Background Information

History of the Sharewood Project

The Sharewood Project was started by students at Tufts University School of Medicine who began working to establish a free healthcare program in 1994, during their first year of medical school. After a year and a half of planning and hard work, Sharewood opened its doors in Boston’s Chinatown on February 18, 1997 under the guidance of Dr. Brian Lisse (Medical Director/Advisor, 1997-2001). Throughout the spring and summer of 1997, Sharewood worked on tailoring its services to the needs of its expanding patient population. By August 1998, Sharewood had seen 244 patients with a total of 465 patient visits.

In the winter of 2001, the Chinatown location could no longer host Sharewood's clinical location. After an extensive search, and assistance from Dr. Joseph Gravel (Medical Director/Advisor, 2001-2009) and the Malden Tri-City Community Action Program, Sharewood successfully completed its move to Malden Center and reopened its doors in January 2002. It operates today out of the Fellowship Hall of the First Church of Malden.

The Sharewood Project Today

Sharewood has seen approximately 1500 different patients (with a total of about 2500 patient visits) most of whom do not possess health insurance. Sharewood's patient population includes native speakers of English, Mandarin, Spanish, Cantonese, Creole, and Portuguese. With the move to Malden, Sharewood has seen an increase in patients from the Malden area, which include low-income and homeless individuals, some of whom attend the Center United Methodist Church's "Bread of Life" soup kitchen, which is also open on Tuesday nights and located right next door.

Over the past few years, many progressive changes have taken place. The clinic has fully electronic medical records, easily accessible by any of several computers attached to the Sharewood network. The electronic medical record software, generously donated by Soapware, is also used to analyze Sharewood's patient population to better direct publicity and public relations efforts.

These examples of progressive changes demonstrate that Sharewood is ultimately as dynamic as its patient population and volunteers. As a gateway into the American health
care system, it is ever-changing to meet community needs and accomplishes this through the enthusiasm and dedication of the volunteers.

Who Does Sharewood Serve?

Health Insurance:
- 79% do not have health insurance
- 15% have health insurance, mostly Mass Health

Language and Ethnicity:
- Only 52% speak English as a primary language, with Mandarin, Spanish, French, Creole, and Portuguese as common languages

Recent Voluntary Patient Data:
- Ages: 2-76 (most are in their 20s and 50s)
- 52% from Malden (the remainder from Greater Boston and north of the city)
- Over half of the patients were not born in the US and 20% have lived in the US for less than one year.
- 64% are new patients and about 30% are returning
- 34% work, 23% unemployed, 20% students, 8% retired

Sharewood’s Medical Services

- Primary care medicine
- Confidential HIV, sexual health, and STD testing and counseling
- Hepatitis B screening
- Mental health services
- Annual flu shots (seasonal and H1N1)
- Case management services
- Laboratory testing
- Vision and optical services
- Dental screenings

Student Management Structure

Primary responsibility for Sharewood is in the hands of a Board of 23 volunteer medical students who are elected to various positions such as Case Manager, Physician Coordinator, Clinic Coordinator, HIV/STD Counselor, Finance, Fundraising, Publicity, etc. Terms begin in January of the medical students’ first year and run until December, when the students are half-way through their second year.

The Sharewood Undergraduate Board brings students from Tufts’ Medford/Somerville campus to the clinic each week to greet patients and take their vital signs. In addition, undergraduates collaborate on public health initiatives and contribute to publicity and fundraising efforts.
The clinic operates under the supervision of Medical Director/Advisor Gregory Sawin, M.D., M.P.H. Dr. Sawin is the Program Director of the Tufts Family Medicine Residency at Cambridge Health Alliance.

About the Sharewood Project

The Sharewood Project is a free healthcare organization run by Tufts medical students, volunteer physicians, and Tufts undergraduates. Sharewood opens its doors to the public every Tuesday night from 6:30 to 9PM at the First Church of Malden. We offer healthcare services to individuals from underserved communities in the Greater Boston area completely free of charge. The Sharewood Project consists of a general medical clinic and an STD/HIV testing clinic. We also provide eye exams and dental care one week each month, as well as case management services by connecting patients with primary care physicians, health insurance, and any other social services that may need. For more information, please visit our website at: www.sharewood.info.

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