

### Free Care, Special Effects

Middleton specialty clinic the only one of its kind in the state

They come with sore knees, bad hearts, troubled minds — and no insurance.

This year, patients have come to the Benevolent Specialists Project Free Clinic in Middleton more than ever before.

Managers say the recession has increased demand at Wisconsin’s only free clinic offering only specialty care such as orthopedics, cardiology and psychiatry.

Supply has gone up, too, with doctors volunteering in four more specialties, for a total of 20 types of care.



Dr. Richard Hendricks examines Christopher Burgan, 54, of Burlington at the Benevolent Specialists Project Free Clinic in Middleton last week. The free clinic is the only one in Wisconsin that offers only specialty care.

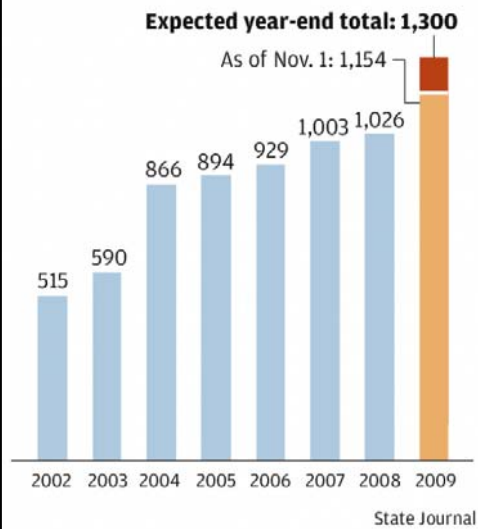
The strain on the \$100,000 annual budget is also on the rise. The Dean Foundation provides significant support, but the clinic — in the basement of the foundation’s building on Allen Boulevard — also relies on donations.

“We can always use more help,” said Kathy Williams, clinic manager.

South-central Wisconsin has at least a dozen free clinics, where low-income patients without insurance can get free medical care. Most focus on primary care, though some provide some specialty care.

#### BSP Free Clinic patient visits

*Demand for medical care has increased this year at Wisconsin's only free clinic to offer just specialty care, in Middleton.*



The BSP clinic is the only free clinic in the state providing only specialty care and one of fewer than 10 such clinics nationwide, leaders of the state and national free clinic associations said.

The clinic’s top requested specialties this year: psychiatry, orthopedics, internal medicine, neurology and podiatry.

Meriter and St. Mary’s hospitals provide free lab and X-ray services, and UW Hospital contributes other free services, Williams said.

Dr. Ernie Pellegrino started the BSP clinic eight years ago after retiring as an orthopedic surgeon at Dean. He said he saw a need for free specialty care, especially if it could be delivered in an environment more relaxed than a typically busy regular clinic.

Most of the 40 or so volunteer doctors are retired and not pressed for time, he said.

“Many of these patients need somebody to spend some time with them,” Pellegrino said. “That can reduce a lot of the doctor shopping that can take place.”

The BSP clinic is a lifeline for patients at primary-care free clinics like the Community Connections Free Clinic in Dodgeville, said that clinic’s manager, Therese Hess.

“We make referrals to them just about every night we’re open,” Hess said.



Tonya Turner-Blake, 30, of Madison, has her temperature checked last week at the Benevolent Specialists Project Free Clinic in Middleton. Without the clinic, Turner-Blake said she would be piling up medical debt.

Tonya Turner-Blake, of Madison, came to the BSP clinic two weeks ago after being referred by the MEDiC free clinic on South Park Street.

The 30-year-old, who cleans buildings part time at night, said her knees “hurt like crazy.” She called the BSP clinic — where she saw Dr. David Zeman, an orthopedic specialist — a “necessity.”

“If it wasn’t here, I’d be going to emergency rooms

and building up big bills,” Turner-Blake said.

Christopher Burgan, 54, of Burlington, saw the clinic’s Dr. Richard Hendricks, an internal medicine specialist, after losing his construction job and his insurance because of dementia, said his wife, Cynthia Burgan.

“We were hitting a brick wall until we came here,” she said.

Patti Lane, 46, of Madison, came to the clinic two years ago after hurting her shoulder and losing her nursing job and insurance. The shoulder surgery she received this year at Meriter was covered by BadgerCare, the state’s Medicaid program, for which Lane recently qualified.

“When no one else would take me, they did,” Lane said of the BSP clinic.

Mike Puddester, who also just got on BadgerCare, had been without insurance for 10 years. The 40-year-old from Madison works part time in the warehouse at The Swiss Colony.

A strange growth developed on the tip of his nose last year and grew quite large. Puddester saw a dermatologist at the BSP clinic; that doctor sent him to a plastic surgeon who removed the growth for free.

“Nobody else would have touched me without insurance,” he said.

The Benevolent Specialists Project Free Clinic, 2711 Allen Blvd., Middleton, is open from 1 to 6 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays. For more information, call 608-827-2308 or [www.dean.org](http://www.dean.org)

Free clinics in south-central Wisconsin:

- Beaver Dam: Church Health Services, 920-887-1766 or [www.churchclinic.org](http://www.churchclinic.org)
- Boscobel: InHealth Community Wellness Clinic, 608-375-4324 or e-mail [pertranso@mchsi.com](mailto:pertranso@mchsi.com)
- Dodgeville: Community Connections Free Clinic, 608-930-2232 or [www.communityconnectionsfreeclinic.org](http://www.communityconnectionsfreeclinic.org)
- Janesville: HealthNet of Janesville, 608-756-4638 or [www.healthnetofjanesville.org](http://www.healthnetofjanesville.org)
- Jefferson: Rock River Free Clinic, 920-674-7275 or [tinyurl.com/rockfree](http://tinyurl.com/rockfree)
- Madison: MEDiC Clinics, 608-265-4972 or [www.medic.uwmedstudents.com](http://www.medic.uwmedstudents.com)
- Madison: Our Lady of Hope Clinic, 608-819-8544 or [www.ourladyofhopeclinic.org](http://www.ourladyofhopeclinic.org)
- Middleton: Benevolent Specialists Project Free Clinic, 2711 Allen Blvd., 608-827-2308
- Prairie du Sac: Good Neighbor Clinic, 608-643-4749 or [www.goodneighborclinic.org](http://www.goodneighborclinic.org)
- Richland Center: Richland Community Free Clinic, 608-647-6161 or [www.rcfreeclinic.com](http://www.rcfreeclinic.com)
- Stoughton: Shalom Holistic Health Services, 608-205-0505 or [www.shalomholistichealth.org](http://www.shalomholistichealth.org)
- Watertown: Watertown Area Cares Clinic, 920-206-7797 or [www.watertownfreeclinic.org](http://www.watertownfreeclinic.org)