

To Dr. Jim O'Connell, not having a place to live is a lousy excuse for not having quality medical care.



"We're not here to judge or change people, we're here to heal and relieve suffering," says Dr. James O'Connell, president and street team physician for the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP) — and a Massachusetts General Hospital physician.

With that philosophy, BHCHP delivers quality medical care compassionately and respectfully to more than 9,000 homeless men, women and children annually.

Very often that care is delivered through the BHCHP clinic at MGH — one of the first private hospitals in the nation to host a clinic for homeless people.

The clinic opened 21 years ago, with one physician seeing patients twice a week. Today, the clinic operates five days per week and is staffed by five physicians, one physician assistant and one nurse practitioner. Last year they handled 3,600 visits by homeless people.

Since 1995, Partners HealthCare and MGH have provided \$1.5 million to support the clinic.

The BHCHP clinicians at MGH also educate and train medical students and residents in treating homeless patients. Among the most vulnerable people in our society, the homeless need treatment for exposure to extreme heat and cold, trauma, violence, complex and chronic diseases, persistent mental illness, and substance abuse.

Caregivers from the MGH clinic also provide direct care in the streets and at BHCHP sites at the Pine Street Inn, St. Francis House, Pilgrim Shelter, and two Beacon Hill churches that serve homeless and poor people.

Both MGH and Brigham and Women's Hospital routinely discharge hospitalized homeless patients to the Barbara McInnis House, a BHCHP respite care facility in Jamaica Plain where homeless people can recover from surgery or serious illness.

Dr. Jim, as he's known on the streets, is raising funds for a \$35 million renovation of the Mallory Building in Boston's South End. It will significantly expand BHCHP's respite care and serve as an anchor for its far-reaching program, which operates at more than 70 sites in the Boston area.

Partners HealthCare has made a \$2.5 million charitable contribution to BHCHP for the Mallory project. It is the largest capital gift that Partners has ever made and one of the largest corporate gifts that the BHCHP capital campaign has received to date.

"This gift," Partners President James Mongan, MD explained, "is an expression of our core values. It also supports cost-effective care in the right setting and prevents disparities in health for some of the most vulnerable people in our city."

For more information on Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, visit www.bhchp.org.



A charitable non-profit organization