

# Vitals

May 2018

Greetings:

Mercy Health made an effort to implement an alternative to emergency room referrals for urgent management of patients who had chronic illnesses such as COPD, CHF and complications related to diabetes in 2013. Several reasons halted the alternative's implementation, but a desire to provide high acuity care alternatives continued.

The Cincinnati Clinical Integration Oversight Council (CIOC), Mercy Health Select, Mercy Health Physicians and Mercy Health—Fairfield Hospital are making efforts to reinstitute a High Intensity Medical Home.

A High Intensity Medical Home (HIMH) is an alternative to the emergency room for management of acute exacerbations of chronic medical problems like COPD and CHF. The primary purpose is providing an alternative site for management of these problems for primary care physicians. The proposed hours of operation are from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

We identified the highest utilizers of higher acuity care among our population health patients, and, in conjunction with our primary care providers, we proposed better support for these patients by referral to the HIMH during acute exacerbations of their diseases. For example, a patient with an exacerbation of COPD can receive breathing treatments and steroids from a respiratory therapist in the clinic and receive self-management training by a pharmacist – all without requiring a visit to our emergency department or a hospital stay.

Currently, we are close to initiating this clinic in the North Market at Mercy Health – Fairfield Hospital with the idea of expanding it to other markets.

Our proposed staffing for this “clinic” seeks Primary Care Providers in the region to provide the care given in the HIMH. Depending on the number of providers who are willing to help give this higher acuity care, each person may only need to participate once or twice monthly. The time commitment is from 7 a.m. until 5 p.m., and each provider is reimbursed for their time on a per diem basis. For those of you who are interested in providing this care, it allows you to maintain your “inpatient management skills” for some of our more challenging patients. The hospitalist groups show a willingness to provide the care needed for patients referred at the end of the day (5-10 p.m.), so a warm handoff is required. More details are forthcoming.

If you or your partners want to learn more about providing this level of care – again, starting at Fairfield Hospital with expansion at other hospitals in our region later – please contact me at 513-896-9595 or [ecroper@mercy.com](mailto:ecroper@mercy.com).

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