

AMERICA'S HEALTHIEST HOMETOWN

A weekly report on The Villages' efforts to become "America's Healthiest Hometown" compiled by Daily Sun Ombudsman **Larry D. Croom**
Email larry.croom@thevillagesmedia.com.
Or call him at 753-1119, ext. 9366.

For more information on audiology, contact The Villages Health at 352-674-1700. For general information, visit the website at thevillageshealth.com.

Did you know?

Dr. Al Turri, director of audiology for The Villages Health, has made 600 jumps as a skydiver.

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Q&A with Dr. Tressie Waldo

Is it important for patients to see an audiologist to establish a base-line on the status of their hearing?

Yes, that's absolutely right. We'll monitor you every year. And not just is your hearing decreasing, but is your speech understanding decreasing as well – that brain-ear connection. Or is the brain still understanding the speech input that's provided by the inner ear. That's one of the big things that we do look for every single year.

It is true that a lot of patients don't actually need hearing aids?

Yes. Probably 25 percent of those that we see do get



Waldo

need to help them with some hearing aids.

If someone needs a hearing aid, should they always choose the most expensive, top-of-the-line model?

Most people don't need the "mac daddy" hearing aid, fully loaded with all the bells and whistles. There's a lot of research out there as to how much hearing aid is just right. It really is patient-specific. You don't always need the absolute top-of-the-line, right-off-the-line hearing aid technology. Sometimes, if you just wait a few months and get slightly older technology, you can save a lot of money that way.

What is your philosophy on health care?

Take care of the patient. That needs to be our goal. Take care of the patient and the rest follows suit. It shouldn't be about the bottom line at the end of the day. You have to make money to keep the practice open. But it should be about making sure that you take care of the patient as effectively as you possibly can and managing your resources wisely.

What does the relationship you have with your patients mean to you?

The patient comes first. The patient is your customer and you want to have the healthiest, happiest patient that you can. That makes us healthy and happy as well. To know that we are helping that patient to be happy is just rewarding. You don't find that everywhere. This is all focused on the patient and how do you make them healthier.

Do you think the initiative here can change health care across America?

I think it has the potential to change it. You've got to have the right population. They have to be willing to buy into it themselves. It's not just all the doctors and the medical staff. The patients have to be willing to take care of themselves.

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George Horsford / Daily Sun

Dr. Al Turri, right, director of audiology for The Villages Health, talks with patient Jim Scarlett and his wife, Dell, recently at the Colony Care Center.

PERFECT MATCH

Audiologists say primary care setting best place to practice

By **LARRY D. CROOM** / DAILY SUN OMBUDSMAN

THE VILLAGES
Audiologists with The Villages Health will be the first to say that working alongside primary care doctors is akin to a marriage made in heaven.

In fact, according to Dr. Tressie Waldo, the partnership creates convenience and a real comfort factor for patients.

"There's that built-in trust by having your primary care doctor right down the hall," said Waldo, a 20-year Air Force veteran who has an extensive background in hearing loss prevention. "They trust us, so therefore the patient is more willing to trust us. We're here to help you in the same way that your doctor is here to help you."

Dr. Al Turri, director of audiology for The Villages Health, said he wanted the opportunity to work closely with primary care doctors for quite a long time. He said that dream started to become a reality a few years ago when he started working alongside primary care physicians at Family Doctors of Belleview, which merged with The Villages Health in December 2012.

"What we found is, by educating the physicians about the need for hearing health care – between hearing loss, tinnitus, dizziness,

vertigo and all the things that we do as audiologists – we saw a lot more patients," he said. "And we got to educate them and let them know what's going on and things that they can do about it."

Turri said being in the primary care setting also provides the opportunity to counsel patients who might be approaching a hearing issue.

"The person that would have waited seven to 10 years too long, they get sent to me down the hall, maybe within the first year to two years of symptoms," he said. "We get a baseline, we educate them

Coming April 13

Dr. Herbert Pardes, executive vice chairman of New York-Presbyterian Hospital's board of trustees, offers his thoughts on The Villages Health.

and say look, 'when you're ready, come see us and we'll be able to help you.'"

Waldo said she's worked alongside primary care doctors her entire career and really appreciates the teamwork that occurs every day. She added that she's thrilled to be working in facilities that carry the prestigious designation of patient-centered medical homes.

"A lot of places have great ideas, but they don't take the time or the effort to follow it through to fruition," she said. "They really walk the talk here. It's not just lip service."

Fran Ehrmann agrees. After close to 15 years of frustrations with hearing aids, she visited Turri after being referred by Sylvia Wallace, an advanced registered nurse practitioner at the Santa Barbara Care Center. Turri made some hearing aid adjustments and Ehrmann is now hearing things she hasn't heard in years. Toss in her other positive experiences with The Villages Health,

and the Village of Poinciana resident said she couldn't be much happier.

"The first day I walked in, there were four things that I had on my to-do list involving my health care," she said. "I talked to the person who admitted me and I said, 'I also have these four things.' She took the paperwork and said, 'don't worry, we'll take care of it.' That was it. They took care of everything. I felt like I was the queen or something. This whole Villages Health care system is magic to me."

Dr. Joe Hildner, chief medical officer of The Villages Health, said stories like Ehrmann's are how health care is supposed to work for patients. And, he added, it's an excellent example of the importance of seeing a trained audiologist.

"Audiology is a science, and doctors of audiology really take care of a broad spectrum of issues and problems," he said. "They can really improve one's wellness and one's ability to enjoy their life."

Dr. Saul Rosenblum, medical director of the Santa Barbara Care Center, agreed.

"If you can't enjoy the other people around you here and you feel embarrassed because you can't hear, it diminishes the value of living in The Villages," he said. "Why not maximize the value of being here. Hearing loss is a critical issue."

The Villages

Q&A with Dr. Al Turri

What is one thing about your job that really sticks out in a positive way?

Camaraderie and collegial relationships with all the providers on this staff, from the medical director of the whole company right to my staff audiologist to the nurse practitioner to the medical assistant to everybody across the spectrum of delivery of service. You can feel the energy. There's an electricity in these halls. You can't help but get excited about what we're a part of and how we're changing things.

What is your philosophy on health care?

If I wouldn't do it with my mom or my dad, I don't do it for a patient. It's kept me straight and helped me build very successful practices over the years by putting my patients first and treating them like mom and dad. And it should be directed by your primary care physician and surrounded by specialists that are responsive, professional and caring. If your doctor is more like your coach and there to support you and educate you, I don't see how we can fail.



Turri

Do you have rules that you live by when treating patients?

We've got two rules. If you have a hearing loss, you've got to tell me that it's bothering you. And then you've got to ask me for help. I'm going to tell if you need (hearing aids), but if you don't ask me to help you, you're not ready. So why should we put a hearing aid on somebody like that that will wind up putting them in a drawer? We have a simple conversation. Yes, they might benefit from a hearing aid, but let's wait until they're ready.

Are there steps people who aren't ready for hearing aids can do to help combat hearing loss?

Yes. Pick a seat in a restaurant where you can get your back against the wall. That's going to get all that background noise out in front of you. That's going to solve half your problem. With the television, if you're not ready for hearing aids, let's get you a set of TV Ears (a wireless listening device). All of a sudden, the TV isn't a problem anymore. Then next year, I want to see you. We're going to check to see that your hearing is stable, and we'll talk more about how that strategy helped. At that time, maybe you'll be ready.

Are there ever very simple solutions to hearing loss?

Yes. Sometimes it's just taking out the ear wax. Sometimes they come totally plugged. We just had a guy that was totally plugged. He's got a little bit of a high-frequency loss, but the bulk of his hearing loss was because he had the wax plug in both ears. He doesn't need a hearing aid. He just needs to come see me every couple of months for wax removal.

Care Centers in The Villages

Primary care

The Villages Health Colony Care Center
280 Farner Place, 352-674-1710

The Villages Health Santa Barbara Care Center
1575 Santa Barbara Blvd., 352-674-1740

The Villages Health Pinellas Care Center
2485 Pinellas Place, 352-674-1720

The Villages Health Mulberry Grove Care Center
8877 S.E. 165th Mulberry Lane, 352-674-1750

The Villages Health Lake Sumter Creekside Care Center
1050 Old Camp Road, Building 100 (Opening April 14)

Specialty care

USF Health Specialty Care Center
1400 N. U.S. Highway 27/441, Building 810
352-674-8731