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MDC's Medical Campus to open low-cost clinic for the needy

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Roberto Koltun / El Nuevo Herald

MDC Medical Campus physical therapy students Tania Medel, Veronys Ramos and Elizabeth Quintana examine a patient in class. The campus will open a new Wellness Clinic in June, where patients from the community will be treated.

In an effort to offer limited medical care to the community it serves, Miami Dade College's Medical Campus is opening a low-cost Wellness Clinic next month.

Once it's in full swing, the clinic will offer basic medical services to the public, carried out by students who are seeking degrees in the medical field and will be supervised by the clinical faculty and volunteer medical professionals at the Medical Campus.

"We are very excited to make this dream a reality," campus president Armando Ferrer said. "With this effort we continue living our philosophy of bringing quality medical services to our community."

Ferrer said the clinic will charge minimal fees to allow it to be self-sufficient.

The benefit of the clinic will be two-fold. It will provide students entering the medical field an additional site to practice what they learn and also contribute to their community, Ferrer said.

The Wellness Clinic — whose construction and medical equipment was funded by grants, foundations, donations and internal funds — cost \$80,000 and is taking over the student life offices at the campus at 950 NW 20th St.

The clinic will be an addition to the existing dental hygiene and vision clinics which have been operating for 20 years at the campus.

Ferrer said that one of the reasons that led MDC to open a new clinic is the high demand he witnesses for medical services at the campus' annual health fair.

About 2,000 people, mostly from the surrounding Overtown, Allapattah, and Wynwood neighborhoods, attend the fair annually in search of medical care. For example, for the 50 free mammograms available, women start lining up at 6 a.m., he said.

During an initial period, the clinic will offer medical services to students. At a low cost, it will help them fulfill the requirements of hospitals, clinics and doctors' offices that they undergo physical exams, drug screening, HIV testing and EKGs before they conduct their required clinical practices and come in contact with patients.

College part-time employees who may not have health insurance will also be served at this clinic. The full services to the community will be added later this year.

"We are very excited to be able to make this dream a reality," Ferrer said. "With this effort we continue alive our mission of educating highly qualified healthcare professionals and also of providing the services to our surrounding underserved community needs."

For more information about the Wellness Clinic, call 305-237-4025.

Miami Herald staff writer Luisa Yanez contributed to this report.

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