



Improving chronic disease: Ferris State University and Cherry Street Health Services initiative receives national recognition

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By **Brian McVicar | bmcvicar@mlive.com**

When Dr. John Jameson, a pharmacy professor at Ferris State University, started consulting with patients at Cherry Street Health services in November, he had high hopes.

A partnership between the two institutions was taking a new approach to helping low-income residents from throughout the Grand Rapids area battle chronic diseases such as hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes.

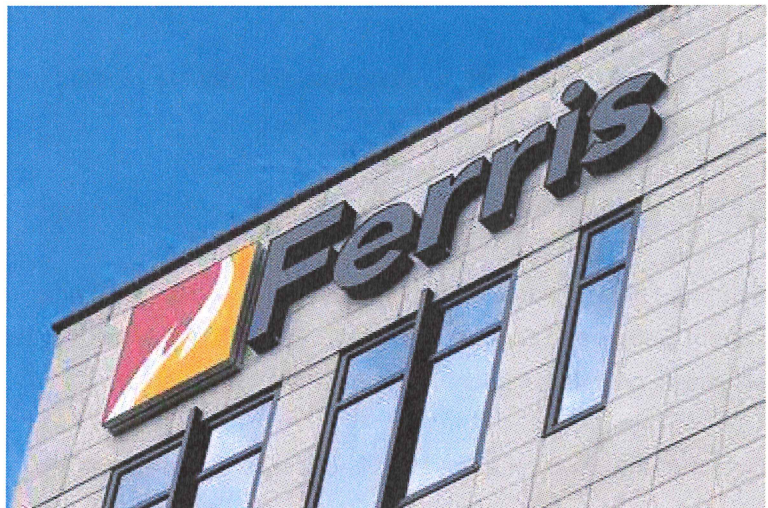
Doctors, pharmacists and dieticians were working as a team to provide consulting to patients. Staffers were uploading patients' medical histories into an electronic database used to monitor their progress on a weekly basis. Students from Ferris' pharmacy school were reaching out to see whether patients were following their medication plan.

Months later, the results have exceeded Jameson's expectations. About 60 percent of the patients involved in the project have shown the desired improvements, with another 30 percent coming close to their goal.

"It's better than we thought it would be," Jameson said. "It's quite remarkable."

Cherry Street Health Services is a non-profit organization that strives to provide care for uninsured residents.

To highlight the program's success, Jameson traveled to Washington D.C. last month to participate in a webcast with doctors and pharmacists throughout the nation. He and Fred Schmidt, pharmacy director at



Press File Photo

Ferris State University

Cherry Street Health Services, gave advice about how other medical professionals could create a similar program.

Patient outreach was one area of the program Jameson emphasized.

"We track people and don't let them flounder out there," he said.

The partnership is part of a program known as the Patient Safety and Clinical Pharmacy Services Collaborative, a program of the Health Resources and Services Administration. The idea behind the effort is to incorporate pharmacy experts into the care of "high-risk, high-cost, complex patients," according to the initiative's website.

The end goal is not just improving patients' quality of life, but also alleviating pressure on the health care system, Schmidt said.

"Can we keep adding patients to the health care system with the costs we have," he said.

Schmidt said the partnership with Ferris started in 2010 after a student made an inquiry about the then new Patient Safety and Clinical Pharmacy Services Collaborative. He and the student talked, and both felt the emphasis on collaboration would be a win for patients.

Five students, two on a full-time basis, help out in the effort.

Jameson said the students get a chance to work alongside doctors, pharmacists, dieticians and other medical experts, and help improve the quality of care for a group of people who suffer from complex medical issues.

He said it also gives students experience in a multidisciplinary work environment, an approach to health care that more educators are embracing.

"The two sets of skills complement one another," he said. "I love working with the docs over there. It's a real good team effort."

Schmidt said about 60 patients have participated in the program, but he hopes to expand to as many as 200 to 300 in the future.

"If they start to have success with their chronic disease, we have a better opportunity to help other patients," he said.

Email Brian McVicar or follow him on **Twitter**

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