

# Health Care on the Move

April 23, 2008 1:45 AM

Alicia Duplessis [aduples@tulane.edu](mailto:aduples@tulane.edu)

Thanks to the State of Qatar, the Tulane University Community Health Center at Covenant House is making health care accessible to more New Orleanians. A bright green mobile medical unit provides "On the Road Services" in neighborhoods where residents live.



Dr. Chukwunonso Dennar takes a moment between patients to collect his thoughts in front of the mobile medical unit where he is medical director and physician on board. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The mobile medical unit is the size of a large recreational vehicle, and its interior has everything a doctor's office should have, including a registration area, patient waiting area and examination room.

Dr. Chukwunonso Dennar is medical director and physician on board for the medical unit, which Qatar funded through a \$5 million [grant](#) to Tulane University.

The grant was awarded to help New Orleans residents receive adequate medical attention as the city rebuilds following Hurricane Katrina.

"We have a way to increase access of health care to people who are not able to get it for different reasons," says Dennar, an assistant professor of medicine in the general internal medicine and geriatrics section in the Tulane School of Medicine.

"During this time of rebuilding New Orleans and the health infrastructure, I see the mobile unit as a transient medical patch until a viable health structure is operational."

The mobile unit travels to the parking lots of apartment complexes, churches and schools. Services offered include physical examinations, immunizations, blood pressure screening and monitoring, and social work services such as counseling and assistance with Medicare.

According to Dennar, once the unit becomes fully functional, it will park five days per week at set locations around metro New Orleans. Both adult medical attention and pediatric services will be available four times per week with one day reserved for pediatrics only.

Tulane University

The green mobile unit joins two [blue mobile medical units](#) that provide free pediatric care to children in the greater New Orleans area under the direction of the [New Orleans Children's Health Project](#) and the Tulane Department of Pediatrics.

With the loss of many medical records during Hurricane Katrina, Dennar says that he hopes the unit will get children back on schedule with immunizations.

"Our computer systems are linked to both Tulane and Covenant House," says Dennar. "That way we can upload patient charts and medical records to a central database. That would prevent another loss in medical records."

Dennar expects the unit to be running at full capacity sometime this summer. In addition to the doctor, the unit is staffed by a driver who also handles patient registration, a nurse and a social worker.

"Right now we see between 10 and 16 patients a day, but once we're in full effect and we have our patient screening days, the numbers will get larger," Dennar says, adding that 20 patients would be the average number seen each day.

The [Tulane University Community Health Center](#) is a partner of Covenant House, an organization that provides care for homeless and at-risk youth and their children in New Orleans.