



Med students host Teddy Bear Clinic at Killearn Lakes Elementary

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(Photo: Glenn Sanger-Hodgson.)



Going to the doctor for the first time can be scary.

To address that fear, first-year med students at the FSU College of Medicine hosted a Teddy Bear Clinic recently at Killearn Lakes Elementary School to help kids get more comfortable around doctors and medical equipment.

More than 400 kids in pre-K through second grade brought their ailing teddy bears to school and took them through different stations to learn what to expect when visiting the doctor.

One bear couldn't stop dancing. Another ate too much macaroni. A third had sudden-onset color blindness.



Med students staffed the intake, radiology, physical exam, casting and outtake stations to care for the bears and familiarize kids with basic health-care equipment and procedures.

"When you think about what children see when they go to the doctor, it's a stranger in a white coat with fancy gadgets around their neck, holding more fancy gadgets and objects up to their face. I'd be scared, too," said med student Julianna Kacheris.



Gerald Megna bandages a doll at the Teddy Bear Clinic at Killlearn Lakes Elementary School recently. (Photo: Glenn Sanger-Hodgson.)

Once the kids helped fill out paperwork at the intake station, they moved on to the radiology table and looked at X-ray films. Med students took the bears' blood pressure and temperature, listened to their hearts and conducted vision exams and other tests.

The future physicians put casts on broken bones, applied bandages and wrote prescriptions before sending the kids and their furry companions along with a sticker and lollipop.

"The goal of the event was to reduce the fear of going to the doctor, but it also gave us med students the opportunity to work with children and learn to communicate with them," said med student Gerald Megna, who organized the event.

Learning how to comfort children, understand them and get down to their level was one of the biggest takeaways for Kacheris.

"I learned that involving the children as much as possible in their own care is what worked best to help them feel more comfortable," she said. "When I asked the children to place the stethoscope on their teddy bear's heart instead of doing it myself, their faces lit up. It really gave me insight on how to calm children down in a medical setting."

With the success of the first teddy bear clinic, Megna hopes to make it into an annual event.

"I got the idea from a friend of mine who does it at Michigan State every year," said Megna. "I hope to bring this to the College of Medicine campus, get the PA students involved, invite the community and hopefully make it into a collegewide community outreach event."