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As black lung surges across Eastern Kentucky, rehab clinics expand to meet growing demand

By Will Wright

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In a hospital in far Eastern Kentucky this week, a stone's throw from the West Virginia border, a group of former coal miners wore oxygen masks and heart monitors and walked on treadmills about as far as they could.

They are patients of New Beginnings Pulmonary Rehab, a group of clinics in Central Appalachia that focuses on strengthening the lungs of former miners afflicted with black lung disease, a deadly and incurable illness whose prevalence has spiked in recent years.

With the disease surging across the region, New Beginnings is scheduled to double its number of clinics with three new openings — one in Harlan on Sept. 1; one in Tazewell, Va., on Oct. 1; and one in Elkhorn City in Pike County, that will open later this year or in early 2020.

Marcy Tate, who opened the first clinic six years ago in Norton, Va., said the expansion will create space for dozens more patients and provide easier access to care — some former miners drive more than 100 miles each way to access pulmonary care.

Read more here: <https://www.kentucky.com/news/state/kentucky/article232538227.html#story...>

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