

# Quality Report Card

Licking Memorial Health Systems



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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

## Yoga Benefits Mental Wellness and Substance Use Recovery

Substance use and addiction remains an important public health concern in the United States and is considered to be a chronic medical illness. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 40.3 million Americans who were 12 years or older battled a substance use disorder (SUD) in 2020. There are a variety of methods and programs that are available to treat substance use and addiction, with more programs focusing on a holistic approach to treatment that includes alternative methods such as yoga.

Yoga is a mind and body practice that combines physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation to promote mental health and physical well-being. Practicing yoga brings mental benefits, including reduced anxiety and depression, and is also recommended as a treatment for SUDs. Yoga helps to lower stress and improve sleep, both of which contribute to improved mental health.

Performing yoga allows brain cells to develop new connections in learning and memory. As with physical exercise, yoga triggers the release of the mood-boosting chemicals, such as dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine. Yoga movements and poses elevate the heart rate and cause the muscles to work hard, stimulating the release of these chemicals in the body and resulting in the positive feeling that people achieve when they exercise.

Studies have indicated that yoga is beneficial to the recovery of patients with substance use disorders and may help

decrease the chances of relapse. When used in conjunction with treatment programs and addiction prevention methods, yoga can improve the quality of life in patients with substance use disorder by decreasing addictive behaviors, enhancing well-being, and improving cognitive flexibility.

Yoga can help those recovering from SUD by improving their focus and awareness. Performing the various postures and breathing exercises can help them stay mentally strong and focus on their recovery goals. In addition, patients become more mindful about their thoughts, feelings, and responses when practicing yoga, allowing them to learn the skills they need to tolerate the uncomfortable sensations that can lead to a relapse.

Yoga is very effective at regulating the stress hormones – cortisol and adrenaline. An imbalance of these hormones can be associated with anxiety disorders, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse. Practicing yoga can help reduce or balance the stress hormones in the body, causing less stress and making a person less likely to seek substances to cope with their situation.

Shepherd Hill, the Behavioral Health Department of Licking Memorial Hospital, will soon offer yoga classes to its patients. Shepherd Hill is a nationally accredited treatment center that focuses on the treatment of patients with substance use disorders. The facility provides care for patients aged 18 and older and provides comprehensive treatment in the inpatient, residential, and outpatient settings. For more information and to receive help, call (220) 564-HEAL.



Measurably Different ... for Your Health!

# Patient Story – Roger\*

Roger remembers the time when his response to commercials for anti-depressants was to think that people should be able to manage their emotions without medication. However, that was before his own experience with crippling depression. It soon became clear to him that mental disorders, such as depression and anxiety, are serious health conditions and recovery consists of more than overcoming a tough situation. For Roger, his experience with depression began with a significant life event that shattered his confidence. He began experiencing overwhelming sadness and anxiety, and found it difficult to perform daily tasks.

“I’m a mechanical engineer,” Roger shared. “Yet, when my wife told me the change oil light in her car had come on, I could not help her. I felt useless, and did not know what to do.”

In addition to the depression, Roger was struggling with fear and worry when he had to travel for his job which he did often. Finally, Roger revealed his condition to his primary care physician. The physician suggested he seek treatment at Licking Memorial Outpatient Psychiatric Services.

Elizabeth A. Yoder, D.O., diagnosed Roger with depression and began cognitive therapy – a relatively short-term form of psychotherapy based on the concept that a person’s thoughts affect emotions. Cognitive therapy focuses on present thinking, behavior, and communication rather than on past experiences and is oriented toward problem solving. Dr. Yoder also prescribed medication to increase the activity of chemicals called neurotransmitters in the brain. Increasing the activity of the neurotransmitters – serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine, assists in lessening the symptoms of depression and anxiety.

“Dr. Yoder explained that finding the right medication to alleviate my symptoms would take time. The medication is not a one type fits all. Finally, after several medications, and days of suffering headaches and other side effects, I woke up and felt completely free of the

overwhelming feelings of worry and sadness.”

Soon after his breakthrough with the medication and therapy, Roger was traveling for work when he started feeling unwell. After asking advice from one of his siblings who is a healthcare professional, Roger visited his primary care physician who performed an electrocardiogram or EKG. Roger was immediately sent to the hospital where he was told he had recently experienced a mild heart attack and required bypass surgery. The new health crisis again triggered Roger’s depression. Recovery from his surgery was quick and went well; however, he felt paralyzed by overwhelming feelings of uselessness and anxiety.

Roger made an appointment to meet with Dr. Yoder to try to get back on track with his therapy and medication. During the visit, Dr. Yoder became very concerned for Roger’s wellbeing. The depression was much more severe, and Dr. Yoder felt Roger should consider an inpatient stay, which he agreed to complete. She also recommended electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) – a medical treatment commonly used in patients with severe major depression or bipolar disorder that has not responded to other treatments. ECT involves a brief electrical stimulation of the brain while the patient is under anesthesia, and is typically administered by a team of trained medical professionals that includes a psychiatrist, an anesthesiologist, and a nurse or physician assistant. The healthcare team suggested Roger receive 12 ECT treatments over a period of approximately two months.

“Before each treatment, I was given a survey to complete to rate my current emotional condition. Upon completion, the physician who administered the treatment showed me the results from those surveys, and it was a perfect downward curve from extremely out of control down to feeling content. The improvement was incredible,” Roger enthused. “Dr. Yoder had said I was the perfect candidate for the treatments, and she was right. I am in a much better place mentally.”

For Roger, the stay-at-home orders issued in 2020 due to the pandemic were helpful for his personal care. Travel was limited, so he was not required to take trips for work which alleviated some of his anxiety. He was also able to fully focus on his physical and mental health recovery. His wife and family offered support and comfort throughout his experience.

“My family’s faith in God and the belief that I would recover gave me strength when I did not believe in myself because of the confused state that I was suffering through,” Roger recalls.

On the other hand, Roger did struggle with working from home because he always considered himself an extrovert and missed making contact with others. He continued therapy with Dr. Yoder and has been able to maintain his mental health. Now, Roger visits with Dr. Yoder every two months to ensure his medication dosage is correct and that he is using the coping tools she provided to overcome the symptoms of his depression and anxiety.

“I consider Dr. Yoder a friend – not just my physician. It is incredible to think about the impact she has had on my life,” Roger expressed. “Dr. Yoder’s staff have also been a huge influence on me and my family. They are so kind and understanding. They take a personal interest in my wellbeing. I cannot thank them all enough for their support.”

Getting ready for a new chapter in his life, Roger is planning for retirement and is currently working part-time. He wants to be home more to assist his wife of 38 years in caring for her mother who recently moved in with them. Roger also looks forward to spending more time with his 10 grandchildren – 8 of whom are three and under. His two daughters and two sons all live in or around Licking County. Roger also is an advocate for seeking assistance for mental health issues. “Everyone needs to know there is help out there. You just have to reach out for it.”

\*Roger is not the patient’s real name.

# Behavioral Health Care – *How do we compare?*

At Licking Memorial Health Systems (LMHS), we take pride in the care we provide. To monitor the quality of that care, we track specific quality measures and compare to benchmark measures. Then, we publish the information so you can draw your own conclusions regarding your healthcare choices.

- Behavioral health is a broad term that refers to psychiatric illnesses and/or substance use disorders. Inpatient hospitalization for either condition is often necessary for effective intervention. LMH provides a wide range of services for people with behavioral health illnesses at its Shepherd Hill facility. One goal is to transition patients into outpatient settings where they can continue treatment, decreasing the need for readmission.

	LMH 2019	LMH 2020	LMH 2021	National <sup>(1)</sup>
Behavioral Health patients readmitted within 7 days	1.23%	0.73%	0.90%	<b>1.92%</b>

- Outcome studies are conducted to monitor and measure the treatment success of addictive disease. Our data show how patients are doing up to two years after completing the program. Information regarding abstinence one year after completing the program is self-reported by patients.

	LMH 2019	LMH 2020	LMH 2021	Goal
Patients remaining abstinent	98%	96%	97%	<b>greater than 85%</b>
Improvement in quality of relationships	94%	99%	100%	<b>greater than 85%</b>
Improvement in overall physical and mental health	93%	100%	92%	<b>greater than 85%</b>
Improvement in overall quality of life	85%	97%	100%	<b>greater than 85%</b>

- Withdrawal management – the safe, medically supervised elimination of addictive substances from the body – is the most intensive care offered for patients with addictive disease. Acute withdrawal symptoms are managed by the use of appropriate medications specific for each patient’s situation. The length of stay for detoxification depends upon the drug of choice and the severity of the withdrawal.

	LMH 2019	LMH 2020	LMH 2021	Goal
Average length of stay – alcohol treatment	2.9 days	2.6 days	2.4 days	<b>less than 3 days</b>
Average length of stay – opiate treatment	1.7 days	1.4 days	N/A*	<b>less than 4 days</b>
Average length of stay – tranquilizer (benzodiazepines) treatment	1.0 days	2.2 days	1.0 days	<b>less than 5 days</b>

*\*In 2021, an accurate representation of the length of stay for opiate treatment could not be obtained due to fewer patients visiting Licking Memorial Behavioral Health.*

- Education is considered an essential component of providing complete behavioral health care. A thorough understanding of the diagnosis, the purpose of medications, side effects to medications and the expected response to treatment leads to decreased relapse and readmission rates and increased long-term compliance with medication on an outpatient basis.

	LMH 2019	LMH 2020	LMH 2021	Goal
Diagnosis/disease education provided for patients and/or family	100%	100%	99%	<b>greater than 97%</b>
Medication education provided for patients and/or family	100%	100%	100%	<b>greater than 97%</b>

- Family participation is an important component in patients’ recovery. For continuity of care, a licensed professional clinical counselor or social worker will initiate contact with family members of Shepherd Hill psychiatric inpatients and encourage them to participate in a family meeting completed during the period of inpatient treatment.

	LMH 2019	LMH 2020	LMH 2021	Goal
Social work/family meeting during patient stay	98%	97%	97%	<b>greater than 95%</b>

Behavioral Health Care – How do we compare? (continued on back)



**Check out our Quality Report Cards online at [LMHealth.org](http://LMHealth.org).**

**6.** Valproic acid and lithium are two common medications used to treat multiple behavioral health diagnoses. These medications can facilitate control of symptoms and assist in recovery, but both have potentially dangerous side effects. Licking Memorial Behavioral Health professionals monitor their patients’ blood at specified intervals to ensure therapeutic levels of the medications and to observe for toxicity or other negative effects on vital organs.

	LMHP 2019	LMHP 2020	LMHP 2021	Goal
Appropriate testing complete for patients taking lithium (such as Lithobid)	100%	75%*	85%*	<b>greater than 90%</b>
Appropriate testing complete for patients taking valproic acid (such as Depakote)	100%	88%*	89%*	<b>greater than 90%</b>

*\*Due to telehealth visits and concerns about COVID-19, fewer patients visited Licking Memorial Behavioral Health to have blood testing.*

**Data Footnotes:**

(1) Comparative data from the Midas Comparative Database.

# Eating Foods That Fight Depression

Nutrition is an important component in managing a healthy lifestyle. Food plays a significant role not only in a person’s physical health, but also in their mental and emotional health. Eating certain foods can have a positive impact on a person’s mood. Individuals who struggle with depression can make small changes in their diet that may help improve their mood and have a positive effect on their daily life. Consider choosing foods that contain the following:

**Omega-3 fats** – important for brain health and may be involved in the production of serotonin – the chemical that regulates mood. Oily fish, such as salmon, mackerel, trout, sardines, and tuna, are good sources of omega-3 fats, as well as plant-based foods, such as walnuts, flaxseed, chia seeds, Brussels sprouts, spinach, kale, and watercress.

**Tryptophan** – an essential amino acid that helps create serotonin and assists in maintaining healthy sleep and a balanced mood. Pumpkin seeds, squash seeds, chicken, and turkey are good sources of tryptophan.

**Folate** – also known as vitamin B9, folate regulates the levels of tetrahydrobiopterin (BH4), which is important to the production of dopamine and serotonin. Foods that are high in folate include citrus fruits, asparagus, eggs, and leafy green vegetables.

**Probiotics** – several studies have shown that microorganisms living in the gut can play a key role in regulating mood. Probiotics help to reduce inflammation in the body, produce dopamine, and affect a person’s stress response. Foods that contain probiotics include yogurt, tofu, kimchi, sauerkraut, kombucha, and tofu.

Certain foods can negatively impact a person’s mood. Avoid refined grains as well as foods that are high in sugar. It also is important to limit consumption of alcohol and caffeine. Green tea is a healthy alternative to coffee and energy drinks because it provides antioxidants as well as stress-reducing benefits.

Eating nutrient-rich foods can help keep the brain healthy. Making better food choices can improve a person’s emotional health and have a positive impact on their overall wellness. Individuals should talk with their physician before making significant dietary changes.



Please take a few minutes to read this month’s report on **Behavioral Health Care**. You will soon discover why Licking Memorial Health Systems is measurably different ... for your health!

The Quality Report Card is a publication of the LMHS Public Relations Department. Please contact the Public Relations Department at (220) 564-1572 to receive future mailings.

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