COFFEE TALK

Hospital system scores big gains in residency program

Lee Health has retained 20 of 24 doctors in Southwest Florida with its family medicine residency program. Now it hopes to duplicate that success with a new internal medicine residency.

by: Business Observer | Staff

With successful results of its family medicine residency program serving as precedent, Lee Health believes it has the prescription for addressing a shortage of medical doctors in Southwest Florida. To attract more doctors to the growing region, the hospital system will collaborate with Florida State University College of Medicine to create an internal medicine residency program at Cape Coral Hospital.

Lee Health officials hope the results of the new program will mirror the success of its family residency effort, which welcomed its first class in 2014.
The three-year internal medicine program will open with eight residents in 2021 and will have 24 active residents when it reaches capacity in its third year. Because many physicians practice near the location of their residency, Lee Health seeks to keep the majority of the residents in Southwest Florida, according to a release.

Results of the ongoing family medicine residency program suggest the strategy works. Of the 24 physicians who have completed it, seven accepted offers to remain with Lee Health and 13 others stayed to practice in Southwest Florida, far surpassing Lee Health’s goal of retaining at least half of the residents in the region.

“Our family medicine residency program has been very successful in its five years of operation, and we are excited to expand our relationship with FSU’s medical school by bringing an internal medicine residency program to Southwest Florida,” says Lee Physician Group Chief Medical Officer Dr. Venkat Prasad in a statement. “Doctors entering the program will receive hands-on training in cardiovascular disease, infectious disease, endocrinology and other subspecialties of internal medicine. We look forward to welcoming our first class in two years to help serve our growing community.”

Residency programs give hospitals and health systems the opportunity to train doctors to care for the unique needs of the community and help address the national physician shortage in high-demand specialty areas. Residents are licensed and certified doctors who face a full range of medical challenges and are supervised and mentored by seasoned professionals.