Brad Archer, MD
Medical Director
Mercy Health Partners

ARTNERING FOR BETTER HEALTH

Alan Whitters, MD
Director of Behavioral Services
Mercy Medical Center

Mercy Health Partners opened in October 2013 as an innovative initiative to reduce the number of chronically ill patients who rely on Mercy's Emergency Department (ED) to meet their healthcare needs.

An outpatient clinic located within the hospital, Mercy Health Partners focuses on patients with multiple complex healthcare needs (such as congestive heart failure, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease [COPD] or diabetes and renal disease). Brad Archer, MD, oversees the Mercy Health Partners clinic, an appointment-only clinic for patients referred by the ED.

Chronic use of the ED is defined as three ED visits in a three-month time frame, according to the benchmark set by the Accountable Care Organization for Medicare patients. In 2012, Mercy had 197 patients with 10 or more ED visits in that year.

"We have a care coordinator stationed in the ED who helps connect these individuals with the Health Partners clinic. Many of them do not have a medical home or primary care provider. We connect them with a doctor to review their health issues and medications they are taking," explains Deanna Glass, Consistent Care Social Worker at Mercy Health Partners.

Patients meet with Dr. Archer, on-site nurse Dan Tucker, RN, and Deanna. Together, they formulate a care plan custom tailored for that patient.

Jeff Giannetto, 50, was the first patient seen at Mercy Health Partners. In 2013, Jeff had more than 33 combined ED visits, doctors' appointments, scheduled procedures and tests, and follow-up visits prior to becoming a patient at the Health Partners clinic in October.

"I am so thrilled with way the clinic is run. I didn't have a doctor for so long and I was always running to the ER," he says. Jeff has high blood pressure, high cholesterol, coronary artery disease (CAD), heart disease, COPD (which often results in pneumonia), Scheuermann's kyphosis (a spinal disorder), depression, anxiety and a panic disorder.

Under the Affordable Care Act, only the very sick are admitted to the hospital and hospitals are penalized for readmissions within 30 days. Hospitals are not designed to function as primary healthcare providers.

Deanna says, "The clinic is about long-term solutions, not the quick fix. Sometimes people just need a little extra help and accountability. We help connect them to other medical and community resources, and then we follow up with them to be sure they are getting the care they need."

Deanna and Dr. Archer provide accountability through phone calls or personal visits to ensure patients follow a prescribed care plan. If patients don't have a medical home, Deanna helps connect them with a provider at one of the 14 MercyCare family practice clinics, all recognized as Level II Patient-Centered Medical Homes by the National Committee for Quality Assurance.

197
patients with
10
or more ED visits in one year

JEFF GIANNETTO, 50, WAS THE FIRST PATIENT TO MEET WITH BRAD ARCHER, MD, AT THE MERCY HEALTH PARTNERS CLINIC. JEFF AND DR. ARCHER WERE FEATURED IN AN APRIL 27 GAZETTE ARTICLE ABOUT CORRIDOR HOSPITALS THAT ARE FOCUSING ON BETTER ACCESS, LOWER COSTS AND IMPROVED QUALITY FOR PATIENTS.

Deanna Glass
Consistent Care Social Worker
Mercy Health Partners

Deanna adds, "Initially, we see patients for medical needs. But, we've found a number of these patients could benefit from counseling to help them work through what is plaguing them. We can usually tell if someone is anxious or stressed, or if someone is experiencing situational depression due to family or other issues beyond their control. Sometimes they feel overwhelmed or powerless."

Because of the close correlation between physical and mental illness, psychiatrist Alan Whitters, MD, provides face-to-face psychiatric consultations for patients referred to him by Mercy Health Partners. Dr. Whitters is the Director of Behavioral Services at Mercy Medical Center. Dr. Whitters conducts an initial evaluation. Then, he and Deanna help match the patient with appropriate medical and community resources for follow-up care.

"They told me depression is common with what I'm going through," says Jeff. "Dr. Whitters understood right away when I told him I would cry over the silliest stuff – like over things I can't do with my grandchildren because I can't breathe and don't have energy."

Dr. Whitters prescribed a new medication and suggested lifestyle changes, like outdoor walks, that have helped Jeff feel better. Jeff was referred for ongoing outpatient treatment at the Abbe Center for Community Mental Health.

"A number of patients seen in Dr. Archer's clinic have an underlying and/or primary mental health condition, which contributes to frequent visits to the ED and potential admissions to the hospital," says Dr. Whitters.

For example, he explains, people with depression may not take care of themselves properly, so their nutritional, emotional and/or physical needs are not met. They may turn to alcohol or drugs as short-term solutions. This neglect or substance abuse can negatively affect their physical health.

> **"The clinic is about long-term solutions, not the quick fix."**
> *Deanna Glass*
> *Consistent Care*
> *Social Worker*
> *Mercy Health Partners*

Dr. Whitters says, "Anything that affects the body affects the brain. When a person feels better, his or her immune system improves and rates of disease are lowered. Studies show better treatment of psychiatric disorders improves physical state and decreases medical utilization."

Mercy Health Partners is by referral and is appointment-only. The clinic is one of the many ways Mercy is proactively looking for ways to ensure patients with chronic needs receive the care they need from the appropriate sources.

FIND A DOC
(319)369-4444

To learn more about Mercy Health Partners, call (319) 221-8627.