Pharmacy Professor John Conry Takes His Expertise to the Streets of Manhattan

John Conry, Associate Clinical Professor of Clinical Pharmacy Practice at St. John’s College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions, embodies the Vincentian ideal of service to the poor and disadvantaged by volunteering at least once a week in Manhattan with Project Renewal’s Mobile Medical Outreach Clinic.

Aboard the Clinic’s fully outfitted MedVan -- one of the first mobile medical units to offer preventative, urgent and HIV/AIDS services in addition to primary care to the homeless when it began in 1986 – Professor Conry serves as consultant clinical pharmacist on a team that also includes a physician, a social worker, a physician assistant and a driver/aide. Together they provide primary medical care to homeless people ‘where they are’ – on the streets, in shelters, at soup kitchens and at drop-in centers.

On the MedVan, Professor Conry dispenses medicines and dietary supplements to patients, counseling them on how and when to take their medication, how to appropriately store them and educating them on pertinent urban health care issues. He also provides detailed medication education and information -- such as screening for drug interactions, effective dosages, important side effects and the role of medications for various disease states based on evidenced-based treatment guidelines -- to the other health professionals aboard.

A recently awarded grant of $204,000 from Duane Reade Pharmacy will greatly enhance Professor Conry’s work by allowing the university to establish an ambulatory care specialty residency in pharmaceutical care for the urban indigent, allowing a pharmacy resident to spend the majority of his or her time with him at Project Renewal and at a Duane Reade Pharmacy focusing on improving the pharmaceutical care and medication utilization of the poor in New York City. The resident will also be involved in using his/her experiences to teach pharmacy students within the College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions.

According to Robert A. Mangione, dean of the College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions, Professor Conry’s efforts “may be the only such work being done in the United States by a school of pharmacy. I am very, very excited about the work that we will be doing [as a result of the grant]!”

Dr. Conry has served as a consultant clinical pharmacist for a $1 million grant provided to Professor Elizabeth Brondolo of the Department of Psychology at St. John’s The grant, subcontracted to St. John’s by the National Institutes of Health, is supporting a study of the Behavioral Interventions for Women with HIV/AIDS in the New York Area. Professor Conry’s role included leading group educational sessions on HIV medication knowledge and adherence for women enrolled in the study.
He also serves as a consultant clinical pharmacist for two grants focused on improving HIV-positive patients’ ability to take their HIV medications correctly at Beth Israel Medical Center on the lower east side of New York City.

Along with colleagues (Professors Maria Sulli, Regina Ginzburg and Emily Ambizas and Deans Joseph Brocavich and Robert Mangione) in the clinical pharmacy practice department at the College, he has also designed a continuing education program for Duane Reade pharmacists to improve implementation of patient assessment and pharmaceutical care in their respective community pharmacy settings. They have submitted an abstract regarding this project for presentation at the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Annual Meeting in July 2005.

Professor Conry, who received both his B.S.Pharm. and Pharm.D. from St. John’s, teaches courses – including Introduction to Pharmaceutical Care, Drugs and Diseases of Infectious and Respiratory Diseases, Case Studies in Drugs and Diseases, Advanced Therapeutics and Physical Assessment -- at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. His area of focus is in ambulatory pharmaceutical care, HIV, and smoking cessation. He is the clinical coordinator of the Ambulatory Care AIDS Program at the Peter Krueger Clinic for Immunological Dysfunction and is a consultant clinical pharmacist at the Robert Mapplethorpe Treatment Facility both at Beth Israel Medical Center.

When asked what motivates him to spend so much time volunteering, Professor Conry explained, “there is so much that needs to be done…so many people that need help. I have been blessed with an incredible family and a Catholic education…which have instilled in me the importance of loving our neighbors and helping others. Whether the help needed is a pharmacy student struggling to understand appropriate use of medications or a homeless patient…struggling with the complications of HIV infection, I feel it is my responsibility to be there for them and do what I can.

“Whether you identify yourself as a student, teacher, a homeless or a wealthy person, we are all one community and it is important for me to give back to our community. I am very proud of St. John’s University and its unwavering commitment to its Vincentian mission; it truly makes a difference in the world and makes us unique.”