

OCTOBER 23 - OCTOBER 29, 2019 • VOLUME 10 - No. 42

The **BRONX** FREE PRESS

The Community's Bilingual Newspaper
El Periódico Bilingüe de la Comunidad

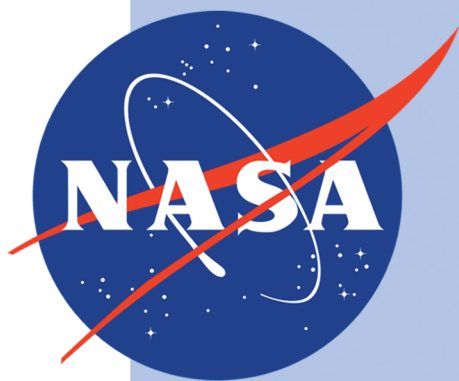


Rehab Retro

UCHC debuts anti-gravity treadmill

By Gregg McQueen

Zero gravity is grounding on Third Avenue.



The AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmill calibrates itself to an individual patient's weight.

Using technology developed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), physical therapy patients at the Union Community Health Center (UCHC) site are now healing faster – thanks to a new treadmill that employs space-age machinery.

The device uses NASA-based technology that allows astronauts to exercise in space.

With the AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmill, patients can run and walk without bearing their entire weight, reducing the impact on the body. Its technology uses air pressure to apply a lifting force to the body that reduces weight on the lower extremities, explained Josephine Dolera, UCHC's Director of Rehabilitation Services.

"It can remove the pressure up to 80 percent of their body weight," Dolera said. "Once the patient starts getting into that routine and pain-free walking, we can gradually increase the body weight to its normal level."

Patients are able to recover from injury and surgery faster, as they can begin doing partial weight-bearing exercises almost immediately, said Dolera.

"Recovery is much faster. That's why we're really advertising this to the doctors, because we want patients to be referred right away," she said. "Not many places have this in New York City."

The machine is only the third of its type in the Bronx, and the tenth overall in the city,



The Physical Therapy team.



Assemblymember Victor Pichardo aided in the necessary funding allocation.



"It's helping me heal faster," said patient John Garcia.

while UCHC becomes the first community health center in the borough to have one, according to UCHC officials.

Patient John Garcia has been using the machine for four weeks after suffering a gunshot wound in his leg.

"You don't feel any pain in the machine," he said. "At my house, I'm walking without crutches already. It's helping me heal faster."

"A lot of times, patients who are post-surgery or recovering from sprains and fractures, they are apprehensive about putting

weight on the legs because they're afraid of feeling pain," Dolera said. "This allows them to rehab without pain and it is much smoother for them."

The AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmill calibrates itself to an individual patient's weight. Their legs are sealed off inside a chamber where the air pressure can be adjusted to reduce weight-bearing. A harness holds the patient in place so they cannot fall.



"Recovery is much faster," said Josephine Dolera, UCHC's Director of Rehabilitation Services.

TECHNOLOGY from p8

Because the sensation of weightless walking can feel unusual to patients, the video screen allow patients to see when they should strike their heels.

"It felt a little weird at first, but then you get used to it," Garcia said. "I'll definitely be walking around normally soon because of it."

The machine shows patients and therapists how much weight is being put on each leg, so users can train themselves to walk correctly again.



"This will help ensure that they walk correctly," said Anash Balamadu, therapist.

"A lot of times people with an injury will end up walking with a slight limp because they were conditioned not to put any weight on their injured leg," said UCHC therapist Anash Balamadu. "This will help ensure that they walk correctly."

State Assemblymember Victor Pichardo helped secure a \$50,000 award from the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) for UCHC to purchase the machine.

"I'm proud to see that not only is this helping our neighbors, but that UCHC in the Bronx has access to this kind of technology," remarked Pichardo, who said patients often have to travel outside of the Bronx for specialized care. "We're trying to bring more of these innovative medical technologies into the borough so people don't have to travel as much and it's less of a burden to them."

"This very special piece of equipment is not widely available in the Bronx and we knew the impact it would have on residents who were in need, if we were able to offer it here," said Dr. Douglas York, Chief Executive Officer of UCHC.

The treadmill can be used for a broad population of patients of all ages, Balamadu said, but is also popular with athletes.

She recalled treating an athlete patient who was unable to run after suffering a severe leg injury, until he was able to try UCHC's machine.

"After using this machine, he was able to run for the first time in two years," she said. "He just started crying, he was so happy."

For more about Union Community Health Center, visit uchcbronx.org.



Garcia has been in therapy for four weeks.



"We knew the impact it would have on residents," said Dr. Douglas York, Chief Executive Officer of UCHC. (R)



The Bronx Chronicle

thebronxchronicle.com

NEWS EDITORIALS SPORTS PARTNERS VIDEO FEATURES SECTIONS ALL SECTIONS

Government, Health, News

NEW MOBILE DENTAL HEALTH VAN TO SERVE LOW-INCOME BRONXITES WITHOUT ACCESS TO DENTAL CARE

| October 20, 2019

By Robert Press

Telling the audience gathered at the Union Community Health Center located at 260 East 188th Street that seventy-four million Americans have no dental care Councilman Ritchie Torres said that there are seventy-four dentists for every hundred thousand NYC residents. He then said that in the Bronx there are only twenty-five dentists per hundred thousand residents. Councilman Torres then announced that he was providing \$334,000.00 to UCHC for a mobile dental van.



The facsimile check for \$334,000 given to Union Community Health Center by CM Torres. [Credit: Robert Press]



Councilman Torres giving facts about health and dental care, explaining his reasons for funding the mobile dental van. [Credit: Robert Press]

Dr. Douglas York said that the mobile dental van would cover the areas not served by the three current Union Community Health Centers which provide dental services. Dr. York said that the Mobile Dental Van would go to schools, shelters, and NYCHA centers to provide the much needed dental services to people who do not have any dental care.

Councilman Torres was asked a question about his vote on building four new borough jails, including one jail in the congressional district he is running where the residents of the Beekman-Diego Houses next to the proposed Bronx jail site were vehemently opposed to the new jail. Torres replied that he voted for the new borough jails because Kalief Browder was held for three years in solitary confinement, brutally beaten, and who committed suicide after being released innocent of any crimes. He added that Rikers was outdated, the buildings are falling apart, and that the eleven total NYC jails would now be only four jails that would be borough-based and much more humane.



An artist's rendering of what the inside of the mobile dental van would look like. [Credit: Robert Press]

The **BRONX** FREE PRESS

The Community's Bilingual Newspaper
El Periódico Bilingüe de la Comunidad

Air Rights

State Senators host asthma roundtable

By Gregg McQueen

Posted by: Postmaster In News November 14, 2019 0 Comments

The Bronx can't breathe.

The borough's residents are suffering from asthma at far higher rates than other parts of the state, with steep disparities between racial and ethnic groups.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 10 percent of New York City adults have asthma, higher than the national average. In some parts of the Bronx, the asthma rate is closer to 20 percent.

In addition, the asthma hospitalization rate for Bronx children is 70 percent higher than the rest of the city."



The borough's residents are suffering from asthma at far higher rates than other parts of the state.

On Thurs., Nov. 14, Bronx State Senator Gustavo Rivera, Chair of the Standing Committee on Health, and Senator Todd Kaminsky, Chair of the Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation, hosted a day-long roundtable discussion on asthma at **Union Community Health Center (UCHC)**.

The roundtable brought together health care professionals, researchers and community partners for a discussion on factors contributing to asthma rates in the borough and possible actions to mitigate it.

Also taking part were State Senators Alessandra Biaggi and Luis Sepúlveda.

"The rate prevalence of asthma cannot be overstated here in the Bronx," said Dr. Douglas York, President of **UCHC**. "We have presentation rates of up to 20 percent of our patients."



Senators Gustavo Rivera and Todd Kaminsky served as hosts.

"It's important to talk about some of the challenges that exist, and what we can do to address this," said Rivera, who has suffered from asthma in the past.

Dr. Karen Warman, a pediatrician at Montefiore, said that home environment factors are a major contributor to asthma rates.

"In some of our studies, we have 60 percent of families with cockroaches at home, 50 percent with visible mold, and these are things that affect [breathing] as allergens and airway irritants," she said.

"A useful lens by which to view everything is the environment," said Dr. Cappy Collings, Director of the LI Children's Environmental Health Center. "Yes, the places you live, the places we go to school, they all have factors that contribute to asthma. But it gives us a real chance to do something because we construct the environments. We can make environments that are healthier."

The **BRONX** FREE PRESS

The Community's Bilingual Newspaper
El Periódico Bilingüe de la Comunidad

Mychal Johnson, community activist with South Bronx Unite, pointed out the high amount of vehicle pollution in the borough due to the numerous highways and truck traffic from the Hunts Point Terminal.

"We have thousands of trucks going right by neighborhoods, hospitals, and schools every day," Johnson said. "The trucks are a real serious contributor to why we can't breathe."

He also remarked that the Bronx lacks green space to mitigate the effects of pollution.



The roundtable.

"In our community, we have one park, St. Mary's. The rest are playgrounds," he said.

Dr. Marina Reznik, Professor of Pediatrics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, said that asthma patients sometimes fail to seek routine care.

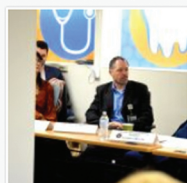
"They feel a little better, and then they don't come back, so we need to address that," she said.

Noting that 10 percent of her patients are uninsured, UCHC Director of Rapid Care Dr. Jae Ahn said that costs are often a burden to patients treating asthma.

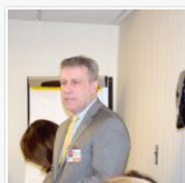
"A lot of times, they can't afford the medications, which can be \$350. They have to pay their rent, they have to pay for food," she said. "We give them the tools we think they need, but they can't pay for it."

Kaminsky said his goal for the forum was to get down to "brass tacks."

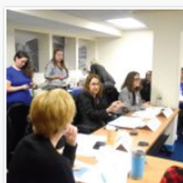
"We have the ability, being the majority, to go up to Albany to start creating policies and having discussions about what we can do to lower asthma rates," he said.



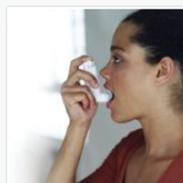
"A useful lens by which to view everything is the environment," said Dr. Cappy Collings.



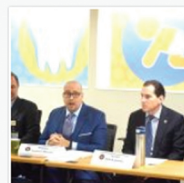
"The rate prevalence of asthma cannot be overstated here in the Bronx," said Dr. Douglas York, President of UCHC.



Dr. Karen Warman, a pediatrician at Montefiore, said that home environment factors are a major contributor.



The borough's residents are suffering from asthma at far higher rates than other parts of the state.



Senators Gustavo Rivera and Todd Kaminsky served as hosts.



The roundtable.

The **BRONX** FREE PRESS

The Community's Bilingual Newspaper
El Periódico Bilingüe de la Comunidad

Aromatherapy on the Agenda

Mind-body therapy at center of anti-opioid program

By Gregg McQueen

Posted by: Postmaster | In News | December 23, 2019 | 0 Comments

Alicia González was tired.

Beset with pain and stress, the Bronx resident had been dealing with a chronic back ailment while caring for a 13-year-old autistic son. Her son's autism had created anxiety that caused her to stay home and not venture outside.

"I wasn't used to going out," Gonzalez said. "I would get him ready for school and sit home. I also didn't look to do activities with my son outside of home. My whole body was in so much pain."



"My whole body was in so much pain," recalled Alicia González.

Recently, González took part in a month-long program at **Union Community Health Center (UCHC)** whose participants were reliant on opioids to treat chronic pain or were diagnosed with having experienced some sort of trauma or stress.

Held in November as part of Mental Health Awareness Month, the program included 14 Bronx residents who were taught "mindfulness-based treatment" such as yoga, meditation, aromatherapy, psycho-education, and stress management as an alternative to the use of painkillers.



Participants learned aromatherapy techniques.

González reported that the program has helped improve her quality of life.

"It helped me control my anxieties with my son. I now take him outside more and feel more confidence in myself," she said.

González has also lost eight pounds and is experiencing less back pain, she said.

The four-week program was made possible by a grant from CVS Health.

Mildred Casiano, **UCHC's** Director of Behavioral Health, said that seven of the 14 participants were opioid users, relying on painkillers such as Percocet, Dilaudid, gabapentin, and codeine.

She said that patients often find it difficult to stop using opioids once they take them for a period of time.

"It's an addiction. Your body craves it. It's accustomed to having it," she said.

The **BRONX** FREE PRESS

The Community's Bilingual Newspaper
El Periódico Bilingüe de la Comunidad

Casiano explained that **UCHC** is attempting to address the opioid epidemic in the Bronx by finding innovative remedies to assist patients reduce their reliance on such substances.

Three out of the five New York City neighborhoods with the highest rates of opioid related-deaths are located in the Bronx, according to the city's Health Department, while overdose death rates in Hunts Point/Mott Haven and Highbridge/Morrisania were more than double the city's average in 2017.

"It's definitely a crisis in this borough and we want to do our part to reduce it," said Casiano.

In November, the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) published a study on mind-body therapies such as meditation, hypnosis, relaxation, and cognitive behavioral therapy and concluded that these treatments were effective in pain reduction and opioid-related outcome improvement among adults using opioids for pain.

These therapies were associated with improved pain and reduced opioid dose, the study said.

"It's an evidence-based treatment for substance abuse," said Christina Albanese, Health and Wellness Group Program Facilitator at **UCHC**. "These are things that people can do instead of relying on opioids or other substances."

"The goal is to get patients to think differently," explained Licensed Social Worker Ada Lugo. She said most of the **UCHC** program participants were being treated for depression, social anxiety, and PTSD.

"Nobody wants to be in pain. But there are things other than medication that are helpful," she said. "Learning to deal with stress will help their physical health."



Bronx resident Vilma Delgado has been coming to **UCHC** for more than a year for back pain issues and stress.

She said she enjoyed the group dynamic of the program on mindfulness-based treatment.

"All of us connected and we helped each other. We all leaned on each other," she remarked. "We were able to learn from each other and we became friends outside of the session."

"We want to do our part to reduce [the crisis]," said **UCHC**'s Director of Behavioral Health Mildred Casiano.

She said that discussing her issues in a group setting proved to be beneficial.

"There's a lot of people who are ashamed. You don't need to be ashamed of what you're going through," Delgado said.

Albanese, who ran the sessions, said the group talked about the mind-body connection in terms of dealing with stress or anxiety.

"Everything we did was related to practical applications that the patients could use outside the sessions, teaching them things to do at home," said Albanese.

The **BRONX** FREE PRESS

The Community's Bilingual Newspaper
El Periódico Bilingüe de la Comunidad

Participants learned aromatherapy techniques and were given diffusers to take home.

"I meditate at home now and use aromatherapy," Delgado said. "It really works, and I feel completely different than before."

Casiano reported that two of the opioid users who participated in the mindfulness-based treatment sessions have stopped their use of pain medications.

"They said they're no longer opting for painkillers, and are relying on the techniques they learned in the group," she said.

Patients sometimes think, 'I can't do it without medication,'" said Lugo. "It's about motivating patients to do something different than they're used to. What this group did is raise awareness that there are other things that are helpful."

Casiano said the grant from CVS Health is for a period of one year, which will allow **UCHC** to offer another session of the program. Next time, the classes will be conducted in Spanish, she said.

"It's what patients have requested," said Casiano. "We'd like to be able to offer this all the time. It's all based on the funding."

Casiano explained that **UCHC** employs a collaborative care model, where the different clinicians responsible for a patient's care will communicate with each other.

"We're no longer working in a silo. Everyone speaks to one another. We share the same electronic records, so we see what's going on with the patients at all times."

Since completing the program, González has revived her dream of pursuing a career as a fashion designer.

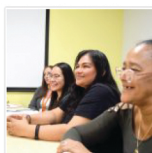
"Before, I was being held back," she said. "Now, I'm not going to give up."



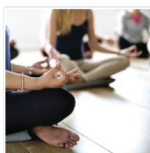
"The goal is to get patients to think differently," explained Social Worker Ada Lugo.



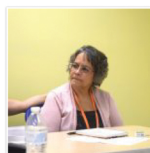
"It's an evidence-based treatment," said Christina Albanese, Group Program Facilitator.



The program is focused on a group dynamic.



"Mindfulness-based treatment" included practices such as yoga and meditation.



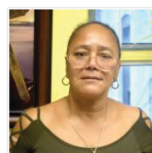
"The goal is to get patients to think differently," explained Social Worker Ada Lugo.



"My whole body was in so much pain," recalled Alicia González.



"We want to do our part to reduce [the crisis]," said **UCHC's** Director of Behavioral Health Mildred Casiano.



"All of us connected and we helped each other," said Vilma Delgado.



Participants learned aromatherapy techniques.



For more information on **Union Community Health Center**, please visit uchcbronx.org.