



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

2022

COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE NEEDS

Female & Male Health Needs

Focus group participants mentioned that there is no Obstetric (OB) physician in Wharton County. It was stated that no native patients are born in Wharton County since the Wharton Hospital closed in 2016. The closest OB services are in Victoria, TX and Sugarland, TX, which are both approximately an hour away, and transportation to get to those facilities can be challenging for community members. As a result, Family Medicine physicians often provide pre-natal care. There are plans to build a new hospital facility and when that takes place the hospital is planning to bring back OB services.

Heart disease, stroke, depression, lung cancer, and prostate cancer are five of the top health issues for men. ECMH has provided free prostate screenings for males in the past but eliminated these due to the lack of participation and follow-up from patients. The patients would get the results but would not follow up with the hospital. It was mentioned that when the new ECMH facility is built, perhaps they can bring back these screenings as well as provide additional screenings such as high blood pressure checks and cholesterol screenings as there will be more space in the new building.

ECMH does provide free health screenings at area health fairs, at the Wharton County Youth Fair Senior Citizen's Day and at the request of local businesses.

Preventive Care

Our discussion surrounding preventative care revealed that not all participants were aware of the preventive care education that the hospital is providing. They were familiar with the Wellness Clinics, but most participants believed that the primary care physician managed preventive care education and treatment. Community members did mention the presentations that Dr. Nguyen

provided on COVID vaccines during the COVID Pandemic and said that they were helpful and well attended. Smoking cessation was believed to be managed one-on-one with the patient's physician. Another discussion point was the large health fair that ECMH previously provided every year. Understandably, it ended during the COVID Pandemic. It has not returned due to the lack of volunteers to run the health fair. This health fair provided free health screenings and education and would be well-received again in the community. Plans are in progress to bring this event back to the community when COVID subsides and the risk of health issues decreases for senior citizens.

Another identified community need is more outreach related to diabetes education. Suggestions to meet this need were to provide diabetes information on the TV screens in the clinic, blood glucose screenings, and a nutritional education program. Participants suggested that it was not just the responsibility of the hospital to provide nutritional education, but that individuals should form local teams and go into the community to educate persons on the importance of proper nutrition and the prevention of diabetes.

Pediatric Health

Children's health is important as it is the foundation for their growth and development. The most important parts of children's health are:

- Brain Development
- Physical Health
- Nutrition
- Social, emotional, and mental health
- Oral Health
- Active living
- Safety and injury prevention

There is currently only one pediatrician nurse practitioner in El Campo, which can limit availability. Focus group participants mentioned the need for a pediatric clinic as families often go to Wharton and Victoria for pediatric care. Persons in our focus groups indicated a desire for ECMH to provide even more children's health care in the community. There was great appreciation shown for the hospital clinic at the school in Louise, a city approximately ten miles

away, but nurse practitioners staff this clinic, and it does not have a pediatrician. Recruiting an additional pediatrician and opening a pediatric clinic would make it more enticing for families to stay in El Campo rather than going to neighboring cities or Houston for pediatric care. (Note: when the new hospital facility is built there are plans to bring on pediatrics at that time). As discussed previously, 31.5% of the El Campo community is children under the age of eighteen, so opening a pediatric clinic could be very beneficial to the community. Note that there is also a school campus care at the El Campo Independent School District that offers assistance in health related issues to school children, teachers and staff.

Senior Health

Seniors make up 15% of the population in El Campo, but this number is growing according to those in our focus groups. We discussed the large elderly population and the specific needs that exist for this demographic. Thirty-three percent of the seniors live alone. Of this thirty-three percent, over three quarters are female. Programs for seniors that would provide socialization and activity would be ideal. ECMH currently has a program called Senior TREK (Travel, Recreation, Education, Knowledge) with four hundred+ members. There is a minimal membership fee, and activities take place throughout each month. The membership fee and cost of monthly activities may prevent lower income seniors from participating in this group. The larger community could provide an alternative.

Almost one half of seniors have an income less than \$20,000 annually and 42% receive food stamps. Many of the elderly go to Manna Meals, a United Way program, in El Campo on Monday and Thursday evenings to receive a meal at no cost. Because so many seniors are living in poverty, it could be beneficial to provide more education about ECMH healthcare financial assistance options that are available in addition to Medicare and Medicaid programs. ECMH does offer an indigent/charity program for individuals living in the West Wharton County Hospital District which does offer assistance to those that meet criteria.

Senior citizens also need more transportation options. Colorado Valley Transit buses run a regular route in El Campo and Wharton that goes to the hospital, schools, and downtown businesses. The regular route does not require advance notice. However, for door-to-door service a person must give twenty-four-hour advance notice. Participants in our group were unsure of the cost to ride the buses but thought that you had to qualify to ride. One recommendation was that

ECMH could look into the possibility of providing a van to transport the elderly who have no transportation to the hospital or clinics in El Campo.

Participants mentioned the need for more palliative care at ECMH if the numbers would support increased service. They also discussed their gratitude for the Hospice Room at the hospital because when they had a family member that needed those services it was helpful to have that service available nearby.

Mental and Behavioral Health Needs

What is an overwhelming need in El Campo is mental health care. Specifically, all the focus group participants mentioned the lack of children's mental health care. From what the participants have seen at the schools and churches, an estimated 20-25% of the children in El Campo are in extreme need of counseling. There are 3500 students in the school but only a small percentage of those needing counseling reach out for help. Licensed professional counselors from Turning Leaf Counseling and Education Center come to the schools, but according to focus group participants, this is not effective and is not enough.

We also discussed the stigma around mental health care, as parents do not want their children talking about their family issues with someone else and they do not want their children treated differently because of a possible mental illness. Participants suggested that more education for the parents might be effective in eliminating this stigma.

Another issue is payment for mental health services, as most families cannot afford to pay and Medicare and Medicaid will only pay for mental health services provided by a psychiatrist, not a licensed professional counselor. A psychiatrist being on staff at ECMH would be a welcome addition, but it is much more expensive to hire a psychiatrist than a licensed professional counselor. Recruiting a psychiatrist to move to El Campo and then have enough patients to sustain the practice would also be a challenge. Participants mentioned that it is hard for ECMH to compete with Houston and Sugarland in the specialty of Mental Health.

Hispanic/Latino Population Outreach

Several participants mentioned that ECMH needs to offer specific outreach to the Hispanic/Latino population. They make up the largest percentage of the population in El Campo

and speak little to no English. The language barrier makes it difficult for this group to seek medical care and when they do seek care it is typically through the emergency room. Cultural differences and insurance confusion can also make medical visits intimidating for them.

Hispanics/Latinos have an apprehension about healthcare that comes from a long history of preferring non-Western medicine and a tradition of privacy that makes them believe they have no need to ask for help. It is common to have family involvement in healthcare for Hispanic/Latino patients. There is more trust placed in family remedies than in Western medical advice.

Typically, patients have already sought help from family resources before showing up at the emergency room for medical care. When they do seek out this medical care, they value having relationships with their doctors. They do not want to feel rushed, and they want to be treated with respect and dignity.

These health issues are prevalent in the Hispanic/Latino population:

- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)
- Kidney Disease
- Liver Disease
- Cancer

Culturally taboo topics such as sexual health and mental health are even more unnerving as they consider these private issues. Nationally, Hispanic males are almost two and a half times more likely to have HIV and teen pregnancy is five times more prevalent in Hispanic females than in the white population. As for mental health, Hispanics/Latinos are not comfortable talking about anxiety or depression and only 10% will contact a specialist in mental health. They may know that a family member is “not right,” but they believe that it is a phase they can control without the help of Western medicine.

If Hispanics/Latinos are to seek healthcare, they want the medical care price to be reasonable. Participants in our focus group shared that while there are healthcare financial assistance options available at ECMH, there is a general distrust of government programs so Hispanics/Latinos will not sign up for programs such as the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicaid or

free/reduced lunch at school. Because of this, Hispanic/Latino patients do not receive the care and help that they need at a price they can afford.

Outreach and General Awareness of Hospital Services

ECMH has commercials on the two local radio stations, KULP and KIOX, and focus group participants shared that the hospital does an excellent job on social media platforms like Facebook in keeping the community up to date on hospital activities and services. They did indicate that they would like to see more personal outreach using technology. One suggestion was the development of a new platform that could remind people through text or email when it was time for their appointments and wellness checks.

We also discussed ideas that would help generate a personal connection between the community, ECMH, and the physicians such as a “Walk with the Docs” event and opportunities to meet the physicians at events such as the Health Fair. Another proposal was to highlight existing and new physicians in the newspaper and on social media.

New El Campo Memorial Hospital Facility

The community is aware of the plans to build a new ECMH facility and offered suggestions for new services and the offering again of services that had been discontinued. Services mentioned were Maternity/OB, open MRI, Sports Medicine/Orthopedics, pediatric and adolescent care, more free health screenings, medical transportation for seniors and a fitness center. Clinic space for a psychiatrist is a need as currently only Family Practice physicians prescribe medication for mental health needs. Participants believe that building a new hospital could help attract new physicians. Currently a specialist may come to ECMH but cannot get enough business to sustain it. A new hospital would provide more space for clinical services, but it also could create new jobs and potentially increase the population and economics within the community. It will be beneficial for ECMH to keep the community informed and involved in the new facility plans as the hospital will want the new facility to reflect the community that it serves and will want it to continue to meet the community needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Partner with Community Organizations

ECMH already strives to maintain a strong relationship with the community so that they can quickly and effectively address issues and needs. One way they can continue to do this is to find new ways to partner with community organizations.

ECMH can partner with the schools to improve children's health by providing age-appropriate healthy eating and healthy lifestyles programs to the children and parents. They can also collaborate with school cafeteria staff to ensure healthy food options are available and work with physical education staff to provide presentations to students on the importance of physical activity in feeling good and being healthy. One way that ECMH is currently partnering with the schools is through the clinic at the school in Louise and El Campo. These clinics are used by the school as well as the community (Louise only) and educational material can be provided to children and parents through the clinic staff.

Partnering with Manna Meals, where many of the low-income elderly receive their meals twice a week, the hospital can provide free health screenings as well as education on financial assistance programs available at the hospital that will allow them to have their health care needs addressed sooner rather than later.

These are just examples of how the hospital can collaborate with community organizations to improve the health of the community. By engaging community organizations and citizens in hospital programs, health initiatives can be more effective and sustainable.

Mental and Behavioral Health

One of the first steps in eliminating mental health stigma is providing accurate, straightforward information about mental health disorders, such as the symptoms of depression and anxiety. Myths that exist around mental health can also be eliminated by showing that mental health disorders are treatable, and part of your overall health is mental health. Children and adults will feel better about seeking treatment if they feel that a treatment exists and that seeking treatment for mental health is just like seeking treatment for an injury or other illness. Whether through health fairs, the schools, or a "Lunch and Learn" event, the community is urgently in need of mental health education and ECMH will be an excellent source to provide this education to the community.

An additional recommendation is for ECMH to either recruit and staff a psychiatrist or contract with and bring in a psychiatrist from another facility on a regular basis to meet the Medicare and Medicaid requirements regarding payment for mental health services.

Preventive Health & Disease Prevention Education

Preventive health care and education puts information into the hands of the community and provides tools to help them stay healthy or improve their health. ECMH can offer educational events, post information on social media, and provide support groups. The topics can include:

- General knowledge about nutrition & the importance of exercise to prevent Obesity and Diabetes
- Special awareness information for patients with Diabetes and Hypertension that shows them how to cope with the disease as well as minimize the disease's effects on their body
- Alcohol and drug prevention programs
- Counseling on quitting smoking, losing weight, and treating depression
- Importance of Well-Child Visits and Immunizations

ECMH can bring back the Community Health Fair. Community health fairs allow residents to economically assess their health status and receive information to address their health concerns. Health fairs can also provide valuable information to the hospital, showing ECMH the specific health problems of its residents that need educational and interventional efforts. The timing, location, and promotion of the health fair should be evaluated to ensure good participation and the hospital should partner with other community organizations to make it an effective event for all involved.

Improve Outreach to the Hispanic/Latino Community

The Hispanic/Latino community is one of the largest and fastest growing populations in the country and is the largest percentage of the population in El Campo. Historically, Hispanics in the United States have less access to healthcare, and they utilize fewer preventative care services. Limited cultural sensitivity, health illiteracy, and a shortage of Hispanic/Latino health care providers are the main barriers to access to health services.

While ECMH already provides health-related information in Spanish, it is important for ECMH to improve their outreach to this community by striving to understand the Hispanic/Latino culture and beliefs. This will help the hospital effectively provide healthcare education and services to this community. For example, the most important thing in the Hispanic/Latino culture is family. Family members participate in decisions. Therefore, education must take place at the family level. ECMH could begin the process to convince the family why primary care is important and help the family understand why the parent has diabetes and how to prevent that from happening to the rest of the family. It will also be beneficial for ECMH to educate their employees and specifically the Spanish speaking employees to be more aware and culturally sensitive to the Hispanic/Latino population.

Increasing Specialists and Services

Residents in our focus groups stated that they would like more availability of specialists at ECMH. Recommendations were an Obstetrician, an additional pediatrician, Orthopedics/Sports Medicine, a geriatric physician, and a psychiatrist. While space is an issue in the current facility, this may not be a concern in the new hospital building. Having enough patients to sustain the practice has historically been a challenge for specialist physicians however, so ECMH might consider bringing these specialists to El Campo once a week, a few times a month, or use tele-medicine. Tele-medicine would be a more cost-effective manner to provide these specialist services to the patients that need them and would be of great benefit to the community.

Increase Community Relations

While ECMH is already advertising and updating the community on its services through radio commercials and social media sites, these are additional ideas of actions ECMH can take to promote the hospital and improve community relations:

- Consider establishing a Patient Advisory Council
- Publish status updates on the new hospital facility on social media
- Publicize when new or updated equipment is purchased and explain how it is beneficial to the community
- Promote locally available services to discourage travel to other areas

- Create a Wellness Page on the hospital website
- Offer a Medicare Benefit Guide to the Senior Population
- Organize a speaker for a community Senior Group to raise awareness of a specific health concern, provide a meal, and distribute information
- Create leadership opportunities on hospital committees for younger adult community members
- Promote new physicians on social media and the hospital website
- Publicize collaborations with other community organizations
- Form support groups for diseases such as Cancer and Diabetes and smoking-cessation programs and provide space for them to meet at the hospital
- Create a hospital newsletter with a Wellness Spotlight and post on social media
- Increase hospital presence at community events by sponsoring events or booths
- Organize and host a 5K “Walk with the Docs” Event
- Provide space and equipment for a Fitness Center in the new facility

SUMMARY

Focus group participants were overwhelmingly positive in discussing their individual experiences in receiving support and treatment from ECMH. They indicated that they received excellent care and were grateful that their hospital was in their community because the services they needed required immediate intervention and treatment.

Community hospitals play a significant role in the health care system in the United States. They are often the largest employer, and they provide not only medical services, but also education on healthy living and assistance in accessing necessary services. These community hospitals must constantly evolve in response to local and national demands. Historically, ECMH has been able

to evolve and meet these demands and the hospital will continue to do so as their goal is always to address and improve community health issues.

The feedback provided by the focus group participants in this CHNA report as well as the statistical data can be beneficial to ECMH as it provides direction for where to focus their efforts and funding in serving the community in the future. Implementation of these recommendations will enable ECMH to make the greatest possible impact in the community.

Bibliography

(2022, December 13). Retrieved from El Campo Memorial Hospital: <https://ecmh.org/>

(2022, December 15). Retrieved from Datawheel: <https://datausa.io/>

(2022, December 19). Retrieved from Children's Health: <https://www.childrens.com/>

El Campo Memorial Hospital. (2022, December 14). Retrieved from American Hospital Directory: https://www.ahd.com/free_profile/450694/El_Campo_Memorial_Hospital/El_Campo/Texas/

El Campo, city, Texas, United States. (2022, December 14). Retrieved from United States Census:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/elcampocitytexas,US/PST120221#PST120221>

El Campo, Texas Population 2022. (2022, December 13). Retrieved from World Population Review: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/el-campo-tx-population>

El Campo's Metamorphosis from a railroad Camp. (2022, December 13). Retrieved from El Campo Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.elcampochamber.com/history-of-el-campo>

Hispanic Health in the USA: a scoping review of the literature. (2022, December 20). Retrieved from Public Health Reviews: <https://publichealthreviews.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40985-016-0043-2/>

How Many Latinos Dread Going to the Doctor? (2022, December 19). Retrieved from The Atlantic: <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/05/why-many-latinos-dread-going-to-the-doctor/361547/>

Shortage Area Designations. (2022, December 14). Retrieved from Texas Department of Human Services: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/texas-primary-care-office-tpco/health-professional-shortage-area-designations>

Texas County Profiles. (2022, December 14). Retrieved from Texas Association of Counties: <https://txcip.org/tac/census/CountyProfiles.php>

Texas Genealogy Trails. (2022, December 09). Retrieved from harton County, Texas History of El Campo: http://genealogytrails.com/tex/gulfcoast/wharton/history_el_campo.htm

Texas Senior Guide. (2022, December 15). Retrieved from Senior Care: <https://www.seniorcare.com/directory/tx/>

Texas State Historical Association. (2022, December 13). Retrieved from Handbook of Texas Online: <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbookC/entries/el-campo-tx>

Wikipedia. (2022, December 05). Retrieved from El Campo, Texas: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Campo,_Texas

Your Child's Health. (2022, December 15). Retrieved from Child Care. gov: <https://childcare.gov/consumer-education/your-childs-health>