About the Sharewood Project

The Sharewood Project is a free healthcare organization run by Tufts students and volunteer physicians. Sharewood opens its doors to the public every Tuesday night from 6 to 8 pm at the First Church of Malden, offering healthcare services at no charge to individuals from underserved communities in the Greater Boston area. Sharewood consists of a general medical clinic and an STD/HIV testing clinic. Students also provide eye exams, dental care, and oral cancer screenings twice each month, as well as case management services that connect patients with primary care physicians, health insurance, and any other social services that may need. For more information, visit the Sharewood website, http://medicine.tufts.edu/Global-and-Local-Engagement/Sharewood.

History

The Sharewood Project was started by students at Tufts University School of Medicine who, during their first year of medical school, began to conceive of a free healthcare program in 1994. After more than a year 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 adapted its services to the needs of its expanding patient population. By August 1998, Sharewood had served 244 patients and overseen 465 patient visits.

In the winter of 2001, the Chinatown location could no longer host Sharewood's clinical location. After an extensive search, as well as 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 church houses a soup kitchen, which is also open on Tuesday nights; some of the low-income and homeless individuals who eat at the soup kitchen seek healthcare services at the adjacent Sharewood Clinic.

Sharewood Today

Sharewood currently serves approximately 750 patients annually, most of whom do not possess health insurance. Patients speak a variety of languages, including English, Mandarin, Spanish, Cantonese, Haitian-Creole, and Portuguese. The clinic recently established a collaboration with the nonprofit Found in Translation, which provides medical interpreter services to patients who need them.

Today, the clinic maintains patient information in electronic medical records, easily accessible by any of several computers in the Sharewood network. The electronic medical record software is also used to analyze Sharewood's patient population to better direct publicity and public relations efforts.
Sharewood Data

Health Insurance
• 79% of patients do not have health insurance.
• 15% of patients have health insurance, mostly Mass Health.

Language and Ethnicity
• 52% of patients speak English as a primary language.
• Mandarin, Spanish, French, Haitian-Creole, and Portuguese are commonly spoken.

Recent Patient Data
• Ages: 2-76 (most are in their 20s and 50s)
• 52% of patients are from Malden; others come from Greater Boston and north of the city.
• More than half of Sharewood’s patients were born outside the United States; 20% have lived in the U.S. for less than one year.
• 64% are first-time patients.
• 34% are employed, 23% are unemployed, 20% are students, 8% are retired.

Sharewood Services
• Primary care medicine
• Confidential HIV, sexual health, and STD testing and counseling
• Hepatitis B screenings
• Mental health screenings
• Seasonal flu shots and vaccines
• Case management services
• Lab tests
• Vision screenings and optical services
• Dental and oral cancer screenings

Student Management Structure

Primary responsibility for Sharewood is in the hands of a Board of 27 volunteer medical students who are elected to 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 managing students are halfway 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, the Program Director of the Tufts Family Medicine Residency at Cambridge Health Alliance.

A Final Word

As a gateway into the American healthcare system, Sharewood is continually evolving to meet community needs. Both private philanthropy and the enthusiasm and dedication of its volunteers are essential to Sharewood’s services and organizational growth.