

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.

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Did you know?

Ginger Clive, an advanced registered nurse practitioner at the Santa Barbara Care Center, is a huge fan of the New York Yankees.

Villages Health Q&A

Dr. Al Turri Shares Thoughts On Importance of Audiology

Why did you become an audiologist?

When I was deciding what I was going to do for a living, one of the professors I had in a speech pathology program I was doing made me take an audiology class. He made us pick three different practice settings. In two of those three, they were fitting patients with hearing aids. I'll never forget that rush, that goose-bump feeling. The hair was rising up on my arm. The patients were hearing stuff they haven't heard, and they just got ignited. It doesn't happen with every patient, but there are those cases where you see them tearing up, and I start to tear up and the wife tears up. Or they come back at their first follow-up and say, 'Oh, my goodness, I heard my granddaughter on the phone.'



Position: Director of Audiology
Age: 47
Undergraduate degree: University of South Florida
Master's degree: University of South Florida
Doctorate: Salus University (Pennsylvania)
Certified: American Board of Audiology
Military service: Army National Guard (4 years)

What is your favorite thing about being an audiologist?

On the patient side, I get to help people hear better. I get to pull out their ear wax. I get to get rid of their dizziness with a simple eight-minute procedure when they've got a certain form of vertigo. I'm making people's quality of life better and getting them connected to the world. I also get to hire audiologists. I get to buy equipment and determine what type of technology we use as a company. I get to make the decisions that guide this company down the road of helping patients with their hearing health care. It's not only going to change the lives of the Villagers, it's going to be the model for the rest of the world.

How important to you was the time you served in the Army National Guard?

It changed my life. I was always a good student, pretty well disciplined. But for some reason, around 12th grade, first year of college, I rebelled a little bit. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I knew I was supposed to go to college because my parents wanted me to go to college, but I was studying accounting because my dad was an accountant. I said, 'Man, this isn't for me.' So I went and got a job, part-time, loading trucks at night while I was trying to go to school to make some money. I said, 'I don't want to do this forever.' So I joined the Guard just to get away, get in shape, maybe see if I wanted to do the military full-time. And that's where I grew up. I came out of there focused and ready to go.

What is the biggest thing you took away from your military experience?

The attention to detail, discipline, schedule and the camaraderie. I remember being at boot camp and infantry training. You really mold and blend with those guys. You kind of

unite, and that was some of the closest ties that I've had in a short period of time.

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 who 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 take 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 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.



Bill Mitchell / Daily Sun

Dr. Kimberly Giovannelli and Dr. Frank Melidona, primary care physicians at The Villages Health's Santa Barbara Care Center, compare notes in a patient's electronic medical record recently.

Added Benefit for Doctors and Patients

Primary care physicians cite multiple advantages of electronic medical record

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

THE VILLAGES Ask any Villages Health primary care provider about the importance of an electronic medical record and the answer will be quite clear – it benefits both doctors and patients in a huge way.

In fact, according to Dr. Saul Rosenblum, medical director of the Santa Barbara Care Center, it's a key component of providing excellent care.

"In this day and age, where it takes a team to keep people healthy, there's so much communication going on," Rosenblum said. "So there's a need to be able to maintain information and transfer information to those who are taking care of you, be it specialists or other primary care physicians who are on call that night."

Dr. Tomas Perez, a family doctor at the Pinellas Care Center, echoed those thoughts, adding that it is crucial to have pertinent patient information available when covering for other physicians.

"All you have to do is log into the computer and you have all the information you need to make an appropriate medical decision," he said. "It's having accessibility to the medical data at your fingertips."

Dr. Laura Cloukey is no

stranger to the eClinical-Works electronic medical record used by The Villages Health. In fact, the primary care physician who practices at the Pinellas Care Center said she used the same system for eight years while practicing at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston.

"What I found up in Boston is that we weren't necessarily pushing the software all the way to its abilities," Cloukey said. "They are doing more with it here in The Villages, and I was happy to see that. If it's not working to the top of its level, then what am I going to be able to get out of it?"

Dr. Robert Reilly said he believes one of the most important features of the eClinicalWorks record is that the notes physicians record about patients are not only legible – something that wasn't always true with paper charts – but also readily available.

"It's accessible from a variety of different platforms, whether you're at home, whether you're in the office or you're somewhere far away," said Reilly, who serves as medical director of Creekside Care Center. "It tracks everything and keeps everything in one place. You don't have papers that are getting misplaced and thrown out inadvertently."

Dr. Joe Hildner, director of

Coming Feb. 22

Electronic medical record provides immediate access to information for patients.

medical affairs for The Villages Health, said he has found over the years that when doctors truly communicate with each other and work closely together, patients benefit greatly.

"When you have a paper chart in your office and I have one in mine, they don't talk," he said. "But if you and I are on the same electronic medical record, we know each other's moves. I know what lab work you've already run or what X-rays you've taken, so we don't need to repeat that. We can just team up on this care together with the patient much more effectively than anything else."

For Dr. Daniel Whinnen, who practices at the Belleview Care Center, it's all about being a better physician for his patients.

"The electronic medical record is important for being able to access data more efficiently," he said. "That's a big part of my job, finding data and interpreting it. The rate-limiting step there is finding the data. So, if I can get it

presented to me efficiently, it helps me to be more efficient."

That key information, said Dr. Michael Wald, can make a huge difference in the way some treatments are administered.

"It's much easier to gather information electronically and we can say, 'Maybe we've been treating this a little incorrectly. The data that we've collected suggests that maybe this is a better way to go,'" said Wald, who practices at the Mulberry Grove Care Center. "It's a research tool, really."

It's also a tool for keeping track of prescriptions that have been given to patients, said Dr. Elliot Sussman, chair of The Villages Health.

"I don't rely on my memory anymore for what pills you're on, when I started this, how long you've been on it, what the side effects were, do I remember what, if any, allergies you have," he said. "All that is part of the record."

Along those same lines, Sussman added, is the benefit of physicians quickly knowing what tests patients already have taken.

"If you have that electronic record and it's accessible to other physicians, we all know what medicines you're on and what studies you've had," he said. "You're going to get far better care."

Area Residents Encouraged to Sign Up for Free Memory Screenings

STAFF REPORT

THE VILLAGES The Villages Health USF Health Community Center is providing free memory screenings.

Whether you have concerns about your memory or are just looking to establish a baseline, area residents are encouraged to sign up for a free screening.

The tests are being offered

through a partnership with the USF Health Byrd Alzheimer's Institute in Tampa. They are administered by a registered nurse who has been certified by the Byrd Institute to provide memory screenings.

According to Amy Wixted, program director at the community center, a memory screening takes about 30 minutes to complete. She said it is

not a diagnostic tool, but can determine if a person has a problem with his or her memory and should seek further evaluation by a physician.

"For some, the screening may ease their concerns and reassure them that their memory is fine," Wixted said. "But for those individuals who do have a memory problem, the results may encourage them to

see a doctor."

Wixted said early detection of memory problems is extremely important. She pointed out that some medical conditions that cause memory loss – depression, alcoholism, anemia, diabetes, thyroid imbalance, vitamin deficiencies, medication side effects and acute infections – can have symptoms similar to Alzheimer's disease.

"If a person has one of these conditions, his or her memory loss could possibly be reversed following proper medical treatment," Wixted said. "If the memory loss is due to Alzheimer's disease, then the sooner the diagnosis is made, the better."

Although there is no cure for Alzheimer's, Wixted said treatments are available to preserve function and slow

the progression of the disease. So the sooner patients receive medication, she added, the longer they continue to enjoy a higher quality of life.

Memory screening appointments are available throughout the week at The Villages Health USF Health Community Center, 1040 Lake Sumter Landing. Call 753-6200 to schedule an appointment.