

Grant Outcomes Report

The Hope Dispensary of the Southern Tier: Making Prescription Drugs More Accessible for Low-Income and Uninsured Individuals

The Problem:

Prescription medications are particularly costly and sometimes simply unaffordable for uninsured individuals, especially during difficult economic climates. Yet these medications are necessary for all individuals—particularly those with chronic diseases—to manage their medical conditions and avoid costly emergency department care or hospital admissions. The Dispensary of Hope was created to directly address this issue. The Dispensary is a nonprofit that collects unused sample medications from physicians' offices across the United States. These sample medications are then distributed to clinics and pharmacies that serve low-income and uninsured individuals throughout the United States and abroad.

A community planning committee and coalition formed in the Southern Tier region of New York State developed plans for a pharmacy using the Dispensary of Hope's model. The committee approached the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) to request start-up funds to continue the formation and implementation of "The Hope Dispensary of the Southern Tier," which they planned to administer through Our Lady of Lourdes Memorial Hospital, Inc. in Binghamton, New York.

Grant Activities & Outcomes:

The bulk of the NYSHealth grant was used to support the initial start-up of the program and to cover salaries and various legal fees. Over the grant period, 1,127 people received 4,210 prescriptions through the Lourdes Dispensary of Hope. Since opening in August 2009, the pharmacy has experienced a steady increase in the number of prescriptions filled. In August 2009, 86 prescriptions were filled, but by the last six months of the grant period, the number of prescriptions filled per month averaged 431.

KEY INFORMATION:

GRANTEE

Our Lady of Lourdes Memorial Hospital, Inc.

GRANT TITLE

The Hope Dispensary of the Southern Tier

DATES

August 1, 2009 – January 19, 2011

GRANT AMOUNT

\$198,326

FUNDING

2009 Special Projects RFP

The top three medications dispersed throughout the grant period were Advair, Spiriva, and Cymbalta. Advair and Spiriva are used to treat chronic obstructive lung disease and Cymbalta is used to treat chronic mental illness.

The community planning committee and coalition also implemented a Prescription Assistance Program (PAP) as part of the Dispensary's operations. A PAP helps qualifying patients without prescription coverage obtain free or low-cost medicines through public or private assistance programs. Over the first year of the project, 579 people were enrolled in the PAP, and 1,163 prescriptions were filled for these individuals.

The prescriptions provided through the Lourdes Dispensary of Hope had an average wholesale value of \$382,170 (based on data from January 2010 – July 2010). In addition, the retail value of prescription medications ordered through the PAP during the first year was \$270,585 (based on data from January 2010 – July 2010). The Dispensary also estimated that the local health care community saved \$1.1 million through this project, not taking into account savings that resulted from client enrollment with primary care physicians or connections to other community services.

A routine part of Dispensary staff person's activities is screening uninsured persons for eligibility for public programs and/or hospital financial assistance programs using a software program that was highly reliable and took only five minutes to complete. Through this process, Dispensary staff identified people who qualified for Medicaid, Family Health Plus, or Child Health Plus and referred them to the Department of Social Services or to Lourdes Hospital- based enrollers, where they were assisted with the enrollment process. Staff members referred 163 qualified clients through this process. They were able to verify that 72 of these referrals became enrolled in a public program, though final determination was difficult to track. Dispensary staff also referred 499 people to hospital financial assistance programs over the course of the grant period. Finally, 144 people



were referred to a range of other assistance programs such as local Food Banks, Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability, and Action for Older Persons.

Finally, the Dispensary's full-time Medical Social Worker helped educate clients about the importance of having a primary care physician and linked 109 people to a primary care provider.

The Future:

The Dispensary continues to work on finding ways to sustain the program and its outcomes—as well as to replicate the program in other parts of their local area. By the close of the grant, the Dispensary had secured small donations from the community by individuals and companies. It had also received support through the PAP and had some success in winning local grants. The Dispensary had plans to reach out to Broome County for an annual contribution and was also working with the 100% Access Team at Ascension Health, the nation's largest Catholic and nonprofit health system, to seek other sources of funding and assistance in making the case for the return on investment.

In addition, other Ascension System hospitals are starting to replicate the dispensary program. By the close of this grant, St. Mary's in Amsterdam, New York and Mount St. Mary's in Lewiston, New York are at different stages of exploring or implementing dispensary programs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

ABOUT THE GRANTEE

Our Lady of Lourdes Memorial Hospital, Inc, has provided compassionate care to those in need since 1925. In Binghamton, New York, the main hospital campus includes a Hospice Program, an Ambulatory Surgery Center, and a Regional Cancer Center. Reaching beyond these boundaries, Lourdes Hospital has established a network of primary care physicians at sites throughout the region. The Mission In Motion program, which provides primary care and cancer screening services through two mobile medical vans, makes health care accessible to rural populations.

GRANTEE CONTACT

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