

Patient Turned Clinic Advocate

Nikeya was a college student at UW-Madison when she found her way to the Specialty Care Free Clinic (SCFC). She had been experiencing chronic, uncontrolled itching, among other symptoms, and scheduled an appointment at University Health Services (UHS) for evaluation. The provider suspected her symptoms were stress-related; however, as part of due diligence, they needed to rule out other potentially serious diagnoses. This would require a consultation and a liver/spleen ultrasound; however, Nikeya was presently uninsured and didn't have funds to pay for these services out-of-pocket.

UHS sent her to a referral coordinator for financial services, who was unable to identify eligibility for any alternative health insurance coverage for the specialty care services Nikeya required. Nikeya had three options: stand in line at a "first-come-first-served" primary care free clinic for a financial assessment and estimate for reduced-cost services, call area hospitals herself to price ultrasound services, or schedule an appointment at SCFC for a free specialist consultation and go from there.

Nikeya opted for a visit to SCFC and was so grateful she did! She noted that the clinic visit was scheduled within a week, the consultation felt very comfortable, and she was referred to an area hospital for a diagnostic ultrasound. She left feeling relieved to have her liver and spleen evaluated so quickly. Despite initial skepticism that she would be able to obtain any services



Nikeya, a patient advocate

for free, she received no bill for the SCFC visit or the ultrasound arranged by the clinic. Fortunately, the ultrasound was able to rule out much more worrisome diagnoses and her symptoms abated with stress management techniques learned at UHS.

"It really helped me trust the health care system more," says Nikeya. She has gone on to complete her education and establish a career in community health management! "It's great it was something I could access even as a student, versus being a regular resident."

Nikeya has done presentations to other student groups to point out that they have access to services beyond the university walls.

MISSION

Volunteers provide specialty medical care to uninsured, low-income patients referred by clinicians in south-central Wisconsin.

VISION

Compassionate specialty care for all patients

VALUES

Dignity, Integrity, Compassion, Confidentiality, Empathy





An eye toward the future

**Sheila Olk Martin,
SCFC Executive Director**

Hello! As the new Executive Director for Specialty Care Free Clinic (SCFC), I am very grateful to join the dedicated staff and volunteer network that passionately provides excellent medical care to the south-central Wisconsin uninsured population. The patient story that is featured in this newsletter attests to the challenges individuals face when they do not have access to necessary medical care, and we see this play out daily in the clinic. While every patient's story is unique, the outcomes are often similar because our patients frequently delay care until symptoms become unmanageable, often resulting in advanced disease, significant stress, and compromised health. Sadly, poor health affects employment, housing, nutrition, education, and life aspirations, and we see many families struggling with these issues.

One of my priorities throughout the next year will be raising the visibility of the exceptional care being delivered at SCFC. Early in my tenure a seasoned board member remarked that SCFC was the "best kept secret" here in south-central Wisconsin, noting there is excellent care being provided, but wishing there was more public awareness of it. Part of my personal mission as Executive Director will be to increase public perception of SCFC, with success being measured by an increase in the number of patients served and an expansion of our donor base.

In early September, the Board of Directors will hold a strategic planning session to outline our organizational goals and determine the strategies we will employ to achieve them. Opportunities to serve additional uninsured patients will undoubtedly top that list, and the mechanisms to achieve this are likely to include expanded recruitment of volunteers and exploration of new funding sources. It will be critical to get the word out through collaboration with other non-profit organizations and the media, that we are here to fill this fundamental healthcare gap for our most vulnerable populations.

As I listen to individual patient stories, I am struck by how much perseverance and fortitude is required to seek help with complex medical needs. The healthcare system is difficult to navigate and without insurance the potential expense can be daunting. I am grateful for the empathetic and skilled volunteers who consistently show up, for our staff whose hearts are so passionately engaged, for our community collaborators that extend the scope of care well beyond our individual clinic, and for our unbelievably generous foundation, business, and individual donors. We could never help as many people as we do, without all of you.

Supporting Specialty Care for the Uninsured

There are many ways to contribute to the Specialty Care Free Clinic (SCFC) to help guarantee that we have the staff, space, and supplies to support our volunteers, as they provide medical care to our patients. The staff process referrals from primary care clinics, coordinate follow-up diagnostics and procedures, work with community care organizations on behalf of patients to obtain discounted pricing, and assure care plans are communicated back to the referring physician. Your gift helps our staff and volunteers provide quality care efficiently and effectively, with the patient's health and dignity at the core.

Consider the following opportunities:

- A direct gift of cash
- A direct transfer from your IRA or charitable giving fund
- A bequest through your estate planning
- Appreciated stock

Contributions can be made at any time online at our website: scfcwi.org or by mailing a check payable to Specialty Care Free Clinic, 1409 Emil St, Suite 120, Madison, WI 53713.

SCFC is a tax exempt 501 (c)(3) organization and our EIN is 82-3567991. SCFC is also registered as a Wisconsin Charitable Organization. We recommend that you consult your tax advisor to determine the impact of your gift on your personal finances.

We continue to work with the Wisconsin Medical Society Foundation to secure gifts for an investment fund that would help ensure the long-term stability of SCFC. For more information on this opportunity contact Elizabeth Ringle, WMSF Executive Director, via email Elizabeth.Ringle@wismed.org or by phone (608) 442-3789.

Our 2022 expenses were \$329,396 based upon unaudited year-end financial statements. We will have final revenues and expenses later this summer when our Form 990 is completed. Donors may request this tax form at any time.



Collaboration to improve outcomes

Timothy Docter, MD, SCFC Volunteer Medical Director

SCFC has been fortunate to establish a number of meaningful collaborations recently. This comes at a time when we are seeing an increased need for our medical services.

Communication among our patients, physicians, nurses, and staff is critical to improving health outcomes. In last year's newsletter, we noted that only a small portion of the information provided to a patient is remembered and understood. When there is a language barrier, this drops even lower.

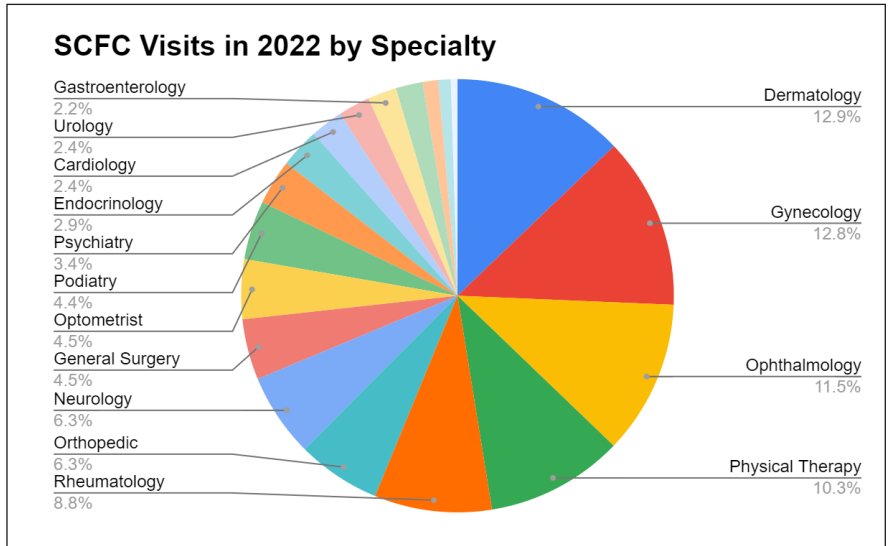
At the core of communication between our non-English speaking patients and volunteer medical specialists are medical interpreters.

We have improved our staffing in this area significantly by hiring an additional part-time interpreter and by recruiting volunteers from Madison College's medical interpreter program. Students get real-life, hands-on experience and we increase the availability of medical interpreters, so it is a mutual benefit.

In addition to interpreters, we are always recruiting additional clinical staff and medical specialists. Most recently, the SSM Health Gastroenterology (GI) Department "adopted" SCFC, and throughout 2023 is scheduled to see patients in the clinic. GI is an area where we have had volunteer shortages coupled with a high need for care, so we are grateful for this additional coverage.

Another collaboration that is benefitting our patients is with St. Vincent de Paul's free pharmacy program. Access to free medications remains a barrier for patients with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, and we hope to expand their prescription coverage to more of our patients in the future.

We experienced an increase in patient visits in 2022 with the trend continuing into 2023. This is good news, because the main objective in moving our clinic location and changing our name was to expand visibility and make medical care accessible for more patients. Automatic extensions of gov-



ernment-supported health insurance that were put in place during the pandemic are slated to expire, which we anticipate will continue to increase the number of patients requiring our services.

This, of course, provides new challenges as we examine options to provide timely care to more patients. Meeting their needs may be one of our bigger challenges this year. As we consider opening the clinic for one additional day during the week, we recognize that this would lead to increased staffing costs. We are fortunate to have generous, dependable donors, but we are always striving to expand our donor base, and thus the care we are able to provide.

Addressing challenges, establishing meaningful connections and collaborations, securing resources, and implementing quality improvement measures rest on the shoulders of our dedicated team of staff and volunteers. With the addition of Sheila Olk Martin, as our SCFC Executive Director, we are well-positioned to take on these challenges, and we look forward to serving an expanded number of patients throughout 2023.

Stay healthy!



Recruiting new volunteers

Tricia Levenhagen, SCFC Clinic Manager

Without a doubt, our volunteers and staff are the lifeblood of Specialty Care Free Clinic. We could never fulfill our mission without them.

One of the biggest challenges following the pandemic has been recruiting volunteer RNs. In response to this shortage, we have developed a new volunteer position – Patient Care Assistant (PCA) – a position very similar to that created at local healthcare organizations. PCAs perform services that do not require a licensed registered nurse, which includes greeting patients, taking vital signs, recording medications, and preparing/cleaning exam rooms.

One of the advantages of this new volunteer opportunity is that it has attracted pre-professional students pursuing health care careers. This gives them hands-on experience working with uninsured and non-English speaking patients. Other individuals who can volunteer as PCAs include EMTs, LPNs and CNAs.

Our volunteer PCAs join close to 75 other medical professionals and an additional 5 to 10 interpreters who work together to provide direct patient care, as well as follow-up support to access other critical healthcare services. We continue to recruit and train new volunteers in all areas. Currently, we have increased patient referrals for urology, physical therapy, ophthalmology, and endocrinology and are hoping to recruit more physicians and other medical providers in these specialties. In addition, we are always looking for volunteer interpreters.

We respect the varied schedules of our volunteers who commit on average anywhere from 1 to 10+ hours per month. I am so grateful for every hour a volunteer contributes and especially our core group, who has been with us for 10 years or more. Even if you can volunteer once per quarter for three hours, you can make an incredible difference in a patient’s health and quality of life.

I would like to give a special thank you to our Spanish interpreters who are on staff, Noemi Cepeda and Alejandra Sochan. They go above and beyond to schedule and support our Spanish-speaking patients. Due to their efforts, we have been able to increase the number of patients substantially. In addition, we are delighted to welcome back Emmalie Anderson, who supports both our Spanish- and English-speaking patients at the front desk, and who was recently out on maternity leave.

Thank you to our staff and our current and past volunteers!



SCFC Staff joins MFD in assuring building safety (top)

Emmalie with baby Carmen (bottom)

Q&A with SCFC Volunteer Kate Sample, MD

Kate Sample, MD, SCFC Volunteer, Obstetrics and Gynecology



Dr. Sample was instrumental in establishing a pilot partnership between SCFC and Share the Health (STH). STH, a collaborative project involving UW, SSM and private physicians, provides free screening for gynecological cancers. As a result of this pilot project, STH volunteers and SCFC volunteers are working together to provide critical care and screening in a more efficient and financially sustainable model. Gynecological care has risen to one of our top referrals.

What motivated you to volunteer at SCFC?

I have always believed that you need to look in your community and see what is needed. If there is a match between a need and what you can offer, you have found your reason to help. Being a doctor - and a gynecologist - is actually a fairly narrow skill set. But there is tremendous need in our community for those skills.

What keeps you volunteering?

I continue volunteering because of the patients. Sometimes it feels hard to come up with the time or energy, but once I am in the clinic, I want to do more and more. First, there is a tremendous sense of community at SCFC - some of my favorite people in the world are on staff there. Second, being able to help the women who come to SCFC with a gynecologic need is its own reward, one I am grateful for.

What impact do you see?

In gynecology, the most measurable impact is in cancer prevention. Many of the medical problems our patients present with fall into the pre-cancer range. Often, with a simple office procedure, we are able to prevent that from ever reaching the cancer stage. This is a massive gap in our healthcare system. There is no reason women here - any women - should die of preventable disease.

Are there any trends that you are seeing among uninsured patients?

Unfortunately, the trends we are seeing since 2020 are that there is an increased number of uninsured patients and that those who come to SCFC are presenting with more advanced healthcare problems. For example, we are identifying more cervical cancer compared to pre-cancer. I would love nothing more than for SCFC to be unnecessary because healthcare is available to everyone. Until then, I am grateful there is an organization working to fill in the many and expanding gaps in our healthcare system.



Thank you!

Special acknowledgement to John Schilling, MD, as he ends his terms of service with the SCFC Board of Directors. Dr. Schilling was instrumental in guiding SCFC's transition from being under the umbrella of Dean Foundation to becoming an independent clinic.

Patient Preferred Language, 2022

Language	No. of Patients
Spanish	685
English	173
Arabic	5
Hindi	4
Mandarin	4
French	3
Mongolian	3
Mandinka	2
Portuguese	2
Urdu	2
Albanian	1
Farsi	1
Punjabi	1
Turkish	1
Uighur	1
Vietnamese	1
Wolof	1

Specialty Care Free Clinic

1409 Emil St., Suite 120
Madison, WI 53713
Phone: 608.827.2308

1,395 patient visits
provided in 2022 ~
a 16% increase over
recent years



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Tricia Levenhagen, Clinic Manager
Emmalie Anderson, Asst. Clinic Manager
Alejandra Sochan, Interpreter/Office Asst.
Noemi Cepeda, Interpreter/Office Asst.

Murals brighten clinic walls



Our clinic has been brightened by the artwork of Developing Artist Murals and Alliances (DAMA) students and their mentors. They based their murals on feedback highlighting what the clinic means to the community and captured the spirit of SCFC perfectly!