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Doctors treat barriers to healthcare

Clinics make medicine affordable and accessible

By **Shawn Clubb**
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Gia Nyugen stood at the head of a line of people before a closed door upstairs in the back half of Scruggs United Methodist Church.

The door opened and an interpreter told him to enter the office, where he was greeted by Dr. David Campbell. After a review of Nyugen's medications and an examination of his chest and abdomen, Nyugen went on his way.



Erica Burrus photo/ Dr. David Campbell of the Institute for Family Medicine examines the chest of patient Gia Nguyen.

This is a common sight at the Vietnamese Chronic Disease Self Management Clinic, which has operated out of Scruggs since January. It is

just one aspect of the work done by the Institute for Family Medicine of which Campbell is the president and chief executive officer. A previous Vietnamese Clinic had operated out of a building on Ohio Avenue, but it closed a year and a half ago. Catholic Charities, which provides a case manager and interpreter for the clinic, courted the Institute for Family Medicine to host the new clinic at 3646 Fairview Ave. - in the heart of St. Louis' Vietnamese community. It primarily serves the elderly population.



"I'm very happy to see Dr. Campbell here," Nyugen said through interpreter Sang Joseph Nyugen. "I can walk here. It's convenient - very easy."

Campbell said it is meant to be that way. Many of the patients can't drive.

"It's kind of the opposite of the 'if you build it, they will come' philosophy," he said. "For the folks that can't get there, we try to take it to where they are."

The Institute for Family Medicine has two focuses, Campbell said. It offers low-cost medical care, while trying to eliminate barriers.

One floor below the Vietnamese Clinic, the institute operates La Clinica, a health clinic set up to serve immigrants and refugees living in St. Louis. Campbell estimates 90 percent to 95 percent of the patients come from St. Louis' Hispanic community.

La Clinica is a free clinic with a full-time nurse practitioner, Brenda Le, on staff. The institute asks for a \$15 donation.

The institute provides some degree of medical services in nine area school districts, clinics in public housing developments, medical care for clients of social service groups and health service for inmates in correctional facilities.

To provide this care, the institute relies greatly on volunteer medical providers.

"A total of 15 or so individuals volunteer as physicians or nurse practitioners on a rotating basis. Others do patient intake," Campbell said. "I'm kind of all over the place."

That includes doing home visits to some people in the Vietnamese community who are not able to leave the home.

The institute is funded through grants, contracts, some school money and an occasional fundraiser - although the fundraisers generate a relatively small amount of the budget.

Services offered through the Institute for Family Medicine

Family medicine office at 4590 S. Lindbergh Blvd.

La Clinica at 3646 Fairview Ave.

Vietnamese Clinic at 3646 Fairview Ave.

St. Louis County Health Department Health Centers - South County Health Center, 4580 S. Lindbergh Blvd., Sunset Hills; John C. Murphy Health Center, 6065 Helen Ave., Berkeley; and North Central Community Health Center, 4000 Jennings Station Road, Pine Lawn.

Clinics at the two St. Louis City Housing Authority subsidized housing facilities.

School health services in the Jennings, Riverview Gardens, Normandy, Hancock Place, Bayless, Maplewood, University City, Wellston and St. Louis Public school districts and at St. Louis Community College-Forest Park and the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Covenant House of Missouri (care provided at the institute's office at 4590 S. Lindbergh Blvd.)

Evangelical Children's Home, 8240 St. Charles Rock Road

Crisis Nursery - South location, 6150 Oakland Ave.; north location, 11037 Breezy Point Lane; west location, 315 First Capitol Drive, St. Charles.

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