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Training professionals to meet local needs

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Education is vital to growing our workforce and ensuring our community attracts and retains the best and brightest health professionals to deliver safe, high quality care. Lee Health supports continued education in a variety of ways, including residency programs for pharmacy and family medicine.

The Lee Health Pharmacy Residency Program, which includes post-graduate year one and post-graduate year two education, recently announced it is expanding.

The year-one residents are increasing from four to six and the year-two residents are doubling from two to four for the 2017-2018 class. The program builds on the clinical, professional and leadership skills the students gain while pursuing their doctor of pharmacy degree.

John Armitstead, system director, Lee Health Pharmacy Services, says there are seven pharmacy schools that offer doctoral degrees in Florida, but none are in immediate geographic proximity to Lee Health. The Pharmacy Residency Program, which began in 2008, provides opportunities for pharmacists to begin their careers in Southwest Florida and upon completion stay to practice.

That is also the rationale for the Florida State University College of Medicine Family Medicine Residency Program at Lee Health. Just two years after inception, the program was approved in December for expansion.

Even more significant, this impressive residency program received accreditation with commendation from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education for the next 10 years –without a single citation for improvement.

The three-year program, based at Lee Memorial Hospital, started in April 2014 with six residents.

The program is expanding to 24 residents, with eight residents added each year for the next three years.

There are 501 family medicine residency programs in the U.S., and –competition is tough for physicians who apply. “We received more than 1,700 applications from U.S. medical students and physicians from all over the world,” said Gary Goforth, founding program director. “With about two-thirds of Florida’s medical graduates going out-of-state for their residencies, the hope is that more resident graduates will remain in the area to practice medicine. Statistically, about 60 percent of residents will practice medicine in the same area in which they are trained. We have great facilities with a diverse patient population, a very supportive volunteer community and core faculty, so we hope that our program can help keep doctors local.”

As caring people, inspiring health, we are proud to help train the doctors and pharmacists of the future.

It is another opportunity for us to show our commitment to the health and well being of our community.
