

BUSINESSPROFILE Walk-In Medical Clinic

Walk-In With Confidence!

by Carolyn Swift

Walk-in Medical Clinic in Aptos is the place where individuals and families are assured medical services 365 days a year, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., with no appointment necessary.

Located near the heart of Santa Cruz County, a neighbor to Cabrillo College on Soquel Drive, the Walk-In Medical Clinic furnishes the health services geared to today's active and hectic lifestyles.

Here is where mothers can come when they discover their children coming down with an illness around bedtime. The extended hours mean that no parent has to lose work time to get health care for the family. This is a facility that can schedule appointments at the end of the day, so there's no conflict in the patient's work schedule. It's also where flu shots are available on a walk-in basis, with little or no waiting.

A community-based clinic, it's been a lifesaver for Mid-County residents who would have otherwise driven for miles with a broken arm or some other routine emergency. Also open Thanksgiving and Christmas and the Fourth of July, Walk-In Medical Clinic staff make it possible so nobody has to wait even when a family doctor might be unavailable.

The clinic has men and women physicians, so women can feel comfortable asking for a female doctor to take care of their health needs if they wish.

Established in Aptos a decade ago, the Walk-In Clinic initially offered urgent care services. Today, it provides both urgent and primary care to meet the needs of patients of all ages, infant to 90 years or more, at one address. The change to include a separate private practice within the clinic was made about two years ago.

"We offer both now. We have primary care with family practice doctors here to see scheduled appointments, just like if you walked into any physician's office," said Administrator

Margie Brown. "At the same time, we have another physician to see walk-in patients with urgent care needs. We do immediate and on-going health care."

An estimated 65 percent to 70 percent of the charts at the clinic are repeat visits.

"There always has been a need for repeat care here," added Brown. "Basically it is like having the same urgent care we always had, with the equivalent of having your own family doctor here to see about on-going care."

The same doctor seen here has hospital privileges and can follow the patient in the hospital if admission is necessary.

The busiest time at the clinic is the evenings, when many people come in after work, or because they are unable to get in to see their own doctors. Even during the day, patients who can't get in to see their regular doctors will come to the Walk-In Clinic so they can get help quickly. The goal is to provide treatment services in most cases within 45 minutes.

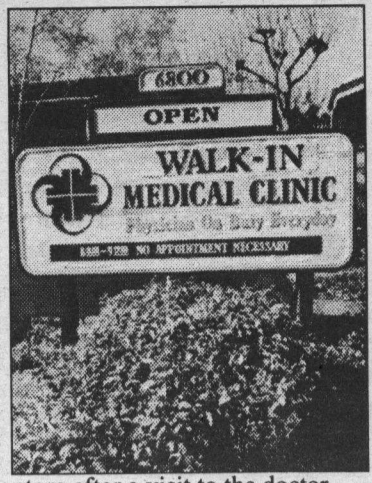
"We're not here to take away another physician's business per se," she continued. "We let them know a patient has been here and will refer someone back to their own doctor. We work with other physicians."

Cindy Ramirez, community services director, further emphasized the clinic's neighborhood role.

As part of the local community, the clinic's physicians are active with school activities and various events. They donate time to supply hands-on care during games at Cabrillo College, and frequently attend special functions where participants or spectators might require medical assistance.

The clinic accepts Medi-Care assignments, assisting many who haven't recently had primary care to see a family practitioner on a regular basis. Flu immunizations are provided this year with no out-of-pocket costs to the Medi-Care population, that is men and women over the age of 65 or who are otherwise specially assigned federal Medi-Care benefits.

The building is integrated with lab and X-ray equipment on site to make it as convenient as possible for all patients. A number of medications can also be obtained right at the clinic, which means many people don't have to stand in line at the drug



store after a visit to the doctor.

Walk-In Medical Clinic physicians include Drs. Valerie Bengal, Brendt Carlson, Stan Hajduk, Lee Jacobs, Gordon Kaplan, Bryan Lee, Sterling Lewis, Michael McGannon, Stuart Simon, John Walther, Eric Webb, Bernie Clum and Robert Martin. Many of these practitioners also staff the emergency center at Watsonville Community Hospital.

An important additional role for the clinic is occupational medicine. The clinic arranges drug screening, pre-employment and regular physical examinations, including back, eye, hearing and respirator exams. The clinic furnishes these health services for a number of businesses throughout the region.

"We work closely with employers," Ramirez explained, "We focus on working with the employee and employer together to get the person back to work as soon as possible."

Businesses have been calling on the clinic lately for its flu immunization program. Companies can coordinate on site visits through Ramirez by calling 662-3611.

"Companies realize how much they can lose if even one person is off sick," she said, "They know this is a good preventative measure."

Some businesses pay for the shots for all employees, while others split the cost or just supply the location for the convenience of their staffs.

Easy to find at 6800 Soquel Drive, Aptos, the Walk-In Medical Clinic is a lifeline for its community, an essential service to local companies and comfort to everyone who needs prompt and capable medical attention.

Walk-In Medical Clinics
6800 Soquel Drive
Aptos
Telephone: 662-3611