## BAYLOR BLACK SEA FOUNDATION



# ROMANIA









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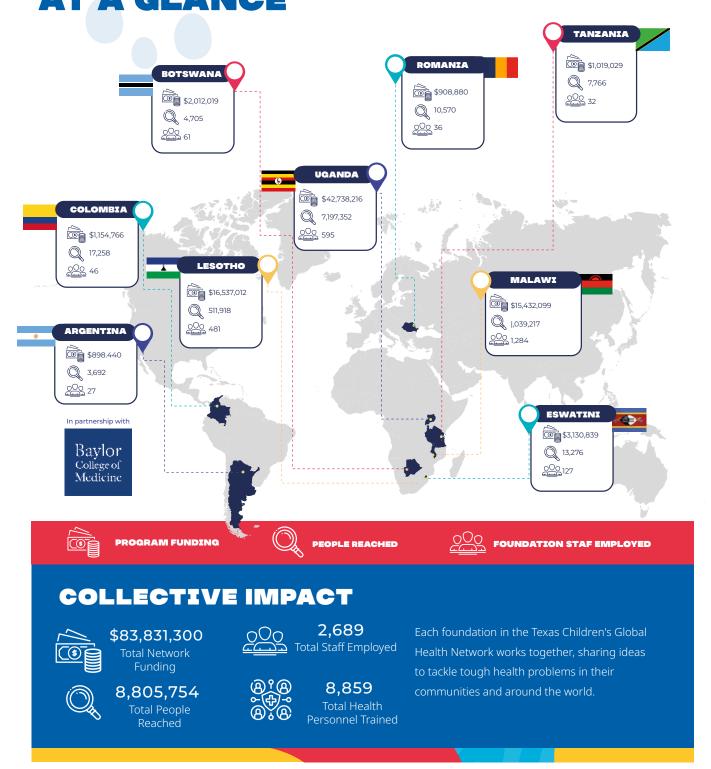
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## NETWORK IMPACT AT A GLANCE







# FOUNDATION BACKGROUND

## A path of excellence in healthcare

Our story begins in 2001, when the HIV Center of Clinical Excellence (also known as the Romanian American Children's Center) opened its doors in Constanța. Three years later, in 2004, the Baylor Black Sea Foundation was officially founded as a legal entity.

## We are part of a global network of excellence

We are proud to be part of the Texas Children's Global Health Network, a prestigious collaboration between Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, Texas. This network represents the largest academic infrastructure for global care and treatment, dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable populations worldwide.

## rom vision to impact

Initially established as a response to the HIV crisis in Romania in the late '90s, the Center of Clinical Excellence of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation quickly became the largest pediatric clinic in Europe specialized in the care and treatment of children diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Over time, we have expanded our expertise to include:

- Viral hepatitis treatment
- Diabetes patient care
- Assistance for COVID-19 patients
- Emergency assistance to Ukrainian refugees

# ACHIEVEMENTS THAT MATTER

10,000

• OVER 10,000 PEOPLE RECEIVED AT LEAST ONE SERVICE IN 2024

105,000

Over 105,000 people from
Dobrogea have been tested and
counseled free of charge for HIV
and hepatitis B and C viruses, as
well as other sexually transmitted
infections

4,000

Over 4,000 people living with chronic infections, HIV and chronic hepatitis of viral origin, have received and continue to receive free long-term medical and psychosocial assistance.

62,500,000

Over 62,500,000 USD represents the value of donated medications to support Romania's healthcare system.

8,000

We have offered extensive professional training programs for healthcare specialists, with over 8,000 professionals participating in courses offered by our experts.

## HEALTHY LIVING

We have become the most important partner of educational institutions in Constanța County, where our team of health educators carries out a complex program to prepare children and adolescents for healthy living.

## **Current infrastructure of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation**

We offer complete services through:

- The Constanta Center of Clinical Excellence
- Two specialized voluntary counseling and testing centers for HIV, hepatitis B and C
- A mobile voluntary testing laboratory with which we support voluntary testing activities for organized groups in the Dobrogea region



## Response to humanitarian crises

In the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we quickly adapted to become an emergency care center for refugees. In 2024, we continued to offer:

- Access to medical assistance
- Translation and medical navigation services
- Information and guidance for Ukrainian citizens

## Mission, Vision, Values

The mission of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation is to help the community develop efficient services for the prevention and care of people living with infectious and chronic diseases. Currently, the Baylor Black Sea Foundation has the status of a public utility organization, which ensures the prevention, treatment and care of people affected by infectious and chronic diseases, specifically viral hepatitis, HIV infection and diabetes (type II).

The vision of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation is to live in a community without discrimination, capable of stopping transmissible and chronic diseases.



#### **Values**

All people have the right to choose how to protect themselves from infectious diseases and the suffering they cause 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 support and continuous education.

## Board of Directors and Leadership of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation

- Tiberiu Csaki, President
- Michael Mizwa, Board Member
- Simona Ruță, Board Member
- Anda Şerban, Board Member
- Gabriel Băzdrăgan, Board Member
- Ana-Maria Schweitzer, Executive Director
- Monica Frangeti, Financial Director



Each day brings hope for people living with chronic infections, and you can amplify this impact. Through our free multidisciplinary care programs, we offer our beneficiaries not just treatment, but also dignity and confidence in the future.

Our vision goes beyond individual treatment. With your support, we develop innovative health education programs that can prevent these conditions and invest in the continuous training of healthcare professionals, preparing them to provide care to the highest standards.

Your donation has the power to change lives. It will allow access to specialized treatment for those in need, support health education, and sustain our commitment to providing equitable access to health services.

Join us on this journey: every contribution, regardless of size, plays a role in building a healthier future for our community. Thank you for choosing to be a catalyst for change!

## Here how you can help

- 1. If you are an individual and earn income from salaries or similar, you have the possibility to express your option to direct 3.5% of the tax on income obtained in the previous year to the Baylor Black Sea Foundation.
- 2. If you are an entrepreneur, you can invest in the community by sponsoring Baylor Foundation projects. Redirect 20% of your tax to support the cause that you and your employees believe in!
- **3.** You can opt to make direct donations to the Baylor Black Sea Foundation,

Fiscal code: 16810410

IBAN: RO34 UGBI 0000 0320 1470 2RON

Bank: Garanti Bank Constanța

SWIFT CODE: UGBIROBU

- 4. You can visit the Baylor Foundation website, in the "Campaigns" section, to opt for one-time or recurring donations to support that component of our programs that you consider of increased interest.
- 5. You can discuss with your relatives, friends and acquaintances about how we serve the community, encouraging them in turn to get to know more about us, and support us!

Get involved! Support our mission to bring health, hope and healing to those who need it most.



# **DIRECTOR**

Ana-Maria Schweitze.

### Dear friends of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation,

It is a true honor to share with you our achievements from 2024 and their impact on our community. Our foundation is not just a place where treatments are offered, but a refuge of hope and support for those who need medical care, psychosocial assistance, and health education.

2024 was an exceptional year for us, marked by a diversity of projects. From the launch of the health psychology manual for clinicians, which contributes to improving chronic patient care, to educational programs in schools that have reached thousands of young people in Constanța, to long-term care projects for patients with HIV and chronic hepatitis, all these initiatives reflect our commitment to offering not just treatments, but also sustainable solutions.

In addition, we have significantly expanded community testing services, facilitating access to diagnosis for thousands of people in the Dobrogea region, with a significant impact on HIV and viral hepatitis prevention. These programs are essential in our endeavor to build a more informed and responsible community.

We are proud to be part of the Texas Children's Global Health Network, alongside Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital, and that, through this, we have been able to contribute to changing the lives of thousands of people in our community. In 2024, we supported 10,000 patients and provided health education in schools and among

medical professionals. Our refugee support program, successfully implemented for the third consecutive year, was recognized internationally, winning second prize for Health Leadership at the European Health Forum Gastein.

We could not have done all this without the support of our main donors, Texas Children's Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine, whom we sincerely thank for their trust and contributions. We also appreciate and recognize the remarkable work of our employees, who make every step possible on this path of change.

Finally, I have kept in mind the words of our patients, words that are not found in statistics and graphs. For example, a refugee said: "I came to Romania with fear and uncertainty, but, at the Baylor Foundation I found a safe place, where I received medical and psychosocial support, and now I feel much more confident and at peace." A hepatitis patient told us: "Thanks to the counseling and psychological support program, I learned to manage my disease and now I have confidence in my own future." Another chronic hepatitis patient, after benefiting from our long-term care program, shared with us: "The Baylor Foundation offered me not just treatment, but also health education. Now, thanks to them, I live a much healthier and more balanced life."

I invite you to continue to be with us! Your financial support is essential to ensure the future of these programs. Each donation, regardless of its size, represents an important step in supporting those who need help the most.

Thank you for being part of the Baylor Black Sea family! Together, we can transform destinies.

With gratitude,

Ana-Maria Schweitzer

Executive Director, Baylor Black Sea Foundation

# NEW PROJECTS IN 2024



## BAYLOR BLACK SEA FOUNDATION'S CONTRIBUTION TO OVERCOMING BARRIERS IN HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

**First in Romania:** We published "The Health Psychology Manual for Clinicians," an essential resource for managing chronic diseases, which shapes how Romanian clinicians support patients.

Ana-Maria Schweitzer, executive director and co-author, explains the vision behind the manual: "We organized this manual in such a way that those who read it will become familiar with key concepts of health psychology, which will help them understand specialized studies and publications about projects implemented elsewhere. We hope that by keeping the same structuring method for each chapter, readers will be able to identify the thinking algorithm we can use when we aim to initiate a support program for a patient with chronic disease."

**Why it matters:** Chronic diseases affect millions of people. This manual provides practical tools and evidence-based strategies to enable healthcare professionals to provide effective and compassionate care.

In 2024, the Baylor Black Sea Foundation, in collaboration with experts from Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, the San Joan de Déu Research Institute in Barcelona, and Freie Universität Berlin, launched a pioneering work: "Supporting Patients with Chronic Diseases — Health Psychology Manual for Clinicians." This innovative project was funded by Texas Children's Global Health from Houston, Texas.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniela Muntele from "A.I. Cuza" University in Iași describes the work as: "One of the most necessary contributions, of indisputable opportunity in the Romanian professional social field of clinical psychology." - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniela Muntele from "A.I. Cuza" University in Iași



## Impact and innovation

In the manual's preface, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniela Muntele highlights the distinctive aspects of the work: "Throughout the text of the work, care and respect for the chronically ill patient shines through. For example, the idea of appropriate professional support dedicated to those affected by chronic diseases is cordially expressed in several places in the manual's text through the formulation 'being alongside patients for the long journey'."

Prof. Dr. Adriana Băban from Babeș-Bolyai University emphasizes the practical importance of the work, stating: "Psychologists who currently practice in Romania and counsel patients with chronic diseases (in hospitals, associations, or in private practice) need a resource in Romanian to train in intervention methods specific to chronic diseases and to organize and evaluate their own performance improvement plan."

## The manual promotes:

- Multidisciplinary approach in treating chronic diseases
- Collaboration between specialists from various medical fields
- mproving patients' self-care capacity
- Long-term maintenance of necessary behavioral changes

#### The manual offers:

- Practical information structured accessibly
- Key concepts of health psychology
- Guidelines for designing interventions
- Concrete examples of interventions and results

## For each chronic disease, the manual includes:

- Detailed presentation of the disease
- Relevant aspects for clinicians
- Patient experiences
- Objectives and determinants of interventions
- Practical examples of interventions



#### **EXPANSION OF HIV TESTING SERVICES**

In 2024, the Baylor Black Sea Foundation consolidated its position as a leader in HIV testing through the implementation of an innovative free HIV self-testing program. This initiative represents a significant expansion of existing voluntary counseling and testing services at the national level. The self-testing component in 2024 facilitates access to the HIV prevention information/education component and intensifies efforts to normalize HIV testing as a routine procedure.

## y results and achievements

The implementation of the HIV self-testing program took place after the success of the 2023 pilot project. The self-testing component offers:

- The possibility of ordering HIV self-tests online
- Flexible options for collecting tests:
  - Directly from the Clinical Excellence Center
  - Home delivery

## rspectives from our experts

Ana-Maria Schweitzer, Executive Director, emphasizes the importance of diversifying testing options:

"Practical experience has shown us that the number of those who get tested increases when we offer more diagnostic options."

Mihaela Bogdan, Project Director, highlights the necessity of self-testing in the Romanian context:

"In Romania, the main route of HIV transmission is heterosexual. Self-testing eliminates financial barriers and facilitates access to diagnosis for people with limited resources."

## Conclusions

The year 2024 marked an important stage in the evolution of services offered by the Baylor Black Sea Foundation, through the successful implementation of the HIV self-testing program. This initiative demonstrates the Foundation's ongoing commitment to improving access to diagnostic and prevention services in the community.

### **EXPANSION OF HIV TESTING SERVICES**





## revolutionary initiative in the juvenile health landscape

In 2024, the Baylor Foundation responded to an alarming challenge: WHO statistics show that over 70% of adolescent boys and almost 90% of adolescent girls in Romania lead a sedentary life. The launch of "The ABC of Movement" marks a turning point in addressing this silent public health crisis.

## Innovative architecture of the program:

The project distinguishes itself through its multidimensional approach, built on four complementary pillars:

- Authentic visual narratives a captivating series of four educational films created together with volunteer adolescents
- Specialized pedagogical tools strategically designed lesson plans to maximize educational impact
- Personalized evaluation tools for measuring lifestyle habits adapted to the realities of Romanian adolescents
- Continuous monitoring system for tracking behavioral transformations to validate program effectiveness

## ducational journey through the video lens

The video materials guide adolescents through a journey of self-discovery and transformation:

- 1. Reality revelation confronting one's true personal level of physical activity
- 2. Change laboratory practical and accessible strategies for integrating movement into daily routine
- **3.** Overcoming limitations identifying and neutralizing psychological and practical barriers
- **4.** Informed motivation discovering the scientifically proven benefits of an active lifestyle

The vision of the architects of this program, designed to strengthen the foundation of a healthier generation

Ana-Maria Schweitzer, Executive Director: "What we plant in adolescence, we harvest in adulthood. We are now activating a prevention mechanism that will reshape the future generation of adults."

Ștefania Mihale, Medical Programs Development Director:

"Our ambitions are big - we equip adolescents with concrete tools for a healthy adult life. The partnership with experts in education and health psychology from Constanța County represents the key to consolidating our innovative methodology."

Mariana Constantinescu, Educational Manager: "The exclusive financial support from the Baylor Foundation's budget demonstrates our unconditional commitment. Pilot testing in collaboration with local school institutions has already given us confirmation: our approach works."

## Voices of change - Baylor Black Sea Foundation volunteers at the center of transformation

The success of the project is ensured by the passionate involvement of young volunteers who give authenticity to the entire initiative:

Cezara Cristache: "I discovered in this initiative a bridge between information and action - empowering young people to become architects of their own health."

Andrei Vintilă: "Our film series is not just educational content, but a visual manifesto for a new culture of movement among Romanian adolescents."

## Strategic implementation and scalability

The Foundation has created an ecosystem of educational intervention that includes:

- Mobile teams of educators prepared to facilitate interactive sessions in the school environment
- Partnerships with 18 educational institutions in Constanța County in 2024 alone
- Online platform that facilitates requesting the presence of our health educators in schools
- Strategic partnership with the County School Inspectorate for amplifying impact and ensuring sustainability

"The ABC of Movement" is not just an educational program, but a catalyst for the cultural change that Romanian adolescents urgently need to write a better health story.





## ment Heroes from the Medical Front Line, in the Spotlight of National Media

The year 2024 marked the moment when the Baylor Foundation's behind-the-scenes work came into the national media spotlight. The press discovered what our community has known for a long time: behind the statistics are extraordinary people who transform the impossible into everyday reality.

"The Doctor Who Says YES When Everyone Else Says NO"

Q Magazine captured the essence of our work through a vibrant portrait of Dr. Suzana Sasu, the dentist who for 13 years has been redefining the boundaries of medical care for HIV/AIDS patients in Constanța. Beyond the spectacular title – "The Only Dentist in the Country Who Treats Patients Refused by Others" - lies the story of a daily struggle against systemic prejudice.

rough the Journalist's Eyes: Transforming the invisible into visible

Cristina Enescu, the journalist who penetrated the universe of our work, perfectly captured the dramatic contrast between public discourse and the reality on the ground, leading to awareness of our discrete efforts. Beyond the current medical protocols, laws, and public speeches, there is still widespread discrimination in society and in the medical field.

While society still debates the issue of discrimination, in the dental office of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation, Dr. Sasu treats not just teeth daily but heals human dignity. Here, beyond well-formulated protocols and laws, the real medical revolution takes place - step by step, smile by smile, patient after patient.

In the trenches of medical excellence: The unknown cost of care without compromise

The impact of Suzana Sasu's work is measured not only in impressive statistics - over 60% of HIV patients in Constanța county benefit from her treatments - but also in the non-negotiable quality standards she has implemented:

"I have never allowed financial limitations to determine limitations in the quality of care. Every patient who walks through our door - whether bearing the burden of HIV, or co-infections with HIV and hepatitis B, C, or D viruses - receives excellent treatment. The costs are high, but the alternative would be unacceptable!"

## The struggle for sustainability remains a constant challenge, expressed directly and disturbingly:

"We thank our partner organizations that provide us with much-needed funding. We also strive to bring other partners alongside us in this project. Each new year brings the same existential question: will we have resources for the thousand patients who depend on us? Each new partnership represents not just funding, but a chance at medical dignity for people who would otherwise remain invisible."

## eyond the office, a silent revolution that protects us all

Q Magazine masterfully captured the dimension of the effort to improve community health, elevating it beyond the individual medical act. What happens in Dr. Sasu's office transcends the doctor-patient relationship. Each successful intervention becomes a social vaccine against collective ignorance. Each treated and educated patient becomes an agent of change in their own community, eroding the monument of misinformation that threatens us all.

This recognition in the national media arena represents not only a validation of the professional excellence of the Baylor Foundation team but also a confirmation of our dual mission: to provide quality medical care to the marginalized and, simultaneously, to transform, from within, society's perceptions and attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS.





## INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

from Crisis to Hope: A Medical Bridge Across Borders, at the Heart of the Greatest European Humanitarian Crisis of Our Generation

When history took a dramatic turn in February 2022, Europe was thrown into one of the largest refugee crises since World War II. In the turmoil of this exodus, over 6 million Ukrainians sought refuge on the European continent, Romania becoming not just a transit corridor, but a destination of hope for hundreds of thousands of people.



The Program's Mission: medical safety in unstable times

In this turbulent context, the Baylor Black Sea Foundation launched an ambitious mission, that of "transforming uncertainty into medical safety for every refugee who crosses our threshold." What began as a first aid point at the Isaccea border has metamorphosed into a complete medical ecosystem in Constanta.



The impact in numbers: beyond statistics, destinies get changed

Since April 2022, over 5,500 Ukrainian refugees have found in our program not just medical services, but an anchor of normality in the chaos of displacement. Each case represents a story of resilience and hope, living proof that solidarity transcends borders.



The architecture of care: a triple support system



- The Baylor Center of Clinical Excellence (COE) in Constanța transformed into an emergency medical care provider for the vulnerable
- Specialized care for the future of the community: young mothers and children
- Personalized treatment for the full spectrum of conditions, from acute emergencies to chronic disease management

## Navigation of the Romanian medical system

- Orientation, with personalized care maps for each patient
- Guidance and accompaniment for specialized consultations with third-party partners
- Overcoming the language barrier through medical translations
- Full coverage of medication costs eliminating the financial burden in times of crisis
- Empowerment through information
- Transforming confusion into clarity by translating medical documents
- Creating informational materials in Ukrainian, bringing the familiarity of the mother tongue in a foreign context
- Transforming the unknown into accessible through navigation guides in the Romanian health system





European recognition: when compassion becomes a continental example

In 2024, our efforts exceeded the sphere of local impact, propelling us onto the European stage: second prize for Health Leadership at the prestigious European Health Forum Gastein represents not just recognition, but a continental validation of our intervention model.

The jury's appreciation: "Example of excellence in times of crisis." In the effervescent atmosphere of the EHFG Press Center, President Clemens Martin Auer appreciated that the Baylor Black Sea Foundation program shined as an example of:

- Rapid adaptability in the face of geopolitical challenges
- Innovation in providing integrated services
- Cross-border collaboration for tangible results



## Echoes in the international community

- Viktor Liashko, Ukraine's Minister of Health had a message of profound appreciation from the heart of the affected country
- Jarno Habicht, leader of the WHO mission in Ukraine confirmed the alignment of Baylor Black Sea Foundation services with global intervention standards
- Caroline Costongs, Director of EuroHealthNet praised Baylor Foundation operations' model as an example of good European practice



## When Recognition Exceeds Expectations:

Stefania Mihale, Director of Medical Program Development, perfectly captures the collective feeling:

"This international recognition surprised us in a very pleasant way, because we are used to receiving appreciation only from those who directly receive our services. Although we obtained second place, we felt like we won!"



## Navigating Towards the Future, Weaving Innovation and Compassion

We maintain our commitment to ensuring access to health services in Europe reconfigured by conflict. While the echoes of war continue to rewrite the destinies of millions of people, the Baylor Black Sea Foundation remains an unwavering pillar of stability. We have not limited ourselves to adaptation but have embraced continuous transformation. We constantly recalibrate our services, not just as a response to the changing needs of refugees but anticipating them.

In this fluid landscape of the humanitarian crisis, we have assumed an absolute moral imperative: "no vulnerable person will be left prey to suffer." We have transformed the geographical challenge into an opportunity to redefine emergency medical care. What truly sets our program apart, beyond its immediate impact on individuals, is the guiding philosophy behind it: "Human dignity and the fundamental right to health transcend any political, linguistic, or cultural barrier —this is our non-negotiable moral compass."

## The Invisible Front Lines: The Medical Journey of a 65-Year-Old Refugee Living with HIV, Her Struggle for Health and Dignity – A Case Study

ML is a 65-year-old woman from Ukraine, and a war refugee in Romania since March 2022. She settled in Constanța, where she lives in a rented apartment. Her home in Odessa was destroyed by the bombing raids. She is both a mother of a married child and a grandmother. Although she has a pension income, it proves insufficient, and she depends on the support of humanitarian organizations for access to treatment and other basic necessities.

ML was diagnosed with HIV in Ukraine in 2005-2006 and has been under treatment since 2009. In addition to living with HIV, the patient carries the weight of several chronic conditions. Their health story includes grade II hypertension, dyslipidemia, marked by abnormal fat levels in the blood, class I obesity, and prediabetes with an HbAlc of 6.4%. Breathing is also a daily struggle due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), adding yet another layer to their complex medical journey. A complex clinical picture that can be difficult to manage for anyone, without adding the burden of war refugee status.

Immediately after arriving in Romania, ML contacted the Infectious Diseases County Hospital in Constanța, and there she was also directed to the Baylor Foundation, based on the existing collaboration protocol between the two organizations. Although she had previously seen a leaflet about the foundation's services at the Red Cross, she did not initially use these services because, in Ukraine, patients do not usually receive medical support from NGOs.

ML never stopped her HIV treatment, even while displaced under difficult circumstances. She received complex care services provided by the multi-disciplinary team at the Baylor Foundation Clinical Center of Excellence, both medical and psycho-social support:



#### **Medical Care**

 Continuation of antiretroviral treatment (with daily administration, access to treatment being ensured by our partners from the Clinical Hospital for Infectious Diseases) and a series of specialized services offered by the multidisciplinary team of the Baylor Foundation, of which we mention:

- Monthly appointments for medication and periodic appointments for tests
- Prediabetes management through lifestyle change recommendations
- Blood pressure monitoring and prescription of antihypertensive medications
- Treatment for dyslipidemia (statins)
- Respiratory system investigations: spirometry and prophylaxis for tuberculosis



## **Psycho-Social Support**

- Linguistic assistance (translation and interpretation during medical visits)
- Facilitating access to community resources
- Assessment and management of refugee-specific anxiety



## Registered progress the patient reported:

- HIV viral load decreased to 172 in November, with CD4 of 535
- She managed to lose weight, although HbA1c value remained at 6.4%
- Hypertension is controlled with medication
- Hypercholesterolemia is controlled with statins
- She managed to introduce long walks into her daily schedule

From a psychosocial perspective, the patient reports feeling more "balanced and calm," with reduced anxiety and greater confidence in social situations.

ML shares: "I feel safer now that I receive the necessary support for myself and my family. My adaptation in Romania was facilitated by meeting people from organizations and translators who helped me. After the experience of bombings in Ukraine, the peace and quiet in Romania gives me a feeling of safety and well-being: after being in a place where there were bombings and coming here, where it's quiet and peaceful, you feel that you don't need anything else, everything is perfect!"

This case underscores the importance of a multidisciplinary approach in caring for patients with HIV and complex comorbidities, especially when belonging to a vulnerable group such as refugees. The combination of medical, linguistic, and social support has allowed the patient to maintain treatment continuity and improve her quality of life despite the challenges related to refugee status. ML has managed to adapt well to the new living conditions in Romania, with the help of integrated services she benefits from at the Baylor Black Sea Foundation.

## BENEFICIARIES' VOICES: EMOTIONS THAT TRANSCEND WORDS

"Thanks to you, we have a safe reference point in our lives. We thank very much all those who contribute to this good deed!" - These simple yet powerful words reflect our true impact: we've provided not just medical care, but a sense of stability in an uncertain world.

"When I first arrived at Casa Florilor, I was overwhelmed by fear and uncertainty, fleeing the war in my country. I didn't know what to expect, but I found here more than just a simple shelter: I found a real home and people who became my family. Recently, I returned for a visit, accompanied by my husband Dumitru, whom I married last month. It was an overwhelmingly emotional moment to see again the place and the people who stood by me when life was hardest for me. With tears in my eyes, I told them: 'I've returned home, to the place that was home to me when life was hardest for me! I will never forget you all my life!' Every gesture, be it small or large, that the staff at Casa Florilor made for me meant enormously and remained deeply imprinted in my heart and memory. Now I live in Varna, where I work at a crewing agency, and have started a new life. But no matter where life takes me, Casa Florilor will always remain that special place that helped me survive and then be reborn from my own ashes."- M., former beneficiary of refugee housing services at Casa Florilor

"Thank you very much for the welcome! I was very pleasantly surprised by the quality of the reception. The clinic is modern, and the doctors are very attentive and involved. In fact, I was warmly received by the entire team, by the nurse, by the translator, everyone shows us a lot of understanding and care! It was the first time in my life as a parent that my son cried because he didn't want to leave the doctor's office."

This emblematic initiative is possible through the strategic partnership with Texas Children's Hospital, whose vision and financial support have catalyzed the transformation of the concept into tangible reality, with immediate benefit for refugee families settled in Constanța.



## BAYLOR BLACK SEA FOUNDATION - SCIENTIFIC PIONEERING



## REVOLUTIONARY ARCHITECTURE OF PATIENT-CENTERED EVALUATION:

In collaboration with elite representatives of the European academic world – Instituto Universitario Avedis Donabedian (UAB), Instituto de Recerca Sant Joan de Deu, and CIBERESP from Barcelona – the Baylor Foundation team conducted a longitudinal study that redefines the fundamentals of psychosocial interventions.

We implemented an advanced evaluation ecosystem, based on patientreported outcomes (PRO). This approach does not mean simple data collection, but a conceptual revolution that:

- Transforms the patient from a passive subject into a co-creator of their own health state
- Decodes the complexity of psychosocial needs through the lens of personal experience

- Personalizes each intervention as a response to real-time feedback
- Continuously calibrates the therapeutic program, transforming rigidity into adaptive fluidity

Quantifying the Impact: Beyond Statistics, We Transform Destinies

Our numbers tell a story of impressive work:

- 890 people comprehensively evaluated since 2018
- 337 therapeutic journeys documented through a minimum of three complete evaluations
- 2526 personalized interventions each representing a moment of potential transformation

These figures capture only the quantitative dimension of a program that, in essence, is profoundly qualitative in its impact. One of the remarkable results of the study was the increase in patients' quality of life. Of the interventions performed, 28.5% focused on patients' cognitive and behavioral capacities, and 23.4% aimed at improving quality of life. Other interventions addressed patient motivation (16.6%), healthy behaviors (19.8%), and general health status (12.4%).

At the heart of our approach is a sophisticated theoretical framework that simultaneously evaluates and intervenes on three interdependent dimensions:

- Individual Capacity the latent potential waiting to be activated
- Internal Motivation the propelling force of any authentic transformation
- Contextual Opportunities the external window that allows change to manifest

Each patient benefits from a service ecosystem calibrated to their individual profile:

- Specialized psychological counseling mapping and reconfiguring the internal landscape
- Adapted social assistance rebuilding bridges to the community
- Personalized progress reports the objective mirror of the personal journey
- Standardized medical care the solid foundation on which recovery is built

## From Vision to Transforming Reality

We look forward with absolute strategic clarity. Our team works tirelessly on:

- Refining evaluation processes, reducing complexity without sacrificing depth
- Perfect monitoring systems, transforming data into actionable insights
- Conceptualizing new frontiers of intervention, exceeding the limits of current models

Beyond the present horizon, the Baylor Black Sea Foundation projects its activities to

- Extend the use of the already validated model to other vulnerable groups
- Strengthening new international collaborations
- Contribute decisively to the standardization of personalized psychosocial interventions

## challenges and Perspectives

Although the results are promising, the Baylor Foundation team also recognizes the challenges encountered. "Constant evaluation and monitoring of patients can be a complex task, and simplifying these processes is an objective for us," stated Ana-Maria Schweitzer. "However, the positive impact we observe in patients' lives motivates us to continue."

In conclusion, psychosocial interventions guided by patient-reported outcomes have demonstrated a significant impact on the health status and quality of life of people living with HIV. "This care model represents an important step in improving the care of people with chronic diseases," emphasized the Executive Director. "Simplification and personalization of evaluations and interventions are the future of medical care."

The Baylor Black Sea Foundation does not settle for being just a service provider – we have become a catalyst for paradigmatic change in the psychosocial approach to chronic diseases, a living laboratory of therapeutic innovation, and a beacon of excellence that illuminates the path towards a future where personalized care becomes the universal standard, not the exception.

# OUR: SERVICES



## SCREENING FOR HIV AND HEPATITIS B AND C FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION

Accessible, free screening program for hepatitis B and C, for HIV and for other sexually transmitted infections for high-risk individuals

- Within the two voluntary, rapid, and free screening centers in Constanța
- Proximity screening with the mobile laboratory in the Dobrogea region (Tulcea and Constanța counties), a program serving a total population of 849,352 inhabitants (according to the 2022 census)
- Community screening and counseling
- Connection to care services
- Personalized counseling
- Reducing treatment costs, preventing therapeutic resistance, relapses, limiting transmission
- Improving community health

ng-Term HIV/AIDS Care Program

#### **Medical Services**

- General medicine
- Child health nutritional support

- Women's health obstetrics/gynecology, family planning, pregnancy monitoring, prenatal screening, HPV screening, fetal monitoring, newborn monitoring (18 months)
- Dermatology
- Pneumology
- Dentistry
- Primary cardiology (EKG)
- Medical counseling
- Counseling and testing for partners and family members of the beneficiary

### **Psychosocial Services**

- Monitoring adherence to antiretroviral treatment,
- Periodic evaluations of the level of disease self-management
- Counseling for preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission
- Counseling for HIV prevention
- Emotional support, including crisis management
- Interventions for behavioral change and adoption of a healthy lifestyle (smoking cessation, improving physical activity level, prevention through vaccination)
- Psychiatric evaluations (subcontracted service)
- Social support in accessing legal rights
- HIV-related counseling (adaptation to diagnosis, disclosure, discrimination)
- Standardized, consistent counseling sessions educating people living with HIV/AIDS about the concept of Undetectable = Untransmittable (U = U).

# WHAT BENEFICIARIES SAY

"I now live in Italy with my daughter, but the road here wasn't easy. Being infected since childhood, I faced many prejudices and discriminations. The turning point came one day when my 5-year-old daughter, who is healthy, came home from kindergarten crying because a child had called her 'AIDS' - a word she didn't even understand.

At that moment, I decided to leave Romania to give my child the chance for a life without stigma. The camps organized by the Foundation were a revelation for me, showing me that I too can live a normal life, with dignity and joy. There I discovered for the first time that I'm not alone and that, regardless of my medical status, I deserve the same opportunities as anyone else. This experience gave me the courage to dream of a better life for myself and my daughter."

"I recently turned 18 and look back with gratitude on my journey with the Foundation. My first camp experience, when I was little, represented not just a vacation, but also my first significant contact with the medical team. I didn't realize it then, but that experience laid the foundation for the relationship of trust I have today with the medical staff.

Now, when the center staff observe with surprise how open I am with the nurses, unlike other young people who tend to avoid contact with medical staff, I know that everything is due to those first positive interactions from the camp. As I step into adult life, I feel ready to take on responsibilities and navigate through the medical system thanks to the confidence and skills I've developed with the help of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation team. The camp wasn't just a place of fun, but the beginning of a path toward autonomy and health."

"Il years ago, when I found out the diagnosis, my world collapsed. I didn't know which way to turn and refused to accept reality - I wasn't taking my medication and rejected any help. In those moments of desperation, the Foundation became my anchor. I've always found unconditional support here, regardless of the form in which I needed it. Whether it was the doctor who became like an aunt to me, the ladies who visited me at home after I gave birth, or the specialists who talked with me at each visit - the psychologist and social worker.

I know it wasn't easy for them to 'fight with me for me' during that difficult period. It's extremely hard at the beginning when you find out about the disease... you're lost, scared. But the Foundation team never gave up on me. When I refused treatment, they insisted, with patience and empathy, until I understood the importance of taking care of my own health.

Today I am well and feel grateful to all those who helped me in this journey, even if I don't remember all the names of the care team members, from the drivers who safely take the team to the field, to the nurses who come to our support, to the psychosocial team, to the caretakers who create a clean and 'flowering' environment, to the doctors who offer services without discrimination - you all contributed to my healing, not just physical, but also spiritual. And now, after 11 years, I know that when I need it, I have someone to turn to. This security is priceless for me."

"I've been a patient of the Foundation since childhood, and I can say that the Baylor team has changed my life. Every time I've crossed the threshold of this place, I've been received with open arms, without judgment, just with warmth and professionalism.

The psychological counseling received here was the cornerstone of my personal development. While other friends in similar situations remain stuck in the mindset of 'I am my own psychologist,' I've understood the immense value of this specialized support. Although I've tried to share with others the benefits of counseling, many still don't understand how important it is.

I've gone through numerous difficult moments in life, but the fact that I consistently came to individual counseling sessions at Baylor helped me overcome them. The staff didn't need to 'chase' after me - I took ownership of this process and actively participated in it, which made the difference.

I know I still have work to do with myself, but looking back, I realize how much I've progressed. Now I can take care of my family, my children, I can face the emotional challenges that arise. The counseling sessions helped me know myself better, discover my strengths, and balance emotionally.

Counseling taught me to be independent and to handle life situations with excellence. For me, the Baylor Foundation is not just a place where I receive complex care, but a place where I've grown as a person, where I've learned to live, not just survive."

#### **LONG-TERM HEPATITIS CARE PROGRAM**





### **Medical Services**

- Abdominal ultrasound
- Laboratory analyses
- Information regarding interventional clinical studies

## **Counseling Services**

- Before and after partner testing
- For vaccination
- For therapeutic adherence
- Health education
- Social
- For chronic disease self-management
- Lifestyle assessment
- Periodic monitoring
- Diagnosis disclosure
- Support groups

## **Navigation Services**

- Interventions with authorities/institutions
- Distribution of informational materials
- Scheduling medical consultations

## WHAT BENEFICIARIES SAY

"After going through two interferon cures without favorable results and suffering a relapse, I thought there were no more solutions for me. However, thanks to the Baylor Foundation, everything changed. The staff contacted me periodically, inviting me to various evaluations, including for metabolic syndrome. Thus, I found out, even before my attending physician, about the approval of curative treatment for my co-infection with hepatitis B and Delta.

Now I am in treatment, I feel good, and I have become optimistic again. What I appreciate most is the fact that I was permanently informed and encouraged - without this support, I admit that I would have given up long ago to take care of my health. I am deeply grateful also for the lifestyle advice, which determined me to make important changes: I gave up alcohol and I am very careful about nutrition, meal timing, and the amount of food I eat.

Another essential aspect was access to free analyses - the cost of an evaluation exceeds 1500 lei, and I need at least two per year, or even four during treatments. This financial support made my treatment possible and gave me a new chance at life."

I am the sole caregiver for a child living with hepatitis B and Delta, who has a severe disability and is completely dependent on support, including feeding. Our situation would have been much more difficult without the help of Baylor Black Sea Foundation.

I enormously appreciate the effort made to cover the cost of medical analyses, which otherwise would have been an impossible financial burden for us to overcome. But perhaps equally important was the support of the care coordinator, who stood by me through the many difficult situations I encountered: lack of information, difficulties in communicating with the attending physician, and not least, the extraordinary effort to establish links with a laboratory closer to our home in Medgidia, to avoid monthly trips to Constanța for collection. This practical and human support made the difference between despair and hope for our family in these difficult moments."

"I come from a family deeply impacted by hepatitis B, as both my sister and I live with the condition. I want to share with you a personal experience that deeply impacted me, namely the vital help received from the Baylor Black Sea Foundation team during the pandemic. Yes, some years have passed since then, but for me it has remained just as important to talk even today about the way I was supported!

In those moments of isolation and restrictions, I completely lost access to the doctor, to the hospital or other medical units, and I would have been forced to interrupt treatment, with potentially serious consequences. The care coordinator was the one who constantly maintained the connection with the attending physician and with the family doctor to ensure my necessary prescriptions and uninterrupted access to therapy.

I also greatly appreciate the financial support received for performing analyses, these constituting the basis of continuity in monitoring my health status. The Foundation is, literally, my bridge to health when all other paths seem blocked."





### For Healthcare Professionals

- Training healthcare workers using modern equipment and simulators to perform venous puncture for exploratory and therapeutic purposes, as well as intradermal and intramuscular injections.
- Training for students (faculties of medicine, psychology, and social work).
- Continuous professional education courses for psychologists.





### **Our Courses:**

- "Nursing Techniques using modern equipment and simulators to perform venous puncture for exploratory and therapeutic purposes, as well as intradermal and intramuscular injections" - the course is designed for students of health high schools, post-high school healthcare programs, medical school students, as well as beginner medical staff or those looking for employment.
- "Treatment Adherence the case of lifelong treatment for people living with HIV/ AIDS and long-term care they receive at the Baylor Black Sea Foundation's Clinical Excellence Center" - course for students of medicine, psychology, and social work faculties.
- "Intervention Skills in Assessment and Counseling of Patients with Chronic Diseases Regarding Therapeutic Adherence" course for psychologists, doctors, nurses, and social workers who work with people who need to follow medication treatments for extended periods/lifetime.
- "Lifelong Medication Treatment the case of people living with HIV/AIDS" course for Psychology students at the Faculties of Psychology and Educational Sciences.
- "The Role of the Social Worker in Caring for People Living with HIV/AIDS" course for Social Work students at the Faculties of Psychology and Educational Sciences.

# HEAR FROM OUR STUDENTS

"My name is Amalia-Ioana Grădinaru and I am a student at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iași, in my 2nd year of master's in clinical psychology and psychotherapy. First of all, I find this course easy to view due to its organization; it's not difficult material and the explanations are clearly distributed. Secondly, the small questions at the end of each section are useful because I realized that I'm not always attentive to details and they highlight certain key concepts. Finally, I find the course useful and beneficial especially for students."

"Thank you for the quality information provided! The course content is very valuable for a clinician and can be an important resource for responsible professional practice. I look forward to other materials." Bianca Mircea, psychologist

"I recommend the course Intervention Skills in Assessment and Counseling of Patients with Chronic Diseases Regarding Therapeutic Adherence to all health professionals." - Oana D., psychologist

"A complete course, useful for any practitioner." - Laura Stanciu, psychologist

"I chose the Nursing Techniques training, and I don't regret it. I learned many things about the Foundation and greatly appreciate the effort the team here makes for community health. The course allowed me to recall useful information and practice techniques to have greater confidence in my own competence." - A. M., beginner nurse

"What did the Nursing Techniques course offer me? Confidence, first of all! I leave here with more knowledge and the joy that I will be able to practice my profession with confidence, offering patients safety and quality." - L.I., healthcare post-high school student

"I had the chance to test my skills and knowledge. This course is an excellent opportunity for self-testing and deepening knowledge. I am more confident in my own abilities. I am glad that I will be able to successfully pass the exams I will face with patients, who can sense whether the nurse in front of them is confident or hesitant." - G.I., beginner nurse



#### Communicable diseases

- Stigmatization and discrimination
- nteractive educational activities in inclusive education institutions interactive basic hygiene lessons
- Interactive educational activities for young people to adopt a healthy lifestyle and improve physical activity levels

## Community Activities: Impact of Health Education Activities in Schools and Program Expansion through Offer Diversification

In 2024, the Baylor Black Sea Foundation significantly expanded its health education program, reaching over 2,000 students from 18 schools in Constanța County. This increase reflects both the high demand from the community and our sustained efforts to respond to educational needs through interactive and adapted methods.

We consolidated existing partnerships and signed a collaboration protocol with the Constanța County Center for Educational Resources and Assistance, thus facilitating access for students, teachers, and parents to essential health information. The increased interest was reflected in the growing number of requests from schools, and direct communication with educational institutions allowed us to diversify and expand the proposed activities.

The results of our studies show a significant change in students' level of information and attitudes. For example, 42% of participants learned about HIV and chronic hepatitis for the first time during our activities, and medical myths regarding the transmission of these infections were debunked through an evidence-based educational approach. Additionally, over 90% of high school students in Constanța expressed openness toward people living with chronic infections, indicating a reduction in stigmatization.

Through the "ABC of Movement" project, we also integrated education for an active lifestyle, considering the long-term impact of physical activity on health. We expanded our teaching methods through real scenarios, case studies, and interactive sessions, providing students not only with information but also the tools necessary to make informed and responsible decisions.

Our efforts continue to focus on combating misinformation, providing credible resources, and developing relevant educational programs that support young people in adopting healthy and responsible behaviors.



## Research

- Clinical studies
- Manuals
- Articles
- Technical reports



# A CONSTANT IN THE FOUNDATION'S ACTIVITY: STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Intense Days of Information and Analysis with Health Psychology Expert Alexandra Dima

The psychosocial department team had the opportunity to discuss with Alexandra Dima about ways to improve psycho-social care services for people living with chronic infections. Over the two days, a series of challenges that arise in current activities were presented. The meeting provided the framework for launching a new analysis of collected data to determine improvements in patient-centered services.

"For me, any new meeting with the Foundation team, with whom I have been collaborating for a long time, is a joy. The vast clinical experience, spanning over two decades, of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation team has led to the accumulation of a considerable volume of practice-based evidence. These, carefully analyzed, have the potential to guide the conduct of research, and this will certainly contribute to the improvement of patient-centered services." - Alexandra Dima, postdoctoral researcher in health sciences, Sant Joan de Déu Research Institute, Barcelona

"I speak for all our team when I say that this exchange of experience is of special importance. This meeting will produce positive results, in the form of new studies and analyses through which we can contribute to better care for people living with chronic infections. We have been collaborating with Alexandra Dima for many years, and I can say that thanks to this collaboration we manage to apply the newest care and intervention techniques." - Ana-Maria Schweitzer, Executive Director







## Voluntary Counseling and Testing Program for Hepatitis B and C and for HIV, Key Indicators

- Tests performed at the Baylor Black Sea Foundation for hepatitis B and C and for HIV
- People tested for the first time. The Foundation has been systematically collecting this information since 2017
- 3. Retesting
- Voluntary counseling and testing with the mobile laboratory
- 5. Average age of people who benefited from the free voluntary counseling and testing service
- 6. Gender distribution of beneficiaries of the voluntary counseling and testing service
- 7. Prevalence of HIV, HBV, and HCV infections identified within the Baylor Black Sea Foundation's voluntary counseling and testing program
- 8. Risks identified during counseling testing sessions

## Long-term Care Program for People Living with HIV/AIDS, Key Indicators

- People living with HIV who received services at the Baylor Black Sea Foundation
- 2. Assessment of the satisfaction level of HIV patients according to the categories of services requested n = 152
- 3. Sessions for beneficiaries living with HIV/AIDS
- 4. Psychosocial services

### Long-term Care Program for People with Hepatitis, Key Indicators

- 1. Active patients with viral hepatitis who requested long-term care services \*patients at their first contract or with subsequent contracts
- 2. Patients with viral hepatitis newly enrolled in long-term care services \*people at their first service contract
- **3.** Assessment of the satisfaction level of hepatitis patients according to the services requested/accessed n=102
- 4. Distribution of patients enrolled in long-term care services according to the type of hepatitis infection
- 5. Distribution of hepatitis patients enrolled in 2023 in long-term care services according to gender

#### Continuous Professional Education for Health Professionals, Key Indicators

- 1. Contribution of the Baylor Black Sea Foundation to the continuing professional education of health professionals in 2024
- 2. Total health professionals who benefited from professional development programs offered by the Baylor Black Sea Foundation



# BAYLOR BLACK SEA FOUNDATION

ROMANIA





