East County and Suburban Poverty

I began my career as a family physician in 1974 at a tiny health clinic in what was then the rural East County town of Oakley. Back then, East County was primarily an agricultural hub filled with farms and not that many people.

East County has changed a lot since then. The housing boom of the ‘90s and early 2000s attracted a wave of middle-class families seeking affordable homes to buy. Cities like Brentwood seemed to transform overnight from long stretches of farmland into houses, condos and strip malls. Between 1990 and 2010, the population of Antioch exploded by 65%, to nearly 103,000 people.

Then the Great Recession struck and the housing market collapsed. East County was hit especially hard, as thousands of people lost their homes to foreclosure.

Today there are far fewer farms and many more single- and multi-family homes, many of which have been vacated due to the economic recession. The result is a significant increase in suburban poverty.

Demographic Shift

A couple of months ago, the San Francisco Chronicle ran an in-depth feature about poverty in the Bay Area moving to the suburbs. The story showed the poverty rate among residents in East County cities like Antioch, Pittsburg and Bay Point skyrocketing over the past 15 years.

This trend is evident in the demographic shifts in Contra Costa Health Plan’s Medi-Cal population, where the membership has been split relatively evenly between West County, Central County and East County until recent years. The plan now has more than 195,000 members, 43% of whom live in East County. By comparison, only 29% live in West County and 27% in Central County.

We know that folks living in poverty tend to be sicker and have a higher prevalence of chronic disease. That’s why the health department is putting more effort and resources into meeting the needs of East County residents.

Trying to Meet the Need

In 2014, Public Health launched its Healthy & Livable Pittsburg project.
which worked with stakeholders in the city last year to develop a community action plan for promoting healthy eating and active living.

In recent years, we have added school-based health services in Antioch and Pittsburg. We also contract with Pittsburg Unified School District to provide nutrition education, strengthen its school wellness policies and incorporate physical activity into after-school programs.

To increase capacity and meet demand we’ve been expanding our health centers in East County. In February, we opened the new Antioch Health Center, which has nearly twice as many exam rooms as the old Antioch site. Meanwhile, we’re in the process of renovating the Brentwood Health Center and will soon begin expanding the number of exam rooms at the Pittsburg Health Center.

**Creative Solutions**

To meet the needs of our patients in East County we must be creative in our solutions. CCHP, for instance, is now paying higher rates to East County providers in the Community Provider Network who increase capacity for adult patient visits. And we’re having discussions about other strategies.

We realize that CCHS cannot meet these needs alone, especially as the demand for outpatient services continues to increase with Medi-Cal expansion. It will take community partners working together to meet the increased demand. We look forward to collaborating with all stakeholders to best serve our patients.

Sincerely,

William B. Walker, M.D

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**Medical Center Recognizes National Volunteer Week**

Contra Costa Regional Medical Centers (CCRMC) & Health Centers is recognizing its many volunteers this month in honor of National Volunteer Week.

Heart-shaped Post-it notes will be available April 4-11 for everyone to write a note of thanks to our volunteers. The Post-its will be located at the piano in CCRMC main lobby or you can contact or stop by the Volunteer Office to pick a few up. “We Love Our Volunteers” stickers and buttons will also be available in the hospital gift shop.

According to volunteer coordinator Rhonda Smith, 275 hospital and clinic volunteers donated a total 31,000 hours of their time last year. Volunteers escort patients and visitors, discharge patients, work in the gift shop, answer calls at the Information Desk, provide patients with reading materials, deliver e-cards and assist various departments with clerical needs.

For more information about Volunteer Week promotions and materials, contact Rhonda Smith at Rhonda.Smith@hsd.cccounty.us.
Behavioral Health, CCRMC Named Leaders in LGBT Healthcare Equality

The Behavioral Health division was named a national “Leader in LGBT Healthcare Equality” by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRC) in March, becoming the first provider of outpatient psychiatric care to receive the honor.

The LGBT Pride Initiative in CCHS leads and coordinates this effort. HRC, one of the nation’s largest advocacy organizations for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights, annually surveys more than 2,000 facilities for its Healthcare Equality Index and recognizes those with non-discrimination policies that are explicitly LGBT-inclusive in regards to services, visitation policies and employment, and that train their staffs in LGBT patient-centered care.

Contra Costa Regional Medical Center has been an HRC leader since 2013, and this year was one of only 15 county-run healthcare facilities to receive the designation. Over the past two years, over 150 staff received trainings related to LGBT health to meet the leadership designation. The Board of Supervisors formally recognized both CCRMC and Behavioral Health with a proclamation at its March 26 meeting.

For more information on the Leadership designation or the LGBT Pride Initiative, contact Joanne Genet at Joanne.Genet@hsd.cccounty.us.

CCHP To Cover Transportation Costs to Appointments for Some Medi-Cal Members

Under a new benefit, Contra Costa Health Plan will now pay some Medi-Cal members to take a taxi, bus, para-transit or special van to get to medical appointments. The benefit, which is being required of all managed Medi-Cal plans in the state, went into effect April 1, 2016.

CCHP members with Medi-Cal may now have some transportation costs covered for getting to and from medical appointments. In order for children and people under 21 to qualify, the services must be covered under the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) program. Additionally, dialysis patients, cancer patients receiving chemotherapy or radiation therapy, prenatal patients and those under CCHP case management can be eligible. The member must also demonstrate a need for this service.

The Health Plan asks that members arrange for rides five days before their appointments—or call CCHP as soon as possible if it’s an urgent appointment. Patients need to call 855-222-1218 for CCHP authorization. The new benefit is separate from transport services from an ambulance, litter van or wheelchair van.

CCHP Chief Executive Officer Patricia Tanquary said the new benefit will help patients get the care they need in a timely way. Many patients miss appointments because they can’t afford transportation.

To publicize upcoming CCHS events and successes, contact Will Harper at will.harper@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6903. The Director’s Report is available online at cchealth.org/newsroom and on isite at http://cchs/
Report of TB in Contra Costa Shows Importance of Treating TB Infection

Public Health’s Tuberculosis (TB) Program released its annual report last month, showing 46 county residents were diagnosed with the disease in 2015—a slight decrease from the year before. Eighty percent of those residents originally came from other countries with higher rates of TB.

If a person comes from regions with a high rate of TB—such as Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe—that person is more likely than other Contra Costa residents to have so-called “latent” TB infection, according to the report. People with latent TB do not have any TB symptoms and cannot pass on the disease to others, but they are at risk of getting sick in the future. Five to 10 percent of people with latent TB will go on to get sick with TB disease—sometimes many years later.

Public Health is working with local health providers, including Contra Costa Regional Medical Center & Health Centers, to improve TB screening to identify people with latent TB before they become sick and contagious, and to offer treatment. Both TB disease and latent TB are treatable and curable.

To read the report, visit cchealth.org/tb. For more information, contact Laurie Crider, TB Nurse Program Manager, at 925-313-6740.

Martinez Clinics Sign Up Most Patients for myccLink

The Martinez Health Center and Miller Wellness Center teamed up to enroll the highest percentage of patients in myccLink among our health centers during the first three months of 2016. For signing up the most patients for myccLink, the Martinez clinics will receive up to $500 from the Contra Costa Regional Health Foundation to pay for a celebration with food and drinks. The health centers had a friendly competition the past three quarters to sign up the most patients and win a paid celebration.

The Martinez clinics signed up 2.57% of their empaneled patients from January 1 through March 31 for myccLink, our Internet portal that lets patients see lab results online and message their primary care doctors. That narrowly edged out the Pittsburg Health Center, which had signed up the most patients the previous quarter. Overall, nearly one in five empaneled patients at the Martinez clinics have activated their myccLink accounts since the online product was made available in 2014.

Systemwide, more than 16,500 patients have signed up for myccLink—or 12.4% of all our empaneled patients. That’s more than double this time last year.

For more information about the myccLink contest, contact Will Harper at will.harper@hsd.cccounty.us.
Event Raises $11,500 for Global Health Fellowship

Thanks to all who attended last month’s fundraiser at the Pleasant Hill Community Center for our Global Health Fellowship. More than 100 people came to the event, which netted $11,500 to purchase medical equipment, such as point-of-care ultrasound devices, and help pay for fellows’ travel expenses.

The Global Health Fellowship Program, an initiative of the Contra Costa Family Medicine Residency Program is one of only six family medicine global health fellowships in the country. At the event, Fellowship co-directors Dr. Kevin Bergman and Dr. Neil Jayasekera described the program’s mission to provide training to family physicians in other countries to help enhance care in their communities.

Current fellows also discussed their work training local doctors and medical students in Malawi, Kenya, South Sudan and Chiapas.

For more information about the Fellowship, visit cchealth.org/residency/ghf or contact Dr. Jayasekera at Neil.Jayasekera@hsd.cccounty.us.

Concord Backs Proposal to Upgrade Parks, Encourage Physical Activities

The City of Concord is supporting a plan to spend $975,000 on new play structures and other upgrades at two parks in the low-income, densely populated Monument community, where park space is sparse.

The spending plan comes three years after our Community Wellness & Prevention Program (CWPP) began working with residents and other local agencies, including First 5 Contra Costa, Monument Impact and the City of Concord, to assess the conditions of several parks in the Monument area. CWPP staff and residents said improved conditions at the parks would attract more people to go there and participate in healthy activities.

The funds will pay for improvements at Ellis Lake and Meadow Home parks, according to the Contra Costa Times. At Ellis Lake Park, the city will install new playground equipment, restrooms, benches and lighting. It will also move the swing set, expand the play area and upgrade the pathways. Meadow Homes Park will get a new play structure, the Times reported.

The Ellis Lake projects are expected to be done by September. Work at Meadow Homes will likely begin in the fall.

For more information, contact Coire Reilly of CWPP at Coire.Reilly@hsd.cccounty.us.
Studies Show Contra Costa EMS on Target in Stroke and Cardiac Prehospital Care

A pair of recently published studies by the EMS Medical Directors of California (EMDAC) shows wide policy variation among California’s 33 emergency medical services (EMS) agencies when it comes to pre-hospital treatment of chest pain, heart attack and stroke—the procedures followed by first responders during emergency calls. The studies, published in December and March by the Western Journal of Emergency Medicine, promote the adoption of evidence-based standards as guidelines for future policy change. Both studies were co-authored by Dr. Joe Barger, who retired last year from his post as Contra Costa’s EMS medical director. Contra Costa’s current policies regarding acute stroke and STEMI (high-risk heart attack) were aligned with current evidenced-based standards.

For more information contact EMS Director Patricia Frost at Patricia.Frost@hsd.cccounty.us.

Updating Contact Information on iSITE

As public employees, we are designated as disaster service workers and must be reachable during an emergency event. In collaboration with CCHS’ Emergency Management Team, Personnel is requesting all staff to review and update their contact information on ISITE.

The department is responsible for contacting employees in the event of a disaster to tell them if and how they are needed. CCHS utilizes the employee contact database on iSITE as its primary source of contact information, so it is critical that your telephone numbers are current. Your personal phone numbers and email addresses are confidential and only used to contact you during an actual emergency or exercise.

To view or edit your contact information, go to the homepage of iSITE and hover your cursor over the “My Profile” tab near the top of the page and select “Edit Profile.” From there, update the information on the “Contact Info” tab (be sure to hit “save”). Also, fill out the “Personal and Emergency Contact” tab so CCHS knows whom to contact in case of a personal emergency.

By selecting “edit profile” on iSITE’s home page, you can update your contact information.

Health Care for the Homeless to Expand Medication-Assisted Treatment Clinics

A federal grant awarded to Public Health’s Health Care for the Homeless program (HCH) will soon expand substance abuse treatment options for patients at three county health clinics. Through a $325,000 annual grant from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, HCH will hire four registered nurses and four Mental Health Clinical Specialists to staff full-time medication-assisted treatment (MAT) programs at Concord Health Center II, Antioch and West County. About 80% of patients using an existing, part-time MAT clinic at Concord II are homeless, prompting HCH to seek the grant. HCH expects the expansion will address the growing need for substance abuse services within the county’s homeless population. Medication-assisted treatment helps patients who are addicted to opioids, a class of drug that includes prescription painkillers as well as heroin. Opioids are the leading cause of accidental overdose deaths in Contra Costa. The new staff will train with the HCH Program and the County’s AOD Program, and work closely with Ambulatory Care staff providing primary care in the clinics to ensure accessible, integrated healthcare for all patients. Expanded services could begin July 2016.

For more information, contact HCH Program Manager Alvin Silva at alvin.silva@hsd.cccounty.us.
You’re a GEM for Going the Extra Mile

Gale Gutierrez, RN
Jennifer Giron, RN
Kurt Rivera, RN
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers
For their willingness to come on our floor and help us mix and infuse a medication we were unfamiliar with, staying until infusion was completed and doing their best to ensure patient safety and comfort. For working well together as a team.
◆ Nominated by Eddie Mendoza Ong

Alma Toney
Medical Records Technician
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers
For her excellent work ethic and for inspiring others to strive to do their best.
◆ Nominated by Corlette Williams

Mirela Radkova
Certified Medical Assistant
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers
For quickly learning her new role and performing her job with excellence. For paying attention to details and ensuring that patients are up to date on their healthcare maintenance, and being a true team player.
◆ Nominated by Tamara McBride

Registration Staff
Contra Costa Regional Medical Centers and Health Centers
For your hard work and dedication during the registration process as front-line staff. For providing quality, friendly and effective customer service to our patients, their family members and the general public.
◆ Nominated by Registration Clerical Supervisors and Manager

Ellen Burke
Occupational Therapist II
Public Health
For her time, effort, dedication and enrichment to our occupational therapy profession. For enhancing our ability to meet the needs of the California Children’s Services population we serve.
◆ Nominated by Patricia Weisenberger

Vicki Davidson, PHN
Public Health
For her collaboration with multiple agencies on behalf of very complex pediatric clients. For making the link from tertiary care services to community care much easier for the children and families in her care. For her exemplary follow up and perseverance.
◆ Nominated by Lisa Frost

Linda Stevens
Physical Therapist II
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers
For always making sure that I have my ergonomic equipment and that it is in tip-top working order. For going the extra mile to get my broken keyboard repaired.
◆ Nominated by Elizabeth Topete

Delinda Taylor
Hospital Attendant
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers
For going above and beyond her duties and for being very helpful when assigned to the 5D unit.
◆ Nominated by Eddie Mendoza Ong

Tamela Gospel
Hospital Attendant
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers
For going above and beyond her duties to be helpful when assigned to the 5D unit.
◆ Nominated by Eddie Mendoza Ong

Emily Bautista, RN
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers
For going the extra mile to be welcoming and helpful to staff when they work on the Telemetry floor. For being a great charge nurse and helping staff care for our patients.
◆ Nominated by Eddie Mendoza Ong
You’re a GEM for Going the Extra Mile

Andre Lindsey  
Cindy Holland  
Jacqueline Taillant  
Darine Rodriguez Baker  
Medical Social Worker II

For their outstanding community contribution provided in support of individuals with HIV and AIDS in Contra Costa County.  
♦Nominated by Christine Leivermann

Damon Powell  
Ellen Gill  
Medical Social Worker-Project

Jami Daviner  
Program Specialist I  
Public Health  
For always looking for new and innovative ways to improve our workflow and better serve our customers. For thinking outside the box and leading our team to grow and learn more each day.  
♦Nominated by Mayra Boyle

Alvaro Rivas  
Terri Clark  
Medical Social Worker I  
Public Health  
For being recipients of a certificate of recognition from the California Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.

Do YOU KNOW SOMEONE  
Going the Extra Mile?

To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the commendation form by email to wanda.session@hsd.cccounty.us or fax to 925-957-5401. Forms are on our website (cchealth.org on the About Us page) or iSITE, our intranet, at http://cchs/  
Nominations are subject to approval by Division Directors.

APRIL MILESTONES

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service:  
Mabel M. Alfonso, Michael J. Moore, Rhodora P. Blanco, Paula L. Hooks, Camille N. Nolan (10 Years); Linda L. Whalen, Maureen T. Fix, Alan Ly, Joanne Sanchez-Rosa, Diana M. Carpio, Linda I. Pickron, Wynn H. Esclovon, Bertha A. Mena, Matthew Luu, Veronica R. Perez (15 Years); Shideh, Ataii, Leticia Mata, Barbara Allen, Martha A. Flores, Cynthia A. Easton (20 Years); Kimberly C. Mercer, Vicki A. Turner, Thomas E. Gamsky, Judith E. Whitworth, Deborah Curtis, Gilbert Soberal (25 Years); Rusty Keilch and Rosalind R. Walker (30 Years)