

senior scoop

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Health

At your service

VNA's Visiting Physician Services celebrates 25 years of bringing kind, compassionate medical care home

By Susan Bloom, Correspondent

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one of the nation's fastest-growing demographics is currently that of seniors age 80 and older, a segment which is expected to more than triple from 5.7 million in 2010 to over 19 million by 2050.

Commensurate with this rise has been growth within a segment of that population which is homebound and unable to easily get access to healthcare -- an underserved market that Visiting Physician Services, a member of VNA Health Group, has embraced since its founding in 1994. For 25 years, the Marcus Welby-style practice has been dedicated to providing healthcare to frail and/or chronically ill seniors in the comfort of their own home versus a hospital or doctor's office.

"Aside from treating seniors in the environment where they're most comfortable, the home setting ensures that our patients will be less susceptible to hospital-borne illnesses or infections as well as concerns regarding unnecessary medications, testing, and other procedures," explained Alex Binder, Vice President of Visiting Physician Services. "In addition," he said, "a house call is easier and more comforting for the patient and represents a more economically-viable solution for society overall."

With 40 clinicians on staff, including physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners, Visiting Physician Services treats patients in eight counties, including Monmouth, Ocean, Middlesex, Union, Essex, Passaic, Bergen, and parts of Somerset; clinicians log an average of 50-100 miles of travel to see six to 10 patients daily, most of whom are 85 and older, at their homes. Among other services, "we try to help patients and families understand the reality of advanced care planning in a kind, compassionate, and transparent way as we work to explore and fulfill a patient's goals and wishes," Binder said.

Comprehensive, Collaborative, and Holistic Care

Since becoming part of VNA Health Group in 2015, Binder said that Visiting Physician Services is able to bring more comprehensive and holistic care to patients than ever before.

"We'd always worked side by side with the renowned VNA team treating many of the same patients and there was tremendous overlap in our services -- essentially, we've been the doctor's office that goes to the home and they provide comprehensive nursing and therapy services,"



Dr. Evan Rubin, medical director at Visiting Physician Services, a member of VNA Health Group, visits with a patient at her home.

Binder said. While their collaboration has brought operating synergies to both VNA and Visiting Physician Services, "it's also been extremely beneficial for patients, who receive greater access to care that's more collaborative; our patient outcomes have improved significantly and it's a much more coordinated approach for these fragile patients," he said. "With the ability to provide most services right in the home -- from medication management and physical exams to diagnostic testing like bloodwork and X-rays via high-tech mobile medical equipment and even just social interaction -- we're delivering healthcare in a more organized, efficient manner that avoids the need for these patients to have to go to multiple locations and be seen by different specialists," he said.

"We're providing true primary care," agreed Dr. Evan Rubin, Medical Director at Visiting Physician Services and a nine-year veteran with the practice. "Our patients are no longer able to be seen by doctors at their offices because they're homebound and/or bedbound and often suffer from multiple chronic illnesses," he said. As these complicated cases often fall through the cracks of today's healthcare system, "we embrace their care and work to remove confusion over their medication and schedules, provide support to family members and caregivers, streamline care and expectations, and encourage conversations about the patient's priorities," said Rubin, who previously worked in an urgent care setting

and appreciates the authenticity of home visits. By treating patients in their own environment, "you get to see the home, the whole person, and the exact conditions they live in, which enables us to provide a greater scope of care," he said. "We can identify the need for certain services like physical or occupational therapy, see their paths through the home and remove any trip hazards, and can also provide the social aspects of care," he said.

"Overall, we can provide most interventions that a patient would receive at a hospital right in the comfort and convenience of the patient's own home and at a fraction of the cost," Binder said. "In some ways, Visiting Physician Services has been the best-kept secret in home-based medical care for the past 25 years."

"I love supporting quality of life," concluded Rubin of the most rewarding part of his role at Visiting Physician Services. "It's about providing comfort and making a difference for a population that's often forgotten."

For More Information:

VNA Health Group's Visiting Physician Services is located at 23 Main Street, Suite D1 in Holmdel. Services are covered by Medicare and Horizon. For more information, call (732) 571-1000 or visit www.vnahg.org/vps.