

THE PATIENT'S NAVIGATOR

Spring, 2017

Access Now - a program of the Richmond Academy of Medicine



**Total number of patients
seen since
Access Now began**
12,161



**Total current number
of specialty care
volunteers**
882



**Total reported value
of donated care since
Access Now began**
\$36.8 million

Access Now "Doing Good On a Very Large Scale"

As her baby girl slept peacefully in a carrier at her feet, **Dr. Sumac Diaz** sipped a cup of hot chocolate at a local Starbucks as she pondered a question about her many years of service to Access Now.

Over the past nine years since Access Now began, she was asked, how many of our patients have you seen?



Dr. Diaz, an Ob/Gyn who practices at [Virginia Complete Care for Women](#) near Chippenham Hospital, had to think hard. It was soon obvious that it would be easier for her to discuss *why* and *how* she treats the women referred to her from the area's free clinics than to tally up how many she's treated since 2008.

About the *why*: Her father moved from Peru to the United States in the mid-1960s, studying at Michigan State where he met his future wife. Over the years, he always made it a point to take his family back to his native land. It made a lasting impression on young Sumac Diaz.

"I've had the opportunity to go to Peru, and it's a whole different world," she explains. "It's amazing to see where he comes from. You realize when you go down there that you don't need certain things to be happy."

As she attended college and later medical school, "I've always felt very lucky for everything I've had given to me. I did work hard in school, but also I know that not everyone has those opportunities to make the most of it."

Her familiarity with Spanish (through home, high school and college) has helped her treat women from Richmond's burgeoning Hispanic population. "I really learned conversational Spanish after I started practicing in 2004 - just by using it daily to talk to patients."

For other offices, she notes, "If you don't have a bilingual staff, it would be difficult. For us, we didn't have to make accommodations." (Access Now has several volunteer Spanish interpreters to meet patients for appointments.)

But she quickly notes that while she can speak enough Spanish to "do some things medically well," with "other things like basic conversation, I struggled."

Nonetheless, Dr. Diaz has never flagged in her commitment to Access Now - scheduling 377 patients over the years.

Reflecting on her most memorable appointments, she says, "The ones who really stand out to me are those who have a compromised quality of life." This includes women with large fibroids, a common tumor found in the female reproductive system.

While most fibroids are benign, Dr. Diaz explains, "They can make day-to-day living unpleasant," causing pain, bleeding and other symptoms. "So when I do a hysterectomy on a patient like that, these are the times I feel the most reward."

Speaking more about the *how* of her medical practice, Dr. Diaz and her staff work hard to help women avoid cervical cancer.

When patients are referred after an abnormal Pap smear, she reassures them that "this is something that is completely curable. It is not a technically difficult procedure." Using a microscope, she examines the cervix and biopsies the abnormal areas. Women with severe changes need a surgery to remove all the abnormal tissue. With that, Dr. Diaz explains, "You can approach a 100 percent cure, with literally a 15 to 20 minute procedure."

She adds, "Cervical cancer is largely preventable. If patients continue to be compliant with their examinations and the follow up, we should be able to dramatically decrease the long-term complications."

Besides her daily service to women at her practice, Dr. Diaz also manages to have a family with four children and performs other volunteer activities, including serving on Access Now's Board of Directors.

"I find it very interesting and very encouraging, because until I joined

the board, I didn't realize the scale of Access Now. To get an entire room of people together just for the goal of helping people in need, you don't see that much.

"This is a very well-organized, well-run production," Dr. Diaz observes. Serving on the board "makes you feel like you're part of something big and that you're doing good on a very large scale."

Thanks to RAM Alliance Foundation!

We're so grateful to the **Richmond Academy of Medicine Alliance Foundation** for its recent **Physicians Got Fashion** fundraising event. Click [here](#) to see some of the great photos of the memorable night!

And thanks to all those who supported the 2017 fashion gala that raised more than \$60,000 for a number of vital health-related programs. As our **RAMA partners** say on their website: "Who knew raising funds for Access Now, Sexual Assault Crisis Kits (SACKs), Nursing and Allied Professional Scholarships, and the VCU School of Medicine Scholarship could be so fun!"



Dr. Shweta N. Joshi of Richmond Gastroenterology Associates

Reshaping a Barber's Life

In his more than 40 years as a barber, Randy Payne has always changed with the times - whether it was cutting 1970s shags, designing 1980s mullets,

or tying up today's "man buns" and sculpting "high fades."

Payne has never complained about working on commission for small shops without health insurance benefits. But one thing the normally cheerful Chesterfield County resident needed help with was pain - specifically, an excruciating, shooting pain in his hip several years ago that began to make it hard to ply his trade.

He tried paying out of pocket to see an orthopedist, but after getting some initial relief, he simply couldn't afford to keep seeing the doctor.

It didn't take long for the pain to be too much to ply his physically demanding trade.

"If I stood for too long, my leg would go numb, like someone stabbing me in the back with a knife."

About three years ago, he visited Bon Secours Care-A-Van and was seen by **Dr. Jonathan Avula** and **Physician's Assistant Mary Anne McFerren**. After caring for him, he said, the pair referred him to Access Now.

After qualifying for treatment, Payne saw **Dr. David W. Miller Sr.**, a total joint replacement and arthroscopic surgery specialist at **OrthoVirginia**.

Dr. Miller had a simple initial instruction: "Walk."

After watching Payne hobble, not walk, it didn't take long for the specialist to determine Payne needed a right hip replacement. Today, the 64-year-old pulls out images from a thick folder of medical records. "See all the bones, fragile and broke?" he asks. "It wasn't getting any blood to the bone."

His right hip was replaced last winter. By this spring, Payne was still healing and getting physical therapy. But, he says hopefully, "Now I have some pain in the back, but not like it was."

As a result of the surgery and follow-up therapy, he's working again. "Men don't take long to cut hair, so I can sit" between appointments.



Randy at home with pet, Ozzy

Still, if he sits too long, stands, or walks, the old pain and numbness may return.

As he sits on his living room couch holding his feisty dog, Ozzy, Payne sings the praises of Dr. Miller and other Access Now physician volunteers who've helped him with other issues, including his hearing and a colonoscopy.

"They just helped me get my health where I'm more able to do things a little better," he says. "I can hear a little better."

Dr. Fred Shaia, an ENT-Otolaryngologist, diagnosed a case of tinnitus (often known as "ringing in the ears") that was caused "not from a hair blower" at work, but more likely from something that happened years ago during junior high when a student slapped the side of his head.

Payne was also grateful to get a free colonoscopy through Access Now, and especially to hear **Dr. Scott Woogen at Richmond Gastroenterology Associates** pronounce him "clean as a whistle."

Payne explains his relief at hearing the news: "I had three uncles and a cousin die of colon cancer."

So even though he's still working out some lingering stiffness and occasional aches and pain, the barber of Chesterfield is grateful for all of the doctors and nurses who have taken him under their wing, such as McFerren at Care-A-Van.

"She's my guardian angel," he declares with a big smile.

Free certification opportunity from RAM's Honoring Choices Virginia

Honoring Choices® Virginia is committed to ensuring that every individual in our community has the opportunity to have access to quality advance care planning conversations. The Honoring Choices collaborative - comprised of the **Richmond Academy of Medicine, Bon Secours Richmond, HCA Virginia and VCU Health** - is working to normalize discussions regarding individual preferences and goals of care, in the event of medical crisis, as a routine component of the patient care experience.

We would love to partner with you!

With the support of the **Virginia Center on Aging**, Honoring Choices is training certified advance care planning facilitators to have these critical conversations with their patients. The funding stipulates that the facilitators will work with older adults from traditionally underserved populations.

Facilitator-candidates are currently being trained through June. In addition, we will work with your team to develop processes and policies that support integration of these conversations into your clinic's workflow. There are a limited number of seats available for safety net clinics and non-profit organizations to participate at no charge.



Interested in learning more about this opportunity or having one of our speakers at an upcoming event for your patients? Contact **Robin Clair Cummings, Director of Honoring Choices Virginia**, at rcummings@ramdocs.org or 804.622.8141.



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