

**Dec. 13, 2006, 11:12AM**

SOUTHWEST HOUSTON

## **Area clinic providing free flu shots**

Drive is focused on young residents and senior citizens

**By SESHADIRI KUMAR**

Chronicle Correspondent

Within the first hour after the Ibn Sina Community Clinic opened Dec. 8 to offer free flu shots, 45 people had received free vaccinations.

The drive to protect area residents from the flu — particularly children ages 4-9 and seniors age 60 and older — was sponsored by officers of the Ibn Sina Foundation, the Rotary Club of Sharpstown and the Houston Community College System.

The clinic had planned to give at least 400 shots and more if needed, said Dr. Aijaz Ali Khowaja, chief executive officer of the Ibn Sina Foundation Clinic, 11246 S. Wilcrest in southwest Houston.

About 190 people received the shots Dec. 8-9, and the clinic had about 70 more in stock on Dec. 11.

The shots would be given free until the stock is exhausted, said clinic manager Claudia Lozano.

People were showing up for the free flu shots Dec. 11, she said.

Khowaja added it is important for children and seniors to get flu vaccinations due to their risk of developing a more serious illness if they become infected with a flu virus.

Ken Burgess, past president of the Rotary Club of Sharpstown, said the club, its foundation and members contributed \$4,000 to purchase the flu vaccines.

HCC president Jay Aiyer, who briefly visited the clinic on Dec. 8, said HCC-Southwest donated \$1,500 for the flu vaccines to assist the community.

Dilawar Ajani, vice chairman of the Ibn Sina Foundation, said he appreciated the contributions of the Rotary Club and HCC, and urged the organizations to continue their support every year so that the clinic could make the free flu shots an annual event.

Khowaja said the clinic, now located in the Savoy shopping center, has limited space and various medical services are given in rotation.

For example, dental care is provided in the morning, mother and child care during the day, and adult and senior services in the evening.

A new, 5,000-square-foot facility for the clinic is under construction on land adjacent to the existing clinic.

Khowaja said the new building is scheduled to open on March 21, 2007. The project cost, including equipment and furnishing, is \$1.85 million, he said.

The new clinic will provide X-ray and ultrasound services, along with eye and dental care. Specialists in cardiology, urology, women's health issues and bone and joint problems will also see patients in the new clinic.

The existing, three-room clinic handles about 12,000 patients a year. Approximately 15,000 patients are expected to be seen at the new clinic annually.

Khowaja said the clinic's annual operating costs are about \$600,000 a year. This amount should grow to \$1 million with the new clinic.

While the clinic will meet 70 percent of its operating costs on its own, it will depend on grants and donations for the remaining 30 percent, he said.

The Ibn Sina Foundation was established in 2001 to meet the growing demand for health care among the immigrant and indigent populations.

The clinic aims at reducing the cost of health care in emergency rooms and hospitals by providing primary and preventive health care, Ajani said.

He said indigent and uninsured patients have to pay a flat fee of \$25. If patients are unable to pay, the foundation makes alternate arrangements.

For more information, call the clinic at 832-328-1680.