

MobileHealthMap.org – MHCN Member Press Coverage

Members of MHCN who have entered program data on the MobileHealthMap.org website to calculate their ROI (return on investment) are receiving local press coverage for their mobile health clinics.

St. Joseph Health System notes study on mobile clinic cost savings

By Dan Verel, Business Journal Staff Reporter

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SANTA ROSA, CA — The traveling health clinics of **St. Joseph Health System-Sonoma County, CA** save \$28 for every \$1 spent on health care costs, according to a study by Harvard Medical School that calculated estimated nationwide savings of mobile clinics.

The study found that, nationally, the average savings produced by more than 2,000 mobile units, including St. Joseph's, equals a 20 to 1 ratio versus what is spent on health care costs. Over the course of one year, the "return on investment calculator" found that 10 mobile clinics that were part of the initial study saved more than \$78 million in what the study calls "Quality Adjusted Life Years." Another \$7 million is saved by preventing "unnecessary emergency department visits," the study said.

St. Joseph's two mobile clinics are part of a national **Mobile Health Clinic Network**, which has 2,000 similar clinics across the nation as members.

Kathy Ficco, executive director of St. Joseph's Community Health Clinics and Programs, said the study reflects the growing need of both community health centers and mobile clinics that reach underserved and often-hard to reach segments of the population, many of whom go undiagnosed for major health problems until they end up in emergency rooms.

With health care costs still high and with wait times at increasingly expanding health centers growing, Ms. Ficco said the mobile clinics fill a void by providing direct access to patients that might otherwise remain excluded from care. "When health centers are filled to the brim, patients seek mobile health clinics," she said, adding that the target patient, while traditionally the underserved, has expanded recently to encompass working-class people who have been laid off or can no longer afford insurance. "We know we're providing for people who don't have access. They just can't traverse the health care system, and with the downturn in the economy, we've seen a lot of working adults, people who lost COBRA, and we frequently address them," she said.

The Harvard researchers compiled published data from the National Commission on Prevention Priorities to assign values to a number of preventative practices. Data was also used to determine savings on avoidable emergency room visits, and an algorithm was developed that quantified the value of mobile health care to the overall health care system.

"We're saving the health care system – not just St. Joseph's – a lot of money," Ms. Ficco said. St. Joseph's mobile clinics serve approximately 1,550 patients with more than 3,700 visits a year. Services range from testing for hypertension, diabetes, childhood immunizations, pneumonia vaccinations, cholesterol and cancer screenings. The annual operating budget was more than \$500,000 in 2009.

To calculate an ROI for your program, go to: www.mobilehealthmap.org. After receiving your ROI, if you would like assistance in getting press coverage in your community, contact: [Melissa Maney @ \(814\) 899-8163](mailto:Melissa Maney @ (814) 899-8163) or mmaneyMHCN@yahoo.com