

Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center

By offering programs across all demographic and economic levels, this health center helps address the disparity of care for its community.



Health For All



Jamesina Henderson, CEO

www.hillhealthcenter.com
HQ New Haven, Conn.
Employees 500

More than 40 years after it was established as the first community health center in the state of Connecticut, the Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center is still working hard to achieve its goal of providing quality care to those in need. The center was founded in 1968 as collaboration between the people of the community in New Haven and the Yale School of Medicine.

“We were very proud of that town and gown collaboration,” said Jamesina Henderson, CEO of the health center. As the health center has grown over the decades, Henderson said it has established itself as the best model of inclusive, integrated care in the region with its focus on mental and physical health.

“There are few community health centers that are as fully integrated as we are with primary medical, dental, and behavioral health services,” Henderson said. “Of course, we are wise enough to have a major focus on prevention and wellness.”



Henderson said the integrated focus on healthcare provided a wealth of benefits for the community, even if some sectors of the healthcare industry have yet to fully catch up with what the center is doing. “The perspective of vendors for electronic health records hasn’t broadened to be inclusive of medical and behavioral health,” she said. “Although many people in the behavioral health sector are talking about moving toward establishing a medical home and people in primary care are talking about moving toward incorporating behavioral health services, the people who make the electronic health records have not recognized that high demand for truly integrated technology.”

Although it is a challenge, the health center isn’t backing down from trying to find a vendor that can provide that type of integrated electronic medical record. “We are in the process now of meeting with the decisionmakers from the top three vendors that develop the highest quality electronic health records,” Henderson said.

An eye to prevention

“Everyone who walks through our doors, whether they are a patient or a client, has conversations about promoting good health with any provider they encounter,” said Henderson. “In every interaction, there is an intervention concerning prevention.”

As the center has put a focus on prevention and wellness, it has also improved its environment of care with the help of a capital campaign funded by private donations and state and federal funds. The center renovated its pediatrics and dental services areas and developed a convenient care clinic as part of the capital campaign. “In the last year, we made some great progress in that anyone who walks through our doors knows we are not only welcoming to everyone, but we are the best for everyone,” Henderson said.

One typically underserved demographic the health center puts much effort into helping is the homeless population. “The biggest challenge with serving homeless people is



maintaining the relationship because they are very transient,” said Henderson. “Because of that transience, it is difficult to have follow-up care and to make sure we can monitor their progress.”

Another area the health center puts a lot of focus on is its substance abuse programs. “Every day is a challenge for most of the individuals in those programs, and if they have a win on any given day, that is a good day,” said Henderson.

The health center’s model of integrated care is especially important when it comes to helping patients in the substance abuse programs since many also present with other behavioral and primary care issues. For addiction medicine, the goal is to provide the full spectrum of healthcare under one roof.

Grassroots support

When it comes to getting the word out about the health center’s programs, it’s a grassroots effort. “Our intent is to make

connections and reestablish old connections with community-based organizations to make sure they are aware of the types of programs and services we offer and how they can benefit their constituencies,” said Robert Rioux, director of community relations and corporate development. “We want to partner with them to bring that message into the street because much of our patient population simply doesn’t ascribe to the traditional media viewpoints.”

In addition, the health center tries to create awareness as often as possible with the political leaders in the community. Henderson, Rioux, and other leaders from the health center recently met to discuss how healthcare reform will affect people in the community.

As a result of healthcare reform, Henderson said she expects the health center will begin to see more young people because they will be able to keep coverage under their parents’ policies until the age of 26. “We also expect more first time patients



who will be interested in our prevention and wellness programs,” she said. “We just expect with the spotlight on health care in general and the importance of maintaining primary and secondary prevention that we’ll see an increase in our patient population.”

As a health center in an urban location, Henderson said there are certain health issues that come up time and again. “Diabetes, hypertension, weight management, smoking cessation, and childhood asthma are all too common health disparities we see in our patient population,” she said.

Over the next several years, the health center wants to have a continued impact on the healthcare disparities in the community, Henderson said. “We don’t want to maintain the status quo,” she said. “We want to be creative and innovative in the way we address those disparities by collaborating with other community health centers and hospitals in our area so we are not duplicating services and so that we are all filling a void in a unique way.” +

—Adam Swift

