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SCWHC Celebrates Our “Founding Mothers”

If you're a new friend of the SCWHC you may not know that the clinic started nearly 35 years ago as a small group of women who wanted to have more control over their health and their bodies. They came together as the Santa Cruz Women's Health Collective. Together they educated themselves and others and became active in their own health care and in the health care delivered in the community. This was an exciting time when, all over the country, similar groups were starting up. Health care for women has not been the same since.

Out of this collective sprang a new health center run by and for women. It was conceived as a safe place, where education and support were just as important as medicines and stethoscopes. While the Santa Cruz Women's Health Center is now much larger, and is considered an integral part of the health care safety net for the County, we have not forgotten our roots. Indeed, our updated mission statement still reads:

**The SCWHC Mission is to:
Provide quality health services and advocate the feminist goals of social, political and economic equality.**

Many of the early visionaries that began the collective and morphed it into a place that provides clinical services still live in or near the Santa Cruz area. In fact, one still WORKS at the SCWHC as a provider.

To honor these early pioneers, we held an exciting event in May. Our recently-retired board chair, Kate Hartzell, has been hosting a mothers' day tea party/fundraiser at her house for the last several years. This year, we decided that this was the perfect way to reconnect with, celebrate, and honor the “Founding Mothers” of the SCWHC.

So, we sent out feelers, to locate and invite as many of the founding mothers as possible. Amazingly, 15 founding mothers were able to attend. They told stories of the early days, reconnected with one another, and had a chance to meet many of the current staff and leaders of the SCWHC.

We have since met with several of the founding mothers to get advice and direction on topics like how to be successful at fundraising. Kater Pollock, one of the founding mothers, is working hard on a volunteer project sorting through the many boxes of archived materials, and soon we hope to have a permanent historic display in the clinic, celebrating our feminist/collective history.

I am proud to be the new board chair. This is one of the few surviving feminist health centers in the country, and we believe one of only a few that provides comprehensive primary care services, in addition to reproductive services.

Suzanne Koebler is the current chair of the Santa Cruz Women's Health Center Board of Directors.



Integrative Medicine at the Santa Cruz Women's Health Center

Because Santa Cruz is in the unique place that it is, alternative medicine is neither unusual nor radical. The integration of conventional Western/allopathic medicine with Eastern healing, spiritual healing and other modalities is considered by many to be a richer and more effective approach. At the SCWHC, we also believe in the value of integrative healing, and believe that, like Western medicine, it should be available to everyone, regardless of ability to pay.

Dr. Kristina Mutén, while medical director several years ago, dreamed that we could offer this more comprehensive, holistic approach at the health center. She started what we used to call the CAM program, or Complementary and Alternative Medicine. We now have integrated alternative healing into our everyday practice. Kristina Mutén and Wendy Sickels both did a fellowship at the University of Arizona's Program in Integrative Medicine, directed by Andrew Weil. Kristina Hanley, a licensed acupuncturist is now on staff seeing a busy schedule of patients. Also practicing are two chiropractors, and a naturopathic doctor, all seeing patients in a lovely treatment room. What used to be a separate and very part-time volunteer program has evolved into truly integrative medicine. The various practitioners now regularly collaborate on the care of our patients, and we share new treatment and diagnostic modalities.

Integrative medicine means more than substituting an alternative treatment for a conventional one, say an herbal medicine for a drug. It seeks to help unfold the body's natural potential for healing and existing in a healthy state, paying attention not only to the physical body, but the emotional and spiritual aspects of life.

JS is a 61 year-old artist with asthma, carpal tunnel syndrome, anxiety and depression. Our traditional provider, our acupuncturist, and one of our therapists have collaborated to address all of these issues jointly. They understand that the patient's vocation, her spiritual and emotional issues and life stressors can all affect each of these health problems in some way. By using traditional medical treatments judiciously, along with Chinese medicine treatments and psychotherapy, JS has had less asthma attacks, is generally less anxious and has been able to continue to practice her art even with her carpal tunnel problems.

Integrative medicine uses the best possible treatments and preventive modalities from conventional medicine and complementary practices. It emphasizes the relationship between the practitioner and the patient, the insight and trust that can develop will help gain a more holistic understanding of the patient's concern, and help guide them more effectively move toward a healthy state. The approach is based on good science -- alternative therapies are not accepted uncritically -- and strives to use the most natural and least invasive treatments initially, always keeping in mind the very individual needs of each person. We are working to promote good health with all the available tools that touch on mind, body and spirit.

Wendy Sickels, M.D., has been a provider at the SCWHC for nearly seven years. Wendy is a UCSC alum, attended medical school at UCLA, and did a family practice residency at Northridge Hospital Medical Center. She completed the University of Arizona Integrative Medicine Fellowship in 2006.



I Always Feel Welcome.....

Leigh is one of our ever-increasing numbers of older patients. As seniors in Santa Cruz find it harder and harder to find a primary care provider that accepts Medicare, we welcome them at the Santa Cruz Women's Health Center.

About 15 years ago, I was looking for a doctor who would treat me respectfully and who would take my insurance. I was having trouble finding one. I am in recovery, and have lots of problems with anxiety, so I needed someone who would take the time to listen to me and work with me. I had been to the Women's Health Center many years before, but had not thought of it as a place for older women. Someone suggested I look into it, and I have to say, I almost came here as a last resort. I have been coming here ever since.



The medical providers at the Women's Health Center have helped me to stay clean and sober by working with me to manage my anxiety and other issues. Using medicines, acupuncture and by just listening and being there, I have been able to stay clean and sober. Because of my sobriety, I can have a good relationship with my kids and grandkids, and that family life is also helpful to me.

I trust the providers at the Women's Health Center, and they trust me. They listen to me, work with me, and are available and responsive when I have a crisis. I always feel welcome and I am always treated respectfully.

– Leigh

Your financial support of the SCWHC helps us to see more women like Leigh. The cost of caring for a Medicare patient far exceeds what we receive in reimbursement – that is why so many doctors limit their numbers of Medicare patients. As a "Safety Net" clinic, we accept all patients, regardless of payment.

What's New at the Women's Health Center?

- We have a **new, full-time bilingual nurse practitioner, Devi O'Neill**. With Devi on board, we have same-day/urgent care visits available every week day. Now patients with acute problems can be seen immediately and no longer have to wait or go to the Emergency Department.
- We have **two new bilingual Medical Assistants, Aurora Martinez and Patty Orozco**.
- **Nelly Martinez-Pena** has joined our **Billing Department as a bilingual Billing Assistant**.
- **Barbara Merriss** filled a new staff position as **bilingual Patient Care Coordinator**.
- **Sandra Wiley** is **bilingual Coordinator of our new Promotores Program** (see the enclosed article about this new community outreach program!)
- Sadly, both Ann Pomper and Kelly Duncan have resigned from our Board of Directors. Happily, **Bruce Block**, a pediatrician with the Santa Cruz/Palo Alto Medical Foundation has joined. Welcome, Dr. Block!
- In addition to the lovely art work by **Anna Oneglia** that we have enjoyed for years, we are now fortunate to have some additional art displayed on the Clinic's walls. The new watercolors are by local artist **Aimée Bagur Nelson** who was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana and has lived in Santa Cruz for the past 37 years. Aimée is President of the Santa Cruz Watercolor Society and is an active member of the Society's weekly critique group. **Thanks so much, Aimée!!**
- **We now have 10 exam rooms**. After the renovation last year we had eight. In order to accommodate an increase in acupuncture visits and same day appointments, we have sacrificed precious office space to create 2 new exam rooms.
- **We are leasing space nearby on Walnut Avenue**. The 800 square foot office houses our billing manager Ruth Jasso and staff, Simone Reynaud, our finance Director, and Sandra Wiley, our coordinator of the Promotora Program.

Promotores de Salud: A Valuable Partner in Community Health Improvement

Imagine you are a 45 year-old single mother of three. Your doctor tells you that you have diabetes and that you must completely change your diet, start exercising, prick your finger every day to check your blood sugar, and take a new medicine. You are scared. Your grandmother had one leg amputated due to diabetes, and your father had diabetes and died of a heart attack. You wonder if you can really do all these things and you start thinking it might be easier to just not do them.

Imagine if your doctor then told you that there is a person in your neighborhood who can help. She is not a health care provider or nurse, but is another patient like you. And she has been trained to help you through this transition. She can help you pick out foods that are OK for you to eat. She has a walking group three times a week with other neighbors just like you. She can help you to feel less alone and more confident.

This person is a *promotor de salud* or community health worker. A *promotor* is a lay health worker who lives in the community she serves and can provide information and support to her neighbors. He/she is a bridge between the professional health care provider and the patient. Community health workers have been used worldwide for many years, and finally, in this country, we are learning how valuable they can be as part of the health care system. There are a number of studies that document the value of this approach, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has even done a comprehensive evaluation documenting their effectiveness.

The SCWHC recently received a two-year, \$175,000 grant from the Tides Foundation Community Clinics Initiative to start a *promotores* program. We are formally partnering with the Live Oak Family Resource Center, Mountain Community Resources, and the Familia Center. Each of these agencies will receive a significant portion of the grant money to support their recruitment and mobilization of *promotores* in the areas they serve. The SCWHC will take the lead in developing and providing training, and we hope to have our own volunteer *promotores* who can serve as patient advocates in the clinic.

Our clinic manager, Amy Peeler, our medical director, Maria Mead, and our newly-hired part-time coordinator, Sandra Wiley, will oversee this exciting project. By the first of the year, we hope to have several trained *promotores* working in the San Lorenzo Valley, Beach Flats, and Live Oak – the neighborhoods that our three partner agencies serve.

We embarked on this project because we believe strongly that this type of empowerment can be a one of the keys to promoting good health and effective self-care. We also feel strongly that partnerships with other human service providers will prove to be an effective and efficient way to mobilize community health workers.

Have You Seen Our Web Site? www.scwomenshealth.org

We have been working on keeping our web site updated and making it more useful to you. Visit and check it out. You'll find links to some good information on things like vaccines. We are also in the process of uploading scores of patient education sheets – the same ones that we provide to our patients – with lots of good information on everything from fevers to fiber.

Influenza – It's That Time of Year What You Need to Know

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 35,000 U.S. residents die each year from influenza, and some 225,000 will be hospitalized.
- The hardest hit groups are kids under age 4 and adults age 65 and above.
- Influenza is a serious illness, characterized by some combination of fever, muscle aches, headache, sore throat, and congestion. It often lasts a week to ten days. It does not usually involve nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.
- Prevention is effective: Wash your hands frequently, cover your nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing, and get vaccinated.
- It is now recommended that all children up to age 18 and all adults over age 50 be routinely vaccinated.
- In addition, people with certain chronic diseases or who live with people who have these diseases should get vaccinated.
- Influenza can be dangerous for pregnant women – several die every year – so any woman who is likely to be or IS pregnant during the flu season should be vaccinated.
- Finally, if you live with a baby under six months of age, you can protect that child by having yourself vaccinated.
- The vaccine **DOES NOT CAUSE** influenza. The shot contains no virus, only antigens **FROM** the virus, and cannot in any way cause illness. The nasal vaccine is an inactivated virus and can cause a mild case of nasal stuffiness but not the flu.

Summary of influenza vaccination recommendations, 2008: Children and adolescents aged 6 up to their 19th birthday

Vaccination of all children aged 6 months–18 years is a new recommendation.

Children and adolescents at high risk for influenza complications should continue to be a focus of vaccination efforts as providers and programs transition to routinely vaccinating all children and adolescents. Recommendations for these children have not changed. Children and adolescents at higher risk for influenza complication are those:

- **aged 6 months–4 years;**
- who have **chronic pulmonary** (including asthma), **cardiovascular** (except hypertension), **renal, hepatic, hematological or metabolic disorders** (including diabetes mellitus);
- who are **immunosuppressed** (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by human immunodeficiency virus);
- who have **any condition** (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, or other neuromuscular disorders) **that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions or that can increase the risk for aspiration;**
- **who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy** who therefore might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection;
- who are **residents of chronic-care facilities;** and,
- who will be **pregnant during the influenza season.**

Note: Children aged <6 months should not receive influenza vaccination. Household and other close contacts (e.g., daycare providers) of children aged <6 months, including older children and adolescents, should be vaccinated.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Summary of influenza vaccination recommendations, 2008: adults

Annual recommendations for adults have not changed. Annual vaccination against influenza is recommended for any adult who wants to reduce the risk for becoming ill with influenza or of transmitting it to others. Vaccination also is recommended for all adults in the following groups, because these persons are either at high risk for influenza complications, or are close contacts of persons at higher risk:

- **persons aged >50 years;**
- women who will be **pregnant during the influenza season;**
- persons who have **chronic pulmonary** (including asthma), **cardiovascular** (except hypertension), **renal, hepatic, hematological or metabolic disorders** (including diabetes mellitus);
- persons who have **immunosuppression** (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by human immunodeficiency virus);
- persons who have **any condition** (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, or other neuromuscular disorders) **that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions or that can increase the risk for aspiration;**
- **residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities;**
- **health-care personnel;**
- **household contacts and caregivers of children aged <5 years and adults aged >50 years,** with particular emphasis on vaccinating contacts of children aged <6 months; and,
- **household contacts and caregivers of persons with medical conditions that put them at high risk for severe complications from influenza.**

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



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We accept Medi-Cal, Medicare, and several insurance plans. **Yet, NO ONE IS TURNED AWAY for lack of finances!** Fees are determined on a sliding scale basis. We subsidize patients who have no form of medical coverage and are in need.



Services

The **Santa Cruz Women's Health Center** is a community-based clinic established in 1974 by and for women. We provide affordable and quality medical services to women and children. Our medical staff speak Spanish!

250 Locust Street, Downtown Santa Cruz (Behind the Public Library) • **831-427-3500**

Hours of Operation

Monday: 8:30 to 5:00, Tuesday: 8:30 to 8:00, Wednesday: 12:30 to 5:00, Thursday: 8:30 to 8:00, Friday: 8:30 to 5:00, Saturday: 8:30 to 12:00.

Services We Provide:

- General Medicine
- Women's Health Services
- Family Planning
- Pregnancy Testing
- Prenatal
- Pediatric
- Chronic Care
- Mental Health Services
- Acupuncture
- Chiropractic
- Naturopathy

We accept MediCal, Medicare, and several insurance plans. **Yet, NO ONE IS TURNED AWAY for lack of finances!** Fees are determined on a sliding scale basis. We subsidize clients who have no form of medical coverage and are in need. We also have extensive case management to help enroll patients who are uninsured or under-insured in programs to cover their care.