

## Grant Outcomes Report

### Use of the ScanVan for Tuberculosis and Breast Cancer Screening Among Poor and Homeless New Yorkers

#### The Problem:

Low-income, minority, and homeless people in New York City suffer from health problems at far greater rates than the population as a whole, and they face greater barriers to care. Among the many health problems facing this population, the incidence of breast cancer and tuberculosis was of special concern to Project Renewal's health care providers.

The breast cancer rate among low-income and minority women in some neighborhoods is as high as 12.9 per 1,000 women screened. This is twice the rate of New York State's population, which is already higher than the national average. In New York City, 60–65% of homeless women are African American and 30–35% are Hispanic. Access to mammograms and breast health education services for these women is essential for the early diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer.

A 2006 study by New York City's Department of Homeless Services found that homeless people contract tuberculosis at a rate 11 times that of the general population. Other data indicate that 46% of people living in the City's homeless shelters have been exposed to tuberculosis. The standard of care for exposure to tuberculosis is a chest X-ray, but only approximately 20% of shelter residents who are referred for X-rays obtain them.

Project Renewal launched the ScanVan, a mobile mammography and tuberculosis screening clinic serving people living in New York City's homeless shelters and other very low-income men and women. The ScanVan began as a pilot project in June 2007 at the request of the City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Department of Homeless Services. It provides mammograms and chest X-rays at drop-in centers, homeless shelters, community health centers, and street side in areas where these services do not exist.

#### KEY INFORMATION:

**GRANTEE**

Project Renewal

**GRANT TITLE**

Use of the ScanVan for Tuberculosis and Breast Cancer Screening Among Poor and Homeless New Yorkers

**DATES**

February 1, 2008–April 23, 2010

**GRANT AMOUNT**

\$230,000

**FUNDING**

Special Opportunity Grants

The ScanVan is a 40-foot-long mobile clinic with an X-ray room, a mammography room, and an exam room equipped for breast exams, tuberculin skin tests, and patient education. It links to Project Renewal's electronic health record system that also archives X-rays for review by a radiologist. The staff on board the ScanVan includes a licensed radiological technologist, a registered nurse, and a driver/receptionist.

## Grant Activities and Outcomes:

In February 2008, the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHealth) awarded Project Renewal \$230,000 to partially support The ScanVan for two years, giving it time to establish evidence of its effectiveness and secure ongoing funding. Other funders during this period included the New York State Department of Health's Cancer Services Program, several of New York City's Healthy Women Partnerships, the Charina Endowment Fund, and the Frances and Edwin Cummings Memorial Fund.

To support the breast health component, Project Renewal staff members:

- Developed outreach material in a variety of languages and created a toll-free number for women to call to arrange appointments.
- Created a system for reminding women of their appointments and for following up with women who did not keep appointments.
- Conducted mammography X-rays and clinical breast exams on the ScanVan.
- Contacted and counseled women whose tests showed abnormal results. This included arranging appointments with doctors and navigating insurance requirements.

During the second year, when the project was fully operational:

- A total of 320 women received a mammography exam each month, exceeding the goal of 240 exams per month. All of these women received their test results.
- All women with abnormal test results received referrals for diagnostic screening. All of them also received follow-up phone calls, letters, and registered letters to ensure they complied with the referral. The providers to whom they were referred to also received follow-up calls and letters.
- Most women (61%) who were screened during the second year were repeat patients, having had a previous mammogram with The ScanVan.
- Eight women had a positive diagnosis of cancer and received help from Project Renewal staff members throughout their treatment.

- The American Cancer Society recommends that all women receive yearly mammograms starting at age 40. State budget cuts forced Project Renewal to eliminate exams for women aged 40-49 and to screen only half of women aged 50 or older as of April 2009. Funds were temporarily restored in October 2009, but Project Renewal anticipated the cuts would be reinstated in April 2010.

To support the tuberculosis component, Project Renewal staff members:

- Conducted chest X-rays at shelters in Manhattan and Brooklyn.
- Communicated results within one week of screening. Timely results are important because housing, job training, education, and substance use programs require participants to be screened before admission.
- Provided abnormal results to the shelter's primary clinician to facilitate referrals for treatment.

During the second year:

- The ScanVan performed 209 chest X-rays, an average of 17 per month, but fewer than the 50 per month anticipated.
- The X-rays pointed to 19 cases of suspicious tuberculosis exposure. These patients received follow-up care.



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- All patients whose X-rays indicated abnormal results received additional diagnostic evaluations, and all who tested positive for tuberculosis received referrals for treatment.
- All patients referred for further evaluation or treatment received follow-up phone calls and registered letters to ensure they complied with the referral. The providers to whom they were referred to also received letters and calls.

The number of chest X-rays conducted was lower than predicted, largely because one of the shelters the ScanVan had partnered with ended its contract with its on-site medical provider. Without medical providers to refer to and, in some cases, transport the clients, referrals dropped. The staff at Project Renewal was negotiating with the City's Department of Homeless Services to develop other ways to receive referrals.

## The Future:

Project Renewal secured funding from a variety of public and private sources, including Colgate-Palmolive, Avon Foundation Breast Health Outreach Program, Richmond County Savings Bank, Susan G. Komen for the Cure Greater New York City, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The ScanVan also receives a fee-for-service from several New York City cancer partnerships, part of the New York State Department of Health's Cancer Services Program.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

### ABOUT THE GRANTEE

Founded in 1967, Project Renewal's mission is to reduce homelessness in New York City by providing chronically homeless men and women the services they need to move from the streets, to improve their health, and find homes and jobs in their communities. Project Renewal focuses its efforts on chronically homeless men and women with mental illness and/or substance use disorders. Project Renewal's comprehensive progression of services begins on the street where its mobile medical and psychiatric units reach out to homeless people. Once connected, Project Renewal helps clients move into treatment programs where they can improve their health, learn to manage their mental illness, or achieve sobriety. From there, Project Renewal helps clients prepare for, find, and keep jobs. Project Renewal also helps clients find permanent housing so that they can return to their communities and lead stable, productive lives.

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