

News RELEASE



NORTH CAROLINA
MEDICAL SOCIETY FOUNDATION



BlueCross BlueShield
of North Carolina

Foundation

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**Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation Grant Expected
To Boost Patient Medical Visits by 300,000 Yearly in High-Need Areas**
Grant Could Generate Additional \$50 Million in Care for Uninsured Over Five Years

Roxboro, N.C. – Hundreds of thousands of residents in rural and economically distressed areas of North Carolina would get access to primary medical care, and the uninsured in those areas are expected to receive \$50 million worth of medical care, under a joint effort by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation (BCBSNC Foundation) and the North Carolina Medical Society Foundation (NCMS Foundation).

The BCBSNC Foundation today announced a five-year grant to the Community Practitioner Program of the NCMS Foundation. The program pays up to half the medical education debt of physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners who agree to serve at least five years in a community designated as rural, economically distressed or having a shortage of health care professionals.

The joint effort between the NCMS Foundation and the BCBSNC Foundation is expected to generate an estimated \$50 million in care to uninsured patients in high-need North Carolina communities over five years.

The grant, and matching monies to be raised by the NCMS Foundation, are expected to boost the number of participating practitioners from about 100 to 160 by 2010 and to increase the number of patient visits to those health care providers from 400,000 to nearly 700,000 annually, a 75 percent increase.

“We’re supporting the Community Practitioner Program because it has a demonstrated track record of putting gifted, caring health care professionals in communities where they are most needed,” said Bob Greczyn, chairman of the BCBSNC Foundation. “Addressing the needs of the uninsured will take long-term effort and effective collaboration within our entire health care system. Partnering with the Community Practitioner Program is an important step we can take today to have an immediate and direct impact. The program will also improve the delivery of

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preventive care, which we consider essential to managing overall health care costs more effectively.”

Greczyn announced the grant today with Bob Seligson, executive vice president and CEO of the North Carolina Medical Society, and Dr. Lance Walker, a community practitioner in Roxboro who has been with the Community Practitioner Program for five years. News conferences were also held in Gastonia and Winston-Salem.

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“The North Carolina Medical Society Foundation is very proud of the work of the Community Practitioner Program in addressing the issue of access to health care for vulnerable North Carolinians,” Seligson said. “Since its inception, the program has become an integral part of the safety net in our state. We are grateful for the generous support from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, which allows us to significantly increase the program’s reach, as well as secure the future of this vital program.”

Walker serves at Roxboro Family Practice.

“Several years ago, I was delighted to learn that the Community Practitioner Program would help me serve the people of Roxboro,” Walker said. “Now, with the good news of this grant, even more North Carolinians can receive the first-rate medical care they need and deserve.”

The Community Practitioner Program requires practitioners to treat Medicaid and Medicare patients, the uninsured, non-English speakers and others who may have problems affording health care. Only 22 percent of the patients seen by participating health care providers have private insurance.

The BCBSNC Foundation is providing a \$10 million grant over a five-year period, and the NCMS Foundation expects to raise \$5 million in matching funds. The money will be used as an endowment to sustain the program.

The Community Practitioner Program was started in 1989 with a grant of \$4.5 million from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. In its 15 years, the program has assisted a total of 347 primary health care professionals and medical practices in 126 communities and provided \$226 million in care to the uninsured.

Currently, 95 health care professionals are participating in the program in nearly half of North Carolina’s 100 counties. Since inception, providers in the program have served 76 counties. Of the participating health care providers, 73 percent remain in rural or economically distressed counties beyond their five-year commitment, and 85 percent remain in North Carolina.

About the BCBSNC Foundation:

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation provides financial support to improve the health and well-being of North Carolinians. This mission is achieved through programs and services funded in response to grant requests, as well as through funding for programs supporting needs identified by the Foundation. The Foundation’s primary focus areas include increasing access to health care for the

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uninsured and underinsured, minimizing or eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities, promoting physical activity, and providing screenings and health education (related to cardiac care, diabetes, obesity, and women’s health).

Since its inception in November 2000, the BCBSNC Foundation has awarded more than \$16 million in grants to organizations throughout the state. In addition to its grant program, the Foundation supports several signature programs. These programs include Be Active KidsSM, an award-winning program that teaches preschool children about nutrition and physical activity; and Healthy Community Institutes for Non-Profit Excellence, two-day intensive training sessions offered free of charge to all North Carolina nonprofits. Additional information about the Foundation’s signature programs and grant requirements, as well as a list of all grants awarded can be found on our Web site at www.bcbsnc.com/foundation.

About the NCMS Foundation:

The North Carolina Medical Society Foundation is the philanthropic and service arm of the North Carolina Medical Society, the state’s oldest and largest professional association representing over 10,000 physician and physician assistant members. The North Carolina Medical Society Foundation assists the Society in helping physicians and communities improve the health of North Carolinians. The Foundation’s ~~mission is to expand~~ access to health care, particularly for low-income, uninsured and underserved North Carolinians.

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