



MESSAGE OF HOPE

FALL 2025

Walking the Road of Healing Together

One of the main ways we continue to receive God's goodness at Esperanza Health Center is through transformation and health in our patients' lives. The process of walking the road of healing with our patients is often a long journey, one that may be uneven at times, yet we continue to see the amazing ways God is at work to bring renewed hope, healing, and restoration. Earlier this year, during an Esperanza staff retreat, our Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Tim Leaman, shared a story about transformation for one such patient, Brenda*.

Our journey walking with Brenda as a patient at Esperanza started when she first came to us as a new patient over 15 years ago, suffering from chest pain and breathing difficulty. Almost immediately after that initial visit, she was admitted to Temple University Hospital with heart failure, which was eventually diagnosed as Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy, also known as "Broken Heart Syndrome." This serious condition, which is often triggered by severe emotional stress, happens when the heart muscle actually changes shape and is suddenly weakened. As a result, Brenda's heart was pumping at only a tiny fraction of what was needed. After a period of hospitalization and treatment, Brenda's heart symptoms partially stabilized, and she returned for follow-up care in the office. We learned that Brenda's son had recently committed suicide, and that she was in a complicated relationship with someone struggling with substance use. We also learned that she was struggling with severe anxiety and was attempting to manage herself with high doses of benzodiazepines that she obtained off the street.

Brenda then met with our behavioral health staff and our team as we tried to provide the support and care she needed. During another of Brenda's early visits to Esperanza, she was there on the same day as one of our volunteer chaplains, Pastor Joe*, who happened to also be on the pastoral staff of a church up the street from our site. Brenda and Pastor Joe connected that day, and he invited her to church. She started attending church regularly and recommitted to her faith, which she identifies as what turned her life around.

While bumpy patches continued, as Brenda continued to receive care at Esperanza and became connected with her new church, she got free of her street drug dependence and eventually off all benzodiazepines. She was also connected to a place to live.



Tim Leaman, MD, Chief Medical Officer

The Heart Behind Esperanza's Dental Care

At Esperanza Health Center, we seek to walk alongside patients through all their health needs, including dental health. Located on the second floor of our Kensington site, our Dental Clinic has been providing services since early 2008, when it operated from a small space with three dental chairs at our first Kensington site. For more than 17 years, our dedicated Dental team has provided high-quality, bilingual primary dental services for thousands of patients from our North Philadelphia community, many of whom do not have dental insurance, and has built a reputation of trust with patients of all ages.

The Dental team has had to adapt to some significant and unexpected challenges over the past few years. Only months after the opening of our new Kensington health center, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the Dental team had to discontinue in-person care for many months. During that time, they contributed in other ways, including support for our COVID-19 testing and vaccination efforts and staffing our call center. They also had to reimagine how they would prioritize patients' oral health in a virtual world. We're grateful that today, the Clinic is now back to full capacity with a dedicated team including four dentists, two hygienists, dental assistants and other team members all working together to provide excellent care. This has enabled them to increase their capacity to accept new patients, as well as to serve our existing patients.

(continued on page 4)



New Pharmacy Opens at Esperanza

We're excited to announce that we have recently opened our new **Esperanza Pharmacy** at our Kensington and Hunting Park clinic locations, in partnership with RiteChoice, the Philadelphia-based company that manages our Pharmacy. The new pharmacies will replace our dispensaries, allowing us to offer a broader range of medications, free home delivery, and on-site pharmacist counseling and education. Juan Perez, Chief Operations Officer, shared: "This has been a long-standing goal for Esperanza and will go a long way to securing our patients' access to needed medications amidst the many closing retail pharmacies in our service areas." Having the Pharmacy located within Esperanza's sites will provide not only greater convenience for patients to pick up their medications, but also more coordinated care with the pharmacist and Esperanza's provider team. Said Adam Accay, CEO of RiteChoice: "This partnership will help fill a significant gap in patient care and bring stable, affordable, and reliable pharmacy services back to our patients and our neighborhoods!"



Photo (L to R): RiteChoice staff members at our Hunting Park site's Pharmacy - Pedro Morales, Lead Pharmacy Technician and Sevki Yardim, PharmD, Pharmacist.

Introducing our Newest Physician - Dr. Ronnie Shade, Jr.

We're delighted to welcome our newest medical clinician, **Ronnie Shade, Jr., DO**, who joined Esperanza's staff in October as a Family Medicine Physician. Originally from Texas, Dr. Shade earned his Master of Health Sciences from Drexel University College of Medicine and his Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. We spoke with Dr. Shade recently and learned about what inspired his career and motivated his new journey at Esperanza, as well as some fun facts about him!

What led you to pursue a career as a physician? "I decided to pursue a career as a doctor because I always had a curiosity and felt moments of powerlessness, especially as a caretaker for my grandmother. I witnessed the difficulty of navigating barriers and decided to one day become a doctor on the frontlines to help alleviate this dilemma."

What drew you to Esperanza Health Center? "I knew about Esperanza a long time ago, as I would often encounter physicians such as [Esperanza Family Medicine Physician] Dr. Dom Derenge during small groups at our church, on medical mission walks throughout the neighborhood, and during residency. I was drawn to Esperanza after I spent a day shadowing Dr. Leaman. It was amazing to see prayer incorporated into the visits, and I felt very welcome in the space. Everyone was very kind and warm. It felt like a small community of love and compassion."

What impact do you hope to make while at Esperanza? "I hope to demonstrate love to my patients and to make them feel like they are cared for. I want to make an impact on my patients and their generation by empowering and motivating them. With Esperanza's support, I believe that we have the tools of comprehensive care to deliver this impact."

What are some passions or hobbies you have outside of work? Are there any fun facts that people do not know about you? "I love to travel, work out, and I am a huge foodie. I've already received so much food at Esperanza, so I know I'm at the right place! A fun fact about me is that I can play the sousaphone, which is also known as the tuba. I always tell people that my high school band was invited to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, but we didn't fundraise enough to attend."



Ronnie Shade, Jr., DO, Family Medicine Physician

JOIN US IN OUR MISSION!

Here are some ways you can be involved:

GIVE: Visit esperanzahealth.com/donate to make a secure, online gift or scan the QR code.

JOIN US: Learn about current openings at esperanzahealth.com.

SERVE: Interested in volunteering? Please contact volunteer@esperanzahealth.com.

PRAY: Thank you for your prayers for us as we seek to fulfill our mission!



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Esperanza Health Center
Compassionate Care For Everyone

Walking the Road of Healing Together (continued from page 1)

Pastor Joe and his wife, who lived very close to Brenda, bought her a bike to get around the neighborhood and helped her feel more a part of the church community. Brenda is now able to work part-time, has no chest pain or heart symptoms, has stopped smoking cigarettes, and has her anxiety under control. She continues to show up at visit after visit with a bubbly, unmistakable joy. As Brenda has shared, "I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Esperanza."

As Dr. Leaman reflected: "Almost every time she's here, I hear her tell someone how grateful she is. In Brenda's life, we see how the healing that Jesus offers touches every part of us—heals our bodies, restores our spirits, tends to our emotions, and sets us in community. We rejoice in the transformation that Brenda experienced, and know that Jesus desires that both we and our neighbors continue to experience healing like this."

"I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Esperanza."

- Brenda, a long-time patient

Esperanza's Dental Care (continued from page 2)

God has given each staff member a unique personality and diverse gifts that drive the Clinic's operations. With several staff members who have all been with the Clinic for 10 or more years, they have been able to build meaningful relationships with our patients. One way they have done this is by reframing their approach to care and meeting their patients where they are. There are multiple reasons a patient may come to them for restorative care right away, rather than seeking preventive care first.



Luis Shackelford Peña-Taylor, Dental Assistant

Calvin Hoops, Dental Practice Administrator, began as a dental assistant when the clinic started in 2008 and eventually moved into his current role. He expressed that the whole team is committed to not just providing temporary aid to patients, but also empowering them to make wise oral health decisions and take charge of their home care for the long haul. Esperanza's Lead Dentist Amy Liao, DDS, who joined the team in 2009, has evolved in her practice over time and aims to walk alongside each one of her patients in setting and achieving their health goals. As dental fear and anxiety are prevalent in our community, she is interested in her patients' past experiences in the dental chair as well as their motivation in maintaining their smiles. Dr. Liao shared: "These days I spend a lot of time trying to educate patients about how marketing by the beverage, processed snack and tobacco industries influences our choices. I often show patients and caregivers where to find and how to read nutrition labels. When we are more aware of the factors that affect our consumption, we can seek the right support to encourage us in improving our diet."

God's provision has allowed the Dental Clinic to continue providing major restorative care as one of its services to our patients across all sites. Your prayers and support go a long way toward ensuring that these services are maintained at their current capacity and, through faith, create room for growth.

"May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you." ~ Numbers 6:25