

Primary Link: A patient's pass to a health care home

In March 2015, Project Access Northwest began partnering with **Swedish Emergency Services** to launch **Primary Link**, a program for patients who need a primary care home.

With Medicaid expansion in Washington state, more patients now have health insurance. However,

many of them have not established a health care home and still use the emergency department for primary care needs. Project Access Northwest will be working with patients from all Swedish locations: First Hill, Cherry Hill, Ballard, Issaquah, Edmonds, Redmond and Mill Creek.

WHAT is Primary Link?

Primary Link will connect Apple Health (Medicaid) and uninsured emergency department patients to a primary care provider (PCP). The program will also work with patients who were seen at the Country Doctor Community Health Centers (CDCHC) **After-Hours Clinic** and do not have a primary care provider.

Many times, patients want to be seen quickly to relieve pain or treat an infection, but these conditions don't require an expensive trip to the emergency department. **Primary Link and the After-Hours Clinic will help these patients establish a primary care home and get the right care in the right setting at the right time.**

WHO is eligible for Primary Link?

Primary Link focuses on patients with Apple Health (Medicaid) and those who are uninsured. We work with patients who do not have a primary care provider or have never seen their primary care provider.

HOW does the Primary Link Work?

Project Access Northwest staff members call each patient referred from the Swedish Emergency Departments or CDCHC After-Hours Clinic within three days. Case managers work with the patient to schedule and confirm an appointment with a primary care provider within two weeks.

The patients receive the following information from the Primary Link staff:

- Confirmation of PCP appointment and other appointments/resources
- Time/date/location of confirmed appointments
- Transportation options
- Information about the value of a primary care home and options to avoid the emergency department.

"We're delighted to partner with Project Access Northwest," said Mary Weiss, M.D., Swedish Medical Services Director for Primary Care Outreach and Community Health. "Helping patients find a primary care home regardless of income or insurance is an important part of improving the health of the whole community."



The Country Doctor Community Health Centers After-Hours Clinic is open evenings and weekends, when other offices close.

Medicaid Expansion makes a difference

A view from our case managers

Molly James, Project Access Northwest case manager, joined the organization in 2010 before the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was implemented. Molly has been working patient intake, logging and triaging the referrals that arrive daily. Over the past 18 months, she's noticed a significant difference in the acuity of the patients being referred. Patients are healthier and are starting to get the treatment and prescriptions they need.

Project Access Northwest case managers still work on coordinating multiple specialty appointments and lab tests, but as Molly says, "We feel like we're working further upstream for these patients—treating chronic conditions before the complications become irreversible."

"There's no question that the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion have

made a difference, especially for patients with chronic conditions like diabetes and arthritis," she explains. "In 2010, we would see referrals for patients whose diabetes had been out of control for years.

They couldn't afford the medication they needed, they had no access to ophthalmology or podiatry, and they were getting referrals for extreme treatment like getting toes amputated."

Patients living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) are also benefiting. "There aren't a lot of rheumatologists in our community, and access was challenging," Molly explains. "The medications for



*Molly James,
case manager*

RA are expensive and patients often couldn't afford what they needed."

Molly and other case managers mention that these patients have lived with pain for years and it became debilitating. "They would be using a wheelchair or walker because the pain was so bad; their mobility was limited," she says.

Nearly two years after ACA implementation, Molly is seeing a different kind of referral come through. Today patients referred usually have a primary care provider or care coordinator who is overseeing their care. "These patients have a primary care home for regular check-ups, and they have the medications they need," she explains.

"These were the patients who would often end up in the emergency room," says Molly. "Now they have a primary care provider and the preventive medicine piece is working really well. I really believe it's making our community healthier in every way!"

Project Access Northwest recognized as a health care innovator by Seattle Business magazine



Board President Elizabeth Pelley and Executive Director Sallie Neillie accepted the award.

Silver Award for Community Outreach

Seattle Business magazine honored Washington state's health care innovators at its seventh Leaders in Health Care Awards February 26, 2015. Project Access Northwest was nominated for **Achievement in Community Outreach** and came away with the silver award that night.

"We are proud of our work in helping patients get the specialty care they need. We were honored to be recognized," said Elizabeth Pelley, Project Access Northwest Board President.



Thank you, Chryssy Yamada!

Project Access Northwest has been fortunate to have Chryssy Yamada, Evergreen Health Chief Financial Officer, serve on its board for several years. As treasurer, she helped move and improve our financial accounting systems and controls. We appreciate her dedication and support and thank her for her years of service.

WELCOME new staff members

Project Access Northwest is growing!

Welcome to the new staff members who have joined Project Access Northwest to help us with the increased patient demand and our new programs. If you know of someone who might be a good fit with our organization, please visit our website at projectaccessnw.org/employment.html.



New Project Access Northwest staff pictured above (left to right) Heather van der Wal, Kitsap coordinator and Primary Link manager; Natalie Chin, Primary Link coordinator; Yasmin Chavarin, dental case manager; Linda Oh, dental administrative assistant. Not pictured: Mary Anderson, Primary Link assistant; and Katie Tirtanadi, Primary Link coordinator.

WELCOME new Board Members

We welcomed three new members to the Project Access Northwest Board of Directors for 2015.



Shannon Diede
Information Services
Strategic Partner—Swedish
Health Services

Shannon oversees information resources as well as clinical systems for Swedish Health Services. Prior to joining Swedish, Shannon held leadership roles at Virginia Mason Medical Center.



Sylvia Gil
Senior Public Policy Analyst—
Community Health
Plan of Washington

Sylvia analyzes Medicaid policy issues and proposals to understand impacts for patients and providers. Before joining the Community Health Plan of Washington, Sylvia worked with the Washington Dental Services Foundation.



Sally Mildren
Vice President,
Customer Engagement,
Coordinated Care

Sally develops and implements marketing and community outreach strategies for Coordinated Care. Before joining Coordinated Care, Sally was the Director of Public Relations for Shriners Hospitals for Children in Spokane.

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Kristina Larson
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King County Medical Society*

Sallie Neillie
*Executive Director
Project Access Northwest*

Mark your calendars!

GiveBIG Day of Champions coming May 5

On May 5, 2015, from midnight to midnight (Pacific Time), The Seattle Foundation will host its fifth annual GiveBIG. With so much emphasis on the champions in our community—the Seahawks, the Sounders, the Mariners, the Storm—we want to focus on the unsung champions who work with Project Access Northwest. **These individuals and organizations have helped us serve more than 5,000 uninsured or underinsured patients each year.**

In early days, we needed local health care leaders to champion the very idea of Project Access Northwest. We could not have gotten started without these core supporters. Now, we need a new kind of champion — one



who keeps us thriving with donations of time and financial support.

All donations made through The Seattle Foundation's website on GiveBIG day will receive a percentage of the matching funds (or "stretch") pool.

You can become one of our champions with three simple steps:

1. Mark your calendar for Tuesday, May 5, to make a donation.
2. "Like" our Facebook page to learn more or watch for emails as the big day approaches.
3. On May 5, visit the Project Access Northwest page on the GiveBIG website and make a donation.

In 2014, Project Access Northwest raised more than \$22,000 through GiveBIG, even before the stretch pool funds were allocated. *Your donation makes a difference for all of the patients we serve.*

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: Patients tell their stories

Mail Call

We hear from patients regularly, and it always makes our day. This letter highlighted the support and customer service from our case management staff.

"Words can't express how thankful I am for all who give their time to help someone like me. ... the intake person who was so pleasant and understanding and got me into an appointment I needed. I pray that God blesses your life in a special way, just as each and every one of you are special. Thank you."

—Patient T.B.

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Sallie Neillie
Executive Director

We invite your comments and questions.
Visit www.projectaccessnw.org to learn more.

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