

Healing with *Care*



At Clarity Psychiatric Care, patients of all ages have access to mental health treatment in a boutique-style practice.

by LIZ HUNTER
photography by ALISON DUNLAP

Until just a few years ago, for most people, personal health care encompassed routine physicals, dental cleanings or screenings for diseases. The missing component was mental health, an aspect of a person's well-being that has been least discussed and most limited in access. However, the topic has come to the forefront in recent years, with everyone from medical professionals to celebrities and politicians chiming in on the conversation, leading individuals to seek out treatment.

Located in Haddonfield, Clarity Psychiatric Care is a formulation of a boutique private practice, co-owned by doctorally prepared nurse practitioners Amy Carnall, DPN, APN-BC, RNFA, and Cristina Sertway, MSN, APN, PMHNP-BC. They took the leap to step out on their own with an innovative initiative, in spite of the risk. Together, with persistence and drive, they arrived on a mission statement: "The Spirit to Care. The Skill to Heal." For Carnall and Sertway, failure is not an option.

"Mental illness afflicts approximately one in four individuals. Suicide is the third-leading cause of adolescent death. Bullying has reached epic proportions. Addiction is a devastating disease process that affects entire systems of care," says Dr. Amy Carnall, DPN, APN-BC, RNFA. "Mental health is real and we are encouraged that there has been an increasing awareness. However, federal and state dollars need to match the mission statements of political platforms. Awareness includes providing avenues for patients to access care. In our estimation, access to care remains limited at best."

Clarity Psychiatric Care serves a broad range of patients. Sertway provides care to patients across their lifespan, with a focus on young adult and adult populations. Her patients often present with OCD, anxiety, mood disorders (anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder), eating disorders, addiction and

complex psychiatric conditions, as well as perinatal psychiatry. Carnall serves a population much younger who are afflicted with mental health and/or developmental issues (autism, ADHD, sensory deficits), complex family dynamics, psychiatric co-morbid symptomatology and PANDAs/PANs. (Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with streptococcus is the sudden, rapid-onset of obsessive compulsive behavior following a streptococcus pyogenes infection and PANs is Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome associated with a variety of different infections.)

When patients first come into the office, they are immediately made to feel at home in a soothing environment. "People, in general, benefit from being in an environment that is nurturing, supportive and non-judgmental. We remain mindful of this inclusive of our paint choices on the walls, décor and inspirational positive affirmations. Our social media also boasts positivity and is a place for people to turn to when they need inspiration, affirmation, or encouragement that they are not alone," says Carnall. "Our patients typically feel a sense of calm, warmth and caring

professionals/environment that de-stigmatizes mental illness and often allows for a gateway to wellness."

Aside from being welcomed by the human staff, patients will also meet some furry friends in the office. "We are very motivated and excited to offer support animals to aid our patients in times of need," says Sertway. "Our dogs are either in the process of training or trained to support patients in feeling relaxed during session. Assistance from animals is emerging and we are excited to offer this unique approach to further assist patient wellness."

Treatment is not one-size-fits-all. First, Sertway and Carnall must take a thorough history and detailed psychosocial presence, but the appointment is really led by the patient, they say, in a free-flowing conversation that helps develop a treatment plan that all parties are in agreement with.

An interdisciplinary approach is often one avenue to explore. "Patients get better when they are treated holistically. This means that collaboration and coordination is paramount for successful treatment outcomes. However, this is guided by the patient. If patients would like to remain desecrate and not engage their other team members, consideration and respect is taken by our team to honor such requests. However, most patients appreciate the collaboration," says Carnall.

Psychopharmacology could be another key component in management of development and psychiatric issues. But again, careful consideration must be made before implementing, says Sertway. "Psychopharm often lifts the symptomatology and allows patients a better quality of life, relief from typically debilitating illness and better engagement in therapy."

The two practitioners believe in treating each patient and their family as they would their own family and friends, and recognize the courage it takes to reach out for help. "We believe that when patients or a family member makes the call to our office it is the first step in engagement in treatment. It is important to get patients into the office within the week as to not delay their journey to mental wellness," says Carnall. ♦

Clarity Psychiatric Care

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