

# ACCESS INFORMATION

## IN THE KNOW

- Project Access is pleased to report that it met the April 14 deadline for implementing the HIPAA privacy requirements guidelines. Privacy notices were distributed informing patients of their rights and the program's responsibilities in regards to patient health information.
- The Project Access staff hosted a visit from the executive director of the Chattanooga, TN medical society foundation who sought more information about Wichita's program. Chattanooga is developing a similar effort in its community. Representatives from Liberal, KS, Des Moines, IA and Detroit, MI have recently requested detailed information about Project Access.
- In May, Paul Meals attended a meeting with representatives from the medical community of Colorado Springs and provided technical assistance on developing a program to increase access to health care for the uninsured.
- In July, Project Access will launch its own administrative database, replacing the CARES system originally installed when the program began.
- Mark your calendar for a celebration of Project Access' fourth birthday. The date and time are Sunday, September 7 from 2-4 PM. The place is Botanica. The event is part of MSSC's centennial recognition and will be free to all community partners, funders, providers and patients.

## New Drug Policy Seeks to Save Money

Availability of prescription medications is a significant component of the services provided to patients enrolled in Project Access. Each year since the program's inception, the Wichita City Council and the Sedgwick County Commission have jointly awarded \$525,000 for prescription drugs.

However, due to a sizeable increase in drug costs, the governing board of Project Access has implemented a policy change. The program will begin paying only for generic drugs when available to meet patient medication needs.

"Throughout 2002 and into 2003, we have experienced a rise in our costs for prescription drugs," explained Anne Nelson, program director. "In order to be the best stewards of the public funds designated for Project Access and to extend these funds to as many patients as possible, we have decided to move to a generic-only policy."

A letter to all physicians detailing the new policy is forthcoming. "We will make the change as simple and easy as possible for the providers and patients."

## Site Visitors Meet with Program Partners

In March, Project Access partners gathered around a table at the United Way offices with representatives from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to share their perspectives on the local community's progress in improving access to health care for the uninsured. The foundation visitors included Joe Garcia and John Maupin, DDS, both members of the RWJF National Advisory Committee, and Terry Stoller, project officer of the RWJF *Communities in Charge* grant.

"The foundation comes to celebrate what Project Access has accomplished and to also learn from your experiences," said Joe Garcia.

The group was asked to discuss their initial assumptions when Project Access began operation, and to consider key elements to the program's successes.

"I wasn't certain that we would be as successful as we have been because of the variations in the



*John Maupin, DDS, Terry Stoller & Joe Garcia facilitated a site visit in Wichita on behalf of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.*

way everyone did things. I learned that coordination is the key to eliminating duplication and improving the process," said David Nevill, CEO of Wesley Medical Center.

"I was incorrect in assuming that SRS would be overly bureaucratic. Their part in the program's success has been important," said Daniel Caliendo, MD.

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## Studies Evaluate Local Hospital Usage

Project Access has contracted with the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita to undertake a community-wide study of hospital utilization by uninsured and Medicaid patients during the last three years. Under the leadership of Dean S. Edwards Dismuke, MD, and coordinated by Terri Jones, KUSM-W has completed work on the first year's data.

Both Via Christi Regional Medical Center and Wesley Medical Center have compiled information from the continuum of uncompensated care that occurs in their facilities—in-patient, out-patient and emergency room utilization—for the study.

"The assistance we have received from the hospital information technology departments has been outstanding," remarked Anne Nelson, program director.

The information collected from the utilization study will be shared with hospital administrators and the larger community to help make informed decisions about providing health care to the area's uninsured.

An evaluation of Project Access' emergency room case management project is closely monitoring its impact on patient health care as well as on ER usage. The project connects frequent users of ER services without insurance to primary care providers and works with patients to help them better manage their health care.

"The study is tracking patient outcomes, such as health status, productivity and pre- and post-ER utilization," Nelson said.

During 2002, the case management teams worked with 608 clients. The teams saw a 69% decrease in ER utilization for a cost avoidance of over \$1 million to the hospitals. An analysis of patient surveys shows early signs of improvement in health status of the participants.

Refer to [www.projectaccess.net](http://www.projectaccess.net) for these and other evaluation reports.

### NUMBERS COUNT

Since September 1, 1999...

**4,102 patients** have enrolled in Project Access, and **630 patients** are active as of June 20.

**544 physicians** participate in Project Access and **50 physicians** volunteer in six community clinics for a total participation rate of **72%** of MSSC members.

**\$6,954,429** in care has been donated by physicians submitting HCFA billing reports.

**\$16,434,580** in care has been donated by seven area hospitals submitting UB92s.

**\$1,441,996** in prescriptions have been purchased (**62,833** prescription claims filed) with funding provided by the Sedgwick County Commission and the Wichita City Council and filled at no charge by **69 participating pharmacies.**

## Site Visit

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Encouraged by the site visitors to be forthright with their comments, the discussion included issues that had led to difficult decisions, such as the policy change regarding undocumented persons.

"We learned that the needs are greater than one project can meet," said Joseph Meek, MD.

"The foundation site visitors were looking for honest feedback about our experiences, and the community partners present at the meeting rose to that challenge," said Anne Nelson, program director.

Among those participating in the site visit were:

Christopher Moeller, MD, president of Project Access board; Paul Meals, SRS assistant director and co-chair of Project Access Operations Council; Carolyn Earnest, RN, co-chair of Project Access Operations Council; Fred McLean, Good Samaritan Clinic executive director; Trix Niernberger, Hunter Health Clinic communications director; Tom Purcell, pharmacist; and Lucynda Raben, DDS, Dental Society immediate past president.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is conducting similar site visits with all 12 communities funded by its *Communities in Charge* grant project.



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