Welcome to the first issue of Cook County Health & Hospitals System’s (CCHHS) Community News. As you may know, there are a lot of exciting developments happening at the health system and I am looking forward to sharing our latest updates with you through this newsletter each month.

Many of CCHHS’ changes are directly related to the Affordable Care Act, also commonly called Obamacare. For more than 180 years, Cook County provided for patients who were mostly uninsured and don’t have anywhere else to go to get care. But thanks to federal health care reform, today nearly 70 percent of CCHHS’ patients have health insurance. This is great news! It means that these patients have more options to get primary and preventive care and don’t need to rely on the Emergency Department for basic care. The way our patients access health care is changing and CCHHS is changing to meet our patients’ needs.

Our goal is to have every one of our patients connected with a primary care medical home, a “home base” for health care. A medical home includes a team with a doctor, nurse and other health care experts who can help their patients get the right care they need, at the right time and the right place. A medical home can help patients stay healthy and out of the hospital.

We are also working to make doctor’s visits as convenient and pleasant as possible for our patients. This includes increasing the primary and specialty care services we offer in our community clinics, making our clinic facilities more modern and welcoming, and expanding the hours we are open to make it easier for our patients to see their doctor or make an appointment. We are very excited about our plans to build a new outpatient building to replace the Fantus Health Center on our central campus. In the coming months, we will be moving many of our outpatient services from Fantus into Stroger Hospital. When the new replacement building is complete, it will be reflective of the modern, quality health care we provide.

Additionally, we intend to build a new regional outpatient center that will serve the Provident community and offer primary and specialty care, as well as laboratory and diagnostic services. These are just a few examples of the work we are doing to expand access to care and improve our patients’ experience across the health system. We will continue to share news like this with you in coming months.

Thank you for your continued support of the Cook County Health & Hospitals System.

Dr. Jay Shannon, CEO, CCHHS
The Cook County Health & Hospitals System is proud to offer an array of dental services to our patients. The health system has five dental clinics in health centers across the county, including the CORE Center and the Prieto, Cottage Grove, Rolling Meadows and Robbins Health Centers. Good oral health practices are a key component of overall health and wellbeing. A standard oral exam can uncover serious health problems, like periodontal disease, which is linked to diabetes and heart disease, or even cancer. CCHHS’ dental clinics offer a wide range of dental services, from cleanings and fillings, to dentures and partials and oral surgery. Last year, CCHHS provided for more than 7,000 dental visits across the ambulatory health system.

CCHHS is committed to expand the services that our patients need the most, including dental care. We recently opened a new dental clinic at Jorge Prieto Health Center and have future plans of expansion to create access across the system.

Pediatric patients who visit the Cook County Health & Hospitals System’s Logan Square Health Center (2840 W Fullerton Avenue, Chicago) get a head to toe check-up, and now as part of a new pilot program—check-ups also include screening for food insecurity.

During an exam, health care providers at Logan Square Health Center ask pediatric patients and their families questions about their access to food.

Patients and their families who screen positive are given a “prescription” from their doctor that can be redeemed for free produce on the Greater Chicago Food Depository’s FRESH truck, which visits Logan Square Health Center every other month.

The Food Depository’s FRESH truck is a walk-through refrigerated vehicle lined with shelves of fresh produce. Recipients with vouchers select fruits and vegetables to take home at no cost.

Patients who screen positive for food insecurity are also referred to the Food Depository’s SNAP Outreach Hotline if they need assistance applying for the federal nutrition program, as well as information on nearby food pantries in the Food Depository’s county-wide network of partner agencies.

At CCHHS, we believe food is medicine. By connecting our patients with reliable sources of food we can better care for their health and mitigate avoidable health consequences associated with hunger and poor nutrition. This program is expected to be rolled out at all CCHHS clinics in the coming year. See media coverage of this initiative in “CCHHS in the News” section below.
Cook County Health & Hospitals System’s Patient Support Center offers patients a one-stop-shop to make a medical appointment at a community clinic or with a specialist at Stroger and Provident Hospitals. (Some specialty care visits may require a referral from a primary care doctor.)

The Patient Support Center recently added nursing support to provide real-time advice to patients calling with medical questions. The Patient Support Center also expanded its hours and is now open from 6:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Weekend hours are coming soon, and the Patient Support Center plans to be open 24 hours a day by mid-2016.

The Patient Support Center makes it easier for patients to make an appointment with their doctor and get health care advice. By centralizing calls, our clinic staff have more time to focus on caring for the patients in the clinics.

Call the Patient Support Center at 312-864-0200.

Visit our website at cookcountyhhs.org

Medicaid Members Need to Renew Coverage Each Year, CCHHS Creates New Hotline

Every person who receives health insurance through Medicaid must renew their coverage each year through a process called “redetermination”. The State of Illinois sends each person with Medicaid coverage a form every year to reconfirm their Medicaid eligibility for the next year.

It is very important for people with Medicaid coverage, regardless of their plan, to complete and return their redetermination paperwork to keep their coverage. Medicaid recipients can call 312-864-REDE (7333) with any questions about redetermination.

The Cook County Health & Hospitals System has its own Medicaid managed care plan, CountyCare. CountyCare is a no cost health plan that offers members a wide range of health benefits and includes many choices of doctors and hospitals (known as the plan’s network) across Cook County.
While the deadline for purchasing an insurance plan on the state marketplace has passed, eligible Illinoisans can apply for Medicaid year-round. CountyCare billboards and bus shelter advertising will run in key Cook County zip codes from February through April.
• Chicago’s storied public hospital system gets boost from its new Medicaid plan

• County, Food Bank battle food insecurity

• Logan Square doctor’s office offers food to kids in need

• New evidence suggests Cook County is facing a hunger crisis

• Chief Psychologist prepared with academics and broad-field training

If you would like to invite a representative from CCHHS to attend a community event, please send an email to events@cookcountyhhs.org.

To provide feedback on CCHHS Community News, update your contact information, or unsubscribe, please email Marcelino Garcia, Director of Community Affairs, at mgarcia6@cookcountyhhs.org.