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FSU's unique medical training puts aspiring doctors with real patients

By ANNE GEGGIS, Staff writer 



Dr. John Meyers, left, and Florida State University medical student Alok Nath Pandya discuss patient Mary Jamison pregnancy following Jamison's exam Oct. 28 at the OB/GYN Health Center in Daytona Beach. N-J | David Tucker



Florida State University medical student Alok Nath Pandya listens to the heart beat of Mary Jamison's baby Oct. 28 at the OB/GYN Health Center in Daytona Beach. N-J | David Tucker

Residencies

The local branch of the Florida State University College of Medicine started in late 2007 and produced its first class in 2009 with eight students. Last year, there were 14 students and, in 2011, 21 students are scheduled to graduate.

Students have been matched with the following residencies coming out of the FSU College of Medicine's Daytona Beach campus: Halifax Family Medicine Residency (three students).

- Orlando Health (internal medicine residency).

University of Florida College of Medicine in Jacksonville (obstetrics/gynecology).

University of Florida College of Medicine Shands (psychology).

- Johns Hopkins (Baltimore, Md.) Emergency Medicine.

- Medical University of South Carolina (Charleston, S.C.) in surgery, emergency medicine and pediatrics.

- University of Nevada Affiliated Hospitals (Las Vegas, Nev.) in emergency medicine.

- Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, N.C. (family medicine, pediatrics, and internal medicine).

- Exempla Saint Joseph Hospital in Denver, Colorado (obstetrics/gynecology).

- University of Chicago Medical Center (pediatrics).

- Allegheny Health System (Pittsburgh, Pa.) in radiation oncology.

- Atlanta Medical Center (surgery).

- University of Texas-Southwestern (ophthalmology).

- University of California, San Francisco (pediatrics).

Source: Florida State University

DAYTONA BEACH -- Measuring tape in hand, Alok Nath Pandya approached the pregnant belly as if he were measuring for picture-hanging.

"Oh yeah," he said, as he extended the tape to the peak of Mary Jamison's 38-week pregnant belly. "You're about ready to go."

Pandya is in the midst of gestating a medical career. Unlike Jamison, though, he's only just begun -- halfway through rotations in family medicine, internal medicine, psychology, surgery, pediatrics, and gynecology/obstetrics.

He's one of 40 students who make up the first full class of aspiring doctors here from Florida State University's College of Medicine, studying at the Daytona Beach's branch that started four years ago.

You might see them trailing local doctors who are making the rounds. And sometimes, direct medical care is in their hands.

Just four weeks into this rotation, Pandya, 25, has already experienced being hauled out of bed to bring new life into the world a number of times. He said he's already seen how pursuing obstetrics/gynecology as a lifelong career has its advantages.

"You practice a good mix of medicine," said Pandya, who is originally from Tampa. "You get to do primary care, preventive medicine, surgery. You get to see the full gamut of people."

He's getting a view that's more close up with patients than traditional medical school training.

The Florida State University model of community-based medicine, begun 10 years ago, was the first U.S. medical college founded in 25 years. And it is unique in partnering third- and fourth-year students one-on-one with doctors in practice. Between doctor-mentors and the professionals reviewing their work, there are 200 local clinicians involved in the training of these students.

Between seeing patients, Pandya and Dr. John Meyers, a local obstetrician/gynecologist, reviewed the chart of their next patient, an elderly woman. They reviewed what a bone test density score should mean.

"How old is she?" Pandya asked.

Meyers replied, "Seventy-six."

"When it's more than minus 2 1/2, that's osteoporosis, right?" Pandya says, eyeing the patient's chart that shows hers is more like minus 1.2.

"We'll talk to her about it," Meyers said.

Pandya nodded and said, "Pretty conservative right now?"

"Right."

This kind of training is a switch from the traditional model of medical education, in which a herd of third- and fourth-year medical students follow an attending physician as he or she makes the rounds. These students usually get direct instruction from residents working under the attending physician. The residents have graduated from medical school and are in the midst of their specialty training.

Dr. Pam Carbiener, an obstetrician/gynecologist who matches FSU students with local doctors, said she tried it both ways during her training. First, she trained one-on-one with physicians as a student at the University of South Dakota and then she was a resident in a university setting at Georgetown University. Of the two, she found her earlier training much more rewarding. Both sides of the equation benefit in this model, she said.

"They (the students) get taught one-on-one and by the time they get to their residencies, they are so much better prepared to take (medical) histories, do physicals, come up with diagnoses and establish treatment plans," Carbiener said. "And they, in turn, help the faculty by keeping us up to date on the latest technology."

Meyers, who has guided a number of third- and fourth-year FSU students in their training, said he has continually been amazed at how having more information at their fingertips has revolutionized medical student training.

"While we were taught in textbooks, they are taught out of an article published last month," said Meyers, who was

named as the Daytona Beach medical college branch's Teacher of the Year for the second time this year.

As a student, he was trained in a university setting. But he sees advantages in the community-based training in which he now participates.

"In the university setting you might be able to say, 'I trained under one of the biggest names in OB/Gyn,' " he said. "As a general rule, you will not grow up and be someone who writes textbooks, but someone who is a local physician in practice."

Josh Counihan, a fourth-year FSU student now interviewing for a residency, said his rotation with Meyers was life-changing. Watching Meyers in action convinced him to specialize in obstetrics and gynecology. And it wasn't just Meyers' practice of medicine that was the deciding factor.

"He has a great practice and a great family life," Counihan said. "Just an all-around great guy."

Meanwhile, Pandya is getting the Jamison family ready for their new life. Samuel should be arriving shortly.

"The baby sounds good. He's measuring perfectly," Pandya said.

"I'm ready to be done, but I'm willing to wait," said Mary Jamison, 30, of Deltona.

Pandya nodded: "I should be around."

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