



ACCESS INFORMATION

In July, Patrick Hanrahan, president of the United Way of the Plains, Susette Schwartz, CEO of Hunter Health Clinic, and I attended a national health conference in Boston. The conference — Innovations in Health Care — was sponsored by four national organizations that fund communities implementing programs to address the health care needs of the uninsured: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Bureau of Primary Health Care, the Kellogg Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

Our community was invited to present to this august group of 200 attendees. Mr. Hanrahan graciously shared the Project Access story, along with Dr. Suzanne Landis from Asheville, NC's program. The audience's positive response was very encouraging.

At the end of July, I traveled to Charlotte, NC to provide information about Project Access to the National Association of Counties. I was proud to highlight the partnership between the Sedgwick County Commission and the Wichita City Council to provide prescription funding for the program.

Because of these opportunities to share information with others, we are learning that we have much in common with communities throughout the country that are seeking new approaches to

improve the health of their uninsured citizens. We are truly not alone in our endeavors.



Anne Nelson
Program
Director

Joint Community Effort Is A Prescription For Success

The cost of a prescription medication can make all the difference in the health and well-being of many Project Access patients.

"People can access donated care, but if they don't have the money to fill their prescriptions, they aren't going to get well and stay well," explained Anne Nelson, program director.

Early in the planning process of Project Access, elected officials for the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County were approached to provide funding for prescription medications — and they responded generously with a first-year commitment of \$250,000 each.

"From the beginning, Project Access made sense," said Bill Buchanan, county manager. "It clearly helps an underserved population. It is as simple as that."

"Project Access is a great concept that brings together a number of sectors of the community for a common purpose," said Chris Cherches, city manager. "The whole area of wellness is important to economic development and the quality of life. I can't think of a worthier program for the city to be an active partner in."

Supporting local public health programs is not new for city and county governments. Each year, they allocate millions of dollars for various community services, including EMS, mental health services, addiction treatment activities and the Wichita-Sedgwick

County Health Department.

"It's part of government's role to help people reach their potential," Buchanan explained.

"Project Access fills a significant void in the community and allows individuals to have hope that they will receive the needed medical care," stated Cherches.

Local pharmacists and pharmacies also have been willing partners in Project Access.

"John Dye, a retired pharmacist, was part of the original

group working on Project Access," remarked Nelson. "He was instrumental in linking the area's pharmacy professionals with Project Access. He also played a significant role in developing our contract with the Prescription Network of Kansas (PNK)."

Enlisting PNK's help was crucial because it offered both the administrative capabilities and the computer network necessary to link the participating pharmacies with Project Access.

"We have not had an opportunity in the past to participate in a program this important that expands access to a population that dearly needs the assistance but can't afford it," said Peter Stern, executive director of PNK.

Working in conjunction with the Project Access office, PNK handles



CITY OF
WICHITA

IN THE KNOW

- As of August 7... 531 physicians are participating in Project Access. 1,076 patients are enrolled in Project Access.
- Project Access is completing the final interview phase to add another patient service coordinator to its staff. The additional coordinator will assist with the growing number of patients enrolled in the program.
- The American Association of Medical Society Executives recognized the Medical Society of Sedgwick County for its leadership in creating Project Access. Dwight Allen received the "Spirit Award" during the organization's annual conference held in Seattle in July.

THANK YOU . . .

to the Wichita City Council and the Sedgwick County Commission for their commitment to Project Access.

to the 54 pharmacies and their staff for their support of Project Access.

to Prescription Network of Kansas, particularly Peter Stern, Chellie Ortiz and Laurie Goertz, for their help and support of Project Access.

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various administrative details, such as processing claims, contracting with pharmaceutical companies and monitoring utilization trends. Prescriptions are purchased at 15% below the average wholesale costs for Project Access.

A total of 54 pharmacies in Sedgwick County — 70% — are now involved with Project Access, including all Dillons pharmacies.

"The community partnership was a strong reason why we chose to participate in Project Access," remarked Robert Tomasu, pharmacy specialist for Dillons. "Everything has gone very smoothly. The process works just like any third-party transaction, except that we waive the filling fee."

Project Access patients present their prescription card at one of the participating pharmacies. Local pharmacists access the PNK-managed network to verify patient enrollment and enter information about the prescribed medication and its cost. They also collect a \$4 co-pay for each prescription.

"The process is designed to be easy for the pharmacists to use

while preserving the patient's dignity," Nelson noted.

Project Access receives a report every two weeks from PNK detailing the types of medications dispensed and the total costs.

"This is valuable information about what the program's patients need to get well," Nelson pointed out.

Examples of the top 15 families of medications being prescribed include antibiotics and cardiac-related, cholesterol lowering,

pain-related, anti-inflammatory and diabetes-related drugs. To date, approximately \$100,000 in medications have been purchased for Project Access patients with city and county funds.

But Buchanan and Cherches are quick to give credit to others.

"Government's role is small in comparison to the contributions given by the doctors, hospitals and clinics," Cherches remarked. "It was the medical society's dedication that made it happen."

"This is a good program that does what it says it will do and is run well," Buchanan pointed out. "What's not to like?"



Nick Bombardier, RPh, of Dillons Pharmacy is just one of the many local pharmacists working with Project Access patients.

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