

# 2010

**PROJECT ACCESS SAN DIEGO PROGRESS REPORT**



**SAN DIEGO COUNTY  
MEDICAL SOCIETY  
FOUNDATION**

## BACKGROUND

The San Diego County Medical Society Foundation was formed in 2004 with the mission to address the unmet healthcare needs for all patients and physicians through innovation, education, and service. Our Foundation subsequently had the vision to create a coordinated, comprehensive network of donated healthcare services for vulnerable patients of San Diego. This vision led to the launch of Project Access San Diego. As the one-stop-shop for donated healthcare services in San Diego County, Project Access offers hope and health to our patients while also reducing the costs and burden on the overall healthcare system.

## 2010 HIGHLIGHTS

- 19** ▶ **community clinic systems in San Diego with 81 clinic sites**
- 500** ▶ **physician specialists volunteers**
- 773** ▶ **patients referred for evaluation**
- 476** ▶ **patients referred for specialty care**
- 1061** ▶ **appointments with physicians and other providers**
- 249** ▶ **patients identified as eligible for public health insurance**

## PROJECT ACCESS SAN DIEGO MODEL

Much of the success of Project Access is due to the case management provided to ensure a positive experience for both the patient and the volunteer specialist. Key activities of the case managers include the following:

- ▶ Arrange appointments with physicians and other providers for needed office consultations, diagnostic laboratory and imaging studies
- ▶ Arrange interpreter services to assist in communication between client and specialist, transportation services and other support services to ensure a smooth visit to specialists
- ▶ Collect necessary medical information from a variety of sources and provide information to specialists to make consultations effective and efficient
- ▶ Arrange care to be provided at hospital or outpatient surgical facility
- ▶ Resolve glitches and unforeseen problems that arise during referral process

Due to the intensive case management support provided to patients, only one percent (1%) of patients missed appointments in 2010. Specialists were uniformly pleased with the completeness of the information and the ease of the consultations.

## PROJECT ACCESS SAVES HEALTHCARE COSTS

While assisting clients gain access to specialty care is important by itself, preliminary data suggests it is also beneficial to the healthcare system overall. When low-income, uninsured patients visit emergency departments or stay in hospitals, both the patient and the hospital are faced with unanticipated expenses. Happily, after six (6) months of enrollment patients in Project Access, patients report reductions in emergency room visits of 50%, number of nights stayed in a hospital by 92%, and number of clinic visits by 58%. Additionally, the average Project Access administrative cost of providing specialty care for an individual patient was \$936 in 2010. The average value of the volunteer specialty service was \$2616. This represents a return on investment of nearly 3:1.

## PEOPLE WE SERVE

Alicia had a history of colon polyps and her physician recommended a colonoscopy. She lacked insurance and was referred to Project Access for assistance. As Alicia said: "I wouldn't otherwise be able to have the procedure done without the assistance of Project Access".

- ▶ **89 gastrointestinal procedures were performed under Project Access in 2010, making it one of the most common procedures. This procedure is facilitated by strong support from gastroenterologists and outpatient surgical centers.**
- ▶ **There have been a significant number of Project Access patients who required complicated treatment involving several specialists. The case managers spend considerable time arranging for this complex care while ensuring the process is easy for the involved patient and the specialists. In 2010, 1061 appointments were arranged, averaging more than 4 each working day.**

### Project Access Most Common Conditions Treated

- ▶ Abdominal Pain/Ulcers
- ▶ Breast Mass
- ▶ Cataract/Other Eye Problems
- ▶ Chest Pain/Heart Problems
- ▶ ENT Problems
- ▶ Gallbladder Problems
- ▶ Gynecological Problems
- ▶ Hernia
- ▶ Intestinal Bleeding
- ▶ Orthopaedic Problems
- ▶ Skin Lesions
- ▶ Thyroid/Endocrine Problems

Kelly is a homemaker who had been suffering in pain for the past year. Kelly had been in the emergency room four times since being diagnosed with gallstones. At one point, Kelly lost 40 pounds and weighed only 75 pounds. Kelly struggled to care for her three children because of her decreased energy level and associated pain. Happily, Kelly had her gallbladder surgery and is grateful for the generosity of Project Access San Diego. Kelly states, "I am grateful for the opportunity Project Access San Diego has offered me; my life has changed."

- ▶ **Patients with gallbladder disease typically experienced multiple emergency department visits and disability prior to the surgery. In 2010, 18 patients had gallbladders removed through Project Access.**



## PEOPLE WE SERVE

Leonora is 58 years old and has had cataracts since 2006. She had surgery on one eye in December 2008 and needed the other eye repaired as well. Her poor eyesight had an impact on her ability to work and help support her family, as she works for a pizza company and was unable to drive and deliver pizzas. Leonora also volunteers at her local parish as a secretary, but her eyesight problems made it difficult to complete her secretarial tasks. Her cataracts forced her to lose some of her personal independence in other ways too. For example, she needed to rely on her husband just for simple transportation. Leonora was unable to afford the surgery without Project Access because her employer does not provide medical insurance. Today she is grateful for the surgery Project Access provided, and she now enjoys her favorite pastime, reading, once again. She “thanks God for the program. It’s a true God-send.”

- ▶ **Many of our volunteers tell us Project Access patients are living with conditions not normally seen in the insured population. Project Access is the only option these patients have to return to full health.**

Maria was elated to finally bring closure to the medical issue she had been battling since 2007. After suffering a stroke that required multiple surgeries and resulted in an impaired ability to swallow, Maria had to undergo a tracheotomy, a procedure that creates an opening in the neck. Following the initial tracheotomy, Maria also suffered two strokes and three neurosurgeries. Maria needed the tracheotomy reversed in order for her to swallow normally and regain her speech. Project Access San Diego arranged for Maria to have her surgery in December 2010. Maria is thrilled to have her life return to normal. She is currently undergoing intensive speech therapy to regain her voice.

- ▶ **The case managers at Project Access work to ensure a positive outcome – not only a medical outcome, but a personal, functional outcome. At times, this means going beyond the medical needs to arrange for other services and resources to help patients realize their full potential. A recent survey of patient satisfaction revealed all Project Access patients were satisfied with their care and would have been unable to receive the care without the program.**



## WHAT PHYSICIAN VOLUNTEERS SAY

As of December 2010, 500+ physicians had volunteered to participate in Project Access. More importantly, 95% of those who volunteered have remained with the program — a true testimony to their support.

Rosemarie Marshall Johnson, M.D. leads the recruitment effort, and she reports: “the physicians are so happy. I can’t tell you the number of them who have said ‘This [caring for patients in need] is why I became a physician’”.

Recently specialist physicians responded to a brief Project Access satisfaction questionnaire. All responding physicians were satisfied with the support Project Access provided in making it easy for the physician office to schedule and see patients. Additionally, all physicians reported the referrals were appropriate for the specialty involved. Over 80% of the physicians reported patients arrived on time and were familiar with the treatment process. All responding physicians indicated they would recommend the program to their colleagues.

“Volunteering for Project Access allows me to give back to the San Diego community where I have practiced medicine for 29 years. I enjoy knowing that I am providing for people who would otherwise not be able to obtain needed medical care, and make a difference in their lives.”

*Leslie Mark, M.D., Skin Surgery Medical Group, San Diego, Project Access Volunteer*

“The gratification I receive from treating needy patients through the San Diego County Medical Society Foundation’s Project Access is unparalleled. The appreciation patients with awfully crippling arthritis show is worth far more than any copayment or insurance reimbursement can provide. The program facilitates the scheduling, visit, and follow-up in the comfort of our own office, lessening the burden of time required to see these patients in other settings. This program reminds me of the basic reasons I chose medicine as a career.”

*Ara Dikranian, M.D., Rheumatology, Project Access Volunteer*

“When my partners and I volunteered to participate in Project Access, we knew we would be backed up by a system that would help us to help them.”

*James T. Hay, M.D., North Coast Family Medical Group, Project Access Volunteer*

“San Diego County Medical Society Foundation’s Project Access provides much needed volunteer medical care to the uninsured and uninsurable people in San Diego. Without this type of volunteerism by surgeons, radiologists and medical specialists diseases could progress to life threatening illnesses. I am proud to be a surgical volunteer for Project Access. Patients come fully vetted and with complete records. When needed, they are accompanied by a translator. The service is very well run and very easy for my office staff to interface with. Its service leaves us all feeling good about what we do.”

*Eileen Natuzzi, M.D., General Surgeon, Project Access Volunteer*

## WHAT CLINICS SAY

The community clinic physicians and practitioners who refer patients needing specialty care are enthusiastic about this program. There are few situations more frustrating for a physician than to know his or her patient needs a specialist consultation or a surgical procedure but cannot receive it due to inadequate finances.

“Our free clinic has referred several patients into Project Access. After our patients consult with a specialist or receive a free surgery, they return to our clinic overjoyed by the generosity of the physician volunteers. We are extremely grateful for this program!”  
*Ellen Beck, M.D., Primary Care Physician, University of California, San Diego*

“Having Project Access has been a great thing for both the patients and the primary care physicians treating them. Previously we had nothing to offer. Now we can offer hope and a tangible result that in many cases is life-saving or life-changing. Two of my patients have literally had their lives saved by Project Access, and many more of my patients have avoided permanent disfigurement, morbidity, and/or severe pain due to Project Access. They are a godsend!”  
*Jim Schultz, M.D., Primary Care Physician, Neighborhood Healthcare*

“Project Access helps many of our uninsured patients access medical specialty care that would be out of their reach otherwise. We are so thankful for the services that are offered by the volunteers and the amazing work staff does to make sure that the patients of the community health centers are served. Thanks to all of you.”  
*Barbara Mannino, CEO, Vista Community Clinic*

## WHAT PATIENTS SAY



# GRATITUDE

We are profoundly grateful to the 500 individual physicians who have agreed to volunteer their services on behalf of those who are unable to access services without them.

We also rely on the generosity of our associated partners who provide donated services, supplies or equipment. These include the following:

- ▶ Allosource
- ▶ Amplatzer
- ▶ Anesthesia Consultants of California
- ▶ Anesthesiology Services Medical Group
- ▶ Applied Medical
- ▶ Arthrex
- ▶ Boston Scientific
- ▶ Cardinal Health Radiopharmacy
- ▶ Carlsbad Imaging Center
- ▶ Carlsbad Surgery Center
- ▶ Coast Surgery Center
- ▶ Edward Ayub Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy
- ▶ The Endoscopy Center
- ▶ Escondido Surgery Center
- ▶ Genzyme Corporation
- ▶ Graybill Physical Therapy
- ▶ Hanger Prosthetics and Orthotics
- ▶ Harmony Home Medical
- ▶ HealthTronics
- ▶ Imaging Healthcare Specialists
- ▶ Innovative Ophthalmic Products, Inc.
- ▶ Kaiser Permanente
- ▶ LabCorp
- ▶ La Jolla Endoscopy Center
- ▶ La Jolla Orthopaedic Surgery Center
- ▶ NeuroTrace, Inc.
- ▶ Northcoast Surgery Center
- ▶ North County Radiology
- ▶ Omni Motion
- ▶ Otay Lakes Surgery Center
- ▶ Ottobock
- ▶ Palomar Pomerado Health
- ▶ PhenoPath Laboratories
- ▶ Poway Surgery Center
- ▶ Quest
- ▶ San Diego Imaging
- ▶ San Diego Outpatient Ambulatory Surgical Center
- ▶ San Diego Pathologists Medical Group
- ▶ San Diego Spine and Sport
- ▶ San Dieguito Anesthesiology Medical Group
- ▶ Scripps Health
- ▶ Stryker
- ▶ Tri-City Medical Center
- ▶ University of California San Diego
- ▶ Western Diagnostic Imaging Center
- ▶ Valley Radiology
- ▶ Vital Wear
- ▶ XDI Radiology

Additionally, Project Access could not exist without the support of our funding partners.

- ▶ Alliance Healthcare Foundation
- ▶ The California Endowment
- ▶ The California Wellness Foundation
- ▶ County of San Diego
- ▶ The Doctors Company Foundation
- ▶ Kaiser Permanente
- ▶ Leichtag Family Foundation
- ▶ San Diego County Board of Supervisors
  - ▶ Supervisor Greg Cox
  - ▶ Supervisor Ron Roberts
- ▶ San Diego County Medical Society
- ▶ Susan G. Komen for the Cure San Diego
- ▶ WebMD Health Foundation
- ▶ And many other organizations and individuals



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