

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

UMMC TO COLLABORATE ON MALL CLINICS WITH COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

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JACKSON, Miss. - The University of Mississippi Medical Center and Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Center are planning an innovative collaboration that promises to give thousands of medically underserved Mississippians better access to primary care medical services.

Effective July 1, pending federal approval, JHCHC will assume control of UMMC's primary care outpatient clinics at the Jackson Medical Mall Thad Cochran Center (JMM). The clinics are for obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics and internal medicine patients. Last year, UMMC saw more than 18,000 patients through the clinics, many of whom would otherwise have no medical home for routine health care.

As a groundbreaking part of the agreement, UMMC physicians in residency training, under the supervision of medical school faculty, will continue to see patients at the clinics, but responsibility for operating the clinics will shift to JHCHC, a federally qualified health center (FQHC).

The arrangement between UMMC and JHCHC is one of few such collaborations of its kind nationwide in which an academic medical center bases educational efforts at an FQHC. Dr. James Keeton, vice chancellor for health affairs at UMMC, said this collaboration could serve as a model for other states.

UMMC, a major stakeholder in the JMM Foundation, will maintain operation of its ancillary services and specialty care clinics at the JMM, including the Cancer Institute, dialysis clinic and a number of administrative and educational support offices. UMMC has plans to occupy an additional 60,000 square feet of support space over the next year.

Keeton said this change of operations will improve access to care, an important aspect of the Medical Center's mission of service to the state.

"Jackson-Hinds and UMMC have been looking for some time for a collaboration that would provide better service to patients who will get a medical home and more timely care. In this agreement, we have partnered with a federally qualified health center that treats patients who often seek treatment in our emergency room," Keeton said.

Dr. Jasmin Chapman, chief executive officer for JHCHC, said the collaboration will allow Jackson-Hinds to fulfill its 40-year mission of providing the best health care possible to the underserved and combating health disparities in central Mississippi.

"This collaboration, developed over several years prior to health care reform, will benefit patients by offering primary and preventive care that promotes regular treatment in a comfortable and welcoming environment," she said.

About 17,000 adults come to UMMC's emergency room for treatment that could be provided by a primary care physician. UMMC's primary care operations at the mall, centered on medical education, don't have the capacity to handle all the patients who need comprehensive primary care.

"We believe this new paradigm (coupling residency training with an FQHC) will provide a unique opportunity to address the primary care physician shortage and allow us to continue to build our capacity to serve our growing community," Chapman said.

UMMC will pay JHCHC \$1.8 million per year for five years to support the educational mission of the clinics.

Also, as an FQHC, JHCHC receives federal operating grants and higher reimbursement rates by being located in designated underserved areas and treating patients regardless of their ability to pay. Patients are charged on a sliding scale based on need.

In the process of this transition, 41 UMMC employees will be given the opportunity to remain with University of Mississippi Health Care at the Medical Center's main campus or satellite clinics. No UMMC employees will lose their jobs through layoffs.

This collaboration builds on earlier Medical Center efforts to help the medically underserved in the state. Two years ago, the Medical Center collaborated with the Mississippi Primary Health Care Association and the Mississippi State Department of Health to form the Mississippi Healthy Linkages Project, a process that connects patients to one of the state's 21 FQHCs.

The program provided patients who came to the UMMC emergency room with names and phone numbers of FQHCs in their counties that could serve as their primary care providers.

The JHCHC collaboration has been approved by the Board of Trustees for Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning and is pending approval with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the primary federal agency responsible for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated or medically vulnerable.

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The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. University of Mississippi Health Care represents the clinical programs of the Medical Center and includes University Hospitals and Health System and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's citizens. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at 601-984-1100 or visit us on the Web at <http://info.umc.edu/>.