

Access to health care is key to living well

Written by Melody Mendiola, MD
Friday, 16 April 2010 12:06

African Americans comprise 13 percent of the U.S. population. As a group, their health status continues to lag behind that of whites, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. For example, the report goes on to say that the African American infant mortality rate is more than double that of whites and African Americans die from diabetes at more than three times the rate of whites.

Although many factors account for health status differences, access to health insurance coverage and appropriate health services could reduce many of these disparities.

As part of its mission to improve the health of the community, Hennepin County Medical Center has developed different options to improve a person's access to health care. These options are designed to be convenient and affordable and to help the community get the best possible medical care for their families.

Among them:

New Wal-Mart Clinic – The Clinic at Walmart, operated by Hennepin County Medical Center, offers accessible, affordable high quality health care that is delivered by qualified practitioners. All clinicians are licensed, board-certified practitioners employed by Hennepin County Medical Center.

The Clinic at Walmart treats a wide range of medical conditions ranging from allergies, cold, flu, pink eye and strep throat to shingles or minor burns and abrasions. Vaccinations, including those for flu and pneumonia, are also available at the clinic. Patients can also get a number of lab tests at the clinic, including tests for pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, cholesterol and colon cancer.

Located at 715 E. 78th Street in Bloomington, the Clinic at Walmart is convenient to use. No appointment is necessary. The clinic is open Monday-Friday, 10 am to 8 pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm.

The Clinic at Walmart accepts Medicare, Medicaid and most major insurance plans.

Community Clinics - Hennepin Care North, Hennepin Care South, Hennepin Care East Lake, and Family Medical Center (West Lake Street) are hospital-based clinics located throughout the Twin Cities that are owned by Hennepin County Medical Center.

In the downtown area, adults and children can receive care at the Downtown Medicine Clinic and the Downtown Pediatrics Clinic.

Many of the HCMC Medicine Clinics can offer same-day appointments.

Interpreters and Cultural Experts – Over the past several decades, the state of Minnesota, and more particularly Minneapolis and St. Paul, has become home to many new immigrants and refugees. This has broadened the cultural diversity of the metropolitan area.

Hennepin County Medical Center's Interpreter Services have medical interpreters who not only

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have a rich medical background from their native countries, but are cultural experts as well, able to provide medical staff with cultural knowledge. This resource gives health care providers the tools readily available to ensure that patients from different countries provide care that's appropriate to their cultural needs.

More than 50 interpreters in 20 different languages are available free of charge and at all hours.

Emergency Express Care – Patients with minor acute illnesses, simple injuries, and other non-emergency conditions now have a fast track through the Emergency Department since Hennepin County Medical Center's new Emergency Express Care opened at the downtown campus.

On the first floor of the Red Building at 730 S. 8th Street, patients will report to the Emergency Department triage desk and cross the hallway to Emergency Express Care if appropriate.

Emergency Express Care is open every day of the year except for Thanksgiving and Christmas, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. No appointment is necessary.

MyChart – A person's health is important around the clock—not just during office hours. That's why Hennepin County Medical Center offers MyChart. With this Internet connection to their doctor's office, patients can schedule appointments, request prescription refills, review their health history and more—online, at any time.

With MyChart, patients can use the Internet to request medical appointments, view their health summary from the MyChart electronic health record, view test results, request prescription renewals, and communicate electronically and securely with your medical care team.

MyChart is a free service.

Paying for health care – According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, more than half of African Americans nationally have private health insurance; Medicaid covers an additional 21 percent but almost one quarter are uninsured.

Many health care providers are making great efforts to provide health care to all underserved communities. At Hennepin County Medical Center, patients with no health insurance or limited coverage may qualify for a Hennepin Care discount, depending on their income. Those who cannot pay their bill within 30 days can work with financial counselors who are available to talk about payment arrangements. Public assistance is also available for those who qualify. It's also possible to request a price estimate in advance of a particular service or procedure.

Hennepin County Medical Center is just one of many health care providers doing their part to ensure that everyone – regardless of race, income or ability to pay – can receive quality health care for themselves and their families.

Melody Mendiola, MD, is a board-certified general internal medicine doctor and medical director of Hennepin Care North, a clinic of Hennepin County Medical Center, located in Brooklyn

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Center, MN. Dr. Mendiola is accepting new patients at Hennepin Care North. To schedule an appointment, call (612) 873-8800.