

THEN & NOW

A reminder of the pace of change, and of timeless truths, from the 1955 Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital annual report:

“Our professional, technical, and service staffs are well trained, competent, and loyal,” wrote the president of the Board of Trustees. “The statistical data provided you will bear out the fact that adequate coverage has been provided in practically every field of medical science. This is as it should be, because the first duty of a hospital is of dedication to the sick and ailing who come seeking assistance.”



55

M.D.'s practicing at Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital in 1955

888

M.D.'s (and equivalents) practicing at DHMC in 2010

Helping a Good Neighbor to do even better

For nearly 20 years, the Good Neighbor Health Clinic has been caring for uninsured and underserved patients in the Upper Valley with a few paid staff members—plus over 100 volunteers, including Dartmouth undergrads and medical students and DH physicians and nurses.

Now, thanks to the efforts of a Dartmouth '12 and a DMS '13, Good Neighbor's dental program is helping many more patients. The Red Logan Dental Clinic (RLDC) came into being in 1996, largely through the efforts of Dr. Robert Keene, an adjunct member of the DMS faculty and a local dentist who's now retired. Both Good Neighbor and the RLDC are housed in the former Gates Library on Main Street in White River Junction, Vt.

**Care:** “In 2010, there were 543 visits to the RLDC,” says Hildegard Ojibway, Good Neighbor's executive director. The care that those patients received was provided by local volunteers—21 dentists and eight hygienists and assistants—and had a value of \$400,329. Still, 400 to 500 people remained on the RLDC's waiting list.

Then two Dartmouth students, with the support of fellowships, developed plans to tackle the patient backlog—one by increasing the RLDC's capacity and the other by reducing demand for its services.

Yang Wei Neo, a Dartmouth College junior, took on the first goal as a Class of 1982 Social En-

trepreneurship Fellow—an initiative of Dartmouth's Tucker Foundation. His charge was to attract fourth-year dental students to the RLDC through externships, a required part of training for a D.M.D.

**Fit:** His challenge was the fact that there is not a single dental school in Maine, New Hampshire, or Vermont. So, says Neo, “I contacted dental schools in Boston to find a good fit, wrote a business plan, organized the local dentists, and helped raise \$20,000 in funding to get that program off the ground.”

Now, the RLDC has an agreement with the Harvard School of Dental Medicine to sponsor, three times a year, 12-week externships for two fourth-year dental students. They work under the supervision of local dentists, some of whom now have adjunct appointments at Harvard. The dental students also visit specialty practices in the region and at DHMC.

Neo is continuing to serve as a liaison between the RLDC and Harvard. With those extra hands in patients' mouths, Ojibway estimates that 200 additional people can be treated each year.

**Need:** Stephanie Pan, a second-year DMS student, took on the second part of the RLDC's goal—trying to prevent the need for dental care. Under the auspices of an Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, she developed a dental workshop for RLDC patients. Dental disease not only affects



JON GILBERT FOX

This free dental clinic is meeting more need now, thanks to Pan, left, and Neo.

teeth, but can affect patients' self-esteem and cause a wide array of medical and mental-health problems as well.

There are many simple preventive measures, however, so Pan built them into her workshop. “I had to put together the material . . . from scratch,” she says, and she decided that “for continuity, professional hygienists or assistants [would do] the actual teaching.”

**Miles:** In what seemed an inauspicious start, the first workshop attracted just four patients—but one was a mother who'd walked two miles with her toddler daughter to get there. Her long trek had a good outcome: she received instruction in how to preserve her remaining teeth and how to prevent her daughter from the same fate. Workshops now typically attract 20 people each month.

Thanks to Neo and Pan, there will now be hundreds of brighter smiles throughout the Upper Valley for years to come.

ROGER P. SMITH, PH.D.