

From Policy to People CCRMC & ACA Saving Lives

Annette Harris

Annette Harris has been through a lot but she considers herself lucky. That's because a mammogram her doctor recommended caught early-stage breast cancer in 2016.

"It has been, like, the quickest cancer ever," Annette says.

In late 2015, 57-year-old Annette moved to the Bay Area to be near her aging mother and other family. One day her sciatica pain became so severe she went to the emergency department at our Regional Medical Center in Martinez. While at the ER, she was enrolled in Medi-Cal. Expansion of the health insurance program under the Affordable Care Act allowed her to qualify for coverage with the Contra Costa Health Plan.

With that coverage, she was immediately and automatically assigned a primary care physician close to her home, at West County Health Center in San Pablo. She made an appointment.

Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers is the safety-net system of choice in our community. We serve more than 12.5% of the population in Contra Costa County, a San Francisco Bay Area suburb with 1.1 million people. In three short years, since the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Medi-Cal expansion went into effect, we have more than doubled in size from 65,000 patients to 138,000 patients assigned to primary care providers in our health system. Many of these new patients are previously uninsured people with chronic health issues.

We provide our patients with high quality care that is coordinated, integrated and efficient. We proactively do medical screenings to catch diseases early; our larger health centers, for instance, offer walk-in mammography services. We not only treat patients when they're sick, we also educate patients on how to take better care of themselves through our group visits program. In short, our work saves lives.

Here are some of our patients' stories that paint a picture of how we are improving health and saving lives.

Dr. Andrea Sandler noticed that her new patient was not up-to-date on many health tests and screenings. She explained to Annette the importance of the tests, and Annette agreed to get them.

Her screening mammogram came up suspicious, so a diagnostic mammogram, then an ultrasound and biopsy were conducted, all within two weeks. Two lumps were discovered under her breast, so deep and small they would not have been felt with a self-exam. One was benign. The other was early cancer, stage 1.

"It was all so quick," says Annette of her diagnosis and treatment.

Annette decided on surgery to remove the breast—and any future concerns about recurrence. She will soon have reconstructive surgery.

"The care has been excellent," she says. "I give it a 10-plus... Thank God for Dr. Sandler."

Making A Difference

Akshita Kumar

It was shortly before New Year's Day 2017, but Akshita Kumar (not her real name) wasn't feeling either joyful or optimistic about the coming year. The 53-year-old woman had recently developed a lump in one of her breasts and she was worried. Despite being frightened about what her care providers might find, Akshita scheduled an appointment at our Concord Health Center—something she thankfully could do now thanks to Medi-Cal expansion.

Family Nurse Practitioner Heather Cedermaz was concerned about Akshita's breast mass and ordered a diagnostic mammogram and ultrasound. The tests were completed that same day and confirmed the suspicion for malignancy; a biopsy confirmed the cancer diagnosis a few days later.

Akshita is currently receiving chemotherapy to shrink the cancer, which will be followed by surgery. Her prognosis is good and her medical team is hopeful that her timely diagnosis and treatment will lead to a cure. Having health coverage and ready access to diagnostic procedures and care has provided the medical treatment she needs to have a hope as she embraces the greatest gift of all: life.

“...ready access to diagnostic procedures and care has provided the medical treatment she needs.”

Salvador Bravo & Rafaela Hernandez

In March of 2016, married couple Salvador Bravo and Rafaela Hernandez came into one of our health clinics. The couple was not feeling well and they hadn't seen a doctor in more than four years. Both are diabetics and had not been taking medication.

Socorro Padilla, one of our Promotoras located at the health center, assisted them with the Medi-Cal application. Thanks to Medi-Cal expansion Salvador and Rafaela qualified. By April 2016 they were both connected to a primary care doctor, able to join diabetic medical group visits and getting the medications they needed to stay healthy.

Today the couple's diabetes is under control, they're symptom-free and enjoying spending time with each other and their son and expect to be around for many more birthdays.

“...they were both connected to services needed to stay healthy.”



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