:

- Prevention of infectious diseases (HIV infection, hepatitis B and C, tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections, COVID-19);
- Testing and screening services for HIV, hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections;
- Direct treatment for the diseases mentioned above, diagnosed in the medical offices of the Baylor Foundation (pulmonology, obstetrics-gynecology, dentistry, dermatology, family medicine, family planning, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, psychiatry);
- Ensuring access to other treatments provided by the government for infectious diseases through public-private or private-private partnerships;
- Youth involvement and social activism.

Mission, Vision, Values

Baylor Black Sea Foundation's **mission** is to help the community develop effective services for the prevention and care of infectious and chronic diseases. Currently, Baylor Black Sea Foundation's status is that of a public utility organization. Baylor Foundation Romania provides prevention, treatment, and care for people affected by infectious and chronic diseases, namely viral hepatitis, HIV infection, and diabetes (type II).

Baylor Black Sea Foundation's **vision** is to live in a discrimination free community that's capable of stopping communicable and chronic diseases.

Our values

All people have the right to choose how to protect themselves from infectious diseases and the suffering these inflict at all levels (medical, social, psychological, etc.).

We believe that personal development, cooperation, and compassion are essential in adapting to life's challenges and crises.

We believe in the power of behavior change through ongoing support and education.



Executive Director Message

Every year, here at Baylor Black Sea Foundation, we do a practical exercise:

- We gather our data.
- We take a look at our results.
- We meditate upon our errors and shortcomings.
- We rejoice in our accomplishments.

As a team, we have learned that scrutinizing our work from time to time is an integral part of the growth process. Instead of going on an automatic pilot, simply repeating what we know to do every year, we try to stop and reflect. After all, looking at our results is not only a demand from the funding institutions and various donors; it is an act of being mindful of what has changed since we started.

For example, little did we expect, when we planned for 2022, that an armed conflict in Ukraine would start. With the help of our long-standing Texas Children's Global Health partners, we structured a response that aimed to relieve the emergency medical needs of the refugees from Isaccea and Constanta County. We have directly provided medical support to children and women from Ukraine, and thus we have expanded our programs into a domain we did not work on previously.

At the same time, we are committed to continue to provide high-quality, highly ethical care and treatment to patients living with HIV and viral hepatitis and to ensure continuity of multidisciplinary care. With the help and partnership of AbbVie Foundation, the Infectious Diseases Hospital of Constanta and the Country Hospital of Constanta, we tested, treated, and cared for over 10,300 persons in 2022 – either people living with HIV or chronic hepatitis, or Ukrainian citizen fleeing into safety in Romania.

Regarding the scientific and educational work, Baylor Black Sea foundation's team focused on showcasing what we have learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of patient navigators for persons living with viral hepatitis, the strategies we use to ensure service quality and fidelity in the prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission, the impact of our family planning program, and also the current situation regarding HIV stigma and discrimination.

Another area that we prioritize is the quality of services we provide and our healthcare providers' interpersonal and communication skills. In 2022, we did our first benchmarking evaluation regarding patients' perceptions of the communication skills of our employees, and this will become part of our current processes. Our objective is that the people who come to BBSF for services and care feel that they have a good experience, that their concerns are heard and that the interaction with the provider meets their needs.

Beyond the direct work we do for the patients and the healthcare providers, we were an active member of the HIV Outcomes Romania steering committee in 2022, advocating for the improvement of the National HIV Strategy in terms of including health-related quality of life indicators and focusing on the mental health and psychological well-being of our patients. Baylor Black Sea foundation joined the European COBATEST network which unites over 30 organizations with experience in community testing.

All these results were possible due to the dedication of our colleagues, who are extraordinary. Please join me in thanking our partners in Texas Children's Global Health Network! The knowledge shared throughout our network of Baylor Children's Foundations and Clinical Centers of Excellence make our work possible at the highest standards, dually improving health and enhancing the quality of life of our beneficiaries and their loved ones.



Infographic of Programs

Screening for HIV and Hepatitis B & C in the General Population

- At the screening centers in Constanța
- Outreach screening across Dobrogea region (Tulcea and Constanța Counties) serving a total population amounting 849,352 residents (according to the 2022 census)

Hepatitis Long-term Care Program (Beneficiaries & Sessions)

- Counseling sessions
- Medical services
- Prediabetes screening
- Linkage to care

HIV/AIDS Long-term Care Program (Beneficiaries & Sessions)

- Family medicine
- Child health
- Prediabetes Screening
- Women's Health – obstetrics/gynecology, family planning, pregnancy, prenatal screenings, HPV screening, fetal monitoring, newborn monitoring (18 months) and nutritional support
- Dermatology
- Pulmonology
- Dentistry
- Psychological counseling
- Social work

Education

- Health care workers simulation training – phlebotomy, intradermal and intramuscular injections.
- Students (medical, psychology & social work faculties).
- Psychologists
- Community education – teenagers and young adults' education
 - Communicable diseases,
 - Stigma and discrimination
 - Basic hygiene interactive activities at inclusive education institutions

Research

- Conferences
- Presentations
- Articles
- Posters

The Ukraine Refugee Response Initiative

- Immediate medical care at the Isaccea border checkpoint, Tulcea county, and Baylor COE in Constanta County (the project at the Isaccea border checkpoint unfolded during April-July)
- Guidance and support (referrals, booking appointments, accompanying consultations, translation by phone, covering expenses of prescriptions) for refugees needing specialized medical care
- Facilitating refugees' access to critical information (health-related, access to various services in Romania, etc.) by translating, printing, and disseminating it
- Housing



Hep - HIV Screening

Baylor Black Sea Foundation provides free-of-charge Hep-HIV screening in the general population since 2007. We are able to maintain the program's continuity in two fixed testing centers in Constanța and with the help of a mobile testing unit which allows the screening team to cover the two Dobrogea region counties, Constanța and Tulcea. The Hep-HIV screening program receives, since the beginning, funding from AbbVie Foundation.

Where we work:

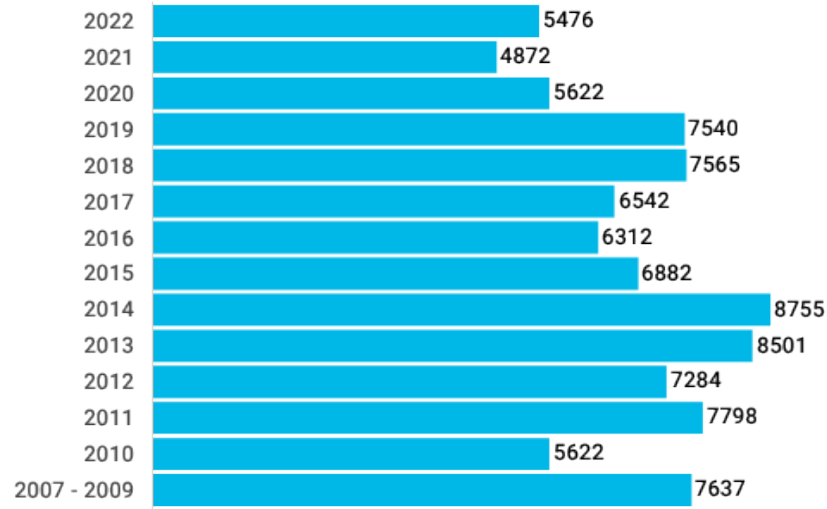
- The Clinical Center of Excellence of Baylor Black Sea Foundation
- The Hepatitis and HIV Voluntary screening Center, Constanța Clinical Hospital
- The Isaccea checkpoint (April – July 2022)
- Dobrogea region (Constanța and Tulcea counties) - outreach Hep-HIV screening, and long-term care (medical, psychological and social work services)



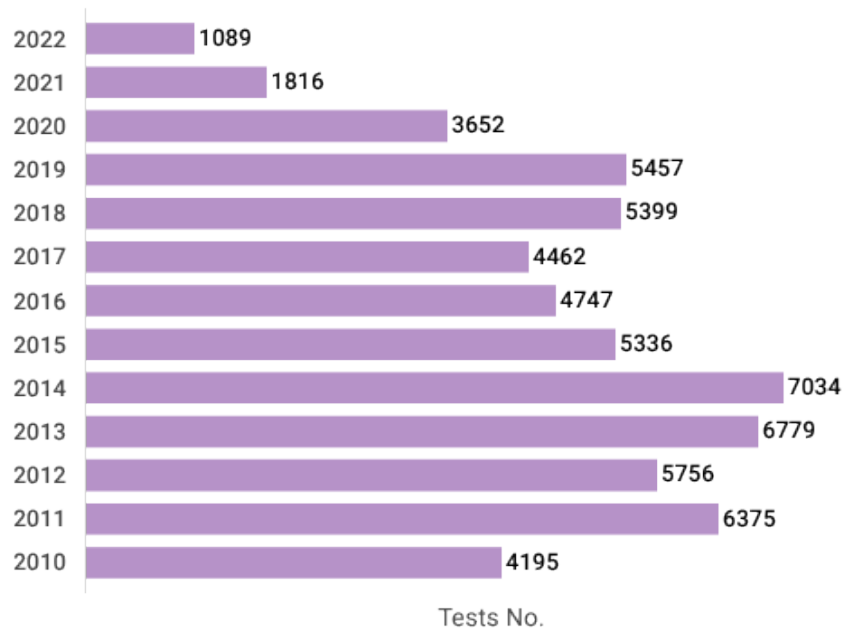
Overall HIV, HVB and HVC Voluntary Tests Performed at Baylor Foundation Romania



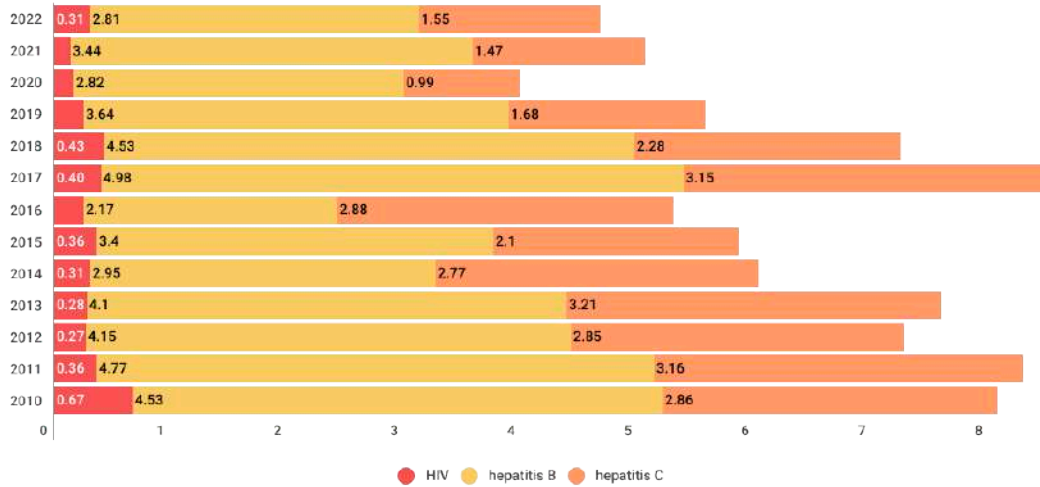
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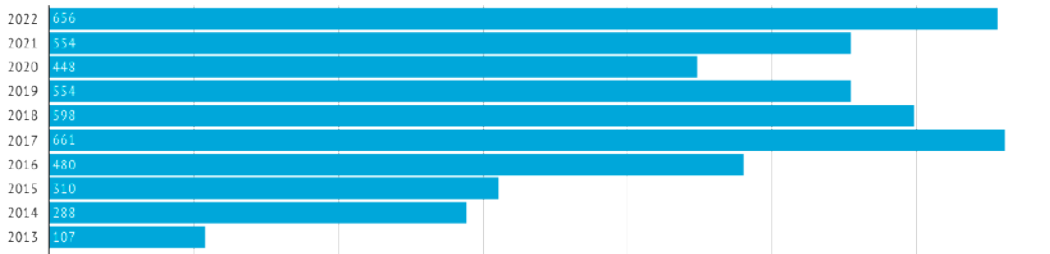
Voluntary Counseling and Testing for HIV and Viral Hepatitis B and C Mobile Testing Unit



HIV, HBV and HCV Prevalence Identified through the Voluntary Counseling and Testing Program at Baylor Black Sea Foundation



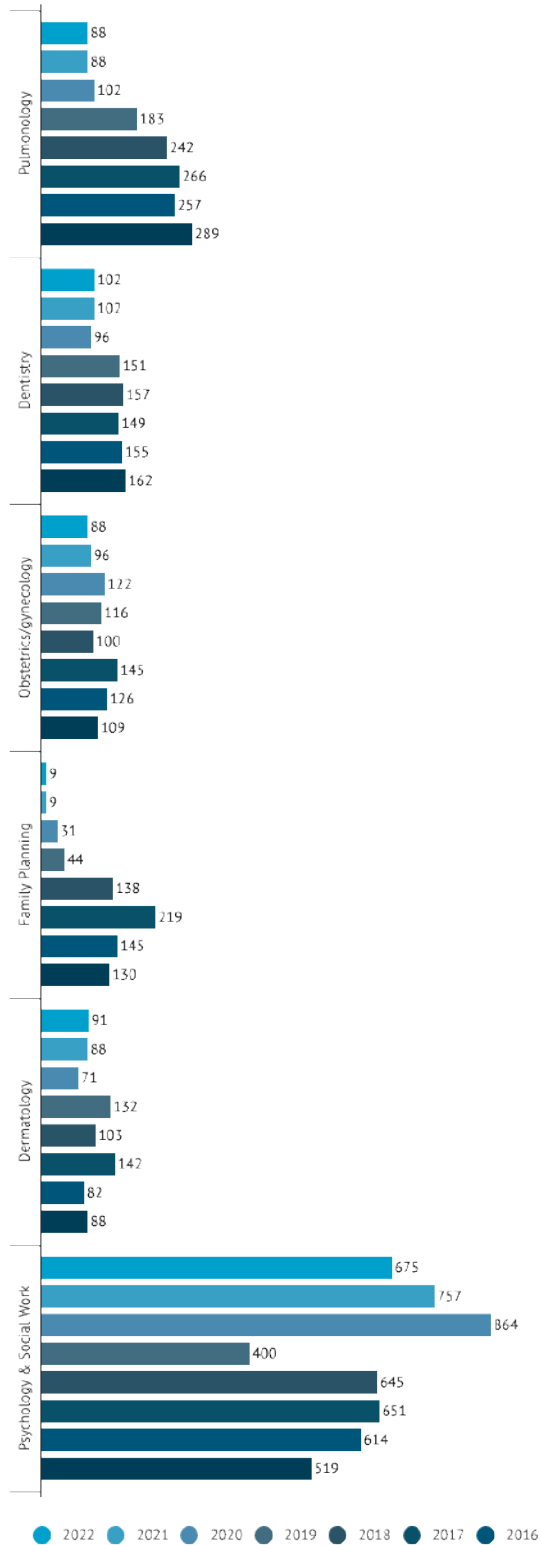
Active Patients with Viral Hepatitis Enrolled in Long Term Services



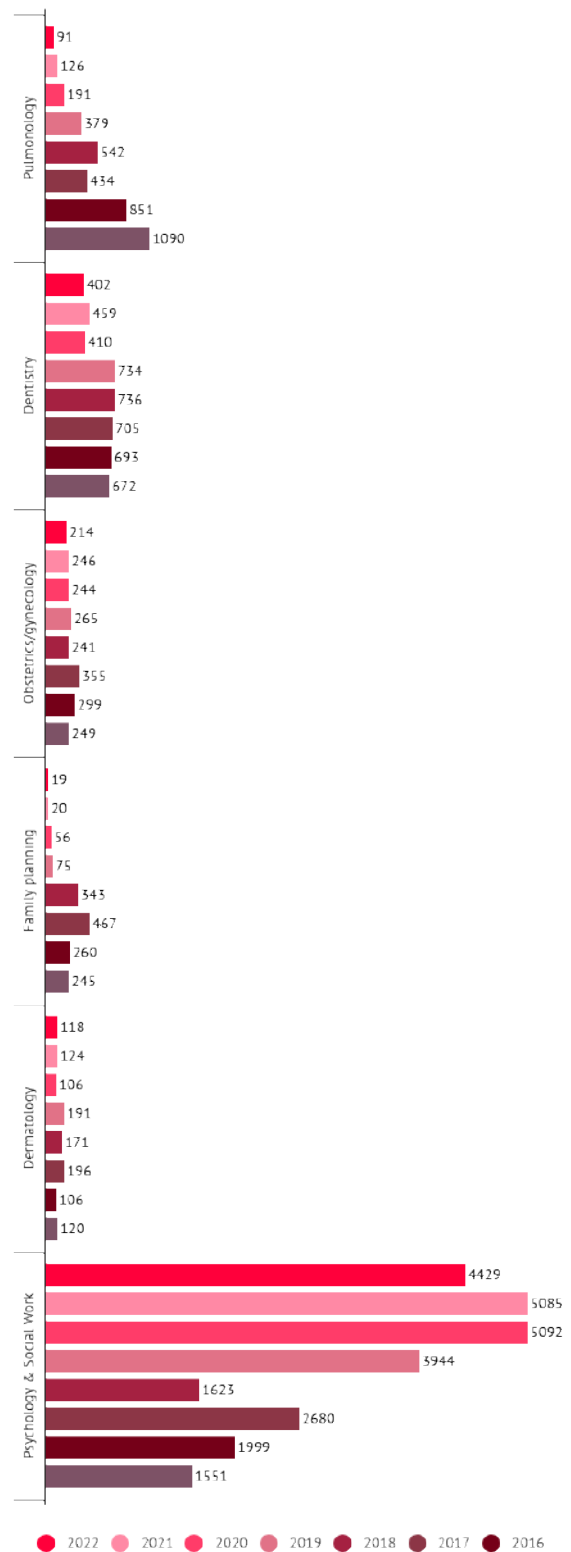
*patients receiving services under the first and subsequent services contract

HIV long term care program beneficiaries and sessions

HIV Patients Served at Baylor Black Sea Foundation

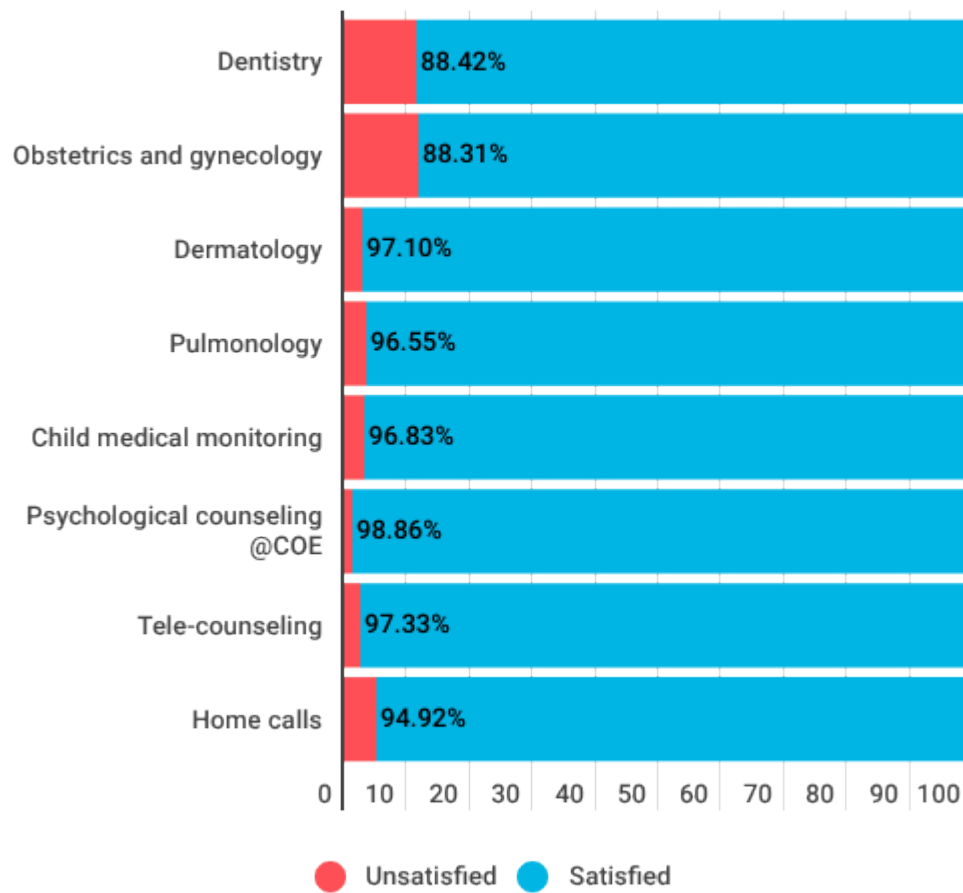


Sessions for the beneficiaries living with HIV



Satisfaction assessment

HIV Patients Satisfaction Assessment as per Requested/Accessed Services



n: 188

Program Highlights

Emergency Support for Ukrainian Refugees

The representatives of TCH Global Health and Baylor Black Sea Foundation carried out in March 2022, together with the Romanian officials, a quick and complete assessment of the situation of refugees from Ukraine in Dobrogea, identifying the needs for first medical aid at the regional and national levels in Romania. New ways of collaboration were also explored, to operationalize the most suitable ways of responding to the current humanitarian and health crisis.

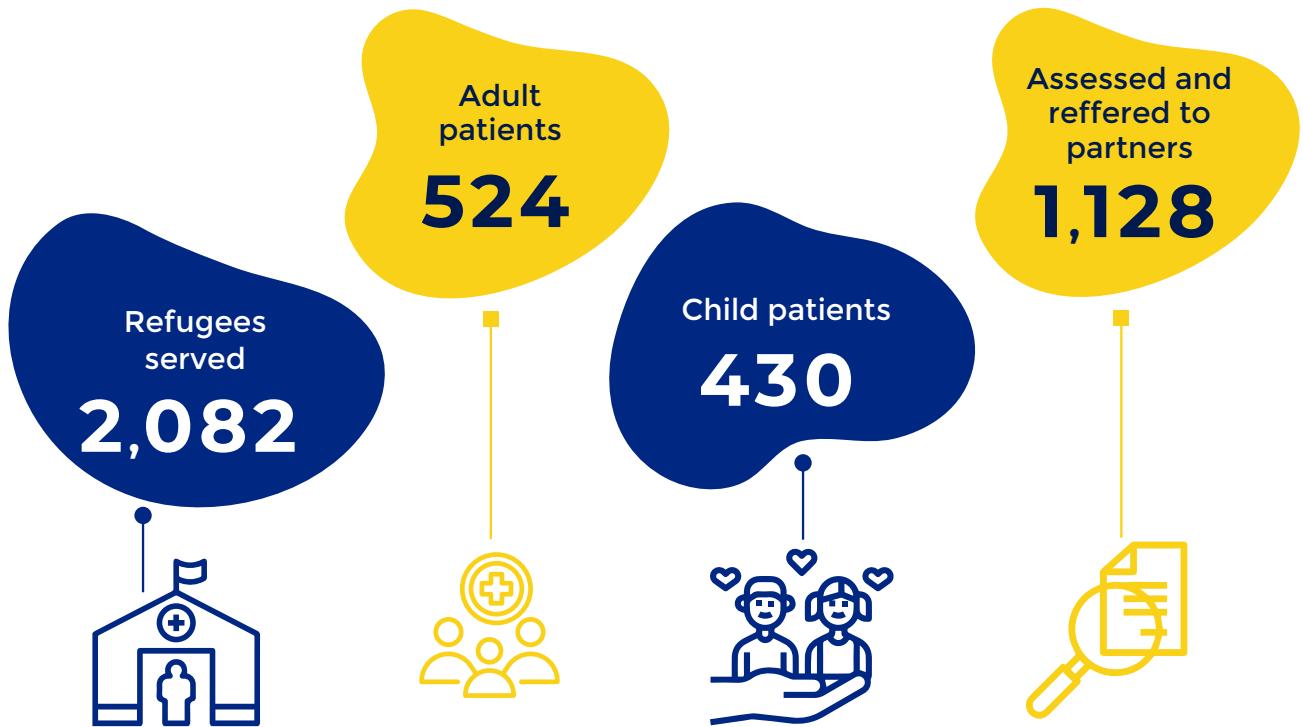
February 2022 turned Europeans from the states neighboring Ukraine into witnesses of the violent uprooting of more than 4 million citizens of this country. Most of them took refuge heading to countries with similar languages and cultures, such as Poland or Bulgaria. However, many chose to settle in Romania. Most refugees are women and children. Ukrainian women were forced to make painful choices: they left behind their husbands, sons, everything familiar to them to save the under aged children. They went great lengths to keep them safe, away from the traumas and privations of war.



The Baylor Black Sea Foundation mobilized from the early stages of the conflict on the Romanian border. With the help of donors from Texas Children's Hospital, the foundation meets the health needs of Ukrainians in Constanta.

Through the program launched in April, the foundation ensured immediate medical care both at the nearest border check point, in Tulcea county and at the Clinical Center of Excellence of Baylor Black Sea Foundation.

The program provided care for over 2,000 refugees, as well as guidance and support (referrals, booking appointments, accompanying consultations, translation by phone, covering expenses of prescriptions) for refugees needing specialized medical care. Refugees had the opportunity to access critical information (health-related, access to various services in Romania, etc.) through Foundation's website, translations, printed materials.



The Story of a Little Girl and her Mother

In July 2022, a mother of a 3-year-old girl came to the clinic to see the pediatrician. She was holding a big file with lab test results from the visit to the ER 10 days before, with the diagnosis of enterocolitis. She was very worried because the little girl still had pains in the abdominal area. The little girl was under treatment, but the pains were not subsiding.

Our pediatrician performed an abdominal ultrasound to further investigate what was going on. Following it, the diagnosis was hepatosplenomegaly, septate gallbladder. More lab tests were recommended to confirm the new diagnosis. Viral infection was also suspected, and an antiviral syrup was prescribed.

The little girl called again for a check-up after seven days.

At the end of the consultation, the mother also received some recommendations on her chronic disease: iron deficiency anemia; what lab test to take, and where and when to see a doctor.

Both patients left the Baylor medical office very pleased. Follow-up tests were also done at Baylor, and they had to come for the final check-up.

The girl's condition improved, and she was given the ok to be integrated into the community. At the beginning of September, she was enrolled in a local kindergarten.

“My name is Silaieva Victoria, and I want to thank the Baylor Clinic for helping me with free medical services and the free ultrasound, medication, and tests. Thanks to all the employees!”

“On behalf of the group from Odessa, I express our deepest gratitude for the warm welcome and attention given to our problems by the entire team of the clinic, and personally by Svetlana, translator and patient navigator.”

Eugenia Gonopolskaya

Ukraine Refugee Response Initiative

Baylor Black Sea Foundation's Frontline Staff



“I especially liked their compliance to treatment. Some of them came back for a check-up and I noticed parents had correctly administered the treatment and in the right dosage. I think that pediatric medical services are so much more important now, during the cold season. In Europe, international warnings about the flu viruses are already in place. Some deaths among children have been registered so I am happy that they come to us. We can help them with medical evaluations, lab tests, check-ups, and we can easily adjust to unforeseen situations.”

Maria Pătrașcu, BBSF's General Practitioner



“I was impressed by the adults' honesty. Although we gave them here, at the foundation, all drugs prescribed by the doctor, many times they refused to take the medication they already had at home. Many times, for example for the respiratory infections, the prescribed drugs were similar to the medication they had brought with them from Ukraine. So, in these situations, they only took the ones they didn't have. The same was with the adults suffering from chronic diseases that came to us for lab tests. I took it as a sign of appreciation for us, Baylor, providing free services to them. Although they were going through difficult times they were always thinking about the other refugees, who could benefit from what they already had.”

Florentina Constantin, nurse

“A grade 10 professional team, made of kind-hearted people. They nicely talked and accompanied the words with a smile.”

B., beneficiary of the long-term care program for people living with chronic hepatitis

“This is a wonderful Foundation, with excellent staff both from professional and behavioral point of view. Thank you very much, you provide a beneficial service to patients!”

V.M., a Voluntary Screening and Counseling program beneficiary



Continuous professional training for psychologists

Intervention skills in the assessment and counseling of patients with chronic diseases regarding therapeutic adherence is a continuous professional education training designed for psychologists as well as for medical staff working with clients/patients diagnosed with chronic conditions. By completing this course, the psychologists can better understand what adherence is, the importance of addressing this topic, what factors can influence it, and how the professional can build a systematic approach in a clinical context. The participants are provided examples collected by the Baylor Black Sea Foundation's team, while providing long term care to people diagnosed with chronic infections. Our team's experience may become the starting point of each psychologist, according to the clients' needs. The training is approved by the Romanian professional association of psychologists, with 20 credits for continuous professional education.

Since the launch of the educational program, in June 2022, 44 psychologists from all over Romania attended the course.



1,052 Children reached

5,066 Women reached



People reached with HIV services

6,793



Beneficiaries of the Emergency Support for Ukrainian Refugees project

2,082

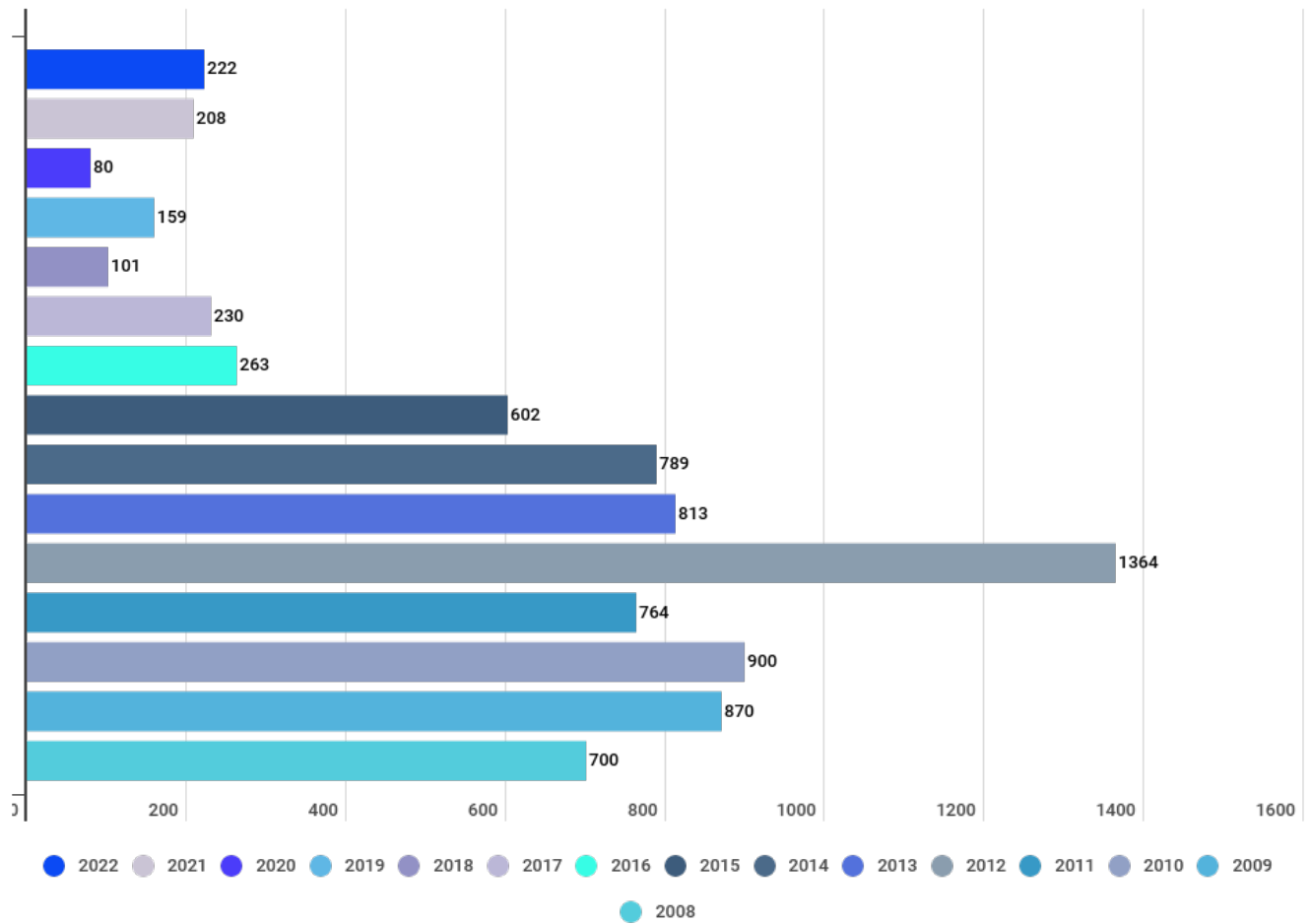


Professionals attended our continuous professional education programs

222



The Contribution of Baylor Black Sea Foundation to the Professional Development of Medical Staff



Testimonials

Continuous professional education

“Intervention skills in the assessment and counseling of patients with chronic diseases regarding therapeutic adherence”

“I am a patient navigator and the material you provide, the handbook as well as the video course, is extremely interesting! I chose to take this course for my training, in order to optimally approach patients. Thank you!”

Raluca Ileana Prodan, patient navigator

“The course on therapeutic adherence is very interesting. Congratulations on your work, presentation, and content. Thank you,”

Cristina Dobrea, clinical psychologist

“I can say that I really liked the structure of this course, the fact that it was divided into 2 parts with sub-chapters of a few minutes. It was very easy to go through, but at the same time, it focused on the essential things that were supposed to be remembered. When choosing Baylor Black Sea Foundation's offer, I went for this course after weighing the fact that one can go through the information at one's own pace. The course gave me the opportunity to check my knowledge both through the questions at the end of each video and through the final assessment. I highly recommend this course!”

L. I., clinical psychologist

“The training opportunity you provide should enjoy more visibility in our current psychological practice. Congratulations to the Baylor Black Sea Foundation team! The course you designed based on your team's experience adds value in the area of counseling and assessment of patients with chronic diseases. I appreciated that the evaluations were created from a broader perspective, not through questions with answers that can be directly extracted from the course content. This course is very well documented and conducted. I would certainly be interested in other courses done in the same way. I wish you success in everything you do!”

G.M., clinical psychologist

Affiliations

Baylor Black Sea Foundation joined the European Network COBATEST



Since the fall of 2022, and 15 years after the launch of the free Hep-HIV counseling and testing program, Baylor Black Sea Foundation has joined the European network COBATEST. The network facilitates collaboration between 30 organizations (28 in Europe and 2 in Central Asia) that offer services of voluntary testing and community counseling. The network was founded in 2009 within the Public Health Program of the European Union.

The Baylor Black Sea Foundation's affiliation will allow our organization to reevaluate our procedures and exchange best practices with other similar service providers in Europe. This way we will be able to improve the level of free counseling and testing services offered to the local community. It may also be a possibility to carry out partnership projects to promote and expand free testing services in the community.

The COBATEST network meeting was a good opportunity to find out which organizations offer similar testing services in Europe. The aim of the meeting was to identify ways in which the network can assist members in developing community testing services and the first step was to discuss the difficulties each organization faces, especially in the context of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine which has affected the functioning medical services in each country.

Baylor Black Sea Foundation initiated this study because information on HIV stigma and discrimination in Romania is limited and it has been many years since an assessment of the level of perceived stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with HIV has been done.

Why a study on stigma and discrimination? A previous study published by ARAS in 2007 showed that up to 52% of people living with HIV were discriminated against. What is the current situation and how could this information help us adapt our services to current patient needs? These were the questions that justified the initiation of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation's first study on stigma and discrimination.

What the results show:

95 people living with HIV and receiving services from the Baylor Foundation voluntarily participated in the study.

Most patients answered that they did not feel stigmatized or discriminated against in the last 12 months, but there remains 20% of patients who feel that they are treated differently, and 23% who can report situations in which they were actually disadvantaged because of the diagnosis of HIV infection. More specifically, 40% were discriminated against by friends, 35% by medical staff who do not routinely treat HIV (e.g., at occupational health services or maternity), and the rest were discriminated on the Internet (29%) or by employees of the public system, for example the Police (18%).

Here is what some of the discriminated patients say:

"I was admitted for a C-section and the staff there behaved very inappropriately towards me."
A patient says: "They were told I have AIDS and not to go near me because they will get it too."

Another patient states: "In occupational medicine, after I was asked if I was taking treatment for various diseases and I said yes, for HIV, the doctor passed this on to the employer. I was in trouble afterwards!"

Another aspect revealed by the study is that patients avoid being seen when they come to the HIV clinic for medication and care: 48% of respondents are cautious, careful to prevent situations of stigmatization and discrimination.

Solutions can come from the stigmatized and discriminated people themselves:

Patients recommended the following when consulted on...

- National information campaigns about HIV transmission - 52%
- Professional secrecy and confidentiality about people with HIV should always be preserved by the employees of the various institutions - 59%
- All people living with HIV should be taught how to defend themselves if they are wronged or mistreated- 53%
- Have easy-to-use avenues for people living with HIV to make complaints if they are denied services because of their diagnosis - 43%

“We note that stigma and discrimination have decreased in the last 15 years, if we refer to previous data, but more than 20% of patients still go through not only unpleasant but also traumatic experiences. At the Baylor clinic, patients are treated with respect and equality, and in many places things have changed for the better, but there is still much to be done. The results of our study can guide authorities and decision-makers in prioritizing anti-stigma and discrimination actions.” – Ana-Maria Schweitzer, Executive Director

*The study launched on December 1st - the International Day of Remembrance of AIDS Victims.



Conferences & Knowledge Sharing

Study I

Including Medical Navigators in Care Teams

Triples Care and Improves Quality of Service

The Baylor Black Sea Foundation is the first non-governmental organization that, since 2017, has included the patient navigator for people with hepatitis B and C in the multidisciplinary team. After 5 years, we set out to study to what extent medical navigators improve services.

Patient navigators for people living with viral/chronic hepatitis are designed to connect them to care services and to provide long-term follow-up for diagnosed patients who have already started therapy.

Before the decision was made to include patient navigators in the multidisciplinary team, the Baylor Black Sea Foundation registered a smaller number of beneficiaries, patients with chronic hepatitis, enrolled in long-term care services (see graphic). After 2017, the year this feature appeared in our organizational chart, we saw a significant increase in the number of patients requesting long-term care services and greater retention of beneficiaries.

The profession of medical navigator has been recognized in Romania for more than 8 years. This profession is more prevalent in oncology specialties, but other chronically ill patients also need the support and guidance that a patient navigator can provide. For example, patients living with viral hepatitis B and C have basic and great emotional and patient educational support needs as they continue their medical journey with treatment and long-term care.

The Baylor Black Sea Foundation is the first organization in Romania that included medical navigators in the multidisciplinary team. The effects were visible in a short time: the number of patients helped tripled, the percentage of those who were quickly taken over by specialist doctors increased to 80%. 98% of patients declared themselves satisfied with the services they received." - concluded the executive director of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation.

Among the responsibilities of a patient navigator there are:

- Counseling to disclose the diagnosis.
- Personalized lifestyle adaptation interventions to support beneficiaries' health goals.
- Orientation in the public health system to be able to benefit from all the necessary care services.
- Counseling for therapeutic adherence and following doctors' recommendations.
- Financial aid to cover the costs of medical tests.
- Advice on the rights they have in accordance with Romanian legislation, on the benefits provided by the state to people with chronic diseases.



During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of the patient navigator role increased: our colleagues provided essential information to patients to guide them to safely access the services they needed.” - Florentina Stoian, patient navigator.

References: “Patient Navigators for Persons Living with Hepatitis: A Needed Professional in the Multidisciplinary Team”, Schweitzer A, Stoian F, Bogdan M, Cîrjilă A, International Viral Hepatitis Elimination Meeting (IVHEM) 2022, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Baylor Black Sea Foundation representatives presented the outcomes of two of the studies carried out by our team to the professional community attending the International EECA INTERACT Conference on HIV, Hepatitis C and Tuberculosis in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The event took place in Riga, Latvia, on 13-14 December 2022. EECA Interact brings together scientists, clinicians, policy makers, patient representatives, and NGOs from Eastern European and Central Asian countries. Here, they jointly discuss the challenges facing countries in these regions, thereby improving both scientific capacity and transnational cooperation.

Study II

Retrospective Analysis of Reproductive Choices of Women Living with HIV and AIDS (WLHA)



As Baylor Black Sea Foundation has established sexual and reproductive services for WLHA since 2010 and family planning services since 2013. We looked back at the pregnant WLHA registered in our PMTCT program since 2013 with the goal of moving up WLHA's reproductive behaviors as recorded during service provision. If the WLHA had other births while living with HIV, before the evaluated period, these births were also included in the analysis. The group analyzed represented 50% of all WLHA, ages 15-50, enrolled in care at BBSF.

Conclusions:

- The average age at the first birth in our group is 24.78 - lower than the average at the national level.
- The number of children per family follows the same trend as the general population although it is yet to see how the data will change if the analysis is extended to include previous pregnancies.
- 9% had their first birth <20 years of age, a lower percentage than at the national level.

Study III

Ensuring Service Quality and Fidelity of Implementation for the PMTCT Program

Baylor Black Sea Foundation Romania has been providing Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) services for the past 20 years. The objectives of the PMTCT program:

- HIV-negative newborn status.
- Provision of adequate primary care at home.

After giving birth, women living with HIV (WLHA) struggle with keeping the medical appointments, following the vaccination schedule, poor skills for administering ARV's or for introducing of solid foods, etc.

Our team developed a PMTCT standard that:

- Includes information for improving basic abilities to care for newborns at home.
- Increases the adherence to PMTCT steps.
- Ensures that all PMTCT members use uniformly the materials.
- Ensures that all WLHA have access to information and monitoring.

The information, education, communication materials included: vaccination calendar, age-appropriate home activities for infants, HIV status evaluation calendar, infant feeding guideline, support guide for infant ARV administration, etc.

Conclusions:

- To be effective, the standard, beside the materials, takes into consideration factors related to the WLHA (time, means of communication, etc.).
- It includes an easy-to-use algorithm that helps design an individualized working plan with each WLHA.
- Close monitoring and use reinforcement are necessary, as it is a new standard.
- Quality control of the service provided is ensured by twice a month team meetings and data collection verification.
- The following step is to gather input from the WLHA receiving services under the new working standard.

Study IV

Even a Single Counseling Session Increases the Number of Patients Willing to Get Vaccinated

A Baylor Black Sea Foundation project demonstrated that patients living with HIV, if encouraged, can make important decisions about their own health, for example becoming more confident about COVID vaccination and presenting themselves for vaccination.

The vaccination program against COVID-19 was made available in Romania first to vulnerable groups and those at risk. People living with HIV/AIDS are one such group that has had priority for vaccination. In the context of widespread misinformation and debate about the need for vaccination, our team proactively assessed vaccination levels and intentions among the unvaccinated.

100 people living with HIV, who declared themselves undecided or unprepared to get vaccinated, benefited from an online or face-to-face counseling session provided by the foundation's health psychology specialists.

It is important for people living with HIV/AIDS to be able to discuss these health-related topics with a team member, especially when they are surrounded by misinformation. Collaboration with infectious disease physicians made it possible to clarify many preconceived ideas and correct erroneous information. The informative video materials made together with the doctors represented a credible source of reference for the beneficiaries. The counseling sessions were organized according to a pre-established, objective standard and were conducted both in the clinic and in the form of tele-counseling to respond as promptly as possible to the needs of the beneficiaries.

The experience of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation team shows that an increase in the intention to be vaccinated is possible among undecided patients, even when the intervention is limited to a single session.

The project helped approximately 32% of patients receive vaccination. They chose to act and take the necessary steps to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

This initiative helped demonstrate the importance of including the health psychologists in health projects. They can use behavioral change techniques that match patients' motivations, respond in a credible and convincing way to their fears and concerns, and finally, assist beneficiaries in making concrete action plans. In our healthcare system, such structured and professional support for patients facing important health-related decisions is rarely provided. We hope that our research will encourage collaboration with the multidisciplinary team and demonstrate, once again, that people make informed choices when they are supported.

“Behavioral Intervention for People Living with HIV/AIDS with Ambivalent Attitudes towards the COVID-19 Vaccine”, article published in Technium Social Sciences Journal, Vol. 36, 411-418, October 2022.



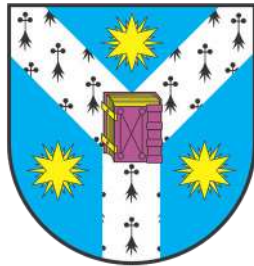
Romanian University Collaboration

The Psychology Faculty and Masters' programs' students in

- Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași, and
- Ovidius University, Constanța

Three of our long-term collaborator universities, attended a workshop on **“The adherence to treatment – the case of life-long treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS and provided long term care at the Clinical Center of Excellence of Baylor Black Sea Foundation in Romania”**.

The initiatives belonged to Daniela Muntele, PhD, Associated Professor at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, and Laura Giurgiu, PhD, Associated Professor at the Ovidius University.



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