

## La Clinica eases pain in North Vallejo

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The opening last month of La Clinica de la Raza's North Vallejo Urgent Care Clinic is already starting to ease the strain on the Sutter Solano Emergency Department, Sutter officials said this week.



Nurse Practitioner Betty Labastida checks Maria Serquina Os heart at La Clinica on Monday. Chris Riley/Times-Herald

It should also start doing so for Kaiser Permanente Medical Center, Vallejo's emergency department, a clinic spokeswoman said Monday.

"Kaiser Permanente is proud to support the new North Vallejo La Clinica location," said Rose Calhan, Kaiser Permanente Napa Solano spokeswoman. "La Clinica has a long history of providing excellent primary care services in this community, and we are pleased that community members without a primary care physician have yet another option for their care."

Since the clinic opened Nov. 3, a growing number of the community's low-income, uninsured and underinsured residents have begun going there for urgent and primary care, Sutter officials said. Adjacent to Sutter Solano Medical Center, the facility receives walk-in patients and those deemed non-urgent by the hospital's Emergency Department (ED) personnel.

La Clinica site manager Monique Sims said the clinic is a sort-of medical hybrid, offering procedures beyond those of most primary care clinics, and with shorter wait times for non-emergency patients. But so far, Sutter's been sending only its follow-up patients as it works out protocols that ensure it's in compliance with hospital anti-dumping laws, she said.

"By law we must evaluate everyone who comes into the ED to make sure they don't have an actual emergency before we turn them away," said Sutter Solano Chief Nurse Executive Kim Trumbull. "What we're telling them is that next time they have a non-emergency situation, they can go to La Clinica."

A recent meeting with Kaiser officials produced assurances that non-Kaiser members will be offered a choice, Sims said.

"They'll be told they can be seen at Kaiser, but that it will cost them a lot less and the wait will be a lot shorter if they go to the clinic up the street," Sims said.

Already, the clinic is seeing between seven and 13 patients nightly in the three hours it's open, Sims said. The clinic's hours will expand when it receives full licensing, in a couple months, she said.

"The early feedback we've had has been fantastic, and we're working closely with the Sutter team to research protocols and review the data on avoidable ED visits, which currently take up about 50 percent of the ED's time," Sims said in a prepared statement.

La Clinica North Vallejo, 220 Hospital Drive, is open 20 hours per week (5 to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday) until its hours are increased, officials said.