

Kheir Clinic Serves Diverse Community with WELL™ Multilingual Messaging



- Established in 1986 as a bridge between low-income, non-English speaking Korean immigrants, and LA health and social service providers.
- Provides services for underserved populations in health care, human services, services, and adult day health care.
- The only FQHC in the nation that offers a full suite of services in Bengali, English, Korean, Spanish, and Thai.

Community health center becomes a vaccination destination for hard-to-reach patients through texting technology and multilingual outreach campaigns.

Located in the Koreatown district of Los Angeles, California, Kheir Clinic is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) with three clinic sites providing primary healthcare and human services. Kheir serves approximately 18,000 patients, largely comprised of Medi-Cal recipients and undocumented immigrants through nearly 70,000 annual visits.

For the vast majority of Kheir's patients, English is not their first language. But the FQHC uniquely provides all services in five languages: Korean, Spanish, Thai, Bengali, and English. Even when patients move out of the area, many travel back to Kheir for healthcare because of the clinic's ability to serve patients in their native languages.

A customer since August 2018, Kheir has used WELL™ Health primarily for appointment reminders, patient surveys, and campaigns. The platform's ability to support 19 different languages was essential to Kheir's multilingual patient communication needs and is the feature that first attracted Kheir to WELL. Samantha McKee, Lead Analyst, Business Intelligence & Quality Improvement, explained, "We can set up campaigns for English, Spanish, and Korean languages since all of the translations are already in WELL." Prior to using WELL, Kheir's patient outreach consisted of phone calls, mailers, and some local media. However, since there are few traditional local media outlets for Thai and Bengali speakers, using WELL for texting proved to be an effective tool for

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outreach and communication with Kheir's diverse patient population. "If there are large populations of Thai and Bengali speakers, we'll just set up separate campaigns in those languages," McKee said.

Using technology to overcome language barriers during a pandemic

When COVID-19 vaccines first became available, supply was very scarce and not guaranteed. The demand for vaccines far exceeded the number of doses available. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health provided Kheir and other FQHCs with a limited allocation of vaccine doses per week. It was up to each individual clinic to prove that they could administer vaccines to hard-to-reach populations before the County could justify giving them more doses. McKee and Shawn Werve, Vice President, Operations, needed to figure out how to distribute vaccines in a way that was linguistically and culturally sensitive. Kheir first needed to connect with their diverse population quickly and effectively, and in the process, secure a consistent and larger supply of vaccines for the underserved community.

With few traditional media outlets in their native languages, many Kheir patients did not have access to accurate vaccine information or any consistent way to access vaccination appointments. Werve and McKee recognized that their patients' best resource for vaccine education came from trusted community health centers like Kheir Clinic. In addition to overcoming language barriers, Kheir had experience in calming the concerns of their underserved patients such as lack of insurance, risks for undocumented immigrants, overall vaccine hesitancy, or the inability to pay.

It was McKee's idea to use WELL to send vaccine communication since patients were already accustomed to receiving text messages from the clinic. Using criteria for who was first eligible for the vaccine, McKee was able to segment that patient population in their EHR. She then used the WELL™ broadcast feature to send customized messages about vaccine appointments with an embedded link in three different languages. Patients clicked on the link which led to the Los Angeles County site to schedule vaccinations. For Bengali and Thai speakers, Kheir used WELL to send texts if the patient's EHR record listed a preferred language supported by WELL. McKee explains, "Many in these groups list English, as chances are a family member or friend can translate for them."

The digital technology that Los Angeles County implemented for vaccine sign-ups was often a challenge for less internet-savvy, older, or non-English speaking individuals. It involved several steps, required an email address, and was available initially only in English and Spanish. The WELL™ broadcast feature enabled Kheir to send instructions about sign-up requirements so patients could prepare to work with a translator or use a friend or family member's email. Werve commented, "Although technology can sometimes seem like a barrier for some people, especially in underserved areas, in this case, we were able to leverage WELL to get a good result."

Kheir becomes a vaccination destination

Due to Kheir's success in reaching vulnerable priority groups, their vaccine allocation increased rapidly. On five separate occasions, Kheir vaccinated over 1,000 people in a single day, and during their largest vaccination event, they administered 1,644 shots. Werve said,



"Our clinic got a quick start on vaccinations because we jumped on board with text outreach quickly." Kheir made a conscious decision to make their vaccination events a positive and fun experience. The clinic also hosted vaccination events with community partners and local churches to make shots available to as many people in the service area as possible.

Word of mouth soon spread about the Kheir Friday vaccine events, and the clinic became a go-to vaccine destination. The entire staff of restaurants would come in the afternoon before their shifts started, all wearing the same T-shirts. Werve said, "The people who we serve, these are working people. They've been there for us during the pandemic. We wanted to be there for them. We had dance-offs; we congratulated everyone who got vaccinated, and tried to make the experience joyful."

Kheir also used WELL to text out a sign-up link for the second dose appointments which was extremely helpful since many of their patients do not use email or have access to a computer. But the majority of patients do have cell phones and texting patients in their preferred language was a reliable way to remind them to schedule their second dose. Werve said, "WELL really streamlined the process for us to be able to reach a large community easily."

Using WELL to take care of families and communities

Kheir tracks 25 quality measures across their patient population to ensure high clinical standards and quality care. These include preventative care measures such as screening for breast cancer, cervical cancer, and colorectal cancer, along with chronic condition maintenance measures for hypertensive and diabetic patients. Werve notes that regular screenings and routine clinic visits are critical for maintaining overall health, but it has always been challenging to persuade patients to schedule visits for preventative care. Kheir plans on using WELL in the future for wellness exam campaigns and preventative care screenings. Werve said, "I'm hoping that our vaccination experience kickstarts something so that people will respond and realize that text outreach provides valuable information."

Kheir is also using WELL to contact existing patients and first-time visitors who came for vaccinations to encourage them and their families to return for care so they can be proactive, rather than reactive to their healthcare needs. As Werve explains, "We are a community-based clinic and this is all about taking care of families. If you take care of families, you take care of the community. That's the hope."

THE RESULTS

21,313

Total unique patients receiving a COVID-19 vaccine campaign

12,522

Total COVID-19 vaccinations administered

3,002

Total new unique patients from vaccine outreach

