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America's Healthiest Hometown

Putting Patients First

Hildner: Goal is to transform medical care with patient-centered care.

STAFF REPORT

By CURT HILLS
DAILY SUN

THE VILLAGES — Imagine a health care process that puts you, as the patient, first. It's something that Dr. Joseph Hildner believes the country's medical community has gotten away from. But, he's now part of The Villages-USF Health partnership that believes it can restore that. He shared his message in two Tuesday afternoon sessions of the latest USF Health in The Villages free health information series at Savannah Center.

Hildner is the founder and leading physician with Family Doctors of Belleview, which is the state's only accredited practice designated as a ³medical home of excellence.² But now, through the partnership designed to create "America's Healthiest Hometown," Hildner will operate The Villages Care Center when it opens later this year in Colony Plaza. "We're going to change the world," Hildner said.

An admitted ambitious statement, but Hildner said he believes patient-centered primary care facilities, like the first one slated for Colony Plaza, will become game-changers in how medicine is handled. "We think if everybody has access to a good patient-centered primary care doctor, we might not have this health care crisis," he said.

Hildner goes to great pains to emphasize he's not critical of current family doctors or specialists working in the area. Instead, he said his focus is on changing the system and bringing those good doctors into a new way of working with patients.

He said a cardiologist is naturally trained to order a stress test or a neurologist may want a head CT or MRI scan. He said it's expected that they would do what they're trained to do. "If you're a hammer, everything looks like a nail," he said.

He said the goal in The Villages will be to have a family physician and his surrounding care team work with the patients to determine if the care can be handled there, without needing to send the patient to a specialist. And he said because the doctor and his team will invest time with the patient, they'll have a strong understanding of the patient's background and that should lead to ordering tests and procedures only when necessary.

"We know how to order a (CT) scan, but we also know how not to order a (CT) scan," Hildner said. "We have to exercise clinical judgment."

Hildner said there will be obvious situations when a patient needs to be referred to a specialist, such as if a patient has a fractured hip.

But under his patient-centered care plan, patients would receive wellness and preventive care to try to avoid some of those broken hip cases.

"I'm here to tell you maybe that hip didn't need to break," he said to the residents. "That type of care has been forgotten or undervalued."

Hildner went on to show design and floor plans to the residents for the first The Villages Care Center that will be constructed in Colony Plaza.

While the partnership and his practice will build and provide the initial staff, Hildner said he needs help in recruiting doctors that remind people of the values that the fictional Dr. Marcus Welby used to provide for his patients.

"Changing the world is a big one," he said. "We're going to need a lot of help. If you have a 'Marcus Welby' back home, tell us about him or her and we'll see if we can get them here."