

New program brings doctors to SWFL

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LEE COUNTY, Fla. - Lee Memorial Health System says it has a "cure" for a potential doctor shortage. One local hospital is hoping to attract doctors to the area keep medical students from leaving Florida when they graduate and become medical residents.

The 7th floor of Lee Memorial Hospital is buzzing with activity, as crews construct a Family Medical Center large enough to accommodate incoming residents.

"The extended facility will have 20 exam rooms, offices for all of our residents and faculty. Everything we need for the program," said Program Director, Dr. Gary Goforth.

According Dr. Goforth, the State is in need of primary care physicians and hopes the new residency program here in Southwest Florida will help an overwhelmed healthcare system.

"In Florida now there are a number of medical schools and what they found is that about half of the graduates of those schools are having to leave the state because there is not enough residency positions to train him. So those are potentially lost doctors to Floridians," he said.

Cape Coral native Joe Hernandez is a forth-year student at The Florida State University College of Medicine.

"I have to apply to residency programs. I'm applying to all the Florida ones in family medicine right now, fingers crossed," he said, "I'd like to get a house or something. My family is here, my wife's family is here. We met at Fort Myers High School over there."

"This is a beautiful area of the state and the country and we're also looking for medical school graduates that are from this area because many of them want to come home and establish a practice," Dr. Goforth stated.

This residency program is the first of its kind between Tampa and Miami and should be up and running by July 2014. They will begin looking for 18 incoming residents this fall.