

An Open Letter to Our Community

From the University of Chicago Medical Center

You may have heard about our plans to reorganize our emergency room, and to help patients who come to us find the best and most appropriate care, whether in our hospital or in other community clinics and hospitals.

There has been a lot of inaccurate information about our plans, so we are writing to share the key facts with those who are our number one priority – the patients we serve.

No one will ever be turned away from our emergency room if their health condition warrants immediate treatment. As part of our Urban Health Initiative, we are collaborating with nearby clinics, doctor's offices, and community hospitals to make sure that every citizen on the South Side has access to good health care options throughout the community.

Many of the patients who come through our emergency room doors don't need emergency treatment. So, our Medical Center has worked to create partnerships with other area health clinics and hospitals, in many cases placing our own doctors in these community facilities. Our goal is to make sure each patient has a "medical home" – a doctor's office or clinic where they can go regularly, get seen quickly when they are sick, and get ongoing treatment for any chronic illness. Experience and research shows that patients who have a "medical home" get better health care in the long run than those who only come to the ER when they are sick.

Our advice about treatment options is always based on the medical needs of that patient. It is NOT based on a patient's insurance or income. In fact, payment and insurance issues are only discussed after the best treatment location has been identified based on the patient's condition.

As proof of this commitment, the University of Chicago Medical Center provides more care to poor and uninsured people than any other private, not-for-profit hospital in Illinois. And, we work hard to help people who come in with no insurance get the benefits they qualify for through Medicaid.

Many believe the health care system in this country is a mess. We are trying to be part of the solution by developing better systems that serve the needs of our patients, while also making sure that all health providers in the community can stay strong, and still be here in the future to care for South Side patients.

Always, the health and wellbeing of our patients comes first. That is our commitment to you.



James L. Madara, MD
Chief Executive Officer



Eric E. Whitaker, MD, MPH
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