

## **Community Health Clinic Preparing for Growing Demand**

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A lot has changed from a decade ago, when the Youngstown Community Health Center saw about 8,000 patients a year. Last year, the Center on Wick Avenue saw 68,000 patient encounters, something CEO Dr. Ronald Dwinells calls, "about a 750% growth rate in ten years."

Dwinells, who's a pediatrician by specialty, oversees "Ohio North East Health Systems" which operates community clinics in Youngstown and Warren, as well as a satellite office in Alliance. Although 35-to-40% of the system's patients are uninsured, the rest are covered by traditional third-party providers.

The Center does not operate as a free clinic, but does charge on a sliding fee schedule based on a patient's ability to pay. Still, Dwinells admits the numbers of indigent cases are increasing, and with the future of Forum Health and Northside Medical Center far from certain, administrators are taking steps to expand services, both to care for the system's own needs as well as to be ready for whatever changes might be in store at Northside.

Just this week, the System received a \$214,000 federal grant to help pay for the establishment of a new mobile health care unit that would serve the Warren City Schools.

Administrators are also working to land some of the \$1.5 billion set aside for community health centers in President Obama's economic stimulus package. That money would be used to pay expansions in both Youngstown and Warren to better meet their growing demand. Doctor Dwinells hopes those projects could be up and running by the end of the year.