

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Making the Difference

NorthShore University HealthSystem's Outpatient Clinic has extended its hours, added more services and is treating more underserved patients than ever before.

By Sara S. Patterson

Five times per day, Barbara Wine takes insulin to control her blood sugar because of type 2 diabetes. Following the advice of her doctor at NorthShore's Outpatient Clinic, she traded diet pop for Crystal Light, monitors her carbs at every meal and eats more fruits and vegetables now than she ever has before.

"Dr. Cary Belen fights really hard to keep my diabetes under control," said Wine, 67, who was diagnosed 18 years ago and has a genetic predisposition to the chronic disease. For the past four years, she has been seeing a doctor, nurses and various specialists, including a medical social worker, a dentist and Mary Suarez, a diabetes nutritionist, at NorthShore's Outpatient Clinic.

Wine is one of nearly 5,000 patients who came to NorthShore's Outpatient Clinic at Evanston Hospital for comprehensive medical services during the past year. Patients ranging from newborns to seniors made a total of more than 20,000 visits to the primary care physicians, specialists who cover almost every aspect of clinical services and those who offer supporting services like nutrition and social work.

"We see patients across a continuum of care and follow many of their lives from childhood through becoming parents and grandparents," said Liz Raymond, Clinical Nurse Manager of Outpatient Services at NorthShore. "We form relationships with patients, so they return time and time again for care. We provide a very essential service: healthcare. None of us can take healthcare for granted.

At NorthShore, we are keeping our doors open and seeing all the patients we can."

During the past year, with the worsening economy and high unemployment, the numbers of patients are growing. As a result, NorthShore has extended the hours of the General Medicine Clinic—an extra hour—five days a week. "Due to increased demand, we have added clinics during the past year such as Infectious Disease and added to the capacity of the obstetrics/gynecology specialty," Raymond said.

Overall, NorthShore's Outpatient Clinic covers 16 different specialties—four in obstetrics/gynecology and 12 that are a mixture of surgical and medical specialties—to ensure comprehensive care for its patients. Rather than operate as a traditional clinic where it's first-come, first-serve, patients make appointments to see the Outpatient

Clinic physicians and specialists.

"I entered medicine to take care of underserved patients," said Dr. Jacqueline Ivey-Brown, Medical Director of the Medical Clinic at NorthShore and on faculty at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. "When I began working at NorthShore University HealthSystem's Outpatient Clinic as a resident, I realized there was a great need here. As my chief residency year was ending, the position of Medical Director of the Medical Ward Service Clinic opened up, and I immediately asked for consideration. This position in NorthShore's Outpatient Clinic allows me to continue pursuing my goal to care for underserved patients in the Chicago region. I expect to stay here for a long time because it's great to make a difference in these patients' health and well-being." **C**



Dr. Jacqueline Ivey-Brown examines a patient at Evanston Hospital's Outpatient Clinic. During 2009, nearly 5,000 patients of all ages used the Outpatient Clinic's primary care and specialty care clinical services.