

Taking Charge of Our Health Wallace's Partnerships with Patients

Wallace Medical Concern Accomplishments FY 2014-2015

We have been on a journey of discovery - at times it feels like we are shooting rapids. We have experienced extremely dynamic change in health care just as we are putting down roots in our first primary care clinic. Even so, we see the landscape around us, made up of our patients and partners, as something of great beauty and worth.

We are making strides in overcoming the barriers many of our patients face as a result year—and sometimes generations—without access to health care. Many have had a lifetime experiencing closed doors to care when they needed it. They found help only in emergency rooms and only when they were acutely ill. Health insurance? Primary care? Prevention? My own doctor? These are unknowns to many of our new patients.

We feel we are getting a handle on this. We understand these barriers better and are finding ways to educate and support our patients about the medical home they have with us. We are now able to engage our patients, not only in accessing the health care they need and deserve, but also in managing their own health needs and taking part in wellness activities.

Engaging Patients in Their Care

We have completed our 3-year project offering culturally appropriate services for Latino pre-diabetic and diabetic patients. Funded by Kaiser Permanente, Providence Health & Services and Novo Nordisk, we obtained excellent outcomes. Of the 212 patients who participated, 80% of diabetics had improved test results, and only 3% of pre-diabetics progressed into the diabetic range. We implemented and will expand upon innovative practices, such as group medical visits, stress management and nutrition classes, peer support groups, and fitness activities. Our work with diabetics helped us establish a culture of continuous quality improvement during our primary clinic's first years.

We also have completed our 3-year health literacy project funded by Legacy Health. Now health literacy is deeply embedded in the culture of our organization and in every aspect of our clinical practice. Developing expertise in health literacy has improved our clinical outcomes and has been key to our success enrolling families in health insurance.

Our *My Chart* digital literacy project in partnership with PSU and Legacy Health built on our work with chronic disease and health literacy. We tested a new online tool and identified best practices to assist our patients in accessing, understanding and acting on their health information. Sometimes this means passing on basic computer skills, such as how to create and use a password.

We continue to provide services beyond the exam room for our patients with chronic disease and all our patients to promote ongoing wellness. These include yoga and Zumba classes, an array of fitness activities, nutrition classes, and children's activities.

We are learning to communicate with our patients in the most effective ways – which is often by phone and text. We initiated appointment reminders by text this year.

Outreach to People Where They Live and Work

We are strengthening our outreach to families who live in public housing in the Rockwood area. Many have never accessed primary care services and may not have seen a doctor for considerable time. We are introducing ourselves, surveying access needs and holding health fairs to offer resources and basic services. Many thanks to OHSU nursing students for their assistance!

Through our Martin Luther King Jr Day of Service (funded by Kaiser Permanente), we provided medical, dental and insurance enrollment services for nearly 30 people who are homeless. In partnership with Trinity Lutheran Church in Gresham, Kaiser doctors, nurses and medical assistants provided urgent care in 3 exam rooms. We also were joined by a mobile dental hygienist and by Medical Teams International who brought their dental mobile clinic and provided fillings and extractions. Our partners helped with on-site meals, socks, hand warmers, oral health supplies, clothing and more.

We are continuing Women's Health Days. We have added numerous children's activities coordinated by our Community Health Workers, to make it easier for women to participate. We served nearly 160 women with exams, pap tests, chiropractic services, manicures and more.

Our Mobile Medical Clinic continues to serve people who have a difficult time accessing our clinic. We visited migrant housing, farms, social service agencies, public housing sites and the Mexican Consulate among other locations.

Building Trust through Community and Culture

Our three Community Health Workers are from the communities we serve and speak their languages. They are highly trained and compassionate professionals who are trusted by our patients. The strategic support they offer contributes markedly to positive clinic outcomes and greater patient engagement.

Our Community Health Workers and enrollment staff are acknowledged experts in assisting low-income individuals with insurance enrollment and navigating the complicated application process. We assisted over 1,800 individuals to sign-up for health insurance (primarily Medicaid) and provided education to help families understand their health benefits.

Our Community Health Workers provide Primary Care 101 education to our patients to communicate the value of a primary care home for the whole family in improving and maintaining health. We hear patients say that when they run out of medication, they think that is all they could get – they are unfamiliar with the concept of “refills” and so many other aspects of health care that those of us who have enjoyed access all our lives take for granted. Community Health Workers are helping our patients learn what is available to them and how they can access it. They also teach diabetes and other classes to empower patients to manage their care.

Through the heroic efforts of our Community Health Workers, we were extraordinarily successful in our Latina Initiative “Pathways” project, sponsored by Susa G. Komen for the Cure. We screened 225 Latina women over age 40 who had never had a breast exam or had not had one within the past 10 years.

Strengthening Dental Health in Primary Care

You have heard about our efforts to build a dental clinic in partnership with Human Solutions at our campus in Rockwood. About a year ago, we had \$50,000 raised—now we have \$2.4 million committed for construction, equipment and operations. We broke ground in May and the building is coming up fast!

Low-income housing will make up the upper floors of the dental clinic’s building. We are on the cutting edge of efforts to lift people out of poverty by offering health services where people live.

Construction is on schedule. Thanks to the many generous funders of this project, we hope to be seeing patients for dental health care in March 2016.

Who we served

Those we served: We served 7,818 people total with 18,514 visits in FY 2014-15.

- Our primary care patients number 4,292, a 21% increase over last year.
- Our patients were very low income (94% have incomes at or below the Federal Poverty Level).
- Nearly half of our patients were people of color (46%).
- We spoke with our patients in a language other than English in about half of all visits (49%).
- We served many who are without a home (20% of our patients) and many who are migrant workers (18% of our patients).
- Many still did not have insurance (43% of visits were not covered by insurance).

In addition to primary care services, our patients received specialty care thanks to the dedication of WMC volunteers, including dermatology, diabetic care, gynecology, ophthalmology and podiatry. WMC also served low-income families with chiropractic care, oral health, behavioral health and health education. And we assisted many families in navigating the regional health care systems, getting special equipment, arranging transportation, and securing resources, such as food, to support wellness.

WMC received additional funding this year to hire a provider specializing in adult chronic conditions and a family physician who works with children. Our clinic is busy and we are seeing lots of patients for the first time!

Taking on New Challenges

We are able to provide high quality, comprehensive care to thousands of low-income households thanks to nearly a hundred community partners and our many, many supporters – People like you! THANK YOU!

OUR BIG NEWS – We have won approval from the federal government to launch a new primary care clinic serving persons who are homeless, public housing residents and very low-income households. (Only 1 in 4 applications were funded so we are thrilled!) This clinic will be sited in Gresham and will open in late 2015. We will keep you updated about our progress.