



Executive Summary

Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital serves a population that has a high proportion of low-income individuals, many of whom are African American men. The hospital regularly conducts focus groups in the community to understand issues affecting its patients, and has created several programs in response to health disparities prevalent in the area. The Men's Health Program was created in response to significantly higher morbidity and mortality rates among African American males in the community than in the state. Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital's Men's Health Program reaches out to churches to educate men about health awareness and works to help them understand issues impacting their ability to access care. The hospital then recruits men interested in serving their community by working to educate other men in the community about health issues. Titled "Men on the Move," the group of laymen has been educated by hospital physicians and medical providers and now hosts health events and screenings throughout the community, attracting between 500 and 1,000 men to each community event.

The hospital also established its Gateway to Care program to help uninsured and low-income individuals access the prescription medications they need to maintain a high quality of life and reduce preventable emergency room visits. Low-income patients who cannot afford their medication may complete a simple screen over the phone, and then apply for medication-specific prescription assistance through pharmaceutical companies. To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, hospital employees complete a baseline survey of patients' health status, emergency room utilization, and medication costs when they enter the program, and will complete a second survey after the program has been in place for one year.

In response to high rates of African American teen pregnancy and teen fatherless households in the area, the Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital has established school-based teen mother and teen father programs to help young parents understand how to care for their children. Through meetings with children and their parents at their high school each week, the teenagers learn parenting skills and coping skills that have decreased the rates of teen parent high school dropouts. The hospital has also collaborated with several hospitals across the state to conduct cancer screenings in urban and rural areas. Southwest Georgia has a 33 percent higher incidence of cancer compared to the remainder of the state, with higher death rates from cancer due to late diagnoses.

Organization Size: 446 beds

Programs/Initiatives Description

Men's Health Program: The largest segment of uninsured patients in Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital's service area is African American men. The disparity has created a gap in health status between men and women in the area, including significantly higher morbidity and mortality rates among low-income African American men. The hospital began conducting phone surveys and focus groups with men to understand their lifestyles and issues surrounding their health, and it became apparent that there was a need for special intervention in the African American male population. As a result, Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital established "Men's Health Summits" in area churches addressing two common areas of focus: uninsured males, and insured males with a "macho" mentality that they didn't need health care services, or lacked trust in the health care system.

The hospital knew that its message must have a call to action, and be crafted in such a way that males would respond to it. This meant that laymen had to lead the outreach efforts. The hospital created its core message and materials, and then began recruiting laymen from the churches to serve as messengers to other males in the community. The "Men on the Move" allowed Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital to reach men not attending churches or men who avoided the hospital's health promotion efforts because of lack of trust. The Men on the Move were trained, but the training was minimal because all of the men involved could relate to both being uninsured and the "macho" attitude of not wanting to utilize health care services. Individuals involved in Men on the Move were also educated about key men's health issues, such as diabetes and prostate cancer. Physicians and medical personnel explained terminology and medical issues in a way that the men could clearly understand, and explain them to other laymen in the community.

Once the Men on the Move were sufficiently prepared, the hospital created events and actions for the men to get involved and exercise the skills they had learned. Events such as the annual Fathers Day event emphasizing "Healthy Fathers, Healthy Families" include a family picnic, healthy foods, health screenings, and presentations by Men on the Move. The groups also promote national health awareness issues, such as diabetes month, prostate cancer month, and arthritis awareness. The health education and promotion program continues to grow, with over 200 lay males currently involved in educating the public through Men on the Move.

Teen Mother and Teen Father Program: Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital has had a school-based Single Mom program assisting teen single moms for several years. A large percentage of teen pregnancies in the area are young African American women. Hospital nurses visit the hospitals to talk to the girls about prenatal care, birthing, and parenting. During the meetings with the young mothers, it became apparent to the nurses that many of the mothers were

struggling to care for their children because the father was not involved in the child's life. The nurses saw the importance of getting the father involved in the child's life, both to bring the father closer to the child and his responsibility, and to assist the teen mothers in caring for the child so that they would not drop out of school. The Teen Father program parallels the Teen Mother program, with hospital nurses meeting with fathers in the schools every week to discuss parenting skills and how to care for their babies. The program has resulted in fathers and mothers becoming closer to their children and better understanding how to care for them, which has in turn resulted in a reduced high school drop-out rate of teen parents. Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital has received national recognition for its Teen Father program.

Gateway to Care: Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital regularly conducts community focus groups and meetings to understand emerging issues and concerns among local individuals. In recent focus groups, hospital representatives observed that many individuals would like to seek preventive medical care to manage their diseases and stay healthy, but most uninsured patients cannot afford prescriptions. As a result, an overwhelming concern among individuals was that, even if they saved enough money to pay for a physician visit, the physician would prescribe a medication that they could not afford to purchase. Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital recognizes the role that medications play in maintaining an individual's health, and believes that the lack of access to medication was causing an increase in hospitalization and emergency room visits. To address this issue, the hospital applied for and received \$60,000 grant from the Department of Community Health to initiate a prescription assistance program in collaboration with hospital case managers, community health centers, local Salvation Armies, churches, and other organizations involved in helping low-income individuals access medications.

Gateway to Care representatives work with all interested physicians in SW Georgia to help low income patients access free prescription assistance programs through drug companies, drug discount cards, and Medicare prescription discount cards. Employees may conduct pre-application screening over the phone to determine if patients qualify for assistance programs. If patients qualify, they bring their information to the office and employees enter their information into a software program that determines eligibility. Once a patient is determined eligible and enrolled, program representatives perform a baseline survey to assess the individual's current medication utilization, emergency room utilization, and ability to perform basic activities such as activities of daily living (ADL). After the program has been in place for one year, the hospital will assess participants' health utilization and ADL again, comparing their responses to their initial baseline survey to determine the impact of the program. In addition, Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital randomly pulls four enrollees' files each month to track how much they paid for medication before and after entering the program, and ensure that patients are receiving their medication.

The Gateway to Care program also assists patients who are prescribed medications during their hospital stay and are not currently enrolled in the program. It may take a patient between four to six weeks to receive their prescriptions from the drug company through the program, forcing low-income patients to rely on free samples or financial assistance from friends and family to pay for their medications during that period. The hospital's program now provides patients medication for the initial period after treatment until patients receive their medications through the prescription assistance program.

Cancer Coalition: In response to a significantly high incidence of cancer, combined with high mortality rates once diagnosed, Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital formed a partnership with other local hospitals throughout the state to reduce cancer incidence through prevention and education programs and improving access to care. The partnership also includes two public health departments, the American Cancer Society, and state funds from Georgia's tobacco settlement money. Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital is a designated main site for the program, with an office in the hospital dedicated to patient outreach, education, and cancer screening. The program includes a variety of approaches, including providing transportation to cancer centers and nearby hospitals so that individuals in rural areas may receive cancer screenings. Research is also conducted to understand smoking and the role of PCPs in helping patients navigate prevention and screening tests for all types of cancer. The program is unique because the area's four competing cancer centers are all working together toward the same goal of early detection and prevention, rather than competing for patients.

Establishment of Programs/Initiatives

- Men's Health Program: 2000
- Teen Father Program: 1999
- Gateway to Care: January 2004
- Cancer Coalition: 2001

Racial or Ethnic Disparities Problem the Programs/Initiatives Were Designed to Address

- High proportion of low-income individuals in the area; although many of these low-income individuals are African American, the main barrier creating health disparities is caused by lack of access and poverty
- The largest portion of uninsured in the area are African American men, creating health disparities between these uninsured men and the remainder of the community
- High rates of African American teen pregnancy and fatherless households
- A 33 percent higher incidence of cancer in SW Georgia compared to the remainder of the state, with higher death rates from cancer due to late diagnoses

Major Objectives

- Reduce cancer incidence in SW Georgia
- Provide health education, awareness, and screening to the large portion of uninsured males in the community
- Assist low-income individuals in accessing prescriptions to increase quality of life and decrease preventable emergency room visits
- Educate teen mothers and teen fathers about parental roles and responsibilities, bringing the parents closer to their children and allowing them to complete high school

Significant Results

- The number of “Men on the Move” participants in the Men’s Health Program has grown significantly, to about 200 leaders; for the first time in 2004, the “Healthy Fathers, Healthy Families” day utilized lay people from Men on the Move as teachers, rather than relying on doctors and providers.
- Every time “Men on the Move” hosts an event in a public location such as a park or university, approximately 500-1,000 men attend. Approximately seven out of every 200 men screened have suboptimal test results and are referred to the hospital.
- The personal lifestyle changes of participants in the Men’s Health Program are evidence that the program is successful.
- A greater percentage of teen mothers and fathers are now completing high school. In addition, both mothers and fathers are closer to their babies and have a greater understanding of how to care for them.
- Surveys assessing the value of the Gateway to Care prescription assistance program demonstrate that 95 percent of all patients receive their medication, and using the medication has made a positive impact on their lives. Common feedback includes patients’ ability to purchase necessities such as food and basic clothing and an increase in health status demonstrated by increased mobility and community involvement.
- The hospital has enrolled 1,500 people in prescription assistance programs in the previous three months, with approximately 50 percent of the enrollees representing minorities.
- Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital was recently awarded the Foster G. McGaw award for the combination of its programs meeting community needs.

External Partners in the Programs/Initiatives

- Local hospitals and cancer centers
- Public health departments
- American Cancer Society
- State of Georgia

Limitations or Problems Encountered

- Transportation: This has been addressed in the Cancer Coalition by utilizing vans to bring people to the cancer center or rural sites for screenings.

- Illiteracy impacts the hospital's communication approaches.

Advice to Other Organizations That May Want to Start Similar Programs

- Relationships and partnerships are the key to success.
- Organizations must understand who cares about the issue, who should care about the issue, and how to bring all the stakeholders together to leverage the assets of all involved

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