

OU BEDLAM CLINICS: PRESCRIBING HELP

Pharmacists aid working poor

► Through six local community pharmacies, patients can get most medications filled for a minimal co-payment of \$5.

By **KIM ARCHER**
World Staff Writer

Jim Spoon says his job is not just about money.

"It's community spirit," said Spoon, who is one of four local independent pharmacists who provide an estimated \$50,000 monthly in prescriptions to Tulsa's working poor through the University of Oklahoma Bedlam Clinic.

In 2003, OU-Tulsa opened its walk-in Bedlam clinic, 2815 S. Sheridan Road, to serve those Tulsans who work but have no health insurance. That has expanded to include a medical student clinic at 1111 S. St. Louis Ave., 10 school-based clinics and two public-housing clinics.

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HELP:

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scriptions filled for a minimal co-payment of \$5.

"Obviously, that doesn't cover our costs, even if somebody paid for the drugs outright," said Jim Brown, owner of Freeland-Brown Pharmacy, 4112 S. Peoria Ave.

But without this group of philanthropic pharmacists, doctor visits at the clinics would be in vain, said Dr. Jack Coffey, OU-Tulsa's clinical associate dean of pharmacy.

"This is the only sustainable kind of drug supply for indigent people in this area," he said, adding that Oklahoma City is

Where to go

University of Oklahoma Bedlam volunteer pharmacies:

Couch Pharmacies, 444 S. Sheridan Road

Freeland-Brown Pharmacy, 4112 S. Peoria Ave.

Drug Warehouse, 3063 S. Sheridan Road

Spoon Drug, 540 Plaza Court, Sand Springs

T. Roy Barnes Drugry, 3404 S. Yale Ave.

T. Roy Barnes Drugry, 9757 E. 31st St.

working to develop a similar delivery system.

It seems risky for smaller, independent pharmacies to give so much, particularly in a climate where independent pharmacies struggle as the government continues to cut back on Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements.

"The community pharmacies that are left now are strong

ones," Spoon said. "Half the prescriptions that are filled in the U.S. are filled by independent pharmacies."

Bedlam clinic patients are "probably one of the most compliant patient populations I've found," said Dr. Tony Palmer, OU-Tulsa College of Pharmacy clinical associate professor. "They're so grateful once they get their prescriptions."

And the emphasis on helping the community allows local medical and pharmacy students the chance to learn the importance of public health, said Dr. Dean Arneson, the college's associate dean of academic affairs.

"You hear stories about the overall cost of health care rising. By doing this, we're keeping people out of the emergency rooms, and we're reaching people before their conditions become critical. This prevents higher costs for society as a whole," he said.

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Pharmacist Sharon Hayes checks a prescription at T. Roy Barnes Drugry on Tuesday as drugstore owner Jim Spoon works next to her. Spoon is one of four local independent pharmacists who are donating prescriptions to patients through the University of Oklahoma Bedlam Clinic.