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The team of therapists, psychiatrists, and other professionals at **CM Counsel** helps people of all ages overcome obstacles to their peace of mind and enjoy the promise of a new beginning.

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Left to right: Dr. Catherine Frank, clinical director; Rachel Bennett, vice president of operations; and Louise Byrnes, psychiatric nurse practitioner

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Each patient's introduction to CM Counsel begins by meeting with a licensed professional counselor such as Jennifer Markward.

A Path to Healing

THE TEAM OF THERAPISTS, PSYCHIATRISTS, AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS AT **CM COUNSEL** HELPS PEOPLE OF ALL AGES OVERCOME OBSTACLES TO THEIR PEACE OF MIND AND ENJOY THE PROMISE OF A NEW BEGINNING.

The COVID-19 pandemic not only sparked a global health crisis, but also shone a spotlight on the nation's dire need to protect its health—particularly its mental health. The need has only intensified in the years since, according to the leadership of CM Counsel.

A full-service mental and behavioral health practice treating children, adolescents, and adults, CM Counsel employs a comprehensive team of professionals—licensed psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, psychologists, social workers, and counselors—devoted to helping patients overcome obstacles to their well-being and peace of mind. Patients rely on the practice's staff for

services such as psychotherapy (individuals, families, couples, and children and adolescents) and psychiatric evaluation and medication management.

The practice's roots stretch back to 1998, when the husband-and-wife team of Michael Frank, Ph.D., and Catherine Frank, Ph.D., founded the practice with the goal of making counseling, psychotherapy, and psychiatry more accessible to residents of the Philadelphia area. The first office opened in Exton; the practice has since expanded to two more locations, King of Prussia and Plymouth Meeting. Although Michael Frank passed away in late 2023, Catherine Frank continues in her role

as the practice's clinical director. In October 2020, the practice was sold to Sound Minds Behavioral (led by chairman and CEO Jordan Klear), a behavioral health management company that operates practices throughout the Northeast.

"I've always felt that ours is a caring and thoughtful practice, both for our patients and for our care providers," says Dr. Frank, who has a particular interest in working with children, couples, and families. "Therapy is the core of what we do, but having psychiatrists and nurse practitioners for medication management has been a great part of our practice. They all work together, and having that kind of continuity for our patients is a big part of why we have been so successful."

CM Counsel's commitment to accessibility has fueled the practice's steady growth. Rachel Bennett, the practice's vice president of operations, points to three particular ways in which CM Counsel has helped make care more accessible to those who need it: insurance, with in-network providers for most major health insurance plans; flexible scheduling, with in-person or virtual appointments; and an expanded staff that has grown to more than 40.

"We're always looking for good providers to join our team," Bennett adds. "Some of our providers are 100 percent remote, though most of them have at least some time in the office. For medication management, [meeting remotely] has been a convenient way to receive services. The insurance piece was an enormous part of our goal to make care as accessible as possible."

Each patient's introduction to the practice begins by meeting with a therapist. An initial assessment may reveal that a patient's needs exceed therapy, in which case he or she would be referred to a psychiatrist or a nurse practitioner for medication management. If it's determined that a patient would be best served by inpatient care, CM Counsel has close relationships with local organizations such as Belmont Behavioral Health System and The Horsham Clinic.

"One of the best things about our practice is that every provider has a different skill set, so we have someone to meet each patient's specific need," Bennett adds. "The only conditions we don't treat are eating and substance abuse disorders."

"Having someone like Dr. Frank is an enormous asset, too," she continues. "She comes with so many years of experience and offers clinical supervision when providers have questions about a case or if a patient needs to be referred out. A multidisciplinary approach is a definite benefit in a practice like ours."



Dr. Catherine Frank, clinical director



Louise Byrnes, psychiatric nurse practitioner

Solving the Puzzle

Louise Byrnes, CRNP, PMHNP-BC, always wanted to help people. Having started her career as a registered nurse, she had an early experience working with patients in need of psychiatric care that convinced her to go back to school and become a nurse practitioner.

Byrnes spent more than a year working as a psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner at Brandywine Hospital in Coatesville. She joined the staff of CM Counsel in March 2022.

Although she enjoyed her time in a hospital setting, Byrnes has found CM Counsel's outpatient model better suited to her strengths and personality.

"I like the pace and the collaborative nature of what we do here, and I also have the opportunity to spend more time talking to patients," she says. "My experience of working as a nurse practitioner in a hospital psychiatric unit was invaluable. The people I worked with there were at their sickest, in crisis, and that experience has made it much easier for me to identify in this setting when patients are heading in the wrong direction."

Byrnes spends a full hour meeting with each new patient—reviewing their medical and psychiatric history, asking questions, learning about their concerns—to home in on an accurate diagnosis. She also utilizes cutting-edge tools such as pharmacogenomic testing, which can help determine the most appropriate psychiatric medications and doses.

Once she and the patient have a shared understanding of the diagnosis and options for treatment, then they can make some decisions.

"A lot of patients come to me already on medication and have been for a long time, only it's not the right treatment plan," she says. "Doing a thorough intake helps me come up with a better plan, one that can make a difference in their daily lives. It's like a puzzle; we can tweak and adjust things along the way for the best outcome. As long as the patient is open to that and can make an educated decision, we can make a difference for them."

Given the tense political and economic climate of the past several years, cases of anxiety and depression have skyrocketed. From Byrnes's perspective, the past year has been particularly difficult in part because of the uncertainty surrounding the economy. Carefully prescribed medications, she says, can help ease the emotional response to such stressors and "make life more enjoyable."

ADHD diagnoses have spiked in recent years, too, including among adults. That said, Byrnes believes many patients receive an ADHD diagnosis—and are treated with medication—without a thorough evaluation. CM Counsel employs quantified behavioral testing, as well as other assessment tools, to confirm or refute a suspected diagnosis. If the patient's diagnosis is confirmed, medication can help them become more focused and, in turn, better keep up with their peers.

"Mental health issues affect every experience in a person's life," Byrnes says. "If you're stuck in depression or anxiety, everything seems worse and it's much harder to appreciate the good times. Treating the symptoms can significantly improve a person's quality of life. It's not just medication, and it's not just therapy. It's also a healthy diet. It's exercise. It's getting fresh air. It's sleep. It's avoiding or limiting substance use. We're here to address all those points and work with you to make sure you're doing everything you can to take care of yourself." ■

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