



SPECIAL ISSUE: WELLNESS

Managing Diabetes through Lifestyle Changes Two Patient Stories

Twenty three years ago, **Francis Castillo** (now 53 years old and a Greenbrae resident) emigrated from Mexico to find a better life for her children. *“I’ve had a lot of troubles in my life, including depression and domestic violence,”* she says, *“all of which created a lot of stress.”*

Ayah El-Beshbeeshy, a Clinics registered dietician, explains that life style issues and genetics are the main causes of Type 2 diabetes. In addition to food and exercise, stress can also play a role in blood sugar levels.

“Diabetes is very common in our patients,” she reports. *“Many of them have multiple life challenges that can complicate their diabetes. Also, Latinos in general are at high risk due to their genetic predisposition.”*

Eight years ago, Francis was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. Currently on insulin as well as other medications, she is an active

“Both Francis and Miguel are role models for how active engagement in a wellness program can make a difference.”

— **Ayah El-Beshbeeshy**

participant in the Clinics wellness programs. She attended our Clinics Diabetes class series and met with our Clinics health educator to learn how to modify her diet. *“Before, I ate lot of ‘pan dulce’ [sweet bread]. I learned about eating smaller portions; now, I just eat a little piece in the morning and that’s enough.”*

Once a week, she attends the “Balanced Life” class that teaches stress reduction techniques



Clinics patient Francis Castillo, who has diabetes, takes her daily walk

Photo: Stuart Lirette

like breathing exercises, yoga, and Tai Chi. *“I like it all,”* she says. *“The class helps with my stress and also with my arthritis pain – and I do the exercises at home too.”*

Today, Francis takes a daily, one-hour walk and volunteers at Canal Alliance. She sees her Clinics physician on a regular basis and continues to attend our programs. When she sees children who are overweight, she knows they may be at risk for diabetes, and talks to their mothers about better nutrition and exercise. And, as she says, *“I feel very good.”*

Miguel’s story

Miguel Rivas Ventura (age 50) came to the US from El Salvador in 1991 for a better life and to flee the dangerous civil war. A resident of San Rafael, he currently works at a number of jobs, and has what for many might be a stressful life.

Until 2017, Miguel had always been healthy. But when he became chronically tired, started drinking a lot of water, and going to the bathroom frequently, he knew it might be

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SPRING 2018

Photo: Tim Porter

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To improve the health of our patients and community by providing high quality, cost-effective, culturally sensitive, patient-centered health care.

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Leveling the Playing Field in Health Care

By Mitesh Popat, MD, MPH, CEO



These days, health care and uncertainty seem to go together. Families worry about insurance coverage and community clinics fear that government funding may be drastically reduced.

Despite the turmoil, Marin Community Clinics remains strong and is here to stay.

This year, more than ever before, we are committed to ensuring access to health care for everyone, and have adopted the following priorities:

Addressing key social barriers to care

Many of our patients have challenging life situations that have a direct impact on their health.

It's a long list: the high cost of care, inadequate or no health insurance, lack of transportation, limited access to healthy food, being unhoused, lack of child care, and substance abuse problems. These issues can result in delayed care or no care at all, which can be life-threatening.

Marin Community Clinics is committed to breaking down these barriers, often working in partnership with other organizations. We continue to provide healthy food at our popular weekly Health Hubs and help

"This year, more than ever before, we are committed to ensuring access to health care for everyone."

—Mitesh Popat, MD, MPH, CEO

hundreds of residents with health insurance enrollment. (See Annual Report for more information about these programs.)

Being the "health home" for our patients

For patients with complex health problems or barriers to care, having one place to receive care is ideal. Medical, dental, and behavioral health providers work as a team; labs and pharmacies are on site; and, even optometry and radiology are available. It's easier for patients and health outcomes are better.

Increasing the breadth and depth of our services

The more services we can provide at our own clinics, the more convenient for patients and the better coordinated the care. In 2018, we will continue to expand specialty medical services.



We will also increase wellness services, with classes on stress management, diabetes, and pain management – issues affecting many of our patients. With the recent addition of a substance abuse specialist, we now offer alcohol and drug abuse counseling.

Adding to our Charity Care Fund

Last year, we set aside \$20,000 for our Charity Care Fund, which helps pay for services that patients need but that we don't provide, such as MRIs. It won't be enough, so we have set a goal of \$100,000 for this year, which we hope to reach through fundraising efforts.

Serving a broader base of patients

Marin's older adult population is dramatically increasing and the community-based

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Program Highlight

Our Nutrition and Exercise Program

Q&A with JoAnn Gruener RD, MPH, CDE, Nutrition & Health Education Director

Photo: Clinics Staff



Q Why does Marin Community Clinics have a special Nutrition and Exercise Program?

A We see nutritious food and exercise as medicine, and ensuring that our patients have access to both is key to providing whole person care.

Many of our patients have challenges in their daily lives that make it difficult to eat healthy food or get exercise. They know the importance to their health, but often need coaching, encouragement, and more education.

Q What are some of the specific challenges you see?

A The challenges are many – access, lifestyle, financial, and cultural. Traditional diets may include a high percentage of bread and rice, and eating fast food is often easier than cooking – especially if you don't have a kitchen and both parents work at several jobs. Food can be very expensive and it's hard to fit in exercise. A host of serious problems can result - obesity, diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol – all issues that are often preventable.

Q What kinds of services do you offer?

A Our staff of three registered dietitians and four health educators takes a very practical approach.

Photo: Stuart Lirette



We encourage families to come to our weekly Health Hubs, where they can obtain free, nutritious food, nutrition education, health screenings, and learn about exercise. Hundreds of people come every week!

We also offer several groups for our patients that address chronic disease. Our goal is to make healthy eating and exercising fun. There is always a way for us to connect with our patients when we are addressing their basic needs. For

Photo: Lindsay Boughiey



Yoga class at our Parks Rx Program

instance, we help them navigate through the many food choices that exist in our grocery stores and help them make typical meals healthier.

Last year, we started a weekly Walking Group around the Bay and a Parents Meet-Up Group at Albert J. Boro Community Park. Families participate in fun outdoor activities led by our staff. These groups, made possible by a Marin County Parks Community Grant, are part of our Parks Rx Program. Every month, we promote an event where we encourage our patients to visit a county or city park or other open space for a ranger-led event or self-led hike.

Q What kinds of results are you seeing?

A We've seen a lot of dramatic turnarounds. We're particularly proud of the diabetes group – patients have lost weight, are managing their blood sugars, and have reduced their need for insulin - all because of healthy lifestyle changes. Participants aren't just learning from the professionals, but from each other. It's powerful, and they are grateful.

For our Patient Education Program calendar, visit: www.marinclinic.org/health-care-services/healtheducation
See page 1 for patient stories.



What's New at Marin Community Clinics?

Clinics recognized as health center quality leader



Marin Community Clinics has received the prestigious Certificate of Achievement from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the federal

body that oversees federally-funded community health centers. Given in recognition of “exemplary service and commitment to quality health care,” the award followed an extensive survey of the Clinics’ clinical quality outcomes.

This recognition signifies that Marin Community Clinics is among the top 30% of all HRSA-funded health centers that achieved overall best clinical outcomes and high quality clinical operations in 2016. The \$109,000 award from HRSA will be used to expand services as well as hours of operation.

“We continually conduct our own assessments of the care we provide, but welcome having third parties evaluate what we do,” explained **Jose Chibras, MD**, Chief Medical Officer. *“This award is another way we know we are providing the community and our patients with accessible, high quality care. It is a testament to the expertise and commitment of everyone at the Clinics and they are to be congratulated.”*

County services transfer a success

On April 19th, leaders from the Clinics, the County of Marin and the community attended an Open House at our San Rafael Campus Clinic to learn about the successful transfer of medical and dental patients from the County to the Clinics.



Photo: Lindsay Boughey

Joan Lubamersky of Assemblymember Marc Levine's office (L) and Carole Simon Mills of Senator Mark McGuire's office (R) present certificates of recognition to CEO Mitesh Popat

Behavioral health providers hold summit

In late March, Marin Community Clinics and Beacon Health Options (Medi-Cal's payer for mental health services) hosted an important gathering – the first-ever “Health Neighborhood Event: A Behavioral Health Summit in Marin County.”

Elizabeth Horevitz, PhD, LCSW, Director of the Clinics Behavioral Health Division and one of the organizers, indicated



that the event was a great success. *“Over 50 individuals attended – representatives from across the continuum of care – community agencies, funders, community health centers,*

and private practitioners. We made a great start on our goal: to move from silos to working as a ‘behavioral health neighborhood’ where providers work as partners to improve behavioral health (and all health) in Marin.”

Leveling the Playing Field in Health Care continued from page 2

physician population is dwindling. The result is that many older adults are having difficulty accessing primary care. We intend to play a strong role in filling this gap and are well prepared to do so. We are a Medicare-certified provider and have providers with expertise and strong interest in serving older patients.

Enhancing our technical capabilities to reach patients

Many of our patients don't have internet access, but virtually all of them have cell phones. We currently use telecommunications for appointment reminders and plan to explore additional

platforms so that we can provide health information targeted to patients' specific needs.

Advocating for our patients

Finally, in this uncertain time, advocacy has become increasingly important. We will continue to serve as a strong advocate for our most vulnerable patients and encourage you to do so as well. Contact your legislators and share your views!

Volunteer Spotlight: Marty Frankel, RN, MFT

In 2015, when Marin Community Clinics took on coordination of the Health Hubs, we asked the Marin Medical Reserve Corps (MMRC) if it could provide licensed volunteers to help with the health screenings.

Marty Frankel, RN, MFT, an MMRC member and Inverness resident, immediately stepped up to the plate. Once a month, for the past two years, she has volunteered at our San Rafael Health Hub to conduct screenings for conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. When screenings indicate that someone is high risk for problems, she facilitates scheduling medical appointments at the Clinics or even getting them to a hospital emergency department.



Photo: Stuart Lirette

Volunteer Mary Frankel, RN, MFT screens a Health Hub attendee

The Health Hubs provide the whole package – food, exercise, education, and lots of fun. It’s a great place for people to come.”

She also explained that many of the attendees are new to the US, don’t yet have health care providers, and may not even know they have a chronic condition such as diabetes. *“This is an easy way to get screened, learn about health in a positive manner, and get referred for help.”*

Expertise & sensitivity make for a great volunteer

We are fortunate to have Marty on our team. She not only brings a strong spirit and commitment to her work, but has a wealth of experience. Marty worked as a family nurse practitioner for over 40 years, was one of the founders of the Pt. Reyes Community Clinic, has a Master’s Degree in counseling, and was on the nursing faculty at Sonoma State University.

Marty feels strongly about the role that the Health Hubs play in the community. *“Food and security are huge issues for so many people,”* she explains. *“When 50% of your income goes to pay the rent, having a food bank with free, nutritious food is a big benefit.”*

Florencia Parada, who coordinates the

Health Hubs, is enthusiastic about Marty’s contributions. *“She understands the life challenges our patients face and the impact these can have on their health. She is culturally sensitive, understands their fears, and is dedicated to helping them make positive health changes.”*

Calling all Registered Nurses!

If you are a registered nurse and interested in volunteering on our Health Hub screening team, contact florenciaparada@marinclinics.org

Marty recommends it: *“I love working at Marin Community Clinics – perhaps more than any group with whom I have ever been associated. The staff lives out its mission every day, is alert to patients’ needs, and eager to help. Everyone is well cared for. It’s a gift to work with them.”*

Managing Diabetes through Lifestyle Changes continued from page 1

diabetes. He came to our Clinics for tests and his intuition was correct.

“At first, I didn’t understand why I would have this disease,” explained Miguel. *“It didn’t run in my family and I was eating well. But then I realized that chronic stress, with the impact it has on the body, was one of the causes.”*

Exercise, good nutrition, and stress reduction

For a short time, Miguel was on insulin. He also met with El-Beshbeeshy to learn what foods affected his diabetes. He educated himself about the condition and soon decided to manage most of the lifestyle changes on his own, still checking in with his doctor. He is now off insulin, exercises twice a day, and has adjusted his diet to include more vegetables,



Photo: Stuart Lirette

Miguel Rivas Ventura learns about healthy eating from Ayah El-Beshbeeshy

fewer tortillas, and less ice cream. He avoids stress by not taking on too much work, talking issues out with others, and thinking positively.

“Right where they should be”

Today, he no longer needs to test his blood sugar on a daily basis – he “just knows.” *“If the urge to eat ice cream comes up, I take a walk instead; if I am working hard physically, I know I can have more.”*

“Self-care is such a critical part of living with diabetes,” explains El-Beshbeeshy. *“Both Francis and Miguel are role models for how active engagement in a wellness program can make a difference. They are right where they should be.”*

Your Contributions Make a Difference

Donor/Volunteer Profiles: Doris Hunker & Nancy Schlegel

Community members who donate or volunteer are key to our success. Meet two women who are committed to doing both.

The first time Greenbrae residents **Doris Hunker** and **Nancy Schlegel** visited Marin Community Clinics – at the former trailer site on Marin General Hospital’s campus – they knew they wanted to get involved. “It was just fantastic,” reports Nancy. “We were so impressed with the diversity of the patients and the way the staff dealt with everyone.”

That visit sparked a commitment that continues to this day. They made an initial donation, but didn’t stop there.



Photo: Stuart Lirette

Donors/Volunteers Doris Hunker (L) and Nancy Schlegel (R)

out to schools and librarians, things really took off. (They report that the Friends of the San Rafael Library has been their “saving grace.”) Today, they are at the San Rafael clinic once every two weeks. “There is always a need for books,” explains Doris, “especially for the pre-K through 3rd graders.”

Solstice supporters and Legacy Circle members

When Doris and Nancy became involved with the Book Nook, it further opened their eyes to the Clinics’ work, and they became even more active. For the past five years, they have joined our roster of Summer Solstice event sponsors. Every year, they bring friends to introduce them to the Clinics.

Promoting child literacy

Doris and Nancy, partners for 52 years, are both retired teachers. Doris taught elementary school over 40 years; Nancy taught elementary and middle school for 24 years.

So, it was only natural that when Clinics volunteer **Judie Shaw** (“The Book Nook Lady”) met them, she knew they would be perfect to help with the Book Nook, a program

“We really believe in the Clinics. We have seen what they can do.”
—Doris Hunker and Nancy Schlegel

“I know that what we are doing is helping someone,” says Doris.

“It gives us a sense of satisfaction, knowing that people who are

under- or uninsured and have health problems can get help in a safe place,” concludes Nancy.

for children at our San Rafael and Novato clinics. Doris and Nancy didn’t have to be convinced about the importance of reading at an early age, and jumped right in.

For the past five years, they have been collecting and organizing donated children’s books and taking them to the San Rafael clinic for the children. Initially, it was a struggle getting donations, so Doris and Nancy actually bought used books to contribute. When they started reaching

Doris and Nancy continue to help spread the word about the Clinics – sharing newsletters with fellow residents of The Tamalpais and inviting Clinics leaders to speak at community groups.

What a team!

To learn about Marin Community Clinics’ Legacy Circle, email: gifts@marinclinics.org or call 415-526-8527.

Photo: Tim Porter



If you would like to make a donation online rather than through the mail, please visit www.marinclinics.org/support-us. If you would like a tour of our Clinics, please email gifts@marinclinics.org or call 415-526-8527.

Clinics Physicians Tapped as Health Champions

Two Marin Community Clinics' physicians, **Tracey Hessel, MD** and **Elizabeth Shaw, MD**, have been named to a prestigious fellowship with the State Department of Public Health and the University of California (San Francisco).

Harnessing the passion of health care providers

For the next two years, they are participating in a statewide Champion Provider Fellowship Program that was developed to harness the passion of health care providers to improve community health beyond the clinic setting. The primary focus: to address the obesity epidemic, which is leading to devastating and costly diseases such as diabetes, stroke, and heart disease – conditions that disproportionately affect low income, underserved communities.

Dr. Hessel and Dr. Shaw are receiving training and education on a wide variety of health subjects, including health promotion, food insecurity, healthy retail, and communications. Their work will also include collaboration with community leaders, health departments, schools, and faith-based organizations to develop local solutions.

Already making an impact

“Both of these wonderful physicians were already making a tremendous impact in Marin County – even before they became fellows,” reports CEO **Mitesh Popat, MD, MPH**, *“so they were ‘naturals’ to be selected.”*

“Marin County has among the highest health disparities in California – we need to address the larger issues that are affecting the health of our underserved residents.”

**Tracey Hessel, MD and Elizabeth Shaw, MD,
Champion Provider Fellows**

In her current role as lead Clinics pediatrician, Dr. Hessel collaborates with other organizations to strengthen the health care safety net in Marin. This includes collaborating with organizations such as Head Start, First 5, and public school districts, as well as involvement in countywide initiatives such as Marin's Healthy Eating Active Living and Oral Health steering committees.



Photo: Lindsay Boughey

Health Provider Champions Tracey Hessel, MD (L) and Elizabeth Shaw, MD (R)

Dr. Shaw, a family practice physician, has helped develop systems at the Clinics to promote more effective disease management, including the creation of patient-centered care teams and support for patients' transition from hospitals to home. Her career is motivated by social justice and an interest in systems-level changes that can improve health for both individuals and the community-at-large.

Shared passion for improving community health

“I have been a pediatrician in Marin County for the past 13 years,” reports Dr. Hessel. *“Providing patient care is extremely rewarding. But I also know the importance of addressing the larger issues that impact a patient's health. I see it every day – financial challenges, housing insecurities, lack of access to nutritious food, and more.”*



Photo: Stuart Lirette

“I am participating in this fellowship in order to reduce Marin County's health disparities - among the highest in California,” Dr. Shaw explains, *“and to innovate and collaborate to promote interventions for children and their families.”*

Congratulations to Dr. Hessel and Dr. Shaw! They typify the passion and commitment of everyone on the Clinics team.

For more information about Marin Community Clinics
visit www.marinclinics.org or email info@marinclinics.org

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- Novato
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Save the Date: 2018 Summer Solstice Celebration



This year's Summer Solstice Celebration will be held on **Wednesday, June 20, 2018** at the Marin Art and Garden Center in Ross.

The annual fundraising event offers a magical evening of delicious food and drink, musical entertainment, and good company. This year, for the first time, we will add a live auction to the festivities.

A time for renewal and revitalization

All proceeds support our mission to improve the health of our patients and community by providing high quality, cost-effective, culturally sensitive, patient-centered health care.

Event honors Community Health Champions

This year's event will honor our 2018 Community Health Champions, each of whom is deeply committed to the well-being of our patients: urologist **Patrick Bennett, MD**; Dental Advisory Committee member **Barbara Cancilla, RDAEF**; and, Senior Director of Medical Clinic Services **Susan Wiebers**. Marin is a healthier place because of their dedication and compassion.



Photo: Billy Cole

Supporters celebrate at Spring 2017 Solstice event

Get your tickets now before we sell out!

We invite you to support our patients and celebrate with us. Tickets are \$150 per person and are available for purchase online through June 15 at <https://marinclinics.ejoinme.org/summer-solstice>

If you are interested in sponsorship opportunities, contact Lindsay at lboughey@marinclinics.org.

Questions? Contact us at gifts@marinclinics.org or call 415-526-8527.