

## About South Park Inn Medical Clinic

The South Park Inn Medical Clinic (SPIMC) is a student-managed medical clinic serving the homeless community of Hartford, Connecticut. The clinic opened its doors in October 1987 by a group of medical students at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. Since then, the clinic has grown to now serve over 750 patients per year, providing primary care, counseling and information for the community of the South Park Inn Shelter in Hartford.

The primary goal of the clinic is to provide much-needed medical attention to the residents of South Park Inn, while providing an opportunity for medical students to become familiar with the special needs of a homeless population. The clinic is open weekly, staffed by hundreds of student volunteers and supervised by physicians who donate their time. Every Tuesday and Thursday evening, clinic volunteers see 10 to 15 shelter residents with medical problems, concerns about safety, and hygiene. In the process of care, every patient is seen by a licensed physician who is ultimately responsible for the care they receive. The clinic is equipped to diagnose and treat minor medical problems and refer patients to area hospitals and support services.

**"The community doctors like it because they're supervising students. The students like it because they get to see patients with a wide range of ailments. The shelter residents like it because they get 20 minutes of undivided attention. The staff like it because if they're worried about someone they can help them get checked out,"** says Mary Lovelock, co-executive director of South Park Inn.

Shelter residents receive free, confidential, walk-in health care that allows sufficient time and attention to their concerns. Medications are provided at no cost and referrals for diagnostic testing or long term care for chronic disease are made. The Charter Oak Clinic, a federally qualified community health center that provides free services to homeless patients, is the primary referral center of the SPIMC. Preventative screening is offered to all appropriate patients in the clinic or is available by referral. Counseling for substance use and HIV prevention is addressed at every visit.



Medical students and supervising physician Dr. Peter Immordino, 2003 Physician Volunteer of the Year, consult with a patient during clinic. Photo by Peter Morenus

Dr. Bruce Gould, faculty advisor for the clinic, describes the clinic as "a double mentoring" program. **"The doctors mentor the students in health care and the students mentor the doctors in why they went to medical school in the first place,"** he says.

## Medical Student Contributions

At the SPIMC, students gain early clinical exposure to the challenges of caring for the underserved in a no-pressure atmosphere where the students are not being evaluated. *First year students* are given the necessary time to perform a basic history and physical, and complete at least one per night.

*Senior medical students* have the opportunity to further develop their teaching skills by supervising junior students and educating patients on health topics. The health care of shelter residents thus extends beyond the exam room through monthly screening and educational initiatives by medical students. Senior medical students can also develop leadership skills by becoming clinic managers or by serving on the clinic's board.

Fund-raising for the clinic, particularly sponsoring and organizing the annual 5K road race, are every student's responsibility. The students are also responsible for recruiting community physicians, arranging schedules, managing the budget, and staffing the clinic.

**"It is very fulfilling as a medical student to have the opportunity to provide medical care to people in the homeless community who are in need of healthcare but may not have access to it. Volunteering at South Park allows you time to not only practice the skills you're learning in school, but also to help others in need,"** says Yadira Acevedo, a medical student at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine.

## How Can You Help?

As a **medical student** at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, you can donate your time and skills to become an important provider of patient care at the clinic.

As a local **physician**, you can donate your time and expertise to teach and assist students in providing patient care to this underserved population.

As a concerned **business, foundation, or organization**, you can assist the clinic by making donations of needed equipment, supplies and/or medications, or by making monetary contributions that will allow us to continue to provide health care to our patients.

As a concerned **citizen**, you can make financial contributions that will allow us to meet the needs of those for whom health care is not readily available, or participate in our **ANNUAL ROAD RACE**, a 5-K run/walk held at the medical school each fall to benefit the clinic. To make a financial contribution, please make your gift payable to the UConn Foundation – UConn SOM Outreach Clinic at the SPI and mail directly to the UConn Foundation, P.O. Box 552, Storrs, CT 06269.

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The hard work of the volunteers at the clinic has been recognized by the State of Connecticut.

- In 1993, the student board of directors was presented with the **Connecticut Higher Education Community Service Award** for their dedication to serving the homeless population of Hartford.

- In 2000, the physicians serving the clinic were awarded **Community Service Honors** by the Hartford County Medical Society.

- In 2002, student volunteers were recognized as "**Connecticut Treasures**" by State Lt. Governor Jodi Rell for their commitment to providing health care to the Hartford homeless community.

**The free medical clinic at the South Park Inn homeless shelter is completely student run. The Board of Directors, a group of elected medical students, meets monthly to discuss the clinic and see that it runs efficiently. In addition to day-to-day operations, the Board is always working on new and exciting ideas. Although each board member has specified duties, creative projects are always welcome.**



**For more information, please contact:**

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