

COMMUNITY LEADERS DISCUSS PUBLIC HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 11, 2023



On October 6, 2023, Outpatient Medical Center gathered a forum of community leaders comprised of elected officials, academic leaders, school board members, faith-based leaders, and members of OMC’s Board of Directors.

The forum began a discussion about health issues in the community, and compared Natchitoches Parish health indicators to state and national averages. Available data shows that the poverty rate in Natchitoches Parish exceeds state and national averages. This includes the fact that 28% of children in the parish live in poverty, compared to the national average of 17%.

“While poverty has been a human condition since the beginning of time, our interest is in the relationship between poverty and poor health outcomes. The question is: what we can do as a community?” said Dr. Mark Guidry, OMC’s Chief Medical Officer.

According to countyhealthrankings.org, Natchitoches Parish has higher rates of many health indicators compared with state and national averages. Noteworthy among these are high rates of adult smoking, adult obesity, and physical inactivity. These factors correlate with higher rates of heart disease and strokes.

Statistics from the same study also show the alarming fact that the rate of sexually transmitted diseases in Natchitoches Parish is more than double the national average.

The group spoke extensively about mental health needs in the parish, and came to a consensus that there is a continual need for public awareness of these problems, and for education about available resources. Each group member committed to working together to better inform and educate stewards of the community and to find ways to bridge the gaps that exist in our current healthcare environment.

CUTLINES:

Forum 1: From left, Councilwoman at-large Betty Sawyer Smith, School Board Member Emile Metoyer, Natchez mayor Patsy Ward Hoover, and OMC's CEO Dr. Mark Guidry.

Forum 2: Leaders from across the Natchitoches gathered to address difficult questions about healthcare needs in the community.

Forum 3: From left, OMC Board Members Thomas Roque, Sr., Berteal Rogers, Travis Barnum, Melvin Holmes, Jared Dunahoe, John Winston, and OMC CEO Dr. Mark Guidry.

Not pictured are Board Members Arthur Ward, Patrick Jones, Sr., Anita Dubois, Doris Hullaby, Diane Jones, and Yvonne Lewis

Forum 4: From left, Natchitoches Police Chief Nikeo Collins, Natchez Mayor Patsy Ward Hoover, and State Senator Louie Bernard discussed barriers to healthcare.

(NOTE: For information about this news release, contact Colie Plaster, Public Information Coordinator at info@outpatientmedical.org)