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## FSU medical school's growth enhances health care in Volusia, Flagler

By DEBORAH CIRCELLI, Education writer

DAYTONA BEACH -- Dr. Brittany O'Dwyer moved her hands rhythmically as she sewed up the lower abdomen of a patient whose kidney she helped remove.

Deep in concentration, O'Dwyer worked in concert with Dr. Bennett Scaglia of Halifax's Center for Urology. She is one of four doctors in the new Halifax Health General Surgery Residency program.

O'Dwyer, 26, is a graduate of the Florida State University College of Medicine Daytona Beach Regional Campus, which has grown from eight medical students when it opened in 2007 to 40 today.

The medical school, working with local physicians, trains future doctors in area hospitals and doctor offices in hopes of them returning to the area or state to practice. About 60 percent of FSU College of Medicine graduates from all its campuses are practicing in Florida.

The current 66 graduates from the Daytona Beach campus are still in residency programs, with 15 in Florida because of a shortage of such programs.

Three out of the four residents in the Halifax general surgery program are FSU-Daytona medical school alumni and the program hopes to make a dent in a serious shortage of surgeons in the area.

O'Dwyer plans to continue practicing surgery in Volusia and Flagler counties after her residency, something the Ormond Beach native has dreamed of since she was 12 years old dissecting frogs and small reptiles in her driveway from kits her father bought over the Internet.



Dr. Brittany O'Dwyer, center, sutures a patient while working with Dr. Bennett Scaglia, right, at Halifax Health Medical Center in Daytona Beach recently. (N-J | Nigel Cook)



Medical student Jason Pesqueira examines Jacob Meadows while on a clinical rotation with Dr. Gene Crouch on Wednesday. (N-J | David Tucker)

### FSU College of Medicine

Enrollment at the Florida State University College of Medicine Daytona Beach Regional Campus since its opening in 2007:

- 2007 — 8 students
- 2008 — 22 students
- 2009 — 35 students
- 2010 — 44 students
- 2011 — 41 students
- 2012 — 40 students

## LOCAL DOCTORS HELP STUDENTS

The FSU College of Medicine, which leases a building at Daytona State College, accepts about 20 new medical students each year. Sixty-six students have graduated from the Daytona Beach regional campus, one of six FSU College of Medicine regional campuses statewide.

The main FSU College of Medicine in Tallahassee started in 2000 as the first medical school to open nationally in 20 years. There are 482 students at all its campuses.

After receiving their bachelor's degree, students attend their first two years of medical school at the FSU College of Medicine in Tallahassee, then spend their third and fourth years at the regional campuses doing clinical training in the community. After passing various exams, they officially receive the M.D. title, but most still finish a residency program, which can vary from three years for family medicine to five years for surgery.

Dr. Luckey Dunn, dean of the Daytona Beach regional campus and a veteran family practice physician, doesn't see the Daytona Beach campus growing any larger in the near future because of the need to stay "focused on quality."

He said he would let any of the students, whom he describes as "compassionate and knowledgeable," care for him or his family "without a blink of the eye."

Eight clerkship directors, who are local physicians in the community, oversee the required rotations that train medical students in family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, surgery, obstetrics/gynecology, geriatrics, psychiatry or emergency medicine. The rotations take place at private physicians' offices, hospitals, skilled nursing facilities and other locations.

More than 275 local physicians are on faculty helping with the training and providing mentoring.

## RETURNING HOME

O'Dwyer, who was born at Halifax, is fulfilling a lifelong dream of returning to her hometown to practice after spending the first of

Graduates from Daytona Beach campus;

- 2009 — 8 graduates
- 2010 — 14 graduates
- 2011 — 21 graduates
- 2012 — 23 graduates

The FSU College of Medicine admissions committee for all its campuses received 2,369 applications for the Class of 2012. It offered interviews to 363 and selected 117.

Regional Campus Dean: Dr. Luckey Dunn.

Andrea Leech, Regional Campus Administrator.

Eight Clerkship Directors who help oversee the training of medical students in specific areas.

- Dr. Michael Bell, pediatrics.
- Dr. George Bernardo, family medicine and informatics.
- Dr. Harry Black, surgery.
- Dr. Pamela Carbiener, OB/Gyn.
- Dr. Neil Oslos, geriatrics.
- Dr. Vinayak Purandare, internal medicine.
- Dr. Peter Springer, emergency medicine.
- Dr. Wendy Welch, psychiatry.

SOURCE: FSU College of Medicine

her five years of required residency at a hospital in North Carolina assisting with surgeries.

In the past month, she's been doing everything from bladder and kidney surgeries to helping with a gunshot wound to the head and another to the leg while on call for trauma surgery.

"It's awesome. My favorite part of general surgery is you get to do a little bit of everything," said O'Dwyer, a 2004 Spruce Creek High School graduate. "It's very rewarding. The doctors here are great about letting you help with surgery and be involved. It's a great feeling -- all the hard work paying off."

O'Dwyer, who started shadowing local surgeon and family friend Dr. Harry Black when she was 14, chose surgery because she likes making an immediate difference in a patient's life.

O'Dwyer and three of the other doctors in the new surgery residency program attribute their success to the Daytona Beach campus of FSU, which they sought for their medical school training. They point to the school's community-based model working one-on-one with physicians in a friendly learning environment.

O'Dwyer, Dr. Jonathan Dean, 27, of Pensacola, and Dr. Brad Stephan, 29, of Fort Myers, who are three of the four in the new general surgery residency program, were the third class at the FSU medical school Daytona Beach campus in 2009 and graduated in 2011.

Dean, whose dad is a pediatrician, said FSU medical students get "a lot of hands-on" experience and work closely with area physicians. He likes the variety -- being on the surgery residency and following patients throughout their care as well as working with doctors with whom he trained in medical school.

Stephan, who got a bachelor's in business management, got into the medical field after taking some pre-med biology courses.

"I fell in love with it," he said. "I just like being able to help people."

Dr. Issa Mirmehdi, of California, who went to medical school in the Caribbean, applied for the surgery residency at Halifax because he likes the patient-centered care model. He also likes that there isn't a "hierarchical structure" and residents work as part of a team.

Dr. Michael Fabian, a local general and trauma surgeon and program director for the general surgery residency program, said other medical schools tend to put medical students and residents at the bottom of the pyramid or the foot of the table. But here, he said, students are heavily involved working one-on-one with physicians.

Dunn said the area hospitals and physicians "have really bought into" the medical school program.

"They are tremendously supportive," Dunn said. "The caliber of our faculty in this area is phenomenal."

## **RESIDENCY PROGRAMS IN DEMAND**

Trish Ramsay, service line administrator for graduate medical education at Halifax, oversees the new general surgery residency program as well as the family medicine residency program, which has been at Halifax for more than 30 years. Halifax also has a sports medicine fellowship program.

The surgery residency program will ultimately have 10 residents in training with two added every July.

The family medicine three-year program currently has 24 residents who went to medical schools throughout the U.S., including FSU.

"We have a great working relationship with FSU and their faculty. We find their students to be high quality and energetic," Ramsay said.

The surgery residency program was needed, Ramsay said, because of a shortage of general surgeons nationwide, but also "a community need for more general surgeons."

Government funding for residency programs had been frozen for 20 years, Ramsay said, but two years ago some money was released for primary care and general surgery which paid for some of the Halifax program.

It costs about \$100,000 per resident to fund the program, including salary and benefits for the residents and funding for faculty.

## **SHORTAGE OF SURGEONS**

Dunn said the surgery residency is also important because the average age of general surgeons in the area is 53 with "nobody in the pipeline." National statistics, Dunn and Fabian said, show that 70 percent of doctors will stay within 150 miles of where they had their residency.

"The desire is we will use them as general surgeons in the area when they are done with their training," Dunn said.

Florida Health Care and area hospitals often recruit graduates from the school, Dunn said.

Fabian said surgeons like himself "are stretched to the limit." He said there are fewer than 20 general surgeons practicing in Volusia and Flagler counties, including eight at Halifax.

From the 2007 graduating class at the Daytona Beach regional campus, about 60 percent left the state for their residency, officials said.

"We're basically subsidizing the training of doctors for other states," Fabian said.

He and Dunn wish there could be more residency programs but federal and other funding is not available.

Fabian said he enjoys teaching and the surgery residency program has "energized me."

Urologist Dr. Bennett Scaglia, who has worked with O'Dwyer the past month, said the FSU residents have an "excellent fund of knowledge." He said O'Dwyer is "highly motivated" and has "excellent surgical skills."

"It makes it more fun to come to work," Scaglia said about working with the residents. "It's fulfilling to help train the next generation that will be replacing us."

Fidelia "Fe" Roster, chief surgical services officer, who manages the operating rooms at Halifax, said "we need to support the residents" and the medical students.

"They are our future. They will be taking care of us. It's up to us to give them a good, strong foundation and mentor them," Roster said.

### **DELIVERING HIS FIRST BABY**

Jason Pesqueira, 24, of Pensacola, a medical student at the FSU Daytona Beach campus, delivered his first baby last week while assisting an OB-GYN. He is on an OB-GYN rotation, but also works once a week with Dr. Eugene Crouch in Daytona Beach.

"It was an amazing experience," said Pesqueira, whose father is a dermatologist and his mom is a neonatal intensive care unit nurse. "I will remember (that family) for the rest of my life. I was nervous but (Dr. Patricia Modad) had her hands on mine as we delivered the baby. The physicians here are wonderful. It's a very nurturing environment at the Daytona campus. They all really care about our education."

"The school helps us have a long-term relationship with our patients," Pesqueira said about working with the same doctor over a long period.

Crouch, who describes the FSU medical students as "exceptional," has been working with medical students for 15 years, including those from the University of Florida and Florida State University.

"We teach them how to use what they learned in the classroom with real-life patients," Crouch said.

Pesqueira said "it's a lot of work to become a doctor and a lot of studying. I haven't been outside in six years. If being a doctor was about the money or the status of it, it wouldn't be worth it. Being a doctor is about serving the patients."

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