New residency program at Lee Memorial now underway

The Lee Memorial Health System and Florida State University College of Medicine Family Medicine Residency Program are excited to welcome their inaugural class. Residents will face a full range of challenges as seen by the seasoned professionals who will mentor them through intense, real world experience to prepare them as the next generation of family practitioners in Southwest Florida.

It’s a healing endeavor, offering some relief during a time of reform and looming physician shortages. The family medicine residency program was developed to combat an expected national shortage of primary care physicians compounded by an increase in population growth. Among the fastest-growing regions in the state, the population of Lee County grew by more than 40 percent between 2000 and 2010. Most physicians set up practice near the location where they complete their residency training. The goal is to keep well over 50 percent of these graduates in the community to provide primary care for this rapidly growing area.

This culmination of two years of preparation included filling all core and community faculty positions, recruiting 12 outstanding residents, and building a strong and vibrant clinical practice that includes inpatient and outpatient pediatric, adult and obstetrics care. Lee Memorial Health System also completed the renovation of the state-of-the-art family medicine center at Lee Memorial Medical Office Center on Cleveland Avenue.

A big welcome for the first group of residents: Drs. Carl Nyberg, of Fort Myers; Elizabeth Midney, of Immokalee; Alyson Lewis, of Ormond Beach; Mohammad Ayaz Sadat, of Houston; Lee Coghill, of Grosse Pointe, Michigan; and Steven Ovu, of Houston, who began training July 1.

Lee Memorial Health System also signed a third-year resident and five second-year residents who began April 1: Drs. Roy Klossner, Lucia Huffman, James Toldi, Sherry Farag, Kristin Miller and Charles "Jack" Arnold.

Residents will undergo 36 months of training divided into four-week blocks. Their rotations will be completed at Lee Memorial Hospital, HeathPark Medical Center, and Golisano Children's Hospital. In addition, they will work with various community partners who practice in a diverse range of specialties including surgery, urology, orthopedics and geriatrics to name a few. Community preceptors are essential for teaching all aspects of family medicine, a broad specialty that cares for patients from birth to end of life.

Depending on the rotation, residents will work with faculty or volunteer community physicians willing to teach them in their offices or hospital practice. The residents will see patients who are already using these practices in addition to being responsible for their primary care patients at the residency center. They will also work at free clinics in the area to meet their community service requirements.

As primary care physicians, faculty encourages the residents to get to know their patients on a personal level and to appreciate the importance of family, community and social support. The program strives to improve care delivery and increase access to high-quality primary medical care in Southwest Florida by emphasizing the importance of continuity of care, strong doctor/patient relationships and caring for the whole person (mind, body and soul).

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