EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF GLAUCOMA PREVENTS BLINDNESS

J.C., a 59-year-old male with diabetes, was referred for a first-time ever preventative eye examination. Although J.C. did not have any diabetic retinopathy (damage to the light-sensitive tissue lining the inner surface of the eye), intermediate-stage glaucoma was discovered in both eyes. Glaucoma is a silent, sneaky eye disease, with no cure. In most cases, patients do not know they have glaucoma until very late in the disease. In late stage glaucoma, peripheral vision is lost and patients essentially have “tunnel vision.” In addition, late stage glaucoma is very difficult to treat; therefore, patients with late-stage glaucoma are at much higher risk of permanent, irreversible blindness in their lifetime.

The best way to prevent blindness from glaucoma is through regular preventative (annual) eye examinations. It is only because J.C. had access to preventative healthcare (including primary eye care), that it was discovered. Because his disease was caught at an earlier stage, treatment will more likely result in preservation of vision in his lifetime. J.C. is now taking medication eye drops and receiving follow-up visits for his glaucoma.

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Dear Friends,

Your contributions to the Care for the Poor clinics, La Amistad de Jose Family Health Center and Puente a La Salud Mobile Clinics support the medical homes for the underserved in our community. This is where patients receive immediate and ongoing healthcare, referrals to medical specialists, and advice for achieving a healthy lifestyle. In this difficult economic time, we have seen a significant increase in people requesting the services of our clinics.

In this issue, two grateful patients will share their stories of the excellent healthcare they have received from the dedicated clinic staff - one who could have gone blind from glaucoma and the other whose cancer might have spun out of control if not detected early.

At our Care for the Poor Donor Appreciation Reception in March we were able to thank donors and recognize a very special physician, Anita Gregory, MD, for her dedication and service to our patients. St. Joseph Hospital’s new President and CEO, Steven C. Moreau, honored lead contributions made to the newly established Care for the Poor Permanent Endowment. As a result, the endowment will generate much-needed funds for the clinics beginning July 1, 2011.

If you haven’t yet made a contribution, you now have a choice. You may designate your contribution for immediate needs, and there are many; or designate your contribution to the endowment, which by continuing to grow will provide for current needs and also provide for the sustainability of the clinics in perpetuity.

Thank you for your generous support,

Ruth Seigle
Chair, Care for the Poor Committee
LA AMISTAD AND ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL SAVED MY LIFE!

In February 2010, 25-year-old Naya, a contracted catering waitress, was hired to work at St. Joseph Hospital’s annual Care for the Poor Donor Appreciation Reception, an event to thank donors for their support of the community clinics. Listening to patients share how the clinics had helped them with critical health needs, Naya approached a Foundation staff manager to ask how she could get help for a mass she had developed on her neck about six months earlier. Although working, she had no insurance and her fear was that the lump on her neck was a result of domestic violence which she was afraid to report. Angela Acevedo, RN, La Amistad case manager, took one look at her neck and arranged to have her seen at the clinic.

Naya was examined by the Puente a La Salud and La Amistad’s Medical Director, Michael Malouf, MD, who called on Hisham El-Bayar, MD, a general surgeon at St. Joseph Hospital, to perform a lymph node biopsy. The mass was indeed malignant; Naya was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, a type of cancer that is often curable if treated appropriately. She received chemotherapy and radiation at The Center for Cancer Prevention and Treatment at St. Joseph Hospital and, because she qualified as a clinic patient who meets the financial criteria, was not charged for the services.

“It is so important for young people like me to have access to healthcare, because you never know what might happen,” Naya shared.

During her treatment last year, Naya’s 53-year-old mother was diagnosed with colon cancer. As a result of unemployment, she was also uninsured and had never received a colonoscopy. Sadly her mother’s prognosis was not good and she died nine months after diagnosis. “It has been a really tough and difficult year for me” Naya said, “but I am so grateful that the clinic was there for me.”

She recently had a follow up body scan to determine the success of her treatment. To everyone’s delight, there was no sign of residual lymphoma. Naya is now free to enjoy her life and is currently completing her education. “Angela, Drs. Malouf and El-Bayar, and all of the St. Joseph Hospital staff were amazing! I also want to thank all of the donors of the clinics,” she said. “I really believe they saved my life.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP?

Your gifts to the Care for the Poor programs help support our clinics in many ways. For example,

- $25 1 life-saving inoculation
- $75 1 month of medical supplies for diabetic patient
- $95 1 comprehensive Peripheral Artery Disease Screening
- $150 1 patient visit for primary medical care
- $500 Cholesterol screenings for 140 patients
- $1,000 Cataract surgery for one patient

Your gift of any amount will be allocated to the Care for the Poor Permanent Endowment to ensure sustainability of the clinics unless otherwise specified.

There are many ways to support our Care for the Poor programs, including through a bequest in your will or living trust. You might also like to consider making a gift that creates lifetime payments to you. For more information about these types of gifts, call us at 714-347-7900 or visit sjo.org/waystogive.