

Technology, medicine and healthcare access

Mike Smith of FSU College of Medicine addresses Kiwanis

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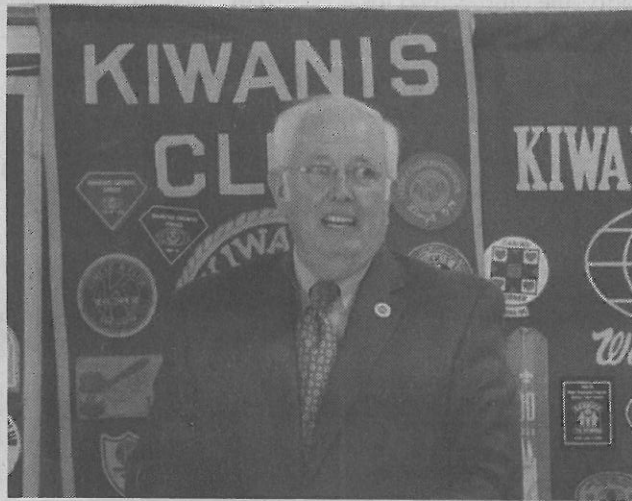
Where is medicine going in the 21st century, and how will technology figure into things?

Michael P. "Mike" Smith, M.A., MPA, Program Director for the Center for Strategic Public Health Preparedness and Principal Investigator for the Center for Universal Research to Eradicate Disease (FLCURED.ORG), spoke to the Monticello Kiwanis Club about FSU's College of Medicine and the emerging field of telemedicine, and how it will be a large part of improving healthcare access.

Smith, who grew up in New York City and whose wife, Elizabeth, hails from Jefferson County, has been on the faculty at the College of Medicine for 15 years. Prior to that, he served in the U.S. Air Force, achieving the rank of colonel. During this time, with his engineer's training as an Air Force pilot, he began looking at the medical field through the lens of technology and becoming fascinated with the emerging field of telemedicine, where physicians, using high-definition cameras, monitors, and computer links, can treat and diagnose patients at a distant location in real time, and treatment centers around the country can be linked together in a real-time network.

During his Air Force years, Smith had been responsible for such a system at the Pentagon that was used for military equipment and maneuvers. In Hong Kong in the 1970s, he saw the first examples of high-definition television and the new cellular technology. Shortly afterward, a hospital in Miami began the first pioneering efforts and by the early 1990s Smith was beginning to think about how this technology could be applied to healthcare all over the country, meaning patients could have access to doctors and specialists, no matter how far away.

Currently, telemedicine has come into general



ECB Publishing, Inc., Photo By Lynette Norris, January 11, 2017
Mike Smith, M.A., MPA, faculty member of the Florida State College of Medicine, speaks to Kiwanis about the future of medical care and patient access.

use in several states, allowing such patient access – for example, in radiology, an image can be sent to and read by a radiologist anywhere on the planet.

In another example from tele-dermatology, Smith spoke of a friend in another state who can simply take a picture of a skin issue with his smart phone, send it to his dermatologist and get an appointment right away; sounds practical enough, but it is still a method most of Florida's medical community "wouldn't touch with a ten-foot pole."

Even though Miami pioneered the first forays into the field, Florida still lags behind 28 other states, and that is something Smith would like to see changed.

Telemedicine would mean better access for more patients, but FSU is also working on the access issue from the people angle, using the community-based model for its College of Medicine to reach patients in small, rural communities.

Smith explains it this way: most medical schools in the U.S. work on the teaching-hospital model – the 'academic medical center;' this is the case with Shands in Gainesville, with approximately 2700 clinicians on staff.

FSU uses the community-based hospital model, something virtually unheard-of when the Florida State Legislature green-lighted the FSU College of Medicine. There are only 27 clinicians on staff at FSU, and instead of being

at a central teaching hospital, medical students break up into groups of 20 and go out to communities all over the state, where the local physicians become the 'faculty' (the first two years of medical school are the heavy academic years, the science and biology, while in the second two years are when the student learns medical procedures - how to use medical equipment, how to take patient histories, and so forth).

Medical school graduates are also not allowed to write prescriptions until they have served a one-year residency; with FSU's program, they complete their residencies in small communities instead of central teaching hospitals. Thus the community-based model improves healthcare access, and since residents usually stay within 70 miles of their residency, the model helps retain more doctors in Florida.

"It was a different

model than the usual," said Smith of the FSU College of medicine when it first began in 2000. "But now other hospitals come to us to see how we do it."

When it comes to numbers, it's clearer how this model helps improve access as well. There are only 150 -160 medical schools in the entire country, producing anywhere from 120-150 graduates each per year. "Not that many (in terms of the general population)" said Smith.

FSU, the first new medical school in the country in 12 years, graduated its first class of 120 in 2005, and produced its 1000th graduate last May.

"Times change," Smith added. Now only the sickest people go to hospitals. Instead, students and residents see most patients in their community with an attending physician. It's a central piece of the program in reaching the elderly and those in rural areas. There are an average of 6000 applications for about 100 openings.

"We're looking for a young person from Monticello, from Bonifay, voicing some willingness to serve in their community," and as the college's mission statement declares on its website, to be "responsive to community needs, especially through service to elder, rural, minority, and underserved populations."

With telemedicine and the community-based teaching medical school

model, Smith expressed hope that patient access, especially in underserved communities, will be improved during the 21st century.

For more information, visit the FSU College of Medicine's website at <http://www.med.fsu.edu/?page=comAboutUs.overview>.

Financial Focus...

Investment Tips for "Millennials"

If you are a "millennial" – a member of the age cohort born anywhere from the early 1980s to the late 1990s – then you're still in the early chapters of your career, so it may be a stretch for you to envision the end of it. But since you do have so many years until you retire, you've got the luxury of putting time on your side as you save and plan for retirement. Here are some suggestions for making the best use of that time:

Invest early – and often. Even if you are at the very beginning of your career, make investing a priority. At first, you might only be able to contribute a small amount each month, but something is far better than nothing – and after a year or so, you might be surprised at how much you've actually put away.

Take advantage of your employer's retirement plan. If your employer offers a 401(k) or similar plan, contribute as much as you can afford. At the least, put in enough to earn your employer's match, if one is offered. Your contributions can lower your taxable income, and your earnings can grow on a tax-deferred basis.

Invest more as your earnings increase. As your career advances, and your earnings rise, you'll want to increase your contributions to your 401(k) or similar plan. And if you ever "max out" otn your annual 401(k) contributions (the limits change over time), you can probably still contribute to another tax-advantaged retirement plan, such as a traditional or Roth IRA.

Thus far, we've only discussed, in general terms, how much and how often you should invest. But it's obviously just as important to think about the type of investments you own. And at this stage of your life, you need an investment mix that provides you with ample opportunities for growth. Historically, stocks and stock-based vehicles provide greater growth potential than other investments, such as government securities, corporate bonds and certificates of deposit (CDs). Of course, stocks will rise and fall in price, sometimes dramatically. But with decades ahead of you, you do have time to overcome short-term losses. And you may be able to reduce the effects of market volatility by spreading your dollars among many different stock-based investments, along with a reasonable percentage of bonds and other, more conservative securities.

Here's something else to consider: Many millennials want more from their investments than just good performance – they also want their money to make a difference in the world. This interest in "impact" investing (also known as "socially responsible" investing) has led some of your peers to screen out companies or industries they believe have a negative impact on society in favor of other businesses that are viewed as contributing to a more sustainable world. If this viewpoint resonates with you, then you may want to explore these types of investment opportunities with a financial professional. But most importantly, keep on investing throughout your life. As a millennial, you've got plenty of the one asset that can never be replaced: time. Use it wisely.

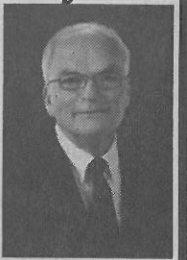
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