

# Western Carolina Medical Society

2021 Strategic Plan

October – December Update

## **WHO WE ARE:**

**OUR VISION** is to serve as a dynamic physician/physician assistant community dedicated to a healthy, vibrant western North Carolina (WNC).

**OUR VALUES** are integrity, equity, and innovation.

**OUR PARTNERS** include Independent Physicians, Employed Physicians, Physician Assistants, Community Leaders, Sponsors/Businesses, Donors/Funders, Health System Leaders, Practice Managers, Patients, and Western Carolina Medical Society Foundation (WCMSF) employees

## **WHAT WE DO:**

- The WCMSF's mission is to advocate for healthy communities, increase access to healthcare, fight health inequities, and promote wellness in WNC.

# Western Carolina Medical Society

2021 Strategic Plan  
October – December Update

## Table of Contents

<b>METRICS FOR CORE AREAS OF WCMS</b>	<b>3</b>
MEMBERSHIP	3
PROJECT ACCESS® (PA)	3
WCMS INTERPRETER NETWORK (WIN)	3
FUNDRAISING	3
<b>STRATEGIES AND GOALS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>STRATEGY 1: INCREASE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE QUALITY HEALTHCARE</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Goal 1. Improve access to care for medically vulnerable populations</i>	4
<i>Goal 2: Expand WNC Colorectal Screening Initiative</i>	5
<i>Goal 3: Utilize Certified Application Counselors to enroll or refer into the Health Insurance Marketplace</i>	5
<i>Goal 4: Conduct outreach and raise awareness about WCMSF programming s</i>	5
<i>Goal 5: Improve access to health care in WNC communities via WCMSF Endowment grants</i>	5
<b>STRATEGY 2: FIGHT HEALTH INEQUITIES</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Goal 1. Reduce health inequities among limited English proficient and Deaf populations in WNC</i>	6
<i>Goal 2: Carry out strategies published in WCMS' statement on Racism as a Public Health Crisis:</i>	7
<i>Goal 3: Advance WCMSF's Dr. Charles Blair Health Scholar and Endowment Funds</i>	7
<i>Goal 4: Support efforts to address public health crises as they arise and work to prevent them</i>	7
<b>STRATEGY 3: PROMOTE WELLNESS IN WCMSF EMPLOYEES, WNC PROVIDERS, AND PATIENTS</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Goal 1: Promote well-being by providing physician/provider support systems</i>	8
<i>Goal 2: Promote wellness and work-life balance for WCMSF employees through our Wellness Program</i>	9
<b>STRATEGY 4: ENGAGE PHYSICIANS/PROVIDERS ACROSS THE REGION IN STATE AND LOCAL ADVOCACY</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Legislative/policy Priorities</i>	9
<i>Goal 1: Continue visits to State legislators with local physicians and providers</i>	10
<i>Goal 2. Conduct visits/communications to organizational leaders</i>	10
<b>STRATEGY 5: ENHANCE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Goal 1: Recruit and retain members</i>	10
<i>Goal 2: Recruit and retain donors</i>	10
<i>Goal 3: Recruit and retain sponsors</i>	10
<i>Goal 4: Write grants</i>	10

# Western Carolina Medical Society

2021 Strategic Plan

October – December Update

## Metrics for Core Areas of WCMS

### ❖ **Membership**

- Membership recruiting and retention goal for 2021 is 600 members at a value of \$130,500. Members to date are 694 at a net value of \$133,037.50 and a gross value of \$139,050. During the fourth quarter of 2021, 237 members either joined or renewed their WCMS memberships. Membership renewals for 2022 began during this quarter.

### ❖ **Project Access® (PA)**

- In the fourth quarter, 1142 unique patients were served. For the year, 2600 unique patients were served.
- Project Access® has a goal to enroll 1650 new patients in 2021. In the fourth quarter, 401 new patients were enrolled. For the year, 1349 new patients were enrolled.
- This quarter Project Access® screened 262 patients for Social Determinants of Health. One hundred and thirty-three (133) referrals were made: 35 to address food insecurities, 39 for transportation, 33 for housing and utilities, and 14 for employment. Note that patients may have more than one referral. Project Access® also referred 23 patients for enrollment in the Health Insurance Marketplace. For the year, 1064 patients were screened, and 602 referrals were made.

### ❖ **WCMS Interpreter Network (WIN)**

- WIN has a goal to fulfill 6000 interpretation appointments in 2021 for a value of \$363,706. This quarter WIN had 1090 appointments at a value of \$79,812. For the year, there were 4520 appointments at a value of \$429,996.

### ❖ **Fundraising**

- The fundraising goal for 2021 is \$45,000. \$75,842 was raised in 2021, with \$30,801 of that coming in Q4.

# Western Carolina Medical Society

2021 Strategic Plan  
October – December Update

## Strategies and Goals

### ❖ Strategy 1: Increase access to affordable quality healthcare

#### ➤ Goal 1. Improve access to care for medically vulnerable populations in WNC through Project Access® (PA)

- ✚ Serve at least 1650 PA patients through in enrollment and/or referral
  - In the fourth quarter, 401 new patients were enrolled. For the year, we have enrolled 1349 new patients.
- ✚ Secure pledges from two new practices to participate in PA
  - We have completed this goal; however, we continue to pursue new practices to participate.
  - One (1) new clinic, Wild Health, pledged to see 5 patients a year. The pledge drive for 2022 was launched in this quarter and we got a response from 9 clinics that will continue participation in the New Year. The rest of the donating clinics will roll over into the New Year until we hear differently.
- ✚ Explore expanding PA to additional rural counties
  - WCMS continued discussions with Care Reach to collaborate with their organization to serve McDowell, Mitchell and Yancey Counties through Toe River Project Access and MATCH programs, both organizations are administered by Care Reach. This partnership's goal is to provide specialty care in these areas since there is no access as of now.
- ✚ Explore establishing a multi-county Dental PA
  - WCMS worked this quarter with MAHEC Dental to create a process for patients to be seen for donated care at their Polk County clinic. Visits will begin Q1 2022.
- ✚ Screen, navigate and find resources for at least 800 patients in areas that address social determinants of health, such as insurance, employment, transportation, food security, interpersonal safety and housing
  - This quarter Project Access® screened 262 patients for Social Determinants of Health. One hundred and thirty-three (133) referrals were made: 35 to address food insecurities, 39 for transportation, 23 for housing and utilities, and 14 for employment. Note, patients may have more than one referral. Project Access® referred 23 individuals for enrollment in the Health Insurance Marketplace. For the year, 1064 patients were screened, and 602 referrals were made.
  - Project Access® assisted many people who were negatively affected by the pandemic by referring them to our community-based partner organizations. Many of our partners were able to assist those that may not qualify for governmental assistance. Some partner organizations offered assistance with rent, COVID testing, COVID relief funds, utilities and other services.

# Western Carolina Medical Society

2021 Strategic Plan

October – December Update

- ***Goal 2: Expand WNC Colorectal Screening Initiative in Buncombe, Madison, Mitchell, Yancey and Avery counties***
  - Project Access® received three (3) referrals for WNC CRCSI. All three were accepted into Project Access®.
  - Eight positive FITs were found and seven colonoscopies completed in Q4 (one scheduled for Q1 2022).
  - We received a grant from the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center to create a coalition in McDowell County to address CRC screening, colonoscopies and CRC treatment for uninsured people in that county. The project began in Q4.
  - Expansion to Avery County continues to stay on hold, at their request, due to pandemic related work.
  
- ***Goal 3: Utilize Certified Application Counselors to enroll or refer 20 people for enrollment into the Health Insurance Marketplace (HIM)***
  - ✚ Project Access® referred twenty-three (23) individuals for enrollment into the Health Insurance Marketplace.
  - ✚ Health Access Coordinators (HAC) participated in the training to fulfill the requirements for Certified Application Counselor (CAC) to be able to assist those that are over-income for Project Access®. Due to the growing number of referrals to Project Access®, we refer individuals to our partners who potentially qualify for coverage.
  
- ***Goal 4: Conduct outreach and raise awareness about WCMSF programming available to the general public, providers, and community based organizations***
  - ✚ WCMS continued work with CareReach and its subsidiaries to discuss collaboration on a multi-county Project Access-like program alliance.
  - ✚ A Medserve Fellow continues to be co-located in the Madison County Health Department thus maintaining representation for Project Access® in rural NC.
  - ✚ WCMS and contract interpreters represented Project Access® at vaccine clinics in the community. Rack cards, business cards and other information have been shared with numerous CBOs and constituents.
  
- ***Goal 5: Improve access to health care in WNC communities via WCMSF Endowment grants once annually***
  - ✚ Granted \$8830 to the Institute for Preventative Healthcare and Advocacy (IFPHA) for their HELP (Health Engagement Leading to Prevention) Today Program as part of a \$15,000 Community Foundation of WNC's Human Services grant. The funding will help IFPHA train, mobilize and utilize embedded, trusted community health workers to support early home-based COVID-19 testing and encourage quarantine for suspected cases until test results can be obtained.

# Western Carolina Medical Society

2021 Strategic Plan

October – December Update

## ❖ Strategy 2: Fight health inequities

### ➤ *Goal 1. Reduce health inequities among limited English proficient and Deaf populations in WNC via WCMS Interpreter Network (WIN) Program*

- ✚ Fulfill at least 6,000 interpretation appointments
  - For the year, we had a total of 4520 appointments. WIN has continued to see a decline in appointments from HCA/Mission. While the number of appointments has decreased, the value has increased due to the vaccine clinic appointments which exceed 4 hours each.
- ✚ Engage and educate the WNC region regarding the importance of in-person interpretation by professional, qualified interpreters
  - Planning continued to offer trainings about the importance of in-person interpretation. We plan to educate medical professionals on the importance of offering language services. If a patient requests an in-person interpreter, they should be accommodated.
- ✚ Expand presence in rural counties
  - Interpreter services were provided to vaccine clinics in Henderson, McDowell, Yancey, Macon, Jackson counties, to name a few. Opportunities to collaborate with other rural CBO's will take place in the near future.
- ✚ Continue strengthening ASL interpreter services by incorporating suggestions from the Deaf Community
  - We continue to recruit highly recommended ASL interpreters. We have adjusted pay rates for the ASL interpreters that are more aligned with industry standards.
- ✚ Explore new business opportunities for interpreter/translation business outside of traditional health care services that address social determinants of health
  - The WNC Community Foundation PIN grant has enabled WIN to provide in person interpretation services for partners like Pisgah Legal, YMCA, YWCA and Community Free Clinic in the areas of social determinants of health.
  - WIN secured a contract with Blue Sky Health (Lamond Family Medicine), CareReach, Inc., Community Family Practice, Haywood Pediatrics, and Forest Dermatology.
  - WIN continues to offer in-person interpretation as the preferred form of communication for limited English-speaking people and the Deaf and hard of hearing. WIN continues to offer Video Remote Interpretation and telephonic options.
  - WIN continues to see an increase in translation work. We are happy to see that more and more clients are answering the call of language equity amongst our community members. Most of the translation work

# Western Carolina Medical Society

2021 Strategic Plan

October – December Update

has been along the lines of COVID vaccine awareness; we hope that this continues beyond COVID in recognizing that access to language services ensures that all of our community members, no matter their native language are seeing the same information of those whose native tongue is English.

- ✚ Partner with Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) to offer high quality interpreter training opportunities.
  - No activity this quarter.
  
- **Goal 2: Carry out strategies published in WCMS' statement on Racism as a Public Health Crisis: <https://www.mywcms.org/news-and-events/anti-racism-in-healthcare/wcms-statement-on-racism-as-a-public-health-crisis>**
  - ✚ The Black Provider Affinity Group had two in person meetings this quarter.
  - ✚ The Recruitment and Retention of Black Physicians Task Force met twice monthly to develop and carry out goals and strategies. According to Sheps Center data for Buncombe County in 2019, there was a total of 1,185 physicians, 87.3% of which were White, matching the general population of 88.8% of Whites. However, there were just 23 Black physicians, which represents only 1.94% of the total population of physicians, far below the Black population of 6.3%. The goal is to increase the Black physician population to match the overall percentage of the community. Efforts will be done over the next 5 years through intentional and strategic recruitment efforts among the major health care systems in the area.
  - ✚ Engaged the services of CEO Search consultant, Kimberly Alexander, whose services are rooted in values of equity, inclusion, and performance.
  - ✚ Engaged the services of Dr. Sharon West as co-CEO.
  
- **Goal 3: Advance WCMSF's Dr. Charles Blair Health Scholar and Endowment Funds**
  - ✚ \$4882 in donations for the Dr. Charles Blair Health Scholar fund was raised this quarter.
  
- **Goal 4: Support efforts to address public health crises as they arise and work to prevent them (ex: Opioid epidemic, nicotine vaping/tobacco use, the impact of climate change on health, racism as a public health crisis, Covid-19 pandemic)**
  - ✚ Advocate for effective policies/regulations locally and in Raleigh
  - ✚ Support and connect local/regional efforts
    - WCMS serves on the WNC Vaccine Acceleration Consortium, comprised of Public Health Directors, Hospital CMOs, FQHC Directors, Dogwood Health Trust leadership, and NC DHHS leadership.
  - ✚ Promote educational resources
    - At vaccine clinics provided CDC handouts and NC Department of Health and Human Services cards in English and Spanish about rights to the vaccine.

# Western Carolina Medical Society

2021 Strategic Plan

October – December Update

- ✚ Engage providers
  - Kept providers up to date on local, state, and national COVID news via WCMS' COVID webpage.

## ❖ Strategy 3: Promote wellness in WCMSF employees, WNC providers, and patients

### ➤ Goal 1: Promote well-being by providing physician/provider support systems

- ✚ Engage WCMS members and make them aware of their membership benefits
  - Engagement of membership through affinity groups, legislative advocacy, and volunteer events.
  - WCMS 2022 membership drive mailer was sent in November 2021 to all WCMS members, past members, and individuals who had never been members.
  - Additionally, correspondence and invoicing continued between WCMS and 100% Member Practices. Continued to update and maintain 100% practice group status by adding new practice employees as WCMS members.
  - Continued to connect with membership through social media and the membership exclusive weekly e-newsletter, Vital Signs. We reached 5,997 people through social media pages.
  - Facebook engagement went down 8.7%, but the organization's Instagram engagement went up 32.4%.
- ✚ Continue evolving the WCMS' Healthy Healer Program
  - HHP added a psychologist from AdventHealth and a psychiatry resident to the HHP Steering Committee
  - Two new therapists were added to the HHP Program including a Spanish-speaking Latina and a queer woman to offer members more options for therapy and therapists.
  - One of the steering committee members presented a burnout presentation accredited for CMEs at the St. Luke's Hospital monthly physician forum.
- ✚ Offer Affinity Groups, as appropriate, for membership and further their development
  - The Black Providers Affinity Group met twice in Q4.
  - WCMS Fall Festival took place on October 17, 2021 at Claxton Farms
  - WCMS partnered with Parsec Financial for a WCMS Appreciation Gala at the Grove Park Inn
- ✚ Organize community volunteer projects
  - Volunteer activity for 2022 finalized.
- ✚ Serve as a clearing-house for important health care trends to enhance the practice of medicine in WNC
  - Publish weekly Vital Signs, monthly Community Pulse, and quarterly Best Practices

# Western Carolina Medical Society

2021 Strategic Plan

October – December Update

- ✓ E-newsletter, Best Practices, was designed and created for WNC practice managers.
- ✓ Open rate for publications is an average of 34%, which is 11% higher than industry non-profit email open rates. Additionally, open rates increased by 9% over the previous 91 days.
- Continue adding critical information and events about the Pandemic on WCMS website and in Vital Signs
  - ✓ [COVID-19 News and information](#)
- Conduct and share innovative practice interviews
  - ✓ No activity this quarter.

➤ **Goal 2: Promote wellness and work-life balance for WCMSF employees through our Wellness Program, policies, benefits (as resources allow)**

- ✚ Encourage employees to participate in wellness initiatives including weekly meditations, on site exercise, daily walks, and monthly wellness challenges
  - A weekly Mindfulness Monday email is sent to the entire staff. Content includes guided meditation videos, gratitude activities, links to Ted Talks of mental health professionals and academic researchers, and additional resources.
- ✚ Promote a workplace culture that supports WCMSF employees leading by example in prioritizing their personal health
  - A weekly Thunder Thursday email is sent to the entire staff. The subject of the emails is always related to exercise or general physical health. Content includes workouts, articles about staying healthy, and some discuss the mental health benefits of exercise.
  - Employees kept track of their exercise on a Wellness Log; for achievement of fitness goal, employees received a ½ day of PTO as a reward. Our requirement is ten minutes of exercise per day during the work week. WCMS encourages employees physically activity, take workday breaks, and “resets” to reduce the potential for stress, anxiety, or burnout.
  - Some of the weekly Mindfulness Monday and Thunder Thursday emails have been shared on our social media platform by our Digital Media Coordinator intern.

❖ **Strategy 4: Engage physicians/providers across the region in state and local advocacy to improve the health of patients and providers of WNC**

➤ **Legislative/policy Priorities:**

- ✚ Patient and provider protections in new Medicaid Reform law
- ✚ Medicaid expansion/affordable health care access for all
- ✚ Mental Health Access
- ✚ Keeping legislation out of the exam room

# Western Carolina Medical Society

2021 Strategic Plan

October – December Update

- ✚ Public Health Crises (e.g., Opioid/substance abuse, Vaping, Climate change and its impact on health, racism as a public health crisis)
- ✚ Health inequities in communities of Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color
  
- **Goal 1: Continue visits to State legislators with local physicians and providers, both in WNC between sessions and in Raleigh during sessions (e.g., White Coat Wednesdays)**
  - ✚ WCMS continued to talk with legislators and providers about their concerns with the healthcare system in WNC, including patient safety, diminishment of services and access to affordable healthcare
  
- **Goal 2. Conduct visits/communications to organizational leaders that impact health care delivery in the region**
  - ✚ WCMS serves on the WNC Vaccine Acceleration Consortium, comprised of Public Health Directors, Hospital CMOs, FQHC Directors, Dogwood Health Trust leadership, and NC DHHS leadership.
  
- ❖ **Strategy 5: Enhance recruitment, retention and relationship building with potential and current members, sponsors, funders and donors of WCMS**
  - **Goal 1: Recruit and retain at least 600 members at a value of \$130,500**
    - ✚ WCMS currently has 694 members with a net value of \$133,037.50
  
  - **Goal 2: Recruit and retain 190 donors at a value of \$45,000**
    - ✚ \$30,801 was received from 99 donors in Q4 for a total of 226 donors and \$75,842 in 2021.
  
  - **Goal 3: Recruit and retain 20 sponsors at a value of \$27,000**
    - ✚ Received, for the year, a commitment from 21 organizations to sponsor our events for a total of \$40,500.
  
  - **Goal 4: Write 7 grants at a value of \$400,000**
    - ✚ Four grants were written and submitted in the fourth quarter. We heard from two: we received \$235,000 from Dogwood Health Trust for the Project Access<sup>®</sup> Hub and Spoke Project to work with our partners to bring Project Access<sup>®</sup> to McDowell, Mitchell and Yancey counties and we received \$8000 from the Lily W. Smith Trust, which we are using to provide behavioral health treatment to children at Blue Ridge Community Health Center. We are still waiting to hear from the Duke Endowment on \$250,000 grant application. We also applied for \$160,000 from the Leon Levine Foundation to support Project Access<sup>®</sup>. We'll hear from them in June 2022. In 2021 we received \$437,000 in grants. Fourteen grants were written and submitted.