Villages doctors excited to become models for fixing nation’s health care system

The Villages Health has big ideas about the future of medical care, and its physicians aren’t surprised that others are taking note.

“Four or five years ago, I think we're going to call this ‘they got it right,’” said Dr. Joe Hildner, chief medical officer of The Villages Health. “Hopefully, it will be plagiarized, certainly nationally, and maybe even beyond our borders.”

The ‘Villages model, which centers on the rela- tionship between patients and their primary care doctor, is not without risk. But Hildner said it’s “right and it just makes sense.”

Dr. Saul Rosenblum, incoming medical direc- tor for the Santa Barbara Care Center, said he expects the plan to spark conversation at the national level.

“Because we'll probably be closely observed by both who want us to succeed, as well as those who have a vested interest in keeping the status quo, there’s a level of anxiety as well as excitement,” he said. “All the great decisions in my life were preceded by excitement and anxiety, and this is no different.”

Rosenblum said doctors will be drawn to the model that truly puts health care over health.

“We have the opportunity, as well as the tal- ent, to change health care in America,” he said. “It excites me that there are those in academic, politi- cal and financial institutions who think this just might work.”

Dr. Jack Hocutt, who practices at the Colony Care Center, said patients here have a lot to teach patients elsewhere.

“A lot of them have ohhilationed values and are willing to work and are interested in both health and readily take up,” he said. “So that will serve as a model for the rest of the country and the world.”

Dr. Larry Croom, medical director at the Bella Vista Care Center, agreed.

“If you’re going to shoot a guy to the moon, everybody’s going to be watching, so you’d better get that guy to the moon,” he said.

Among those watching are medical students, said Dr. Elliot Sussman, chair of The Villages Health.

“They will begin to say, ‘gee, yeah, there’s a place in Florida and there’s a place in Georgia, in California; I’m going to be a primary care doc,’ ” he said. And they will learn from what we are accomplishing.

“We’re doing this to create America’s Healthiest Community has taken hold of the patient becomes top of that best-of-the-best list, as those who have joined this effort.

“Fixing health care: All doctors want to work as a team, all in the best interests of serving patients. That kind of team will serve as a model for the rest of the country,” he said.

Dr. Stephen Fischer, Bellows Care Center

“How national health care is broken

When I started medicine about 25 years ago, the doctor was kind of in charge. The patient would do as they were told, they received care. It works much better when the patient is involved, so it’s a real compliment that others want to be involved or participate. The physician still is some- body who has the knowledge and the skill and the training, but he has to have the patient as part of that partnership, which carries with it both opportu- nity and accountability. The physician still is some- body who has the knowledge, the skill and the training, but he has to have the patient as part of that partnership, which carries with it both opportu- nity and accountability.

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