

UW Health: Launches comprehensive sickle cell disease clinic

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MADISON, Wis. – As Sickle Cell Awareness Month approaches, UW Health is announcing a new clinic to provide coordinated care for patients with sickle cell disease, an often-misunderstood condition.

This chronic disease disproportionately affects people of African ancestry, or those who identify as Black, and requires comprehensive care from numerous specialists across a person's lifetime, which is why UW Health is launching a clinic specifically designed to bring collaborative and expert care to patients with sickle cell disease.

Sickle cell disease causes the red blood cells to acquire an abnormal shape and structure, which impacts blood flow. This can cause pain, often severe instances of pain called "crises," as well as issues with bones, joints and several organs.

This clinic gathers not just hematologists, but other physicians, nurse practitioners, and nurses in primary care, emergency medicine and specialty care to provide high quality care coordination to patients with sickle cell disease from diagnosis to end of life.

The clinic also manages an infusion center that supports patients with day treatments for times when they cannot manage pain at home and need infusions, medication or other support, ideally meeting the patient's needs and preventing a visit to the emergency department.

"Historically, patients who have sickle cell disease report negative experiences with their care, often from a lack of cohesion among their care providers, which can really impact the patient's quality of life," said Dr. Moniba Nazeef, assistant professor of medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public

Health, hematologist at UW Health, and head of the new sickle cell disease clinic. “We want this new clinic to create a multidisciplinary health care team that is confident and well-versed in the unique needs of patients with sickle cell disease, ensuring patients get the right care when they need it.”

The clinic is still in an early phase, but Nazeef hopes to add nurse case managers, social workers, health psychologists, pain treatment specialists and other organ-specific specialists to the team in the future to expand sickle cell disease expertise and improve support services for patients. She also hopes to build more outreach and educational efforts, reaching patients where they are and reducing the stigma of the disease.