

**Breaking Down Barriers:
Using a Nurse-led Adherence
Program to Increase Viral Load
Suppression**

Introduction

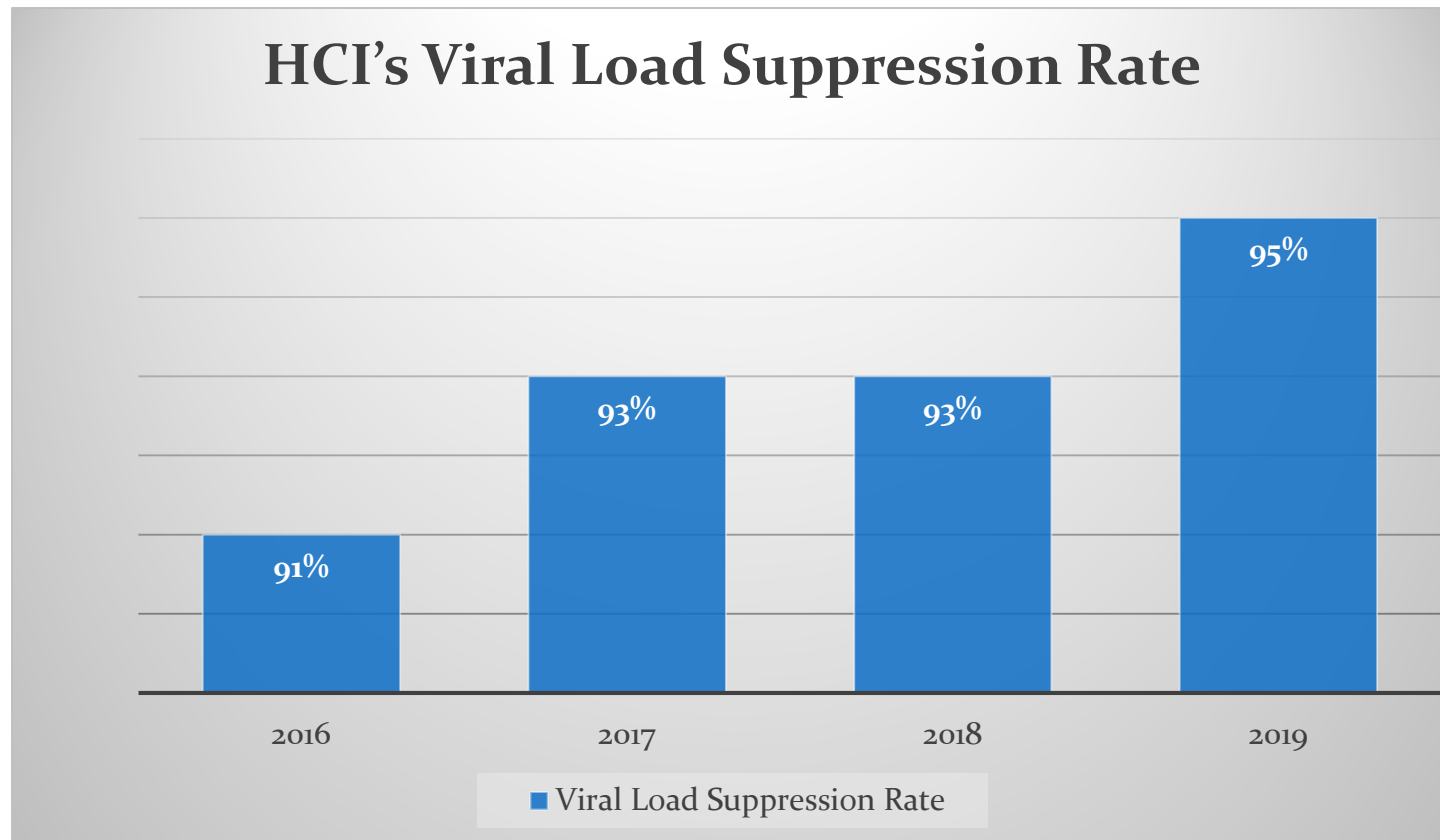
- To retain PLWH in care, Heartland CARES Inc. (HCI) expanded adherence efforts by developing a patient-based, nurse-led adherence program.
- Goal: Initiate interventions designed to provide individualized support to non-adherent patients to increase viral load suppression & appointment retention.
- Intervention Start Date: 09/01/2018
- Intervention End Date: 08/30/2019

Methods & Activities

- Nurse-led Interventions:
 - Individualized consultations for newly diagnosed, new to clinic, & chronically non-adherent
 - Adherence Journal- to promote self-management of medications and appointments.
 - Addressed transportation barriers - Utilized face-to-face & phone encounters, home visits if needed
- Mental Health Interventions:
 - SMART Recovery- Began in July 2019. Weekly group led by HCI's Certified Psychiatric RN based on cognitive behavioral education and methods of change designed to guide patients with addiction issues through the recovery process.
- Technology:
 - Implemented secure texting/messaging system in October 2019 for hard to reach patients. Utilized by both nursing and front desk staff.

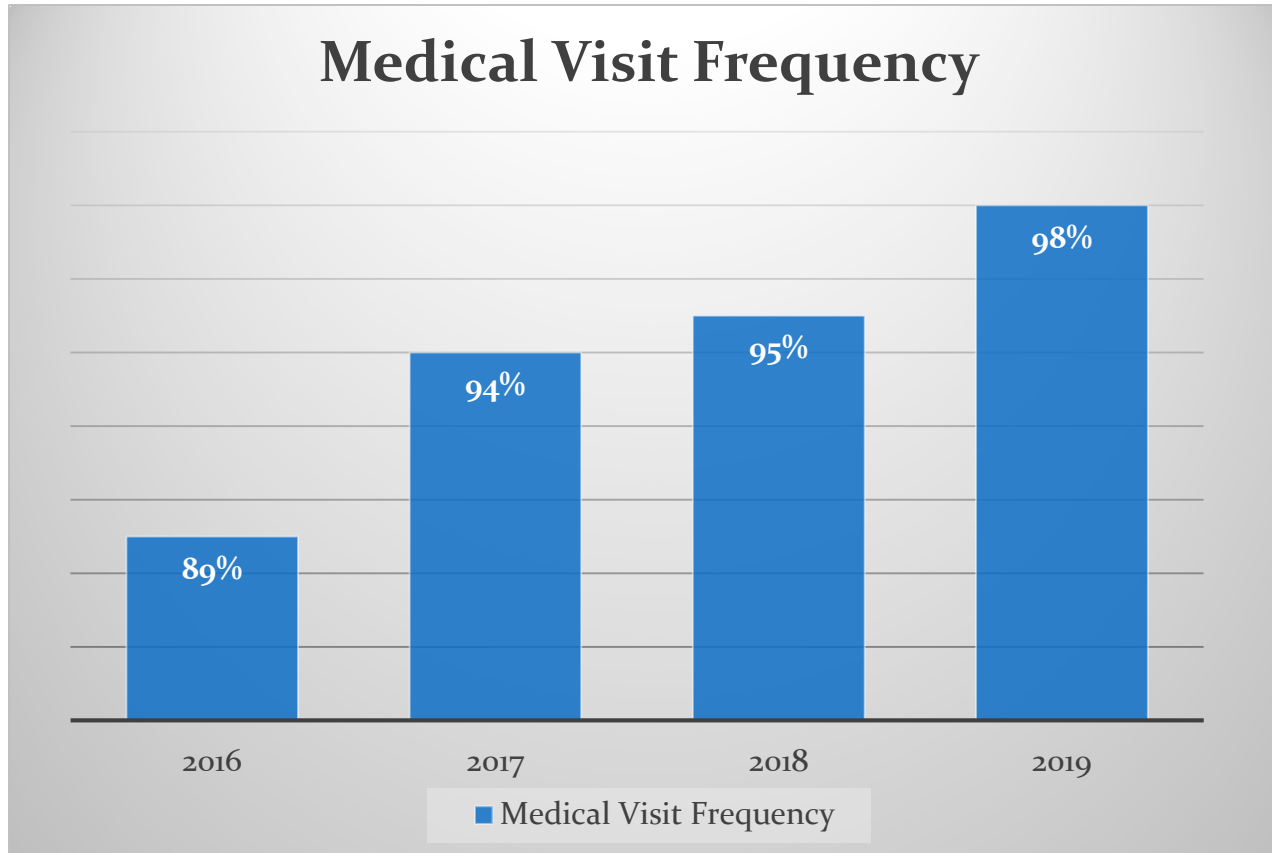
Results- Viral Load Suppression

Below is a chart outlining HCI's VL suppression rate for calendar years 2016 & 2017. The 2018 & 2019 data are based on rolling years 09/01/17 - 08/31/18 & 09/01/18 - 08/31/19, marking the start and end dates of the interventions.



Results- Medical Visit Frequency

Below is a chart outlining HCI's medical visit frequency for calendar years 2016 & 2017. The 2018 & 2019 data are based on rolling years 09/01/17 - 08/31/18 & 09/01/18 - 08/31/19, marking the start and end dates of the interventions.



Lessons Learned

- Importance of multi-disciplinary team approach & open communication.
- Individualized plans are effective. Meet patients where they are in their lives and address specific needs.
- The need to utilize one RN to lead the medication and appointment retention of new patients and another RN to focus on established patients.
- Must haves for success:
 - Needs assessment
 - Coordination of Support Services
 - Follow-up

Challenges/Limitations

- Adherence Journal- Can be a struggle to get buy-in from patients. Some patients did not keep scheduled appointments or calls for nurse follow-up.
 - Possible Solution: Use of telehealth to follow-up on journal. Eliminates transportation barrier while maintaining visual component.
- SMART Recovery- Slow beginning. Some patient interest expressed with a reluctance regarding the group aspect of this recovery approach.
 - Possible Solution: Informational meeting invite to patients both physically and via a platform like ZOOM.
- Transportation- Ongoing barrier due to rural service area.
 - Possible Solutions: Utilizing our newly hired Support Services Coordinator to provide transportation & increase home visits