



## Clinic opens inside Wal-Mart in Forest

By Arnold Lindsay

Wal-Mart shoppers in Forest soon will be able to schedule a physical before picking up discounted merchandise.

A medical clinic will open inside the retailer on Sept. 20, a first for Mississippi.

Wal-Mart will partner with Checkups, a Florida-based company, which has three similar facilities inside Wal-Mart stores in its home state.

Checkups is one of four companies operating a dozen medical clinics inside the retail giant at stores in Arkansas, Indiana, Florida and Oklahoma, spokesman Kevin Gardner said.

"So far, the customer response has been pretty good, very good in fact," Gardner said. "Leasing space to medical clinics extends customers access to convenient, affordable health care. These clinic tenants, they are posting price lists for all their procedures. They bring transparency to the health system."

Wal-Mart plans to have an additional 50 medical clinics open by January, with Checkups operating 28 of them.

Donna Riser, administrator for S.E. Lackey Memorial Hospital in Forest, said she had not heard about the plan until Friday and hoped Checkups will enhance the medical community in the city of 8,000.

"I don't know how well a clinic like that will do, but we'd be more than happy to have them," she said. "We're an under-served area. We can always use more clinicians."

### HOW IT WORKS

This is how Checkups will work:

# Patients enter the facility and file their information onto a secured bilingual, tablet-sized personal computer. A records clerk receives financial and personal information.

# One of two nurse practitioners receives the medical chart and can proceed to check and treat the person or transmit the details to the consulting physician who will not be in the office at all times.

# Nurse practitioners have more advanced training than registered nurses and can work without the supervision of a physician. Their training enables them to diagnose and treat patients. In some states, they can write prescriptions.

# The patient pays \$65 for the visit, gets a prescription or advice and is on his way in less time than an emergency room visit would require, said Dr. Neal F Krouse, president of Checkups. Medicare, Medicaid and all major insurance policies will be accepted.

Dr. Neal F. Krouse, a Florida physician with 33 years of experience and president of Checkups, said the clinic will operate with the most modern accessories. Nurse practitioners will administer most of the patient care, under the supervision of a consulting physician who does not have to be present.

"Most people don't realize how good nurse practitioners are in the United States," he explained.

Krouse said nurse practitioners have master's degrees and extensive training.

"Our nurse practitioners are very limited in what they can take care of. We (the clinic) take care of colds, ear aches, urinary tract infections, bronchitis, those type of things. We're there to keep people out of emergency rooms for minor illnesses."

The quick in-and-out concept has thrived throughout parts of Mississippi as clinics that specialize in treating minor illnesses have grown in number and popularity. For instance, more than a dozen MEA Medical Clinics operate in Mississippi, most of them in metro Jackson.

Three physician-staffed medical clinics are located in Forest. One of them is owned by the hospital, Riser said.

Riser said local people have tended to better support medical professionals who live in or have ties to the Forest community.

"The hospital, we're totally in support of any doctor or nurse practitioner in our area," Riser said.

Krouse said the Forest clinic will be located inside a 550-square-foot modular building, provided by his company.

[alindsay@clarionledger.com](mailto:alindsay@clarionledger.com)