

## SUCCESS STORY

### ADVANCING PARTNERS & COMMUNITIES

# COMPASSION COMPLEMENTS CLINICAL CARE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

## BACKGROUND

Manuel is one of 1,822 patients on antiretroviral therapy (ART) at Clínica de Familia's HIV clinic in La Romana province of the Dominican Republic.

Manuel, who is gay, was referred to the clinic by a peer health promoter from Clínica de Familia who approached him with information about HIV prevention and testing at a community event. "I don't deny that I when I first arrived at the clinic I felt doubt and mistrust, but I soon felt welcomed due to the good treatment that I received," says Manuel.

## INTERVENTION

After getting tested, Manuel was immediately enrolled at the clinic, counseled on ART and the importance of adherence, and started treatment soon after.

Christi, one of the clinic's counselors, emphasizes the importance of pre- and post- test counseling where clients are given basic information about HIV, the implications of their test result, and the services available to them.



APC/DR

Manuel at Clínica de Familia.

Many clients experience physical and emotional problems when they begin antiretroviral therapy, and Manuel was no exception. "At first it was very difficult. I felt nauseous, had headaches, and was dizzy. Initially, I was given enough medication to last only a week, so I got to see my doctor and Christi,



my counselor, on a regular basis. Today, thanks to Christi and Ramón [the peer health promoter who brought him to the clinic], I tolerate the medicine, am adherent, and have an undetectable viral load."

Clínica de Familia's ability to ensure that clients adhere to treatment has as much to do with the emotional support it provides, as it does with the clinical care. A team of counselors, psychologists, and physicians work with each patient. Additionally, the clinic's peer health promoters make home visits and facilitate self-help groups to keep patients enrolled in care and adherent to treatment.

Dr. Rosanna Matic, who runs the HIV clinic, adds that the attitude of the staff is just as important to the clinic's success with clients.

**"Our staff make patients feel welcome regardless of their sexual orientation, occupation, religious belief, or race."**

## OUTCOMES

Manuel meanwhile, was so inspired by his care and good health that he seeks out other gay men in his community to tell them about Clínica de Familia and accompanies them to get tested for HIV.

**"With this work, I am helping others find hope for a better future," says Manuel.**



APC/DR

Dr. Rosanna Matic reviews charts at Clínica de Familia.



Currently, 76% of the patients at the Clínica de Familia HIV clinic are on ART.