

OUR SERVICE SITES

La Clinica health centers:
Birch Grove Health Center
Central Point Health Center
East Medford Dental Clinic
Mobile Health Center
Phoenix Health Center
Wellness Center
West Medford Health Center
Women's Health Center

School-based centers:

Central Point, Jackson, Jewett,
Oak Grove, Mae Richardson,
Patrick, Phoenix, Sams Valley and
Washington elementary schools;
Kids Unlimited Academy; Hanby
and Scenic middle schools;
Crater High School

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JULY 2019
LA CLINICA
AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE EXCELLENCE FOR ALL

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A career of caring

Longtime baby doctor Linda Harris retires

July will bring a new start to Dr. Linda Harris. After nearly 35 years of welcoming babies and caring for women in the Rogue Valley, the respected gynecologist and obstetrician is retiring.

"I am very grateful," she said, reflecting on her career. "It's been an extraordinary opportunity to share in people's lives."

Harris has worked at La Clinica's Women's Health Center since 2005. She previously was in private practice in Medford at the OB-GYN Health Center, which became part of Providence Medford Medical Group.

"She was a great colleague, someone to talk over patients with," said Dr. Lanita Witt, who first met Harris when they were both training in Los Angeles in the late 1970s and worked alongside her in California and for decades in Jackson County. "She really stands up for patients and their care."

Witt praised Harris's patient-first approach, her commitment to data-based science, her pioneering spirit in persevering for advancement for women, and, most of all, her integrity.

Harris plans to spend more time gardening, traveling, reading, biking, hiking, cross-country skiing, and playing the horn in community music groups including the Rogue Valley Symphony and Ashland City Band.



Linda Harris

"She really stands up for patients and their care."

Retired gynecologist Lanita Witt



Innovations in care

New approach puts extra focus on patients at most risk

Damage from a heart attack he didn't even realize he had a decade ago requires Wayne Zinkand, 65, to take a blood thinner to prevent another heart attack or a stroke. The medication must be monitored closely, so Wayne, a La Clinica patient for about five years, has visited the Phoenix Health Center hundreds of times.

He was happy to talk with nurse Sierra Gwin this spring about what was going well in his life and new things he wanted to try. Together they wrote a care plan complete with successes and goals: joining the Talent Garden Club, walking on the Bear Creek Greenway, and eating a healthy diet to keep off about 45 pounds he lost three years ago.

"I can tell they are dedicated to my health, and now I have it in black and white," he said with a grin.

Identifying patients like Wayne who could have severe health problems because of their physical or mental health diagnoses is the latest innovation La Clinica is rolling out to ensure it provides the right care at the right time.

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Getting into the garden is one way Wayne Zinkand focuses on his health. (Photo by Jim Craven)

Risk matters. Of every 1,000 patients, studies show, about 200 need extra care. That 20 percent of patients account for 80 percent of total healthcare spending in the U.S.



Linda Harris wraps up a long career of caring: Page 4



Our 30th anniversary video: Find it at laclinicahealth.org/30



10th annual fundraiser brings in \$100,000: Page 3



\$3 million community campaign coming next year

Growth will accommodate new patients, in-house pharmacies

La Clinica aims to care for 5,500 new patients and open two in-house pharmacies by the end of 2021, and it will launch a \$3 million community campaign next year to support costs of the expansion.

The new patients will be supported by 41 full-time equivalent employees, including about a dozen medical, dental, and behavioral health providers and staff. La Clinica is creating new patient space in its Birch Grove and Phoenix health centers and Wellness Center and will open the in-house pharmacies at Phoenix Health Center and the Wellness Center, offering patients a simple way to get low-cost prescriptions.

It also will expand mental health and substance use disorder services and bring dental hygiene services to medical patients.

"We are thoughtful about when we absolutely need to ask for financial support, knowing there are so many worthy causes and such a high need," said CEO Brenda Johnson. "We are certain that our expansion in services to the homeless or those suffering with substance abuse or mental health disorders is exactly what this community is asking us to do."

About 40 percent of Jackson County residents are low income, and La Clinica estimates that many thousands continue to lack access to low-cost health care.



Program halves cost of most medications

Joe is a diabetic who once struggled to cover the rising costs of his insulin every month. Now he gets help through La Clinica's low-cost prescription program.

The federal program allows patients to get most prescription medication at half the regular price or even less. Without such assistance, insulin runs about \$450 a month, according to the Health Care Cost Institute.

La Clinica works with partner pharmacies to administer the program today. In the coming year, it will add a new option for patients: in-house pharmacies at Phoenix Health Center and the Wellness Center. Doctors will be able to order medication during appointments, and patients will pick it up on the way out the door.

"We are thoughtful about when we absolutely need to ask for financial support, knowing there are so many worthy causes and such a high need." CEO Brenda Johnson

New From Page 1

A tool developed by La Clinica's quality staff found about 950 patients could benefit from the approach. Staff have prioritized them and are developing care plans with each. The plans go into their files, where all staff who interact with the patient can see them and provide treatment with the plan in mind.

"We wanted to identify our most vulnerable patients so we know who we need to hold the closest," La Clinica Director of Nursing Becky Sherman explained.

Grouping patients by health risks they face is a key way to target care to increase wellness and control costs, the National Association of Community Health Centers reports.

New operations leader

Kirk has deep expertise in business systems, quality

La Clinica has a new operations chief who worked her way through the organization as it grew, expanding beyond a single location to a network of health centers providing primary care, dental, behavioral health, and wellness services.

Tara Kirk first came to La Clinica in 2002 as a medical records clerk and quickly moved into a related leadership role. She discovered that she enjoyed building the systems and structures that would help the organization grow and evolve.

She left to work for the state of Oregon in 2010, but "within a year my heart brought me back home to La Clinica," she said. She took a role supporting quality, process improvement, risk management, and compliance work at La Clinica. She was most recently performance excellence director.

"The transformation in size and scope and how we deliver care to the whole person is incredible," Kirk said. She's looking forward to continuing La Clinica's innovation and growth.

Kirk is a certified Lean Practitioner in healthcare quality and a certified practice coach for primary care innovation. She is also a Baldrige examiner for Performance Excellence Northwest, an organization dedicated to business effectiveness.



Tara Kirk

Support for community programs: Fundraiser brings in \$100,000



For event photos, visit us on Facebook.

La Clinica has another \$100,000 to help children and homeless residents receive dental services and care through school and community programs thanks to its annual Raise Your Heart for Health fundraiser, held May 4 this year at Ashland Springs Hotel.

"Many, many thanks to all who made this event such a success," said Maria Ramos Underwood, chief development officer. "We're especially grateful to our 47 sponsors, whose support covered all event expenses. We applaud your dedication to our community and your support of our mission."

This year's event marked Raise Your Heart for Health's 10th year and La Clinica's 30th. Sponsors at the \$1,000 or higher levels included:

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Equity

Statement commits to respect for all

"At La Clinica, we commit to engage everyone in a welcoming, respectful, and loving way and to maintain the dignity and value of all people."

That's the opening line of something new at La Clinica—a formal equity statement. This companion to La Clinica's mission, vision, and service statements describes in three paragraphs La Clinica's approach to its long-held values around equity, diversity, and inclusion.

It's a critical piece even for an organization built on the ideals of equity, said CEO Brenda Johnson. People in social or economic minorities are more likely to be in poor health, less likely to have received quality care, and sometimes distrustful that they will be treated well. A grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust is helping employee groups explore how to ensure equity across La Clinica.

"We don't want anyone to come through our doors and be treated as less than because of who they are," Johnson said. "While nearly everyone goes into health care to help others, we aren't automatically immune to the injustice and inequities that strain the world around us."

Read the full equity statement at laclinicahealth.org/patients/approach/#equity.



Investing in health

Oregon adds focus on social factors

Carol lives with multiple health conditions and gets great care from her doctor. But that's not enough to ensure her issues are addressed; it turns out that social and economic factors—think housing, income, and race, for example—have a bigger effect on health than the care we receive.

La Clinica has been building patient programs since its launch 30 years ago that consider these factors, today labeled social determinants of health. Now the state is throwing its weight into the effort to encourage community investments in this area as well.

Under a 5-year plan known as CCO 2.0, coordinated care organizations that manage Oregon Health Plan patients will increase spending on social determinants of health and work closely with community organizations to improve the health of residents.

The result for La Clinica patients and other low-income residents may be better access to wellness classes, behavioral health care, and other programs that make a real difference: practical, affordable, and effective approaches to changing the course of someone's life.

"It's been common sense forever," said La Clinica CEO Brenda Johnson. "If we can work with people to take better care of themselves, it saves money and it saves lives. It saves, it saves, it saves."

What determines health? About 50 percent of the non-genetic factors that affect health are related to social, economic, and environmental factors, while behavior accounts for about 30 percent and clinical care about 20 percent.

Source: County Health Rankings Model, University of Wisconsin Public Health Institute, 2014