



Project TCMS

Tulsa Charitable Medical Services

What is PROJECT TCMS?

Project TCMS is a community partnership to improve access to specialty health care for low-income, uninsured residents of Tulsa County. It combines care provided in primary care safety net clinics in Tulsa County with donated specialty care in a coordinated referral program led by the Tulsa County Medical Society Foundation. It is designed to enhance the work of existing safety net clinics and other community agencies.

Why is PROJECT TCMS needed?

More than 93,000 of Tulsa County adult residents do not have health insurance. Often, those without health insurance are working in one or more low-wage jobs without health benefits, earning too much to qualify for programs like Medicaid, but not earning enough to afford health insurance and still meet other essential needs such as food, clothing, and housing.

Many of the low-income, uninsured receives primary care services through safety net clinics. Before, safety net physicians and clinic staff worked the phones until they found a specialist willing to help. This was an expensive and inefficient way to locate services, and put pressure on the same physicians to provide charity care.

How does PROJECT TCMS work?

PROJECT TCMS serves as a centralized point of entry for safety net clinics' patient specialty referrals. We maintain a referral database to guarantee that only the number of patients each physician has agreed to accept will be referred to their practice. Patients are assigned to specialists on a rotating basis to ensure an equal distribution of these patients among the physicians who signed up to participate. A similar rotating assignment protocol will be used for the hospital-based surgeries and inpatient care as needed.

Patients are referred to PROJECT TCMS by health care providers working in the safety net clinics including: Community Health Connection, Indian Health Resource Center, Morton Comprehensive Health Services, OU Family Medicine, OSU Family Medicine, Catholic Charities, Good Samaritan, Neighbor for Neighbor, Neighbors Along the Line, OU Bedlam, Tulsa County Social Services, Tulsa Day Center for the Homeless, Tulsa Dream Center and Xavier Medical Clinic.

PROJECT TCMS staff assigns a specialist to each patient referral. Before an appointment is made, the specialist is provided pertinent clinical information and preliminary diagnosis via internet referral management system. Appointments are arranged between sending clinic and receiving specialist after medical records are reviewed and determined appropriate utilizing web based referral management system. If additional testing is necessary prior to visit, this will be arranged by safety net clinic. Most appointments will be scheduled on a first available basis. You will not be asked to see patients outside of your regular business hours.

Who can receive this care?

PROJECT TCMS patients must have been a Tulsa County resident for the past three months, uninsured and does not qualify for governmental programs, like Medicare or Medicaid. Total family income must be 200% or less of federal poverty guidelines (\$46,100 per year for a family of four).

What is the patient's responsibility in the program?

Patients are responsible for keeping appointments and for making a good-faith effort to work in partnership with their doctors.

What if I already give charity care?

PROJECT TCMS guarantees that you will only be asked to care for the number of patients you have pledged to see through the program. Having a broad base of specialists volunteering for PROJECT TCMS should reduce your burden of caring for the uninsured. With the referrals being centralized at PROJECT TCMS, calls directly from the safety net clinics should be minimal.

If you see a patient needing a primary care physician, you may contact PROJECT TCMS. The staff there can help the patient find a medical “home” in one of the safety net clinics.

What would be my responsibilities as a volunteer specialty physician?

First, you would be asked to complete the Volunteer Specialist Pledge form which tells us how many patients you would like to see each year (12-15 is suggested), your office location and hospital preference.

The patient will present a PROJECT TCMS card to your office staff and you will see the patient just as you see other patients. You will be provided with the name and number of the patient’s provider in their safety net clinic, pertinent clinical information and the results of any routine diagnostic procedures you would like the patient to have prior to the appointment. A letter detailing your assessment and care plan should be sent to the sending clinic via internet referral management system.

Your office staff is asked to submit a non-payable claim to PROJECT TCMS. This data is used for donation tracking purposes only. Please keep in mind no payment will be forthcoming.

What if a patient needs medication?

The safety net clinics’ patients have access to low-cost or no-cost medication assistance programs for uninsured patients. While these programs do not cover all medications, most are covered.

What if a patient needs laboratory or diagnostic studies?

If there are diagnostic services that the patient needs such as laboratory studies, X-rays, or other tests, you may choose to donate these, if you regularly do these in your office. Alternatively, your office staff can arrange with the sending safety net clinic. There is no pre-certification or other restriction; you decide what is medically necessary.

What if a patient needs surgery and hospitalization?

At this time, hospital participation in PROJECT TCMS is growing. If surgery or hospitalization is needed, PROJECT TCMS staff will assist in securing a participating hospital. If a patient enters a non-participating hospital, the patient will be responsible for payment.

What about malpractice coverage?

The Volunteer Health Care Provider Program provides liability coverage to physicians with a current Oklahoma license who donate care to the medically indigent. Under this program, in the event of a suit, charitable health care providers will be defended by the Attorney General’s office. The Tort Claim Fund will be the payer of first resort, even if other insurance coverage exists. There is no cost for enrolling in this program. PROJECT TCMS will help facilitate your enrollment and complete the required annual reports.

Why should I support PROJECT TCMS?

PROJECT TCMS is a highly visible example of physician leadership in action. At a time when the practice of medicine is becoming increasingly complex and frustrating, PROJECT TCMS is a pleasant contrast: designed by physicians, coordinated by the Tulsa County Medical Society Foundation and focused on the fundamental values of our profession. It is an opportunity for doctors, hospitals, city and county governments, and other community agencies to help existing safety net clinics and agencies provide needed care in a way that is coordinated, efficient, and more effective than any single entity could provide alone.

Where can I find more information on PROJECT TCMS?

For more information, please contact Kim Morris by e-mail at kim@tcmsok.org or by phone at 918.236.3442.