

HEALTH & WELL-BEING @ ISSUE

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FOCUS: CMAP PROGRAM

Prescription Program Relieves Worry



The Rapides Foundation's CMAP program keeps people like Burnidette Edwards from having to make choices between filling her prescriptions and day-to-day living expenses.

Burnidette Edwards of Pollock labored as a boat captain in the Gulf of Mexico for nine years, working seven days out and seven days in. "I was seasick every day I was out there. I did it for the money, so that I could be secure in my old age." She later worked in seasonal jobs for a turtle farm and a plant nursery in Catahoula Parish.

(continued)

It's a choice no one should have to make: Do I pay my electricity bill this month or fill these three prescriptions for blood pressure, cholesterol and blood thinning medicines?

Chances are, you'll decide to keep the lights on, and skip one or more of the medicines for a few weeks.

Too many residents in Central Louisiana are facing these kinds of decisions each month, and the resulting medical disasters are showing up in our local emergency rooms and hospital beds when untreated chronic conditions become acute. It is because of these issues that The Rapides Foundation-funded Cenla Medication Access Program (CMAP) was conceived.

CMAP Program

Prescription Program Relieves Worry (continued)

Yet her years of hard work haven't resulted in the kind of financial security she hoped for.

Today, after the discovery of a serious heart condition and a series of strokes, the transplanted Iowa native no longer works, but is dependent upon a small fixed income from her IRA (Individual Retirement Account).

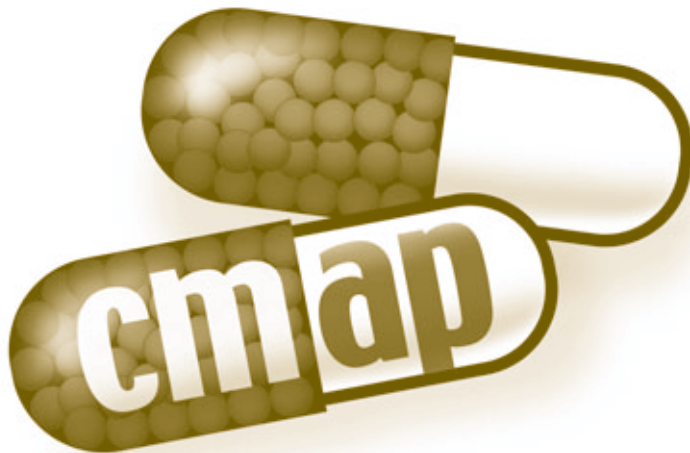
She has faced a precarious monthly balancing act to pay for the six prescription medicines she regularly must take to maintain her health, on top of normal household expenses. Her retirement income disqualifies her for most governmental assistance, and she can't yet draw SSI benefits, she explained.

She uses the services of Huey P. Long's outpatient clinic at England Airpark in Alexandria, including the new outpatient pharmacy that is a part of Cenla Medication Access Program (CMAP). The 60-year-old woman says the program has been a blessing.

"It means that I don't have to worry as much about how much I will need to have for medicines; if any emergency comes up, which medicine will I not be able to buy or will I have to just ignore the emergency."

"It's a great relief. It makes life in itself 100 percent easier." Edwards first became aware of the program's availability through one of the Huey P. Long specialty health clinics.

"I see Danny Jackson (director of pharmacy at the hospital) in Coumadin clinic and he had me holding on for dear life waiting for it (CMAP)."



Besides the blood-thinning medication Coumadin, she takes pills for high blood pressure, fluid retention, and to regulate her heartbeat. She also must make a monthly trip to the main hospital in Pineville for therapeutic phlebotomy to remove some of her blood, because her body makes too many red blood cells.

She used to get some of her prescriptions filled at a local nonprofit dispensary and at retail pharmacies, shopping for the best prices. "I had prescriptions scattered all over the place." By getting her medicines at the outpatient

"It means that I don't have to worry as much about how much I will need to have for medicines; if any emergency comes up, which medicine will I not be able to buy or will I have to just ignore the emergency."

Burnidette Edwards of Pollock

pharmacy at HPL, Edwards says, "I don't have to run all over town. It's much better to have them all in one place. And if there is something I don't understand, I can just ask."

If Edwards had to continue to pay retail prices for her prescription medications, she said it "would just annihilate my budget. It would do nothing at all for my ego, because I would have to be asking my children for money."

Though she owns her home, Edwards, who lives alone, worries constantly about unanticipated household expenses that can crop up at any time. "Anything that goes wrong with a water well costs \$300. Every click in my car is a panic point. I live in the country, and if something goes wrong with my car, how am I going to get down here? I have to come here to see my clinics and get my medications."

This program, she says, "makes me more confident that I'll have the money to get through the month."

A Public-Private Partnership for Patients



“Seventy percent of the patients at HPL are without any form of health care insurance; they don’t have access to Medicaid, Medicare or any third party payer. We’re talking about a large percentage that are either uninsured or underinsured.”

Keith Ashby, M.D., chief of internal medicine at Huey P. Long Medical Center.

A new alliance between The Rapides Foundation and Huey P. Long Medical Center in Alexandria/Pineville has resulted in a program to help area residents who cannot afford their prescription medications.

CMAP is the acronym for Cenla Medication Access Program, a plan initiated this year that takes a two-pronged approach to the documented need for improved pharmaceutical care and access in our part of the state. The program includes a new outpatient pharmacy at Huey P. Long Medical Center’s England Airpark location in Alexandria, as well as a community-based prescription card system for people who are not Huey P. Long patients and have private physicians. One important component of both the hospital-based pharmacy and prescription card system is CMAP’s ability to access the manufacturers’ patient assistance programs.

The Rapides Foundation decided to implement and fund the program after research indicated a significant problem with medication access for area residents who live at or below the poverty level and do not have prescription benefits. A comprehensive study produced last year for the Foundation recommended the establishment of both the Huey P. Long partnership and the new prescription card system as the most effective means of addressing the problem.

The outpatient pharmacy at Huey P. Long, which opened in early May, represents an alliance that is unique in the state.

“Huey P. Long saw a need to provide outpatient drugs to its primary care patients due to the rising cost of medication,” said James Brexler, CEO of LSU’s Health Sciences Center-Health Care Services Division, which manages

(continued)

CMAP Program

Partnership (continued)

the state's public hospital system. In the past, the hospital had been helping patients purchase outpatient drugs through the hospital's auxiliary. Rapides Foundation funding through CMAP allows for that assistance to be greatly expanded.

"The Health Care Services Division is excited to partner with The Rapides Foundation to provide outpatient medications to our indigent patients," Brexler added. Although all of Louisiana's HCSD hospitals participate in drug manufacturers' assistance programs, only Huey P. Long has such a comprehensive program aided by a private foundation.

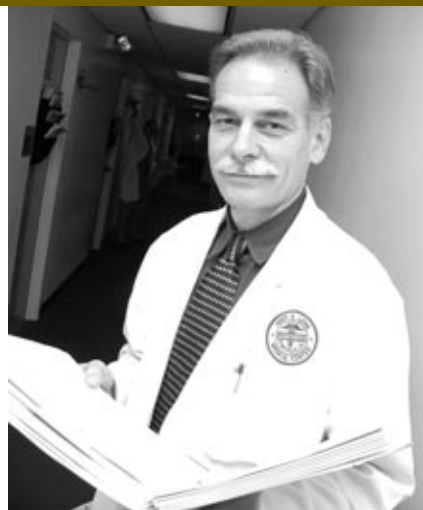
The second component of CMAP is a prescription card system, modeled after a similar pharmaceutical assistance program for senior citizens in Durham County, North Carolina. This system is being slowly phased in with community retail pharmacies, first in Grant and Allen parishes.

"With the cost of prescription medicines on the rise, it has become increasingly difficult for many people to obtain needed medicines prescribed by their physicians," said Joe Rosier, president and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. "The fact that the Foundation has continued to receive a number of requests for funding for various prescription assistance programs points to the size of the problem."

Dr. Keith Ashby, chief of internal medicine at Huey P. Long Medical Center agrees with Rosier's assessment.

"The need is huge," says Dr. Ashby. "Seventy percent of the patients at HPL are without any form of health care insurance; they don't have access to Medicaid, Medicare or any third party payer. We're talking about a large percentage that are either uninsured or underinsured."

"With chronic illnesses – disease states that permeate patients' lives and are probably lifelong conditions (many of which will end up being the ultimate cause of the patient's death) – they all require ongoing care and medication. If you had to think about having to take a pill or a shot or a host of pills or shots the rest of your life, you can imagine how something like that could be staggering financially."



*David Barnard, M.D.,
medical director of
Huey P. Long Medical
Center.*

"The CMAP program fills a widening void for folks who otherwise couldn't afford medications to, in some regards maintain their existence, to maintain life." By spending money now to treat chronic diseases, he says, it's an investment for the long term.

"When you have patients who can't afford their medications, they tend to be the ones who keep popping up in the emergency room, and have repeat admissions to the hospital."

Dr. Ashby, along with several other physicians, serves on the HPL pharmacy and therapeutics committee to choose medicines that may be dispensed under the CMAP program. "It is set up to provide medications with proven track records of being of benefit." As new information becomes available, the committee updates the formulary.

Dr. David Barnard, medical director of Huey P. Long, pointed out the importance of medicines in disease management.

"If our patients are not able to get their medicines, then their treatment is not completed, and the ravages of chronic disease will cause them to become very sick. If you make a diagnosis and prescribe a treatment plan, that's only two thirds of the way toward curing the patient. You have to ensure the patient has access to the medicines," he said.

"I've had a number of patients who get into trouble because they are not able to pay for their medicines, and especially with hypertensives and diabetics, the disease can become very severe in a very short time and can be life-threatening in some instances."

CMAP Program

Partnership (continued)

Dr. Barnard described the Foundation's program as "a very humanitarian and pragmatic" way of helping the community and improving the quality of life for Central Louisiana citizens.

"The Foundation has demonstrated a tremendous amount of innovation and doggedness in seeing this through to completion. I believe it will become a model for other, similar pharmacies in the state within our hospitals and probably nationwide. I would say it's been the most gratifying project we have ever undertaken with a non-state organization."

Dr. Vanda Davidson, a local physician in private practice and a member of the Board of Trustees of The Rapides Foundation, explained, "Basically this program is designed to help those people who have the greatest difficulty obtaining drugs to treat chronic conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes, so they can remain active and working."

"Patients are making choices between eating, clothing and medications. They may cut the pills in two or skip doses in order to make the medicine last longer. We hope this program will help people stay on their medications so there are fewer times they are ill with their problems. It will pay for itself with the decrease in the need for emergency care."

He also noted the value of patient education and pharmaceutical monitoring. Many patients, he explained, see multiple physicians and get different medicines at different pharmacies; they may take those drugs haphazardly.

"This program, because it's using one payer source, can look at their list of medicines and see where the medicines may overlap or duplicate." Such oversight, he explained, can result in the patient getting more efficient, more effective and safer use of his medicines.



Vanda Davidson, M.D., local physician in private practice and member of the Board of Trustees of The Rapides Foundation.

The Rapides Foundation is a philanthropic organization that provides grants to organizations throughout an 11 parish service area that share the Foundation's mission to improve the health and well-being of Central Louisiana.



THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

www.rapidesfoundation.org



CMAP

A Prescription for Good Health

"Pharmacists witness patients every day who choose not to purchase a complete prescription - buying a few pills at a time, or selecting which among their prescriptions to have filled, depending upon price," explained Wendy Roy, CMAP program manager.

The new Cenla Medication Access Program (CMAP) developed by The Rapides Foundation seeks to promote healthier lives and reduce health crises for people by providing prescription medications for those who cannot afford them.

While there are some local nonprofits that help low-income residents with prescription medications, and doctors frequently provide free samples to patients, until now, there has not been a centralized program that can guarantee a regular source for prescriptions.

"This is basically preventive care," Roy continued. "By keeping people on the medications they need, we're trying to prevent complications caused by chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and other serious conditions."

CMAP seeks to accomplish its goals in two important ways: first, The Rapides Foundation is partnering with Huey P. Long Medical Center to offer outpatient pharmacy services at the hospital's outpatient clinic at England Airpark in Alexandria. Secondly, the Foundation has created a prescription card system for individuals who fall at or below 100 percent of



Danny Jackson, director of pharmacy for Huey P. Long Medical Center

"By keeping people on the medications they need, we're trying to prevent complications caused by chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and other serious conditions."

Wendy Roy, CMAP program manager

the federal poverty guidelines and who do not receive their primary care at Huey P. Long, but do have private physicians.

A sophisticated computer software system maintained by the Foundation is helping to track patients, their medications and details of their assistance from pharmaceutical companies.

"The number of people we are going to be able to help will be tremendous," said Roy.

The initial focus of the program is on six parishes in Central Louisiana: Grant, Allen, Avoyelles, LaSalle, Rapides and Winn. The prescription card system, which

works through local physicians and retail pharmacies, got underway in Grant Parish early this fall, followed by Allen Parish.



Clara Carston, CMAP participant, discusses her medications.

Prescription for Good Health (continued)

There is also a mandatory educational component of the program for individuals who have been identified as most “at risk” for medication-related problems. Of particular concern are patients, especially the elderly, who may use multiple pharmacies; there is typically no one professional who sees their entire list of medicines. Problems with drug interactions or taking too much or too little of a medication may result.

To address this issue, CMAP has employed pharmacist Sue Fontenot to provide patient education and medication reviews for high-risk patients who are using the new card system. CMAP staff will also work with these patients to enroll them into manufacturers’ patient assistance programs.

The educational aspect of the program is a benefit for Huey P. Long patients who use its new outpatient pharmacy, according to Danny Jackson, director of pharmacy for the hospital. Patient education, he said, “is a big, big thing.” He explained that pharmacists today do more than simply dispense medications; they also help educate patients about the medicines they take.

“We want to make sure patients get the best care. We try to build relationships with our patients so they feel comfortable coming and talking to us

about things...so we can help them.” The pharmacists work alongside the hospital’s physicians and social services department to identify patients who can be assisted by CMAP.

The outpatient pharmacy at Huey P. Long opened May 1 at England Airpark, and in the first six months, it dispensed over 11,000 prescriptions to more than 1,600 unduplicated patients. The hospital’s goal is to help 10,000 unduplicated patients during the initial three-year grant period. There is also a plan to review outcomes from the program, tracking emergency room visits and hospitalizations, for example. This evaluation is being done through a partnership with the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

Huey P. Long patients pay only a small co-payment of \$3 per prescription. The hospital is able to purchase medicines at about a 40 percent discount, thus leveraging the dollars The Rapides Foundation makes available for the program.

“Through The Rapides Foundation grant, we’re able to expand our disease management program that currently includes diabetes, asthma, HIV and congestive heart failure,” Jackson explained. “Without The Rapides Foundation grant, we would be able to provide medications only available through the manufacturers’ assistance programs. We’re able to expand that now.”

He explained that the CMAP program has allowed good utilization not only of the public hospital’s existing pharmacy space at England Airpark, but also of its ability to buy drugs at discounted PHS (Public Health Service) prices. It’s a cost-effective way of helping large numbers of people.

“We had a facility, we had a pharmacy, so that was a big plus for us. We’re also able to buy drugs with PHS pricing, and that’s a great savings. It allows us to leverage our money. For example, an inhaler you may get at a retail pharmacy for \$50 or \$60, because we are a governmental organization, I can get that same inhaler for \$2.76.”

Jackson believes CMAP fits well into Huey P. Long’s new emphasis on disease management. “By being proactive, our patients are being taken care of a lot better; they’re healthier, they’re happier. This is a great thing we’re able to do.”

*Marty McKay,
pharmacist/owner
of Pearson's Drugs in
Lecompte.*



Pharmacists Witnesses to the Balancing Act

“We see people every day in our pharmacy who sometimes have to forgo getting their medicines because they can’t pay for them.”

That assessment from Marty McKay of Pearson's Drugs in Lecompte is similar to other stories heard from pharmacists throughout Central Louisiana. They are on the frontlines, working with customers who live on the financial edge, and who risk serious health consequences because of it.

McKay said people who have multiple prescriptions have to decide which ones to get filled, based upon the cost. The new Cenla Prescription Medication Program, he said, “will help prevent them from having to make those decisions.”

He worked with the Foundation in its initial research into a prescription medication program.

“We hope that by getting the medicines they need, this will help keep people out of the hospital and out of the emergency room, and it will save money in the long run.”

Phil Henry, the pharmacist/owner of Honeycutt's Drug Store in Jena, is also optimistic about CMAP's potential for helping people in his area.

“I have a certain number of customers who are falling through the cracks, so to speak. They are people who have an income or some assets, so they don't qualify for other programs, but they have trouble providing for all their needs.”

He is especially concerned for example, with people who have high blood pressure and who don't take their medicines; they are likely candidates for eventual medical disasters. “They end up not taking the medications they need because they don't have the money to pay for it. They don't have an alternative.”

CMAP

He also likes the way the prescription card system is structured, with its eligibility standards and safeguards. "I like the way it's set up and intended to operate, so the people who really need the help will get it. I really do think this is a good thing; it's a win-win situation. I don't have any doubt that the CMAP program will help keep people on their medications and help facilitate better healthcare."

John Robichaux is director of the outpatient pharmacy at Huey P. Long Medical Center at England Airpark. He too sees patients every day who have difficulty stretching their dollars to pay for medicines they need.

"They have to choose sometimes between their medications and their household goods, and a lot of times the medication is the thing that gets left out. Many of the patients who come to the window here at the pharmacy have told us these stories, and that CMAP is a blessing, that they are so happy the program exists."



John Robichaux, director of the outpatient pharmacy at Huey P. Long Medical Center at England Airpark.

Before CMAP began, most of the patients say they were doing without their medicines.

Before CMAP began, said Robichaux, most of the patients he has talked to say they were doing without their medicines. "If they were purchasing their medications, it was just on a very limited basis; they would pick between which medicines they could afford, which ones they felt they needed the most, and they would purchase whatever supply they could afford at the time, maybe a couple of tablets, maybe a week's supply. In many cases, the patients told us they simply were not taking their medications because they couldn't afford to buy them."

By helping patients obtain their medicines and take them properly, said Robichaux, "We hope to improve their quality of life, to impact their disease state, make it much more manageable. It's a real good thing for the patients."



Phil Henry, the pharmacist/owner of Honeycutt's Drug Store in Jena.

Education about Medication



Helping patients understand the “whys” and “how to’s” of their medicines is the role Sue Fontenot plays in the new Cenla Prescription Medication Program developed by The Rapides Foundation.

She serves as the Program Pharmacist for CMAP’s prescription card system, designed to help individuals who cannot afford their medicines, and who do not receive their primary care at Huey P. Long Medical Center. Participants in the card system are able to buy their prescriptions at deep discounts, while continuing to see their regular physicians and pharmacists.

Patients who have been identified as “at risk” for medication-related problems receive ongoing education and counseling from Fontenot through the CMAP program.

“I do patient education and medication reviews for those patients who have been admitted to the emergency room twice in the last 12 months, who are on three or more medications, or who have been hospitalized twice or more in the past year,” she explained. She will eventually rotate among the six

Cenla parishes that are targeted to have CMAP sites.

Fontenot worked for 11 years as a retail pharmacist with Wal-Mart in Oakdale, and took the position with CMAP a few months ago. An NLU graduate, she is a native of Minden who now lives in Ville Platte with her husband and two children. She said she chose pharmacy as a profession because she liked chemistry and the chance to help people, two factors that are important in her new position.

“This job is really getting back to what I felt pharmacists should be – actually working one-on-one with the patients, and having the time to sit down with them to go over their medications.”

“I’m enjoying it tremendously,” she added. Patients seem to welcome the service, too. “One lady told me she appreciated me just sitting down and talking with her, because nobody had ever sat down and taken the time to help her.”

By providing individual consultations with patients, said Fontenot, she is able to address individual questions and problems with medicines.

“This job is really getting back to what I felt pharmacists should be – actually working one-on-one with the patients, and having the time to sit down with them to go over their medications.”

“The more a patient knows, the more he can help himself,” she said. And the more compliant he will likely be in taking his medicines properly, she added.

Of particular concern are the large number of diabetics in our area, said Fontenot, patients who must be especially careful about how they take their medications. “We want to help them understand their disease and how to control it. We want to keep them out of the ER.”



Sue Fontenot, program pharmacist for CMAP’s prescription card system.

Medicare and Prescription Drugs



Mary Miller, a CMAP participant, receives medication information from Donelle Windham, HPL pharmacy technician.

Medicare does not currently cover outpatient prescription drugs, yet there are proposals pending, backed by both the White House and Congressional leaders, to add such coverage for senior citizens.

U.S. Sen. John Breaux of Louisiana, who chairs the Senate's Special Committee on Aging, has worked for several years on Medicare reform that would add a prescription drug benefit.

Breaux and Sen. Bill Frist of Tennessee introduced bipartisan Medicare reform bills in both the 106th and 107th Congressional sessions. According to the senators' statements, their bills "add universal prescription drug coverage, include protections for low-income seniors and those in rural areas, create new measures to keep the program solvent and provide a competitive system managed by a new independent Medicare agency."

In what he called "the first necessary step to provide immediate help to seniors without destabilizing Medicare's finances," President Bush announced in July a new national drug discount program for seniors. Expected to be implemented next year, the plan involves the use of discount cards at participating pharmacies.

The various programs being discussed will supplement, rather than replace, the Foundation's CMAP program.

The Rapides Foundation Grants from July-September 2001

Initiative Grants

Alexandria Metropolitan Foundation Matching funds for establishment of small business incubator in Alexandria	\$600,000	3 yrs
Family Playhouse Matching funding for operations support for children's performing arts organization	75,000	3 yrs
Ninth Judicial District Court Establishment of mental health assessment, treatment and day program services for adolescents in the juvenile court system	500,000	3 yrs
St. Landry-Evangeline United Way Establishment of affordable health clinic for low and moderate income Evangeline Parish residents	110,000	2.5 yrs
Young Men's Christian Association Establishment of youth prevention programs in Winnfield	75,000	2 yrs

Mini-Grants and Technical Assistance Grants (one year or less)

African-American Cultural Center and Museum Organizational development funding for this Alexandria-based arts group	\$2,500
Aftercare Ministries Start-up funding for group developing transitional home for males being released from prison	5,000
Amiable Baptist Church Pilot church-based health clinic near Melder (Rapides Parish)	2,500
Central Louisiana Homeless Coalition Project to assess potential infrastructure for homeless services in rural parishes	4,500
D.O.V.E.S. Expansion funding for services to battered women in Natchitoches Parish	10,000
Donahue Baptist Church Start-up of faith-based health clinic in Pineville	10,000
Food Bank of Central Louisiana Program specific software acquisition and staff training	10,000
LA Council of Councils on Aging Pilot shared housing referral service for older adults	10,000
LA Federation of Families-Region VI Matching funds for mentoring services for families with children with disabilities	10,000
St. Augustine Historical Society Organizational development funding for this Natchitoches Parish group focused on local Cane River culture and history	2,500
Shepherd Center Pilot funds for Family Mentors project linking families in transition with faith-based volunteer teams	10,000
Straight Street Ministry Pilot and organizational development funds for start-up organization providing transitional services for women being released from prison	7,500



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