

Creating Connections

The Possibilities are Endless



A Report to the Community 2007

Closing the Gap

Mayo Clinic realizes that not all residents have easy access to medical care when they need it. For some people, lack of health insurance prevents them from getting treatment; for others living in rural areas, doctors and hospitals may be too far away. Regardless of the reasons, Mayo tries to do its part for people who are not getting adequate medical care by finding creative ways to provide it. Being

connected and involved in the community – close enough to understand the challenges in our own back yard – helps to identify the community's health care disparities. Here are two examples of how Mayo closes that gap by taking action to help those who traditionally don't receive medical care or receive it only when it's too late.



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Health Care for the Working Uninsured

For many people, being without health insurance makes medical treatment unaffordable. One way Mayo is helping to reduce this disparity in health care is through Volunteers in Medicine, a volunteer-run medical clinic in downtown Jacksonville providing free outpatient medical services for the working uninsured.

"These people often fall through the cracks," explains Dr. Timothy Woodward, a Mayo Clinic gastroenterologist who volunteers at the downtown clinic one Saturday a month. "They don't have health insurance but don't qualify for Medicaid or charity care."

To be eligible, patients must work at least 20 hours a week, have incomes between 150 percent and 250 percent of the federal poverty guidelines and be without private or government-funded medical insurance.

Mayo Clinic physicians and nurse practitioners regularly volunteer at the clinic, where they provide routine, non-emergency medical services. The clinic focuses on primary care and preventive medicine, and its doctors diagnose and treat conditions that don't require surgery. Some patients with abnormal test results come to Mayo Clinic for free or reduced-cost treatment.

"Through Volunteers in Medicine, we were able to treat a man who

had colon cancer," says Dr. Woodward. "He was suffering with many symptoms, but as the owner of a small convenience store, he didn't have health insurance. He probably would not have received the appropriate care if it weren't for this clinic," he explains. The patient underwent surgery and chemotherapy at Mayo Clinic and is in remission.

"For many people who are working and uninsured, symptoms are often ignored," says Dr. Colon-Otero, a Mayo Clinic oncologist who also volunteers at the clinic. "If we can catch problems like this in the early stages, we have a much better chance of saving patients."

Prompt Diagnosis and the Right Treatment

African-American, Native American and Hispanic women face a greater risk of dying after a breast cancer diagnosis than Caucasian women, according to a report from the University of Florida. This may be partially due to tumor biology, but another problem is access to prompt diagnostic services which becomes more difficult for women who lack appropriate medical insurance.

"Many underserved women are able to get free mammograms, which are a great service," explains Dr. Elizabeth DePeri, a Mayo Clinic radiologist. "But many who need further treatment face limited options for care." Most of these women don't have health care insurance. Many are self-employed or work for small businesses that don't provide coverage.

For the past seven years, Mayo has worked closely with the Duval County Health Department to close the gap in services by providing additional screenings, biopsies, MRIs and follow-up exams for women with income less than 200 percent of poverty level – regardless of race – who have been found to have suspicious mammogram findings. "There is a time in between diagnosis and treatment that often gets ignored for these women," says Dr. DePeri, who administers the program that provides this important transitional care. "This is a critical time, and prompt diagnosis with the right treatment can make a life or death difference."

Through the collaboration, federal and private grant monies at Mayo Clinic cover expenses for follow-up

diagnostic testing to ensure that an accurate diagnosis is made. If cancer is found, the clinic helps patients find a way to receive treatment by guiding them through a process that either helps them



obtain Medicaid or financial assistance from another source. Some patients qualify for care at Mayo via its own charity care program. To date, more than 500 women have received care.