



HARBOR COMMUNITY CLINIC

NEWS

SPRING 2011

Harbor Community Clinic is entering its 41th year of service to the Harbor area this year. Since 1970 we have been a resource for healthcare for low-income, indigent, or uninsured individuals and families in San Pedro, Wilmington, Harbor City, Lomita and the Palos Verdes Peninsula. The mission of Harbor Community Clinic, originally known as Harbor Free Clinic, is to provide primary and preventive medical care to area residents who are unable to meet the cost of such services on their own. In 2010 we provided 10,897 medical visits/encounters to 4,149 unduplicated adult patients and 3918 medical visits/encounters to 1,443 unduplicated pediatric patients. This was slightly up for adult patients, in spite of a construction project that greatly constricted patient exam space for most of the year.

Our Main (Adult) Clinic is located at 593 W. 6th Street (at Grand Avenue) in San Pedro since 2004, where we have had 6 exam rooms and 2 mental health counseling rooms in 7,800 square feet, prior to our 2010 renovation project that is still ongoing. Phase One of the renovation is almost complete, and operations will move into that section (south end), while Phase Two is completed during the Spring and Summer. By Fall, all twelve of the new exam rooms and the new Psychological Counseling Center should be completed and ready for occupancy. HCC will then be able to provide over 21,000 patients visits a year at the Main Clinic.

This project was funded in part by L.A. Care's Robert E. Tranquada M.D. Health Care Safety Net Award to Harbor Community clinic to benefit low income, uninsured residents of Los Angeles County.

<http://www.lacare.org/index.html>. We also received \$75,000 from the Ahmanson Foundation, \$50,000 from the Weingart Foundation, and \$10,228 from Kaiser Permanente South Bay Medical Center for construction costs, and \$50,000 from the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation to fund operations of the newly expanded clinic, as well as a pledge from the Max Factor Family Foundation for \$15,000 for new equipment and furnishings for exam rooms. Furnishings and equipment for the new exams rooms, such as exam tables, lamps, trays, and carts, have been donated by Operation USA (www.operationusa.org) and by Kaiser Permanente South Bay Medical Center. Almost \$400,000 has been pledged by the Department of Health Services toward the construction as well. The City of Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency has also contributed \$25,000 for the completion of the renovation.

Recent very generous grants for operating expenses have been awarded by the S. Mark Taper Foundation (\$60,000) and the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation (\$50,000).

A separate Pediatric Clinic with 3 exam rooms is housed in a County-owned building at 731 S. Beacon Street, where the space for this use has been donated to HCC by the Office of Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe. Crail-Johnson Foundation, a long-time supporter of our Pediatric Clinic, recently awarded HCC a \$15,000 grant.

The families we serve are vulnerable in terms of healthcare access on many levels. In addition to high poverty rates and extremely low levels of insurance coverage, the residents of the area are at high risk for many health conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, asthma and respiratory illness, STIs, teen pregnancy, low birth weight and its complications, as well as certain mental health conditions. These are all preventable conditions, or highly controllable, with simple routine preventive care and health education, which Harbor Community Clinic strives to provide at no cost or low cost to our patients. By providing preventive and primary care, we can help our patients avoid much more serious disease and much more expensive and complicated treatments they might require if their conditions are neglected.

Executive Director / CEO, Michele Ruple, has been leading the Harbor Community Clinic since 2004. She holds a B.A. in Psychology from UCLA and has over 30 years experience managing medical clinics in the Los Angeles area. She is responsible for the day-to-day overall management of both clinics, and works with the Board of Directors to develop strategies for the long-term success of the clinics. Robert Nelson, Controller, has worked in financial management positions at nonprofit organizations in Long Beach and the Harbor Area for over 10 years. We have a highly qualified and professional medical and medical support staff in place to take care of the needs of the many patients we see on a daily basis. They include several physicians, nurse practitioners with advanced degrees, and a Physician's Assistant who is also a licensed cytotechnologist. Since HCC will be expanding its Counseling Program, we are interested in talking with local psychologists and MFTs (Marriage and Family Therapists), licensed in California, who might like to work as independent consultants for Harbor Community Clinic a few hours a week beginning later in the year.

We are fortunate to have a talented and dedicated volunteer Board of Directors whose oversight guides the Clinic. Dan Powers, Chairperson; Alex Levy, Vice Chair; Ken Pleshek, Secretary; Linda Anderson; Terry Butera; Mike Lansing; Alan Weinfeld; Richard Manzanares; Gretchen Williams-Tostrup. And welcome to our newest Board members, Yesenia Aguilar, Veronica Jimenez, and Ida May Taylor.

In 2006 HCC was designated a Federally Qualified Health Clinic (FQHC) Look Alike, gaining formal recognition as a safety net provider of primary care services in an underserved urban community. This enables us to see and treat Medi-Cal and Medi-Cal HMO patients and to receive reimbursement from the State and managed care agencies for these services. We are currently beginning the application process to become a full FQHC which will make us eligible to apply for more sources of vital funding from Federal agencies.

More and more working families are losing health plan coverage or are not offered health insurance through their jobs. The recession lingers in California and the unemployment rate is still very high at 12.4% (January 2011). We are seeing a new group of patients at HCC; more white, middle class individuals who have lost their jobs and their health insurance coverage are appearing in our waiting room. With professionals and white-collar workers who previously had employer-provided or employer-subsidized health insurance unable to afford individual or even COBRA continuation coverage, their families are uninsured. This consequence of the economic recession is contributing to ever-

increasing numbers of low-income and uninsured individuals and families who need healthcare services in the Harbor area and point to a high level of need in the immediate future.

In addition, there are fewer and fewer medical facilities for low-income families to turn to with continual closures of hospitals, emergency rooms and other clinics. Whenever a medical center closes, the remaining facilities and clinics in the area must absorb the patients and our dollars are stretched even further. The Association of Community Clinics projects a growth rate of almost 4% in its target population (the uninsured and publicly insured) between 2005 and 2015 (ACC Los Angeles County 330 Planning Report – June 2008, p.157). As this report was published before the major economic crisis of 2008, this estimate is almost certainly very conservative.

As health insurance becomes increasingly unaffordable to low-income families, and more and more Los Angeles area medical centers are severely impacted by too many uninsured patients, pressure increases on community health clinics such as Harbor Community Clinic to provide care for its neighbors. Harbor Community Clinic gives low-income and uninsured local residents a “medical home” that can greatly improve their health and well-being and lessens the burden on already overwhelmed local emergency rooms, saving taxpayer dollars.

According to a research brief published by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research (August 2007) ¹

- Uninsured persons are less likely to have a usual source of care;
- Among the uninsured, 40.2% reported having no usual source of care (as opposed to only 7.1 % of insured people who reported having no usual source of care);
- Uninsured individuals were less likely to have a primary care provider, have a lower probability of vaccine use or check-ups, and were more likely to delay seeking recommended follow-up care;
- Having a usual source of care has a considerable impact on access and utilization of healthcare service, independent of insurance status;
- The existence of a usual source of healthcare (a “medical home”) has been linked to improved health status and outcomes.

Harbor Community Clinic exists to be that medical home for indigent, low-income and uninsured people who cannot afford the cost of preventive healthcare services or medical care on their own.

We are continuing to fundraise to acquire the remaining needed money for this project. We have engaged a talented contract grant writer, Suzanne Ridgway, who has applied for several additional grants directly related to the expansion project, as well as more for ongoing support of the Don Knabe Pediatric Clinic. Suzanne has a B.A. in English from UCLA and has worked with several nonprofit social service agencies and arts organizations in Los Angeles and Orange County, winning over \$1.8 million in grants for both special projects and general operating support for various clients in the past five years.

New services and programs are planned for the near future that will improve the health of area residents. Our OB/GYN will increase his hours in the Spring 2011, expanding our prenatal program to better serve Harbor Area women. Clinic hours for certain programs are being expanded to better serve

¹ Roby, Dylan H., Kominski, Gerald F., Cameron, Meghan E., “Improving Access Through Health Insurance Coverage and Safety Net Expansion,” *Health Policy Research Brief*, Aug 2007, UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

our patients: General Medicine at the Main Clinic is now available during the lunch hour Monday through Friday. We are open also until 7:00 p.m. every Monday for OB and GYN patients.

Finding funding for all of the Clinic's programs remains a challenge. The California State budget recently signed by the Governor eliminated funding for our supplemental immunization funds and for Expanded Access for Primary Care program that we had come to rely on. However, through Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Institute and a grant given to the Vasek Polak Health Clinic (VPHC), HCC has been provided free of charge with a part-time eligibility worker who can enroll children in the Healthy Family and Healthy Kids programs to ensure they will have access to important primary and preventive healthcare as they develop.

Long range plans for the future include additional enhancements at the Main Clinic, such as pursuing accreditation as an outpatient surgical center and building a suite there that could provide simple outpatient procedures for patients who currently have waits of up to a year for such a procedure if scheduled through Harbor General-UCLA.

We are pleased we will be able to increase access to healthcare for the Harbor Area residents who rely on us. Most of our patients are employed, but are in low-wage, service or temporary jobs that do not offer health insurance benefits. For these people, Harbor Community Clinic may be their only option for healthcare services. We are also serving many formerly middle-class individuals families who are victims of the economic recession, have lost jobs and health insurance coverage, and so have had to access our Clinic for the very first time, in order to get the healthcare they need.

Executive Director Michele Ruple says, "There's a misconception that the uninsured are not working individuals . . . they are. They often perform some of the most dangerous jobs in the community or other essential services. But for whatever reason they are not provided insurance coverage by their employer. That's where HCC comes in . . . we are a safety net so these hard-working individuals can maintain their health and get needed medical care. Also, our patients are appreciative and grateful for the services we provide to them and their families. It is an honor to be a part of an agency which is committed to helping those in need."

Ms. Ruple hopes that, with the completion of the renovation project next summer, Harbor area residents will choose to make HCC their "medical home" when they need quality healthcare services.

On any given day we may

- Treat a local man for the flu, before it worsens and before it spreads to other family and community members;
- Provide a young woman with information to prevent sexually transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancy;
- Prescribe an antibiotic for a toddler with a painful ear infection;
- Provide counseling for a woman with an anxiety disorder that leaves her unable to cope with the everyday demands of her life;

- Provide a well baby visit to an infant or give a sports physical to a youngster who wants to play soccer;
- Provide a pap smear to a woman to screen for cervical cancer;
- Monitor the condition of a child with diabetes or make sure an asthmatic child has an inhaler;
- Give nutritional counseling to an expectant mother, so that she and her unborn baby get the best possible care for the long-term health of the child.

Our services keep our residents healthy and our community healthy.

We are grateful to the individuals, local businesses, foundations and agencies that fund Harbor Community Clinic and allow us to do our work.

HARBOR COMMUNITY CLINIC SUPPORTERS

L.A. Care
The Ahmanson Foundation
Boeing Employee Community Fund
Ralph M. Parsons Foundation
The Weingart Foundation
Max Factor Family Foundation
Palos Verdes Junior Women's Club
National Charity League, Peninsula Chapter
Vons Foundation
The California Wellness Foundation
Kaiser Permanente South Bay Medical Center
Crail-Johnson Foundation
Blue Shield of California Foundation
Anonymous Donor
CalNational Bank
SA Recycling
City of Rancho Palos Verdes
Northrop Grumman Corporation
AMWA American Women's Hospital Service
Allcare
The Neighborhood Church
S. Mark Taper Foundation

Operation U.S.A. (www.operationusa.org) has donated furnishing and equipment and Direct Relief (www.directrelief.org) has donated hundreds of cases of medication.

Cash and in-kind donations from individuals, businesses and the community are always gratefully considered and accepted if appropriate.