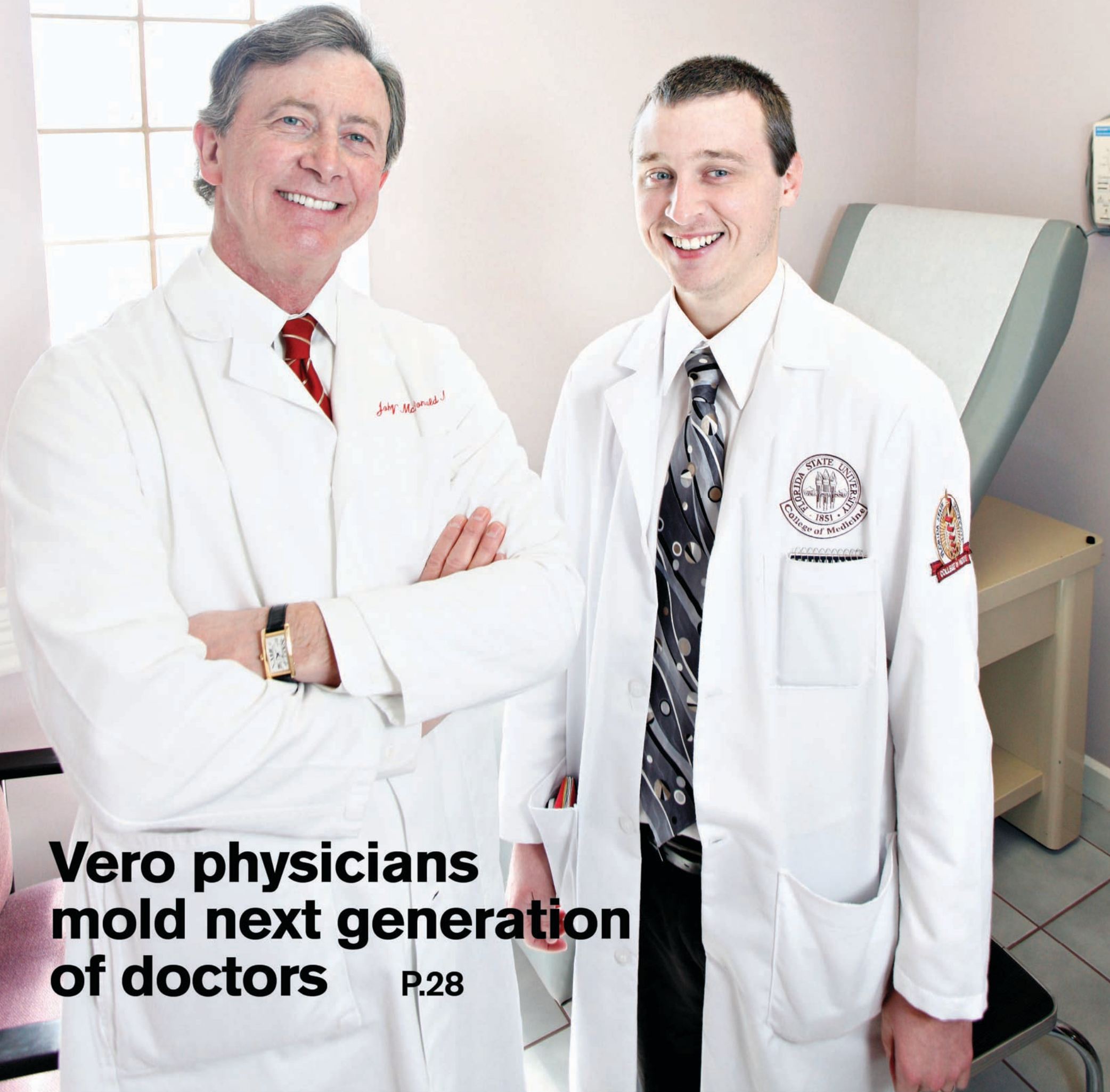


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HEALTH



**Vero physicians
mold next generation
of doctors**

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Vero physicians mold next generation of doctors

BY SANDRA RAWLS
Columnist

Vero Beach is helping prepare a new generation of doctors.

This week Steven Moore, a fourth-year medical student at Florida State University College of Medicine, is beginning a rotation of learning and practicing neurology with Dr. James Shafer.

He just completed the first two weeks of January working with dermatologist Dr. John McDonald.

Moore's experience is part of a unique program to give medical school students a more intensive hands-on education in what its like to take care of patients. Doctors Shafer and McDonald are two Vero Beach doctors taking part in a network of community-based instruction that's the result of FSU's vision for its College of Medicine.

"Shadowing" a doctor or seeing patients in a teaching hospital setting are familiar medical school practices. Moore, however, and oth-



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Dr. Shah completed her family practice residency training at St. Clare's Hospital in Schenectady, NY, and internal medicine externship at St. Peter's Hospital in Albany, NY. Prior to joining IRMC, she practiced family medicine in Troy, NY.

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ers who are in the FSU program are doing more. Moore was seeing patients the last two weeks at Indian River Skin and Cancer Center. The patients had given their permission to be seen by a student doctor.

He took patient histories, performed physical examinations, and assisted in the operating room and with other procedures. During these patients' office visits, they were then seen by Dr. McDonald and Moore together.

His experience and training with local doctors is part of FSU's focus on a community based model of medical education and training. Local doctors are among 1,700 across the state who have become part time clinical faculty at FSU College of Medicine in the last three years.

Moore plans to become a Primary Care doctor like his



Dr. John McDonald stands by while FSU medical student Steven Moore checks out a patient. Photos by Tom McCarthy Jr.

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father, who was once the only doctor in a small town in Alabama.

Students like Moore spend their first two years primarily on the main campus of the Medical School in Tallahassee. They then spend two years at six regional campuses around the state, doing more than 60 percent of their training in local doctors' offices, clinics, and emergency rooms.

FSU's nearest regional campus is in Fort Pierce. Third and fourth-year medical students travel daily work-



ing with a variety of doctors and hospitals in Indian River, St. Lucie, and Martin counties. Their stay in each

situation varies from two to eight weeks. The students are tested and evaluated after each of these "rotations," some of which are required and some of which are electives.

In addition to the regional campuses, the medical school has two rural settings, one in Marianna and one in Immokalee where students learn the special needs of migrant laborers and of patients in agricultural based economies.

An additional emphasis of the program is geriatrics. All students, regardless of their final focus as doctors, receive extra training in this



FSU COLLEGE OF MEDICINE REGIONAL CAMPUSES

At the six regional campus sites, offices with approximately 5000 sq. ft. of office space per site are used for lectures, study, and administration. The students at each site and clinical faculty members spend the majority of their time in doctor's offices, clinics, and hospitals of their respective communities.

Daytona Beach
Ft. Pierce
Orlando
Pensacola
Sarasota
Tallahassee

Rural training sites
Marianna
Immokalee

Additional clinical training
Thomasville, Ga.

SOURCE: 2010 FSU College of Medicine Social Impact Study

specialty. They average 325 contact hours in the diagnosis and treatment of the elderly, significantly more than at most medical schools.

The Fort Pierce site is housed in a building at Indian River State College. Rooms for testing, a weekly lecture, studying, and discussions with other students form a base for contact with administrators and visiting lecturers, but students seek housing in the community, often rooming together.

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cal students a chance to experience what day-to-day life as a physician is like by actually doing it," say Dean of the Fort Pierce Regional Campus Dr. Randy Bertolette. "I think our program is the best way to learn medicine."

Moore agrees wholeheartedly with this assessment. "What I'm experiencing is a great situation. I feel everything I'm learning is top notch. It's absolutely great."

Dermatology in Florida means seeing a lot of older patients and developing a highly trained eye for identifying skin blemishes of many types, including possible cancers.

McDonald impressed Steven as he worked to learn about human skin variations.

"Dr. McDonald is so good. He'll show me something new and I go to read about it, and it's usually word for word what he just said. I think there is not a better way to learn about what skin is like than this."

John McDonald has been Director of Dermatology at Indian River Memorial Hospital and President of the Indian River County Medical Society. He is now also a Clinical Associate Professor on the Clerkship Faculty at FSU.

Skin cancer rates continue to go up and with an aging population, "Steven will see lots of it," says Dr. McDonald. "The set up FSU has to train these students is excellent. The work I do really needs to be taught person to person."

From 1979 to 2007, Fort Pierce Dean Dr. Bertolette was one of Vero's best known doctors. A pediatrician who held many other service positions here, including Vice Chief of Staff at IRMC, he always wanted to get more involved in academics.

"I always loved the academic side of medicine, but I loved taking care of babies. When the position as Dean of the Fort Pierce Campus opened up, I decided to pursue it. It has been a great change for me," say Bertolette, who still lives in Vero Beach.

FSU College of Medicine was created by the legislature and signed into law by Gov. Jeb Bush in June 2000. It enrolled its first class of 30 students in 2001. This year it will graduate 120 new doctors for the first time, the original goal set in 2000.

The medical school opened amid a crisis in Florida medicine – an acute shortage of primary care doctors and large segments of population who were underserved by doctors. Geriatric medicine, primary care, and community medicine for underserved populations were all included in the College of Medicine's founding mandate.

The problem of too few primary

care doctors is nationwide and has brought dire predictions.

These doctors provide the first contact for anyone with an undiagnosed health problem and for continuing care of varied medical conditions. Lack of access to a primary care doctor means more use of emergency rooms and failure to seek treatment.

Dr. Joseph Stubbs, president of the American College of Physicians, last year called the continuing national shortage "catastrophic."

"If things continue as they are," he said, "by 2025, the U.S. will be 50,000 primary-care physicians short."

There are about 300,000 physicians in the U.S. today, but only about one third do primary care, the other two-thirds are specialists. In many other countries the ratio is about 50-50.

The program is producing impressive results. In March 2010 56 percent of its graduating class selected to pursue residency training in primary care, 13 percent higher than the national average. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, FSU Medical School now ranks fifth in the country for producing family doctors as a proportion of their total graduates.

The school is also producing a higher percentage of graduates who plan to work in non-suburban areas. The current student population represents a larger number of racial and ethnic minorities than is in Florida's current M.D. population. It is ranked seventh best in the nation for Hispanic students.

Bertolette sees students from all the state universities interested in the FSU program. We have Gators, Hurricanes and Bulls," he says. "I'm excited by what we are doing. I think the kind of program we have is the way of the future." ■



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