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For immediate release

Well Child Clinic's focus, flexibility improves children's care

SAN ANTONIO (Dec. 3, 2008) — A 10-year-old boy is diagnosed with an undescended testicle, a condition usually corrected by age 1 because of its association with testicular cancer. A 7-year-old girl is diagnosed with scoliosis, a spinal curvature that ordinarily is not apparent until puberty. Other children undergoing routine height and weight measurements are found to have uncontrolled type 2 diabetes.

These and other childhood health issues are being identified during well child checkups at a downtown clinic run by faculty and residents of The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. The Family Health Center Well Child Clinic is housed in the University Health Center Downtown, a University Health System facility. The center is a residency training site of the UT Health Science Center's Department of Family and Community Medicine.

"After studying our young patients and their use of services, we created the Well Child Clinic," said Sasha Loffredo, M.D., assistant professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine. "Our well child visits went from 350 in a 12-month period of 2006-2007 to more than 1,400 since November 2007. Before, fewer than 20 percent of children had return visits; now two-thirds do. Clearly the demand was there. By improving the children's care, we've also improved our residents' education."

The team made family-friendly changes, including guaranteeing well child care appointments within seven to 10 days of calling. A nurse is on hand to identify funding sources, fill out Medicaid applications or register children on Bexar County's CareLink system, and during the school year the clinic offers an evening session so children don't have to miss school for checkups.

Children receive immunizations, blood pressure and obesity checks, and many other assessments of overall health that reveal health concerns or issues. "During these sessions, all health care providers are doing nothing but well child care," Dr. Loffredo said.

Judging by the response, the community loves the concept.

“We are working on filling the gap for these children and parents,” Dr. Loffredo said. “We keep adding sessions and they are full. The question is: When do we have so many that we don’t have enough staff to meet the demand? But, this has done great things for the community and our residency training program.”

The team will conduct Well Child Clinic sessions on several days during the school holidays when parents might find it easier to bring their children for a checkup. The number to call for parents in Bexar and surrounding counties is (210) 358-3985.

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The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio is the leading research institution in South Texas and one of the major health sciences universities in the world. With an operating budget of \$668 million, the Health Science Center is the chief catalyst for the \$16.3 billion biosciences and health care sector in San Antonio’s economy. The Health Science Center has had an estimated \$36 billion impact on the region since inception and has expanded to six campuses in San Antonio, Laredo, Harlingen and Edinburg. More than 24,000 graduates (physicians, dentists, nurses, scientists and other health professionals) serve in their fields, including many in Texas. Health Science Center faculty are international leaders in cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, aging, stroke prevention, kidney disease, orthopaedics, research imaging, transplant surgery, psychiatry and clinical neurosciences, pain management, genetics, nursing, dentistry and many other fields. For more information, visit www.uthscsa.edu.