

# 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](mailto:larry.croom@thevillagesmedia.com). Or call him at 753-1119, ext. 9366.

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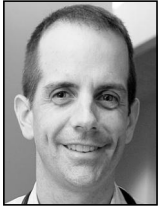
### Did you know?

Riddhi Patel, a physician assistant at the Santa Barbara Care Center, is a big fan of the 2003 hit movie, "The Italian Job," starring Mark Wahlberg and Charlize Theron.

## Doctor Q&A

### How important is the teamwork aspect between a doctor and a physician assistant?

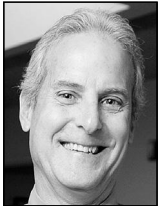
We can't just think, 'I'm the doctor and you're the extender.' No, it's we are taking care of the patient. This is our fund of medical knowledge that takes care of the patient, along with the patient's medical knowledge. It's a great partnership that we have, the three of us together.



**Dr. J.D. Steed**, medical director, Belleview Care Center

### Do you and your physician extenders communicate often?

In the morning, we have what we call a huddle. We start the morning by looking at who we're going to see that day and talking about what we anticipate that they'll need. There are records we have to get. Are there issues left over from previous visits? So we kind of know before we even see them what's going to happen. That goes for us and it goes for the extenders as well. And then, throughout the day, when they see a patient, if there's something that they have a question about, they come to us and they ask us about it.



**Dr. Stephen Fischer**, Belleview Care Center

Oh, absolutely. In terms of communication between the extender, it's not only required, it's encouraged. If they have a specific question about a patient, we do take the time to stop, discuss it, and



many times, we can go in with the extender and talk to the patient. But for the most part, communication is very key with the extenders. It's encouraged and it happens on a regular basis.

**Dr. Aya Olejeme**, Belleview Care Center

Where the doctors sit are called huddle rooms, because it's just like a huddle. We sit and talk to each other. And it's not unusual for me to go to one of the other docs and say, 'hey, what do you think of this' and show them a cardio-



gram or a film or a problem. We can share our thoughts. It's the same with the physician extenders. Cindi will come to me and say, 'I want to ask you about this case I'm seeing' and we will talk about it. And if need be, I'll go in and see the patient as well. But that's what we do - we talk to each other.

**Dr. Michael Wald**, Mulberry Grove Care Center, speaking about his relationship with his physician assistant, Cynthia Stewart



Photos by George Horsford / Daily Sun  
Nurse Practitioner Ginger Clive, left, looks over a patient's file recently with Belinda Nelson, a licensed registered nurse practitioner at the Colony Care Center.

# EXTENDING CARE

## Villages Health doctors say team members' backgrounds impressive

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

Primary care doctors at The Villages Health say they appreciate working alongside physician extenders who bring a variety of educational backgrounds and life experiences to the table on a daily basis.

"They go through some very rigorous training," said Dr. J.D. Steed, medical director of the Belleview Care Center. "What we learn in four years of medical school, they basically learn in a year. And then the three years we have in residency, they do in a year through their clinical rotations. It's very intense."

Dr. Kathleen Steepy, an OB-GYN with The Villages Health Specialty Care Center, works alongside two nurse practitioners, Caroline Mathis and Rosemary Kipp. She said the education they received was almost as extensive as medical school.

"They have to have their bachelor's in nursing and then they go on to a master's degree program in women's health," Steepy said. "So they really have a good handle on all of the issues and concerns that we see on a daily basis in treating women."

Dr. Nasseer Masoodi, a primary care physician at the Santa Barbara Care Center, said he has a great deal of respect for the education and training physician extenders must complete before they earn their certifications to practice.

"It isn't that they wake up one morning and decide to be a physician extender," said Masoodi, who works

with Ginger Clive, a nurse practitioner who also spent 18 years as a nurse. "They are trained and have very good expertise in their field. The schools are really complicated and gaining admission is much harder than it used to be."

Dr. Robert Reilly, medical director of the Lake Sumter Creekside Care Center, agreed.

"We don't just allow anybody who has a certificate from a school and a stethoscope to come in and join us," he said. "They go through the same series of interviews and vetting process that our doctors go through, because, just like with our physicians, we are committed to picking the best of the best."

Masoodi said he also appreciates the various backgrounds Villages Health extenders bring to the table, such as long careers as nurses, paramedics or



Shira Small-Cangialosi, right, a physician assistant at the Lake Sumter Creekside Care Center, talks with Kathleen Hartigan, of Lady Lake, recently in one of the facility's visit rooms.

psychologists, to name a few. "They've worked in different settings with different people, so they have a different perspective of patient care," he said. "And that helps us as providers. That gives you a much better picture of the patient care. Their diverse backgrounds bring something new to the plate."

Dr. Joe Hildner, chief medical officer of The Villages Health, said he believes it takes a special kind of person to pursue a career as a physician extender.

"They're very compassionate, very good at teaching and they like doing that," he said. "And that role lends very well with our model, where each patient has a physician of their own. But that physician does not need to be in there asking you every question, tapping on your kneecaps and

listening to your lungs. An extender can really do that on a physician's behalf so that the patient can get more attention."

At the end of the day, Steed said, all the training and experience must pay off in one way - to benefit the patient. He said it's the most important thing that an extender brings to the table and he's thrilled to see that every day with his physician assistant, Jamie Kinsey, a former paramedic.

"Jamie's strongest point is how much she knows and cares about her patients that she sees," he said. "She knows some of my patients better than I know them. That's just the kind of person she is. She really takes ownership in those patients. She just absorbs them with her care and her spirit, and they love that."

## Notable quotes

"I've got Marykate Drake as a physician assistant, as well as Jennifer Jordahl as a nurse practitioner, as part of my huddle. They know how I treat diabetes



or how I like to have my diabetes or hypertension managed. So that's just a great avenue or resource to extend the care beyond me having limited spaces. That's the benefit of having extenders, not just for me but for all Villages Health physicians. Those extenders add so much breadth of knowledge, but they're also an extension of our own knowledge base."

**Dr. Karla Noel**, medical director, Pinellas Care Center

"She may have a simple case where she'll take care of it completely by herself. But if she has any questions, she comes right over to me. We discuss the case and we see the patient together, if we need to. It's a totally cooperative relationship."



**Dr. Brooks Betts**, Colony Care Center, speaking about his nurse practitioner, Linda Wheeling

"When I work with my physician assistant, she and I know each other extremely well. We understand our practice habits. She understands how I



manage things. I understand how she sees things. We are sort of one and the same when it comes to clinical care. That's the kind

of relationship that forms with time. You've got to love that relationship and make it grow and get stronger. When it works, it works great."

**Dr. Robert Reilly**, medical director, Lake Sumter Creekside Care Center, talking about his physician assistant, Karen Doyle

"If you have really good extenders, they can really be people that hold the office together. You know, we've got a lady coming in with a urinary tract infection. It's 4 o'clock on a Friday.



The doctor's kind of swamped and can't get to it. But that extender might have an opening. And to be able to have that margin does a lot for the camaraderie and the rapport around this place, especially if you have good extenders like we have here."

**Dr. J.D. Steed**, medical director, Belleview Care Center

"I can't see how I could take care of patients without that close relationship. (Physician Assistant) David Fischer is who I work with, and I introduce David as someone who's got the



same number of years of experience that I do. So combined, we have 30-plus years of experience. So in order to take care of you better, I'm able to have David at my side. It improves access, and I'm finding that patients are understanding and accepting of that."

**Dr. Dave Jordahl**, medical director, Colony Care Center