

# FSU, Sarasota Memorial to start residency program

BY MATT M. JOHNSON

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SARASOTA -- Knowing that most doctors who go to school in Florida don't practice in the state if they do their residencies elsewhere, Florida State University and Sarasota Memorial Hospital have agreed to start an internal medicine residency program in early 2017.

The school and hospital signed the deal in March. Sarasota Memorial will invest \$5 million in the program, which is expected to put up to 30 residents in the hospital by the program's third year. The program is being funded without assistance from the federal Medicare program, which pays for the majority of residencies in the U.S.

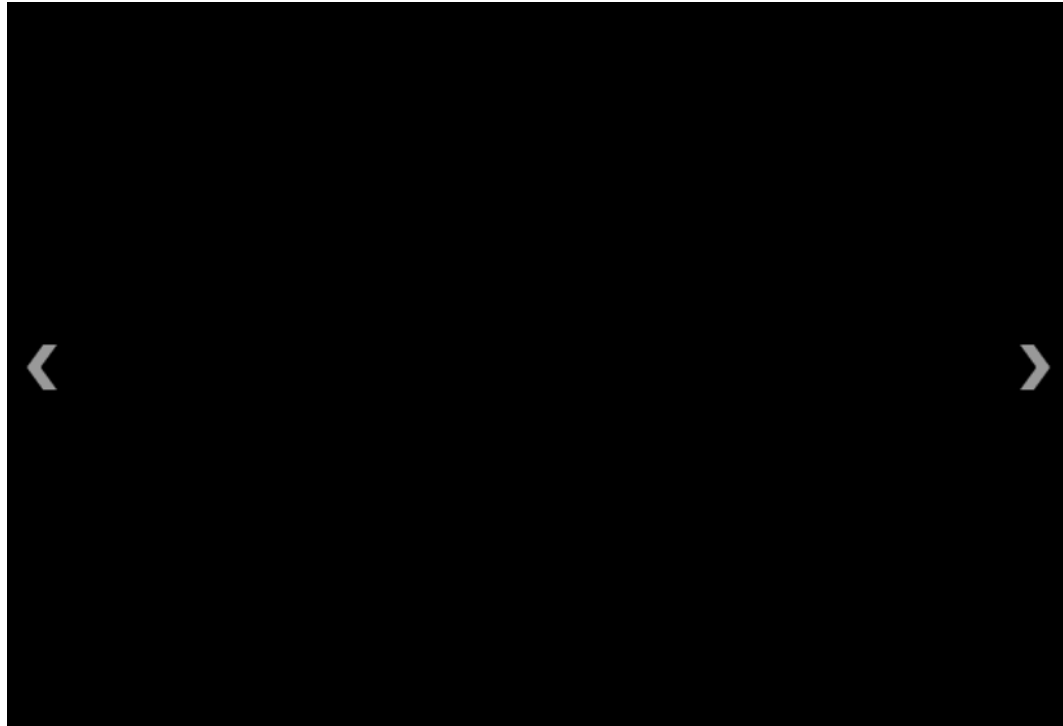
School and hospital officials say the program is vital, as Florida ranks 42nd among U.S. states for the number of residents practicing per 100,000 residents. Up to two-thirds of FSU medical school graduates leave the state for residencies and never return.

"The problem we have in Florida right now is that we're actually graduating more medical students from medical schools in Florida than we have seats for them," said Dr. John Fogarty, the dean of FSU's College of Medicine, during a press conference Wednesday at the school's downtown Sarasota campus.

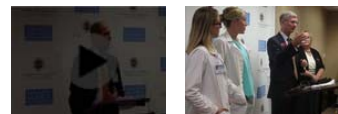
The Sarasota Memorial-based program is intended to fill a hole in the state's residency system. Doug Carlson, the school's communications director, said residency programs are few and far between outside Tampa, Miami, Tallahassee and Orlando. Manatee Memorial Hospital in Bradenton does have its own residency program, but Carlson said the area needs to keep more of its medical school graduates in state and attract students from elsewhere.

The hospital's chief of medical operations, Dr. R. Stephen Taylor, said doing so is critical if Florida hopes to keep a healthy population of practicing physicians. According to 2013 American Association of Medical Colleges, Florida has about 250 physicians for every 100,000 people. But doctors leave the field every year and need to be replaced, Taylor said.

"Our physician workforce is aging and many are retiring and we need to replenish



Sarasota Memorial Hospital will invest \$5 million in starting an internal medicine residency program in cooperation with Florida State University. The first residents will start work in early 2017. Video by Matthew Johnson, Bradenton Herald. Bradenton.com **BRADENTON HERALD**



the ranks of those physicians," he said.

Adding another residency program in the Sarasota-Manatee area is expected to benefit other area hospitals. Melissa Morgan, the public relations director for Blake Medical Center in Bradenton, said her hospital wants to see a larger pool of residents from which to pull doctors.

"Florida faces a critical shortage of physicians over the next decade," she said. "Blake Medical Center supports all efforts to increase the number of medical residency opportunities, especially those that encourage students to stay in the area."

The Sarasota Memorial residency program has been in the works since last fall, when the hospital's board of directors approved funding it. Hospital spokeswoman Kim Savage said the program still has some milestones to reach before welcoming its first 10 residents. It will have to be approved by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. If it is, the program will be eligible to be matched with residency applicants.

There should be no shortage of applicants. According to National Resident Matching Program, more than 41,000 medical school graduates competed for about 30,000 residency positions in 4,756 programs across the U.S. in 2015. Taylor said having a residency program in Sarasota will bring some of the most talented grads to this area.

"We can pick the best of the best," he said. "It's almost a recruiting tool."

Joan Meek, an associate dean with the college who oversees residency programs, said the school hopes many of its graduates will end up in the Sarasota Memorial program.

"Hopefully we'll get some of our best and brightest from FSU," she said.

One member of the 2016 graduating class at the college's Sarasota campus welcomed the news of the new program, even though it will start too late for her. Ashworth Woody, a third-year med school student, said she wants to practice obstetrics and gynecology in Florida and hopes to qualify for an in-state residency. She said the students who follow her at the college will benefit from more slots opening.

"There's absolutely a need for more residents," she said.

A resident's term of service at Sarasota Memorial will be three years. Program participants will work in in-patient and out-patient settings, in intensive care units and in a continuity clinic that will allow the young doctors to see the same patients for an extended period of time.

After the first class of residents finishes the program, it will be eligible for federal funding through Medicare. Patient treatment provided by an established residency program may charge Medicare a higher rate than normal for services provided. Savage said those payments should allow the program to break even.

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