

New Gallup Community Health site creates more opportunities

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 12 January 2024 00:00



It looks like 2024 is the Year of More for Gallup Community Health, which is getting ready to move to a bigger space that will allow it to provide more services to more people.

The primary care practice will officially move into the former College Clinic at 2111 College Dr. March 4, although some administrative staff will start to move over sooner.

The move will offer two big advantages – vastly more space and proximity to Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital – as well as a lot more incremental opportunities.

First, the new space means going from the cramped 4,320 sq. ft. quarters at 2022 E. Aztec Ave. to a building with more than 17,000 sq. ft. That means going from 13 exam rooms to 42, which will make it much easier for providers to help more patients. The building also has some larger communal spaces that can be used for patient education and office space for clinical and administrative staff.

The clinic, which opened in July 2022, grew from a startup to 4,000 patients in its first year, and it's up to about 6,000 patients now. The practice has 10 full-time providers and another five part-timers.

“Right now I have five people working out of a small conference room so it will be great to have them have space to see patients and not be so cramped,” founding Executive Director Dr.

New Gallup Community Health site creates more opportunities

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 12 January 2024 00:00

Valory Wangler said.

The first thing patients will probably notice is a central check-in location when they come in.

The configuration of the current clinic forced them to have two check-in desks, which can get a little confusing for patients, Wangler said.

Behind the scenes, more space may also mean more services. The clinic is pursuing a model of integrated behavioral health.

“So if I see someone in my clinic and they are suffering with depression or anxiety that’s severe and really needs to be addressed, I can walk them over to my behavioral health counselor to get them set up and get some counseling that same day,” Wangler explained.

That could shave a week or more off of wait time for a behavioral appointment.

GCH management is also in talks with a local pharmacy about opening a branch at the clinic.

“I would love a model where I can see patients and they can just walk down to the pharmacy to pick up their medication,” Wangler said.

The practice just hired a certified peer support worker who’s been working with their Alcohol Use Disorder patients. They also hired a clinical pharmacist who is also a diabetes educator to do medication management.

“The big thing is a nurse case manager that will be starting with us, so that will give us the ability to do a little bit more with medically complex patients,” Wangler said.

New Gallup Community Health site creates more opportunities

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 12 January 2024 00:00

That person can also help manage patients that are hospitalized and contact patients who routinely use the emergency room for care to try to get them into primary care to prevent them from having readmissions.

It's also helpful for relatively minor events that land in the ER, like a minor wound that needs a few stitches or a temperature that needs care but not hospital admission.

"It's faster, it's more cost affordable and more resource responsible," Wangler said.

It can also help with physician relationships with the hospital.

Being in the shadow of RMCH may help improve care on both ends. It shortens the time and distance for the occasional patient who shows up for a routine appointment and turns out to have a more serious issue that sends them directly to the hospital.

"If one of my patients is admitted to the hospital, I can go over on my lunch break and see how they are doing," she said. "We are excited to have the opportunity to strengthen that relationship."

RMCH Interim CEO Bill Patten agreed that the proximity is good for health care in the area.

"I am glad the county was able to find a good tenant that could make use of the College Clinic space so quickly," he said. "Having other health care providers close to RMCHCS makes access to health care easier for our shared patients. Also, RMCHCS looks forward to providing appropriate support and services to GCH and its patients."

McKinley County, which owns the building, is getting the space ready and will be GCH's landlord.

New Gallup Community Health site creates more opportunities

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 12 January 2024 00:00

“The county owns that building and they have been really great partners taking care of some maintenance. Shout out to them for being great partners,” Wangler said.

To find out more about GCH and its services, see <https://gallupcommunityhealth.org> .

By Holly J. Wagner
Sun Correspondent