



East Linn Community Clinic – Serving Others Through Education

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Abstract

This brief communication reviews the background and organization of the Community Outreach East Linn Community Clinic, the operations of the Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine (OMM) clinic, and volunteer recruitment. The clinic is located in Lebanon, Oregon, a rural town with a population of about 16,000. The Community Outreach East Linn Community Clinic is staffed by Western University of Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific-Northwest (WesternU COMP-Northwest) first and second year medical students, OMM fellows, and faculty-physicians. Clinic is held twice a month and is managed by one Community Outreach Health Services Coordinator and two second year medical student Clinic Coordinators from Western U COMP-Northwest. The clinic aims to create a healthier Oregon by reaching out to those in need of health services, exposing medical students early on to clinical decision making, and highlighting the importance of community involvement in medical education.

Background

Founded in 1971, Community Outreach Inc. is the premier provider of transitional housing and free medical services within the Linn and Benton counties of Oregon. Community Outreach, partnered with local organizations and private donors, strives to offer support to the underprivileged and uninsured residents in the area. Maintaining the motto “Helping People Help Themselves”, the organization assists with emergency shelters, temporary housing, community food banks, childcare, crisis intervention, and medical/dental care. Community Outreach is all-inclusive and the diversity of residents is directly mirrored in the diversity of the staff and volunteers who make operations possible.

The East Linn Community Clinic is managed by a Health Service Coordinator who maintains clinic operations through recruiting nurse/physician

volunteers, interacting with patients to schedule services and follow-up appointments, and bridging the gap between the patient and Samaritan Health Services for continued care. The Health Service Coordinator partners with WesternU COMP-Northwest to expand available services and meet the needs of the uninsured community.

The clinic serves as an opportunity for medical students to practice clinical and osteopathic skills learned in the classroom and translate that knowledge to benefit patients. Students are making an impact by seeing patients in a community where healthcare access is limited. The community clinic provides an opportunity to solidify the principles of compassion, humanism, and patience during the early stages of medical education. Clinic opportunities facilitate the formation of well-rounded, skilled, and caring physicians.

Operations and Organization

WesternU COMP-Northwest first and second year students take roles at clinic, including an intake volunteer role and a student-doctor role. Western U COMP-Northwest first years fill the intake volunteer role starting in October. Second years fill the student-doctor role from the start of the school year in August until April. In April, the first year students transition into the student-doctor role, while simultaneously maintaining the intake volunteer role. This allows the second years to focus on Step 1 USMLE/COMLEX exam studies. Clinic Coordinator leadership transitions and training begins in March, following application review.

A free clinic night progresses as follows: 4 intake volunteers arrive at 5pm, 6 student-doctors arrive at 5:30pm, and one to three faculty-physicians accompanied by zero to two OMM fellows arrive between 5:45-6:15pm. Doors are open to patients from 5:30pm-6pm, and patients are allowed to begin lining up at 4:30pm. Patients may arrange OMM appointments through the Health Services Coordinator. However, there is no way to predict exactly how many patients will arrive on a Tuesday evening. We generally serve between one to nine patients.

The Clinic Coordinators train intake volunteers and student-doctors upon arrival. Intake volunteers are responsible for rooming patients, measuring vitals, getting patient signatures for paperwork, and collecting voluntary \$10 donations. Once roomed, a Clinic Coordinator will collect the chief complaint from the patient and deliver this to a pair of student-doctors waiting in a separate room. The Clinic Coordinator collects the WesternU COMP-Northwest specific paperwork before passing the patient chart onto student-doctors.

With the guidance of faculty-physicians and the Clinic Coordinators, the student-doctors prepare a list of possible diagnosis, associated symptoms, and physical exam systems to review. Student-doctors also prep any in office procedures that might be warranted, such as Finger-Stick Glucose Monitoring or Urine Dipstick tests.

Clinic Coordinators guide student-doctors to their patient's room, where student-doctors are responsible for obtaining a subjective patient history and objective physical exam from their patient within twenty minutes. Upon exiting the patient's room, student-doctors have the opportunity to prepare for their oral presentation with the help of a Clinic Coordinator. Upon faculty-physician availability, student-doctors orally present their patient's SOAP note (Subjective, Objective, Assessment, and Plan), before returning to the patient's room with the faculty-physician.

Once the patient's subjective history and physical exam has been verified, the faculty-physician counsels the patient on their diagnosis, necessary tests/referrals, and treatment options. Student-doctors and faculty-physicians briefly exit the patient's room to fill out lab and referral requests as needed. At the same time, student-doctors practice writing prescriptions on a white board for faculty-physicians to approve, before prescriptions are written out permanently onto a prescription pad. This results in less mistakes and thus less wasting of prescription pads. This is one way in which resources are rationed at East Linn Community Clinic.

All labs and the first designated provider referral appointments are free. Prescriptions are free if filled at the local Samaritan hospital pharmacy, and only \$4 per prescription if filled at Walmart.

Student-doctors and the faculty-physician re-enter the patient's room one last time to deliver prescriptions, lab orders, and referral requests before concluding the appointment.

Special Programs: Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine

In recent years, the clinic has increased the diversity of available care that is offered by incorporating Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine (OMM) appointments. OMM is a hands on technique used to increase range of motion at joints, decrease musculoskeletal related pain, loosen fascial layers, and

realign musculoskeletal structures. The practice is a useful therapy for treating a wide range of patients and ailments, and is commonly used by osteopathic physicians as an adjunct to other medical therapies.

Expanding services to include OMM has allowed for a broader and more holistic patient experience. While one faculty-physician oversees all of the OMM treatments, most of the OMM assessment and care is provided by WesternU COMP-Northwest OMM fellows and student-doctors.

OMM patients are greeted by intake volunteers while the student-doctors conduct a basic history and physical to gain an assessment of the patient's chief complaint and treatable ailments. The students' findings are then presented to the OMM fellow and/or faculty-physician. The student-doctors, OMM fellows, and faculty-physician then re-enter the room to perform Osteopathic Manipulative Treatments (OMT) and educate the patient. OMM appointments are scheduled in advance due to their longer nature. Each clinic has two OMM fellows on-call and four available appointment slots, at 5:30pm, 5:45pm, 6:00pm, and 6:30pm.

Many patients utilizing the OMM services give positive feedback and return for additional treatments. This service has grown in popularity as word about the OMM clinic has spread. Patients that use the traditional free clinic as a resource have found additional value in OMM, and patients who originally came to the clinic for OMM have had additional medical needs met by the traditional clinic. Adding OMM appointments has transformed the free clinic into a more all-encompassing patient-centered service for the Linn County community.

Volunteer Recruitment

Free clinic volunteers consist of first and second year medical students, OMM fellows, and faculty-physicians from WesternU COMP-Northwest. Currently there are more than 140 active volunteers. Intake volunteer sign up occurs at a mandatory clinic training at the

beginning of each academic year. The list of names is randomized and a schedule is made to fill the set clinic dates. Volunteers are notified of their assigned date and are responsible for finding a substitute if unable to attend. Most students are on the clinic schedule at least twice per academic year and some are able to participate more as substitutes.

The same process is used for the student-doctor sign up in March. Faculty-physicians and OMM fellows are scheduled separately via an emailed list of dates to which they respond with any evenings they are able to attend. Currently we have four physicians and six OMM fellows who regularly volunteer at clinic.

The East Linn Community Clinic has been very lucky to have such a generous list of active student, OMM fellow, and faculty-physician volunteers. The large interest stems from WesternU COMP-Northwest's enthusiasm to serve the greater Lebanon community. From the student interview day, applicants are told about the important connection that the school shares with the Lebanon community and students are informed of the exciting opportunities available to them.

The symbiotic relationship between the community and the University is one of the reasons WesternU COMP-Northwest successfully turns out excellent clinicians that not only pay attention to the medical needs of their patients, but also to the strengths and needs of the surrounding community.