



Advocates for Responsible Care
We will be their voice until their voices are heard.

Fulton County Board of Commissioners

April 20, 2011

As President of the Advocates for Responsible Care (ARx), I would like to thank the Board of Commissioners of Fulton County, and especially Commissioner Emma Darnell, for this opportunity to voice our concerns over Grady Health System (GHS) closing of outpatient clinics, reducing programs and services and violating their mission to the residents of Fulton and DeKalb County. We thank this Board for voting to keep the Otis Smith Grady Clinic open.

ARx feels strongly that the Grady Health Systems administration should be accountable to serving the residents of Fulton and DeKalb counties. In the summer of 2009 I was asked to help 42 patients with ESRD (End Stage Renal Disease) maintain their life-sustaining dialysis treatment because Grady Hospital was closing its Dialysis Outpatient Clinic. These patients would die within 2 weeks without scheduled dialysis treatment. Grady Hospital was prepared to abandon these patients without any consultation with the Fulton/DeKalb Hospital Authority, Fulton/DeKalb Commissioners, Georgia elected officials, patient advocates, community leaders or concerned residents.

GHS refused to take any measures that would enable the Outpatient Dialysis Clinic to remain open. In December 2009, ARx held a conference at Emory University to initiate a dialogue with GHS, private dialysis providers and other clinics. Our goal was to create a financially sustainable setting for the Outpatient Dialysis clinic and open the doors for 'insured' patients to also use the facility. GHS did not attend or acknowledge any proposed strategies. We immediately sought legal advice, community support and press and media coverage to bring the actions of GHS to the public and hold GHS accountable for the well being of these patients. Throughout this process Grady's disregard for the leaders and citizens who fiscally and contractually sustain them was highlighted.

Since 2009, Grady has cut services and communication with the residents of Fulton/DeKalb Counties and defaulted on upholding their mission. GHS Bylaws state and I quote: **"Grady Memorial Hospital Corporation's mission is to provide healthcare to indigent individuals and the sick or injured and to promote the general health and welfare of the citizens of the State of Georgia and surrounding areas..."**

GHS has made every change in their practice that would cancel their accountability to the county residents and has insisted on moving toward a policy of greater privatization.

To date:

- Grady has put the burden of their privatization, increased salaries, decreased services and elimination of jobs on backs of the poor of Fulton and DeKalb counties.
- Grady has announced the closing of 2 Outpatient Clinics (Otis Smith and South DeKalb) cutting services to these neighborhoods.
 - * GHS has announced these closings creating a firestorm of catastrophes denying people access to care.
 - * GHS has disregarded the patients' hardship of using public transportation; physically for those disabled and those seriously ill (like the elderly and disabled patients from the Hightower Manor directly behind the Otis Smith Clinic)
 - * GHS has neglected the financial burden of patients seeking public transportation.
 - * GHS has increased the patients' vulnerability to a medical crisis by creating a delay in seeking care because they must now travel to Grady's ER to get care. These delays could be fatal as in the case of ESRD Dialysis patients. (Site Gloria)

* GHS has added an increased financial burden to their operation with it costing 3-5 times more money for a patient to receive care through the ER.

* GHS has been repeatedly asked, “Where are you sending newly diagnosed Dialysis patients?” GHS has refused to answer.

- Since August 2010, Grady has not renewed any of the Dialysis Clinic patients ‘Grady Health Cards’ despite this renewal process being part of the ARxC agreement with Grady for 32 ESRD patients. These patients are without access to medical care and vital prescription drugs.
- GHS independently cuts measures that jeopardize the access and quality of care to patients without county, state or community input.

By critically cutting medical services and programs to the poor and by closing Outpatient Clinics, GHS demonstrates a blatant disregard for serving the public and the devastating impact on patients.

Since August 2009, when Grady closed their Outpatient Dialysis Clinic, ARxC has fought for, currently 31 Grady dialysis patients to receive long term dialysis care. We feared that the closing of the Dialysis Clinic was Grady’s first step in deserting their patients. Today we know that Grady intends to further neglect their mission without providing a dialogue of care for the residents of Georgia. Possibly this Board would consider developing its own budget for GHS and use some of its present allocation toward a national health center in Georgia or making an alliance with a community center in Atlanta that would serve the needs of its poor and uninsured. The NHC or Community Center would appreciate the Fulton and DeKalb counties funding.

We are faced with a crisis of care. ARxC asks our Fulton County Commissioners to provide an avenue to give the residents of Georgia a voice as stakeholders in the patient practices and policies at GHS. An impartial delegation or committee could be established that would report to the Board of Commissioners to ensure that GHS upholds its mission in an environment of transparency to not only support, but cultivate the welfare of the indigent and sick.

Sincerely,

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The Advocates for Responsible Care empowers individuals to achieve their maximum wellness with a strong voice as health care advocates, effectively reducing cultural incompetency and health care delivery disparity.