

For immediate release:
September 12, 2007

Megan Ingmire, Communications Director
785.291.3310

Health Reform Column:
Preventive health care over a lifetime

The following is a column by Dr. Vernon Mills, a Pediatrician., and Board Member for the Kansas Health Policy Authority Board, regarding the use of pediatric models for delivering care among adult populations in order to improve preventive health care in Kansas.

As a pediatrician for 27 years, I have cared for numerous children and their parents seeking a healthy start in life. I know first-hand the positive impact that primary care and preventive services have on the health and well-being of a child. Regular contact between children and their primary care providers is an integral part of child development and can greatly improve children's chances of reaching their full potential in health and well-being. Ensuring every child has health insurance is an important first step.

But why not expand this model of health care delivery beyond childhood? Many of these same services should be provided for other populations so that regular primary care and prevention efforts do not end at age 18.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, over 22% of American adults, ages 18-44, had no usual source of health care. Compare this to children ages 0-17, of which less than 6% had no usual source of health care during this same time period. Adults face multiple barriers to accessing preventive services. In Kansas, only 53% of adults ages 18-44 had received a cholesterol screening in the past five years and less than half had received a screening for colon cancer. In 2006, more than 34% of Kansas adults reported that a year had passed since their last recommended check-up.

While prevention should start at a young age, adults can still benefit from regular access to health care. In recent years, Kansas adults have accessed fewer preventive services; from 1999-2006, the percent of adults who had received a routine check-up decreased from 73% to 66%. We are moving further away from integrating preventive health care for adult populations.

As Kansas moves towards a more prevention-focused health care system, it is important that all populations are targeted. Health reform needs to be all encompassing, with targeted health promotion and disease prevention policies for children, adults, and seniors so that the health of all Kansans is improved.

###

The Health Policy Authority is a state agency created to develop and maintain a coordinated and data-driven health policy agenda, and it was tasked this year with reforming health care delivery in Kansas. On November 1, 2007, the Board will report to the Governor and Kansas Legislature health reform options aimed at improving the health and health care system in Kansas. To stay informed about health reform activities, please visit our webpage, <http://www.khpa.ks.gov/HealthReformHome.htm>.

Agency Website: www.khpa.ks.gov
Address: Rm. 900-N, Landon Building, 900 SW Jackson Street, Topeka, KS 66612-1220

Medicaid and HealthWave:
Phone: 785-296-3981
Fax: 785-296-4813

State Employee Health
Benefits and Plan Purchasing:
Phone: 785-296-6280
Fax: 785-368-7180

State Self Insurance Fund:
Phone: 785-296-2364
Fax: 785-296-6995