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Lee Memorial Health System joins forces with FSU

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FORT MYERS, Fla.- Lee Memorial Health System is joining forces with a major university to keep future doctors here in Southwest Florida. The argument is simple: more students graduating medical school are looking for work elsewhere. There aren't enough residency programs in the state to offer the needed training. In fact, not one hospital in Lee, Collier or Charlotte County has a residency program.

But, all that is about to change.

The Florida State University College of Medicine is joining Lee Memorial Health System to create the residency program.

The medical partnership will welcome its first class of residency in July of 2013. The program, which will focus on primary care, is the first in the area.

"The fact that there hasn't been a graduate medical education is still a question for many people, so we're really excited to be able to be in a position to get that kick started," said Dr. Alma Littles, Associate Dean of Medicine at Florida State University.

The partnership is in response to a growing need of doctors in the area. The number of people living in Lee County is up 40 percent since 2000.

"The expectation and hopes are that a number of those residents will remain in the community to practice medicine once they're done with their training," explained Dr. Littles.

Up until now, a doctor who graduated med school, wouldn't be able to get the training locally needed to practice medicine, leaving hospitals no choice but to spend in recruitment.

"We've now crossed the threshold where we're now graduating more medical students in the state of florida than we have first-year program positions for them in residency," said Dr. John Fogarty, Dean of Medicine.

It will cost Lee Memorial \$140,000 per resident. Part of the money will be covered by medicare and state grants.

The 3-year program will be a class of 6 residents that will focus on family primary care. Both F.S.U. and Lee Memorial hope to expand the program in the coming years.

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