

# HEALTH MATTERS

## Russell Street Dentists Hang On

Low-income, HIV-positive patients get care

BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A 27-year-old former methamphetamine addict got his mouth checked for the first time in years at the Russell Street Dental Clinic last week. The dentist told him the bad news: Nothing could be saved on the upper half of his mouth; 20 teeth would have to be extracted. The good news: Enough would be left to build dentures.

"We're going to be able to get you something, and that is what's important," said David Rosenstein, the clinic's founder who typically sees at least one set of teeth requiring reconstruction every time he comes into the office.

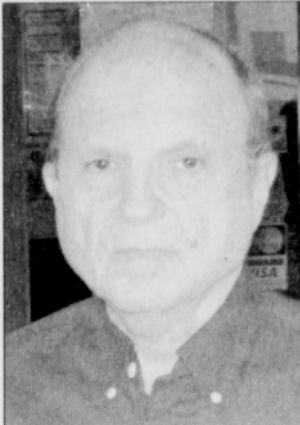
The facility at 214 N. Russell serves patients on Medicare, in recovery or diagnosed with HIV, many of whom pay cash

at below-market rates. Other clinics refuse such patients who sometimes suffer tooth damage from meth or drugs or have lost their saliva's plaque-busting properties because of HIV.

Rosenstein received a slap in the face this year when Oregon Health Sciences University, the clinic building's owner, claimed a need to shut down the services as part of a larger reshuffle. Following the public outcry against the plan, Rosenstein's now confident that Russell Street will receive enough federal grant monies to keep low-income mouth overhauls going for the foreseeable future.

The hoopla stemmed from financial challenges when OHSU lost its \$200,000 malpractice liability cap through a lawsuit. Although Russell Street Dental Clinic has avoided malpractice rulings, the continuation of its services were threatened by association with the medical school.

For Rosenstein, who began seeing HIV-positive patients in the early 1980s, the fight to keep the dental clinic open repre-



Dr. David Rosenstein

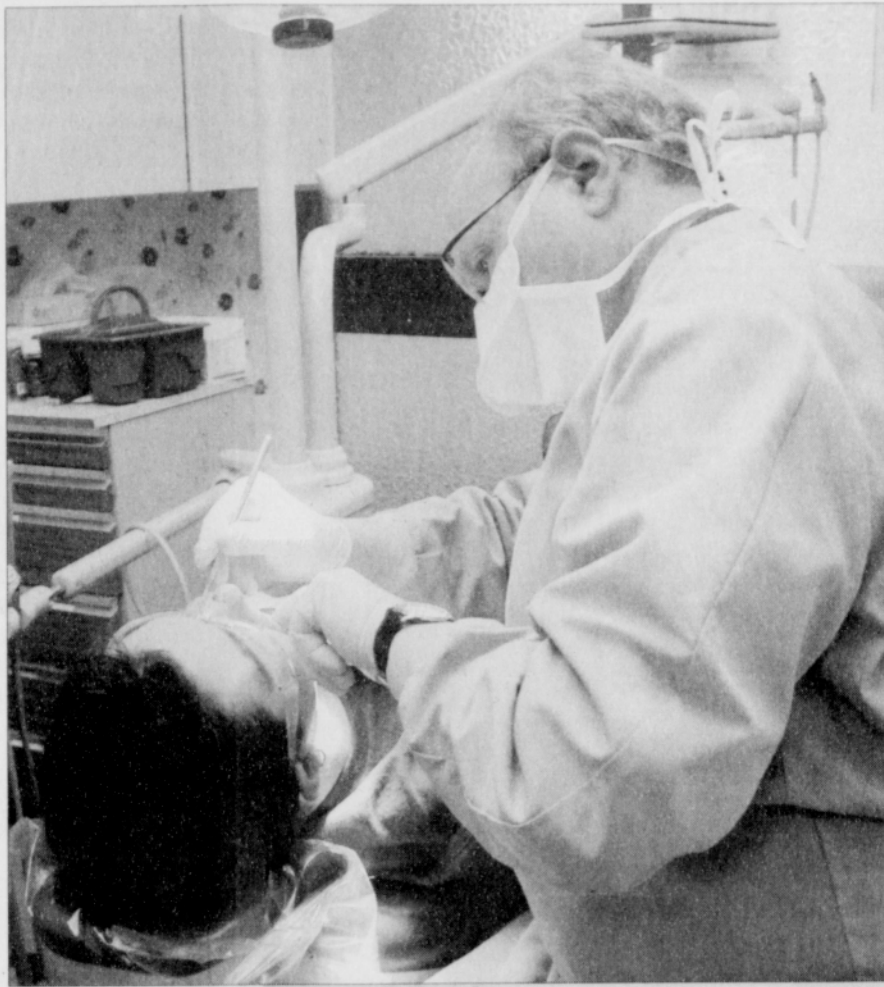


PHOTO BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

sents the general struggle to care for underserved men and women.

"The amount of discrimination in the early years (of HIV) has been well-documented," Rosenstein says. "I still get patients who tell me that their dentists are refusing to see them."

Some dentists continue to fear contracting HIV from patients, even though there have not been cases of this documented. The greater problem has become how to find dentists who are willing to accept the lower rates offered by most cash-paying patients or by public insurance.

"Number one, you have the problem of people who are low-income, people who are HIV-positive not having the funds to purchase dental care, and number two, sometimes when those folks get either the funding or the insurance, like Medicaid dentists aren't willing to treat them," Rosenstein says.

David Rosenstein of the Russell Street Dental Clinic examines a patient, one of more than 4,000 people it sees yearly. Many that it serves pay cash at below market rates, are on Medicare, in recovery or diagnosed with HIV.

## System Not Ready for Boomers

(AP) -- Millions of baby boomers are about to enter a system of health care for seniors that not only isn't ready for them, but may even discourage them from getting quality treatment.

"We face an impending crisis as the growing number of older patients, who are living longer with more complex health needs, increasingly outpaces the number of health care providers with the knowledge and skills to care for them capably," said John W. Rowe, professor of health policy and management at Columbia University.

Rowe headed an Institute of Medicine committee that released a report Monday on the health care outlook for the 78 million baby boomers about to begin turning 65.

The report from the institute, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences, said there aren't enough specialists in geriatric medicine; insufficient training is available; the specialists that do exist are underpaid; and Medicare fails to provide for team care that many elderly patients need.

The study said Medicare may even hinder seniors from getting the best care

because of its low reimbursement rates, a focus on treating short-term health problems rather than managing chronic conditions and lack of coverage for preventive services or for health care providers' time spent collaborating with a patient's other providers.

Maria Ayala Chavez (left) and Theresa McNeil, use hand weights as part of an exercise class at an ElderHealth Northwest adult day health center in Seattle.



## HEALTH WATCH

**Diabetes Treatment** -- Wednesday, April 16, from 6 to 7:30 p.m., diabetes educators will discuss the pros and cons of pumps, nutrition issues, types and upgrade options in a free workshop. To register, call 503-413-7226.

**Welcome to Medicare** -- Thursday, April 17, from 7 to 9 p.m., Multnomah County Aging and Disability Services will conduct the free classes for those new to Medicare, helping to explain the fundamentals of public insurance. For more information, call 503-491-7572.

**Couples Workshop** -- Saturday, April 19, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at 19500 S.E. Stark St., couples will learn essential relationship skills, including conflict management, and understanding communication styles; \$50 per couple. To register, call 503-286-6816.

**Children's Health Wellness Fair** -- Wednesday, April 23, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., the Children's Community Clinic will sponsor a wellness fair at Self Enhancement, Inc. promoting nutrition, health issues and fitness.

**What About Boys** -- Wednesday, April 23, from 7 to 9 p.m., Legacy Meridian Park Hospital, 19300 S.W. 65th Ave., will host the forum discussing the developmental perspectives of raising young boys and the problems they are facing today; \$5 fee at the door. To register, call 503-335-3500.

**Let's Talk About It** -- Wednesday, April 23, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., expert George Koval will discuss causes and treatments for the common disorder IBS (irritable bowel syndrome). For more information on this free session, call 503-574-6595.

**Do You Know Your Numbers?** -- Thursday, April 24, receive a personalized measurement and analysis of blood pressure, cholesterol levels, lean body mass, fat weight and optimal weight; \$30 fee, appointments available from 7 to 10 p.m.; to register, call 503-335-3500.

**Women's Health Conference** -- Saturday, April 26, from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., a meeting at the Oregon Convention Center, will focus on how green living can benefit your health, with guest speakers and workshops; \$40 all-day fee. To register, visit ohsuwomenshealth.com.

**Are you at Risk?** -- A focus on leg and carotid disease takes place Tuesday, April 29, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. with experts discussing what puts you at risk, treatment options, nutrition and prevention; free workshop. To register, call 503-335-3500.

**Women's Wellness; Breast Health** -- Saturday, May 10, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Legacy Good Samaritan, Building Two- lower level, 1040 N.W. 22nd Ave. Free event features catered brunch, guest speakers and booths with topics including cancer genetics, breast imaging, bone density and more. To register, call 503-335-3500.

**Peer-to-Peer Recovery** -- Peer-to-peer education recovery course is a free, nine-week course on the topic of recovery for any person with a serious mental illness. The courses are led by mentors who are recovering from mental illness and are trained to teach coping strategies to others. For more information, call 503-228-5692.

**Health Inequities** -- The public is invited to join in the dialogues with community members, organizations, business leaders and local elected officials to discuss the root causes of health inequities as well as long-term solutions in a this seven-part series. For neighborhood locations, dates and times visit Mchealth.org/healthequity.

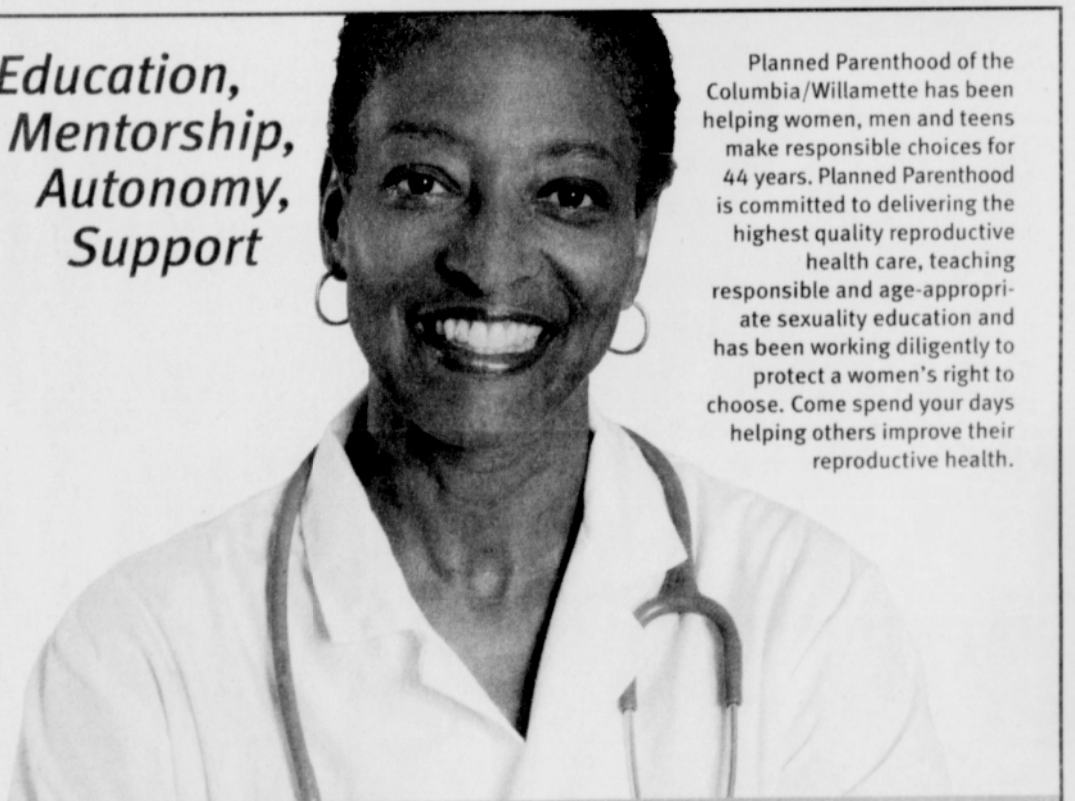
**Tools for Caregivers** -- Six-week educational series are offered to help family caregivers take care of themselves while caring for a relative or friend with a chronic illness. The classes are being held at several locations and dates. Call 503-413-6465 for more information.

**Parenting Classes** -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For a schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit Providence.org/classes.

**Bereavement Support Groups** -- Free, confidential group meetings for those who have experienced the death of a loved one offered on various nights and locations. For information and registration, call 503-215-4622.

**Cancer Resource Center** -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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