



Hands On
NETWORK

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INSTITUTE

Skills-Based Volunteerism Case Study

KAISER PERMANENTE **thrive**

PROJECT DIMENSIONS:

Resources:

Teams with various skills

Engagement Model:

Done in one day recurrent

Types of Skills:

Health professionals

Geography:

Local

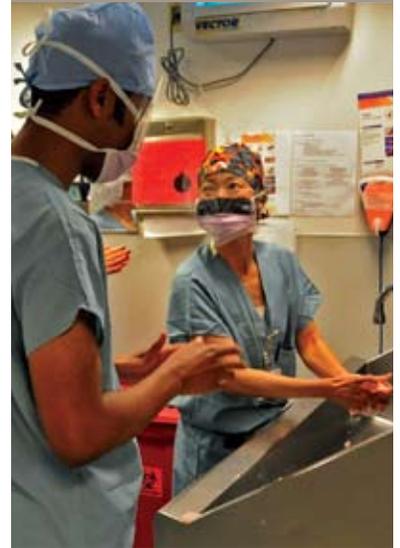
Kaiser Permanente & Operation Access:

Restoring Health & Dignity Through Skilled Volunteerism

Since their inception more than 60 years ago, Kaiser Permanente has been fostering the improved health of the communities they serve. Today, through the Kaiser Permanente Community Benefit Program, they keep that tradition alive by focusing on four broad areas of work:

- Care and coverage for vulnerable populations;
- Community Health Initiatives for healthy eating, and active living;
- Health care safety net partnerships;
- Developing and disseminating health knowledge.

In March 2009, Kaiser Permanente and their partner Operation Access celebrated 16 years of helping those in need in the San Francisco Bay Area through Super Surgery Day.



All Photos were taken by Richard Tenaza at Kaiser Permanente San Francisco in November, 2008.



For more information about skills-based volunteerism, please contact
Veronica Parages, vparages@HandsOnNetwork.org.

The Need

The U.S. healthcare crisis is real and growing. The American Medical Association indicates that roughly 46 million Americans or 16% of the population is without any insurance to cover basic healthcare needs. The uninsured population ranges greatly from those with pre-existing conditions, to working families who are not offered benefits through employers, to small business owners who simply can't afford coverage. As a nation we spend more than any industrialized nation on care—more than 2.3 trillion dollars annually or \$7600 per person

(National Coalition on Healthcare). This tide of working uninsured is a financial and social strain on our hospitals and our communities. As a country we spend nearly 16% of our GDP on health services—a large percent of which are emergency interventions and other supports for those who live without regular health coverage.

California is in more dire straights than most states. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, roughly 18.5% of Californians live without healthcare. This

means that routine check ups and quality of life care are often placed on the backburner—that families, individuals, and elderly with pre-existing conditions only seek help when they are in dire straights. Operation Access is a nonprofit organization that works to mobilize hospitals, supplies, and volunteer surgical teams to provide outpatient surgeries that significantly improve the health, ability to work, and quality of life for low-income, uninsured people in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Model

Operation Access works with over 60 referring community clinics and 24 participating medical centers to identify and vet those clients that need access to surgeries, specialty procedures, and diagnostic screenings. Common procedures include: cataract surgery; hernia repair; cyst removal; and minor ear, nose, and throat procedures. Several client operations are bundled together during “Super Surgery Days” where volunteer surgeons, nurses, anesthesia providers, and administrative

personnel work together to perform these procedures that restore function and quality of life to patients in need.

The program, which was co-founded by Kaiser Permanente vascular and thoracic surgeon, Dr. Douglas Grey, leverages the specialized skills of doctors and the supplies and internal assets of clinics and hospitals to provide the most vulnerable patients with this critical component of the overall health safety net.

Teams of volunteers are organized across the region and across medical facilities to meet the needs of patients on Super Surgery Days. Participating medical facilities donate their space and supplies, as well as teams of translators, intake specialists, surgeons, and nurses who come together to provide the operations. Pre and post-operative patient counseling are also donated through the program.

Client & Community Impact

To date, Operation Access has served nearly 5,000 clients. It coordinates over 1,000 procedures each year with a growing team of over 600 medical volunteers. Kaiser Permanente is a major contributor of both in-kind services through supplies, equipment, and facilities. It is also the major contributor of skilled medical talent.

simple, outpatient procedures. It's estimated that Operation Access procedures have saved the community over 30 million dollars in direct costs. What's more, nearly 93% of patients report improved overall health and quality of life—an immeasurable win for individuals, their families, and the community at large.

escalations that often result in expensive emergency care. Individuals are able to manage pain and re-gain functionality that allows them to increase quality of life. What's more, low-income, but working patients are able to maintain their jobs, their homes, and their connections to work and family. Overall, Operation Access provides more than just a health safety net—it is, in many ways, a critical factor in financial stability and overall community well-being that is hard to calculate.

The skills-based model demonstrates how highly-trained, clinical professionals can work together, across geography and specialty to improve overall patient outcomes and community health through

The success of this skills-based model operates at several levels. There is a tangible cost savings to the health system—these procedures treat non-life threatening conditions and mitigate complications and

Patient Stories

March 11, 2006 is a day Isaac will never forget. He and 21 other patients received vital procedures with the help of 118 volunteers at Kaiser Permanente San Francisco. According to Isaac, "Operation Access has helped me with more than just my hernia; it has given me a new start, a new life without pain and no one can keep that from me anymore."

A simple blocked tear duct created a lifetime of problems for Alicia, a 37-year old single mother. Through Operation Access, a team of doctors and nurses at Kaiser Permanente Santa Rosa performed a 90-minute surgery to reverse the blocked duct that had caused chronic sinus infections, thousands of hours of lost work and family time over 12 years. Just 3 months after surgery the patient reported that her symptoms had disappeared and declared, "This surgery changed my life."

Volunteer Lessons Learned

The Kaiser Permanente - Operation Access alliance has developed best practices around motivating and managing volunteers. The partnership works for many reasons:

- Volunteers can leverage existing skills in a simple "done in a day" or outpatient format;
- Volunteers can work to improve quality of life for medically needy patients;
- Volunteers can build relationships with others—and learn to work in teams across specialties;
- Patient intake and eligibility are managed by Operation Access, leaving volunteers free to focus on lending their talent rather than the administration of a complex program.

Operation Access
Bridging the Healthcare Gap



Volunteer Story

Volunteers find that direct patient work and support of the uninsured is core to both Kaiser Permanente and their personal values. It is no wonder that nearly 50% of the Operation Access volunteers have been committed to the program for more than 3 years—a rarity in the fast changing world of volunteer service. Take, for example, the story of Francis.

Mr. Francis Chiu, RN PACU Kaiser Permanente San Francisco

Francis Chiu has been volunteering with OA since 1995 and is one of the pioneering volunteers that launched Operation Access at Kaiser Permanente San Francisco Medical Center. Francis has helped over 400 Operation Access patients recover at 40 Saturday Surgery Days! When asked why he has stuck with Operation Access for so long, Francis said, *“There are so many people with no insurance. The patients are always grateful.”* Francis was the recipient of the Operation Access Volunteer of the Quarter award in 2007.

Beyond the individual pride the program stokes within volunteers, Kaiser Permanente has been able to translate this “team approach” to skilled deployment in other areas within its Employee Volunteer Program. Through Operation Access, teams of interpreters, nurses, doctors, and other professionals work with their peers outside of their normal “business hours” on special surgery days.

This ability to mobilize across specialty has been instrumental to Kaiser Permanente efforts around disaster response. During hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and again during the recent L.A. transit disasters, volunteer medical teams were deployed to provide critical medical support, surgery, and outpatient assistance during both disaster response and recovery.

Overall, the Operation Access model highlights how high-skill and low-time investment can bring an enormous return on investment for volunteers, clients, and the community. Successfully leveraging medical volunteerism, the Operation Access program is able to provide over \$8 of medical care for every \$1 donated. In addition, it provides a great opportunity for licensed professionals to volunteer in their own backyard rather than through similarly structured international programs and fits deeply within Kaiser Permanente’s larger mission of healthy families and communities.



*Patient & Volunteer Testimonials have been extracted from Operation Access Newsletters and Annual Reports 2006-2008.

For more information on Operation Access visit www.operationaccess.org or to volunteer, e-mail volunteer@operationaccess.org.

For more information about Kaiser Permanente volunteers and community programs, contact: John Edmiston, Community Affairs john.i.edmiston@kp.org