

PALMETTO HEALTH COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

BACKGROUND

Palmetto Health is a 1,138-bed, nonprofit health care system located in Columbia, South Carolina, in the center of Richland County. In 1998, a merger between two major hospital systems created Palmetto Health, which committed to tithing 10 percent of its annual net profits to fund community programs and services for indigent, uninsured and underserved residents. The health care system includes five acute care hospitals, a physician practice network, several clinics and a nonprofit foundation.

Richland County has a large minority population, with an increasing number of Hispanic and Latino residents and a high percentage of Medicaid enrollees. South Carolina has a relatively high number of uninsured residents who are at higher risk of developing chronic diseases, including hypertension, heart disease and diabetes.

INTERVENTIONS

Palmetto Health has pursued multiple initiatives and strategies to promote a healthy community and address residents' health needs. The initiatives are guided by Healthy People 2020 objectives: provide access to quality health care services; create and maintain educational programs; and design and implement community-based services.

Partnerships are critical to Palmetto Health's community commitment. Palmetto collaborates with more than 24 community groups, including faith-based, civic and health care organizations, which can include competitors. Working together, these organizations are better able to fund initiatives and provide a wide array of community health services. Palmetto Health's programs are integrated within its Office of Community Health:

- » *Standing in the Gap*: Provides little to no-cost health services to uninsured, underinsured and low-income residents who live "in the gap" due to lack of health insurance and ineligibility for Medicaid. Participants select a medical home and have access to a comprehensive set of medical, dental and vision services.
- » *Changing Lifestyles*: Focuses on behavior change to prevent or mitigate the effects of diabetes, as well as promote smoking cessation. The Palmetto Health Diabetes Prevention Program aims to help delay pre-diabetes or prevent type 2 diabetes, through supervised exercise, classes and counseling. A free, six-session smoking cessation program provides motivational consultation, medical counseling and antitobacco medication.
- » *Better Together*: Focuses on integration into the community through service projects. Palmetto Health team members started volunteering in 2013 by renovating local homes and volunteering in schools, nursing homes and homeless shelters. Year-round efforts include providing medical scholarships and volunteering at local food banks.
- » *Healthy Choices*: Developed the Teen Health Initiative that addresses teen pregnancy, including weekly youth development programming for middle and high school students and an annual summit. Teen pregnancy is a serious health issue in South Carolina, with approximately 15 teenagers giving birth on a daily basis in the state. Palmetto Healthy Start works to provide early and adequate prenatal care for uninsured expectant mothers.

- » *Going Beyond Physical Health*: Provides funding to the Mental Illness Recovery Center, Inc. Its programs, the HomeBase and Homeless Recovery Center, enable participants to live independently at no cost to them. Along with housing, HomeBase provides treatment for ongoing substance abuse and mental disorders.

All levels of leadership at Palmetto Health are fully engaged in its community programs and participate in program guidance, implementation and evaluation. The health care system's strategy for sustaining programs relies on actively engaging the community for input.

RESULTS

Through its initiatives, Palmetto Health has provided substantial community benefit over the past few years:

- » Standing in the Gap
 - From 2012–2013, provided dental services for 11,256 patients, vision care services to 595 patients and 474 pairs of glasses.
 - During 2013, provided more than 1,400 prostate screenings, 1,700 breast and cervical exams, and 105 colorectal cancer screenings.
- » Changing Lifestyles
 - 64 percent of enrolled adults showed measurable improvements in HbA1c, BMI and other health indicators.
 - Among approximately 105 participants in the smoking cessation program, 75 quit smoking and 31 decreased their tobacco use.
- » Better Together
 - During 2013, \$13 million in services was provided for bereavement and grief support, car seat safety checks, asthma education and other services.
 - Palmetto Health team members committed a total of 200 volunteering hours.
- » Healthy Choices
 - During 2013, the students enrolled in Teen Talk reported no pregnancies.
 - From 2012–2013, infant mortality rate for Palmetto Healthy Start participants decreased from 3.5 to 1.2 per 1,000 live births. During 2013, the infant mortality rate for non-PHS participants was 8.4 per 1,000 live births.
- » Going Beyond Physical Health
 - During 2013, inpatient hospitalizations decreased by 22 percent; mental illness-related emergency department visits decreased by 49 percent.
 - During 2013, average length of stay in specialty hospitals decreased by four days.

CONTACT

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