



Oregon's largest multi-specialty, physician-owned medical clinic.

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Volunteers at The Oregon Clinic Provide Free Medical Care to Portland's Uninsured Through Project Access NOW

Since 2008 The Oregon Clinic has donated more than \$1.5 million in services

Portland, Ore., Dec. 28, 2011 – The physicians at The Oregon Clinic have a long history of volunteerism around the world. No less important is their continuing support for local groups such as Project Access NOW (PA NOW), a nonprofit organization that coordinates access to health care for uninsured low-income people in the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan area. PA NOW helps these individuals navigate the healthcare system by organizing a network of volunteer providers, clinics and hospitals and facilitating free physician visits, surgical procedures, lab tests, diagnostic imaging, pharmacy and other services.

For many patients seen by The Oregon Clinic, PA NOW is a life-changing program. "We recently saw a 50-year old man with severe back problems that limited his ability to work," said Louis Libby, MD, a pulmonary specialist with the Pulmonary Critical Care & Sleep Medicine Division and one of PA NOW's first volunteers. "But he also had sleep apnea, which prevented him from having surgery. Thanks to PA NOW, we were able to treat the apnea so he could have his back operated on."

Dr. Libby's passionate advocacy of PA NOW's mission and goals convinced many other medical professionals at The Oregon Clinic to volunteer. "Our healthcare system is broken," Dr. Libby said. "Though most PA NOW patients are working, many are underemployed and all are uninsured. They don't qualify for welfare, so Project Access fills the gap. It's the right thing for physicians to do."

James R. Patterson, MD, pulmonologist with the Pulmonary Critical Care & Sleep Medicine Division, agrees. "Almost 20% of Oregon adults under the age of 65 are uninsured," Dr. Patterson said. "Most of these are the working poor, trying to make ends meet for their families. I'm pleased that so many physicians at The Oregon Clinic are doing their part."

The Oregon Clinic's commitment to PA NOW began in 2008. In total, there are 134 medical professionals (including 90 percent of all physicians) and ancillary healthcare providers in The Oregon Clinic who are PA NOW volunteers. Since then, The Oregon Clinic has served more than 570 individuals and donated more than \$1.5 million in services to PA NOW clients.

The patient care delivered by The Oregon Clinic on behalf of PA NOW often extends over many years. Gastroenterologist Harry E. Bray, MD of the Portland Gastroenterology Division of The Oregon Clinic recently diagnosed a rare genetic condition in a young woman with severe anemia, who was referred through the PA NOW network. The disease, Peutz-Jeghers Syndrome, produces polyps throughout the digestive system that carry a risk of turning into cancers. Using new technology that allows doctors to look deep into the small intestine, Dr. Bray removed the polyps and will follow up each year to catch recurring polyps.

Linda Nilsen-Solares, Project Access NOW's Executive Director, is extremely appreciative of The Oregon Clinic's strong commitment. "The physicians at The

Oregon Clinic are a well-respected group encompassing diverse specialties, so their participation convinced many other clinics and physicians to join in,” said Nilsen-Solares. “When we first started, we had 40 specialty providers. A month after The Oregon Clinic joined forces with us, we had more than 1,000.”

Currently, an estimated 275,000 people in the Portland metro area do not have health insurance out of approximately 600,000 uninsured in the state. Before PA NOW, the path to health care for those without health insurance was complicated and often overwhelming. Now, qualified patients complete a single eligibility form for most services and PA NOW coordinates care through its network. Patients working with the Portland area PA NOW even have a pharmacy benefit to make sure they get access to needed medications.

Though each volunteer has his/her own reason for participating, most are primarily motivated by wanting to ensure that everyone in the community receives the same quality of basic health care. “We don’t distinguish between insured and uninsured patients,” said Michael Phillips, MD, a gastroenterologist at The Oregon Clinic’s Gateway office. “In fact, we seldom know if a patient is being coordinated through PA NOW. Regardless, they get the same quality care as someone who has traditional medical insurance.”

Lance Marr, MD, a urologist at The Oregon Clinic, recalls the feeling of satisfaction he experienced when he helped a PA NOW patient who couldn’t urinate normally due to severe prostate and bladder problems. “The patient had to periodically catheterize himself because he couldn’t afford to have someone do this for him,” said Dr. Marr. “Thanks to PA NOW, we were able to operate on his prostate to relieve the problem. It’s made a huge difference in his quality of life.”

About The Oregon Clinic

The Oregon Clinic is the largest private specialty physician practice in Oregon, with more than 140 providers practicing over 30 different medical and surgical

specialties and sub-specialties. We use a team approach to address health conditions at more than 15 locations from Vancouver to Salem, and from Hood River to Astoria. Founded in Portland in 1994, our physicians and staff are committed to delivering the highest quality patient care, practicing evidence-based medicine, and providing leadership for the healthcare community. Visit www.orclinic.com or call 503-935-8000 for more information.

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