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GRANTS TO LOW-COST CLINICS

Hunter, GraceMed to expand services

BY KAREN SHIDELEH
The Wichita Eagle

Two Wichita clinics are getting grants that will allow them to treat more uninsured and underinsured people.

GraceMed Health Clinic will get about \$650,000 in each of the next three years to add staff members to care for almost 4,000 more people.

Hunter Health Clinic has gotten \$200,000 to extend its hours to midnight to keep up with an increasing patient load.

The news comes the day after a U.S. Census Bureau report showing that the number of people without insurance jumped by 2.2 million last year. An estimated 335,000 Kansans are uninsured;

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some estimates put the number of uninsured people in Sedgewick County at more than 60,000.

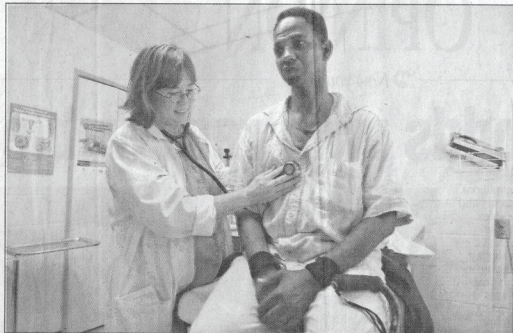
GraceMed Health Clinic found out this week that it had won designation as a federally qualified health center, executive director David Sanford said Wednesday. A nine-month funding cycle, in which it will get \$483,333, begins Saturday; the larger amount will be for the next two full years.

The clinic, 1122 N. Topeka, already has remodeled some space and is working to finish that job and to hire a physician and two midlevel practitioners, which are physician assistants or nurse practitioners.

Federally qualified health centers get funding for three years; the grants are renewable if Congress approves funding.

"What this new designation brings Sedgewick County is another \$650,000 per year" to provide care for those who couldn't otherwise afford it, Sanford said.

Hunter Health, which also is a federally qualified health center (it got about \$1.4 million for fiscal 2006), will use the \$200,000 grant it got earlier this year from the Sunflower Foundation to extend its hours, beginning Tuesday, at its clinic at 2318 E. Central. A physician, already on staff, and a nurse practitioner will



Travis Heying/The Wichita Eagle

Physician's assistant Carolyn Bland performs a checkup on patient Sandy Baker at GraceMed Health Clinic. GraceMed and Hunter Health are each getting grants to help them expand services.

Health and Wellness, Guadalupe Clinic and Good Samaritan Health Ministries also have clinics that serve the primary care needs of uninsured and underinsured people. In addition, the Mother Mary Anne Clinic opened earlier this summer to offer first-come, first-served care for non-emergency problems in the evening.

There's plenty of business to go around, Sanford said: "There is far more need in this area than

there is ability to meet the need."

GraceMed, Hunter and the other primary care clinics offer care to anyone who shows up. Insurance is accepted at most; sliding fee scales are in place for those on limited incomes.

GraceMed and Hunter both are planning other expansions.

GraceMed hopes to add a second full-time dentist to its staff around Oct. 1 and wants to add mobile dental clinics.

Hunter Health is working with

the Center for Health and Wellness, Good Samaritan and Healthy Options for Kansas Communities to expand some dental services.

Hunter Health also is continuing to raise money for a new building that would double its capacity. Schwartz said she hoped the building would be ready to move into by mid-2009.

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