



Everything New Orleans

The Times-Picayune

EDITORIAL: A healthy development

Wednesday, April 02, 2008

People need fast, easy access to doctors, not only when they are sick but to help them stay well: that's why Louisiana State University is moving doctors into neighborhoods.

▼ Advertisement

[CONTINUE STORY](#) ↓

The LSU system is establishing six community clinics where people live instead of attached to hospitals -- three on the West Bank and three on the east. That's an initiative that should make people and the community healthier.

Most of the new clinics are located in schools, and one, at O. Perry Walker High School, only treats students. But three other school-based clinics -- at Murray Henderson Elementary, Martin Behrman Elementary and Frederick Douglass High School -- treat students half the day and the community the other half. The two other clinics, one at Jackson Barracks and another that will open soon in eastern New Orleans, are neighborhood clinics rather than hybrids.

Clinics that are close by and even within walking distance are far easier for people to reach and use, especially those who don't have private transportation. The Louisiana Public Health Institute has determined that 40,000 low-income, uninsured people in this region don't have a connection with a clinic that can act as a health care safety net.

There are serious health consequences when people don't have that connection. Patients with chronic illnesses who could be kept healthy with consistent care and medication instead become worse, and patients of all kinds don't receive the benefits of preventive care. Too often, they end up getting sicker and don't seek help until they reach a crisis and land in an emergency room.

LSU officials hope that increasing access to health care will take some of the burden off hospital emergency rooms, which have been strained since Hurricane Katrina. Patients will be able to get a

primary care appointment the same day that they ask for one, and each clinic will be able to see 150 to 250 patients per week.

Providing medical attention sooner is obviously better for patients, but it also sounds like good medicine for the entire health care system.