

The Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center is a community health center that for 38 years has been serving the community in Washington and Yamhill Counties. Virginia Garcia has the mission to provide high quality, culturally appropriate primary care services to those with barriers to care with a special focus on migrant and seasonal farm workers in our community.

Virginia Garcia serves over 36,000 patients from four primary care sites, three dental clinics, four school based health centers, and a mobile clinic. The Center has implemented the Patient Centered Primary Care Home Model and has achieved Tier III certification at all sites.

Outreach services have been at the heart of the community health center model since the very beginning of the health center program that dates back to the 1960's. Virginia Garcia has followed closely that tradition and has imbedded Community Health Workers in the model as a core component of our approach to care.

In our experience, Community Health Workers often make the difference in ensuring that the health services are most effective. The best diagnosis and treatment plan in the world is ineffective, if it fails to recognize the important culturally and socio-economic factors confronting the patient: such as language barriers, education, transportation, housing, and economic resources. The Community Health Worker is an important support to the medical care delivered in the exam room.

One example of this is a patient who was being seen by one of Internal Medicine doctors for diabetes. The patient was not taking the prescribed insulin and the doctor was not having success with controlling the patient's diabetes. The patient was referred to one of outreach workers who was leading a support group for diabetics. Senora Isabel understood that the patient was struggling with a cultural belief that insulin could lead to blindness. She helped the patient understand that this was not the case and that

she could trust the doctor's advice. The patient began taking the insulin and the doctor was amazed at the sudden improvement in the patient's diabetes control.

The Community Health Worker addresses an important workforce issue confronting our state. The Patient Centered Primary Care Home emphasizes a team based approach to care. At Virginia Garcia, the nucleus of the team is comprised of providers, a nurse, medical assistants, case manager, and team assistant. The teams are supported by behaviorists, clinical pharmacists, and Community Health Workers. The team works in a coordinated fashion to manage the patients on panel.

By utilizing a team based approach, the care of the provider can be extended to better meet the patient's needs. A follow-up from the community health worker on a complex patient with mental health and other chronic illness can make the difference in avoiding hospital admissions or repeat visits to the emergency department.

Virginia Garcia employs over 12 Community Health Workers who provide outreach to our patients in a variety of ways: home visiting, health promotion, care coordination, resource and referral, eligibility assistance, transportation, and interpretation. They work in the clinic as well as in the community- visiting farm worker camps, housing developments, Head Starts, Schools, community centers.

As Oregon moves forward in its efforts to transform the health system, the Community Health Worker has an increasingly important role to play. The emergence of the CCO and the emphasis on patient centered primary care homes and payment reform make CHW's an effective and efficient way to deliver care that's integrated with whole of the medical team and supportive to the patient. The CHW looks beyond merely the office visit as only way to deliver care. The expansion of Medicaid and the emergence of the exchange will require particular focus on outreach and enrollment to help guide newly eligible individuals into care.

HB 3407 will set up a budget neutral Commission that will help guide the development and training of this important part of the future health care workforce. I strongly urge you to pass this legislation.