Community health centers fulfill their promise

As health care reform takes place in Massachusetts and around the country, more and more patients are being directed to community health centers – recognition that for more than 40 years, these centers in urban and rural areas have improved access to health services, controlled costs, and most importantly, provided care of the highest quality.

Beth Israel Deaconess was involved in community health from the earliest days, helping in 1969 to lead the conversion of Roxbury’s New England Hospital for Women and Children into the Dimock Community Health Center. BIDMC has continued to support community health centers (see timeline), which today are a vibrant, crucial part of BIDMC’s care delivery system. They are also at the heart of BIDMC’s mission to care for the underserved.


Beth Israel Deaconess and community health centers

National
“War on Poverty” includes first neighborhood health centers as “demonstration project.”

1960s

Local
• First community health center opens in Boston at Columbia Point.

1970s

Local
• BI is the first hospital to publish a Patient Bill of Rights; it commits to equal care for all.
• New community health centers open, including Bowdoin Street Health Center, Fenway Community Health Center, South Cove Community Health Center and Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center.

National
After successful pilot, funds become available for more community health centers through Public Health Services Act.

1980s

Local
• Health insurance reform brings thousands more patients to community health centers.

National
After federal funding dips, centers find new funds, as well as new providers through the National Health Service Corps.

1990s

Local
• Deaconess and Roxbury Comprehensive Health Center build multifaceted relationship.

National
Largest expansion ever in federal funding for health centers.

2000s

Local
• BI helps health centers address racial disparities in infant mortality.
• Sidney Borum Jr. Health Center established with BI support.
• Six health centers affiliate with BI, and Bowdoin Street joins BI family.

National
With Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security funding, more health centers open and expand.

2000s - New building underway for Fenway Community Health.