

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**
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Did you know?

Dr. Tomas Perez, a primary care physician at the Pinellas Care Center, enjoys playing tennis and golf and spending time with his children.

Villages Health Q&A

Dr. Tressie Waldo Offers Her Thoughts on Audiology

Why did you decide to go into audiology?

I started off in speech-language pathology. At the time, speech and hearing was the bachelor’s program and we had to do three quarters of therapy and then observe 100 hours of speech pathology. That’s when I realized I was not cut out to be a speech pathologist and I needed to go into something else. At the master’s level, the obvious choice was to try audiology. And I did like my audiology classes a lot better than my speech classes.

What kinds of things did you do in the Air Force in the field of audiology during your 20-year career?

We worked with everyone, including the people who would maintain the aircraft, fliers, logistic support, vehicle maintenance – we save everyone. I had opportunities to work in really large medical centers, very small clinics, even the industrial sites where you had the planes coming in for their depot maintenance. So we took care of all of the folks who were working around loud noise. And at some places, if it was a larger medical center, we would see retirees. So we would dabble in hearing aids and everything there as well.

What is the importance of having audiology tied to primary care?

Several things. One is convenience because we’re right here, especially in The Villages Health, where everything is so accessible. And two, there’s that built-in trust by having your primary care doctor right down the hall. They trust us, so therefore the patient is more willing to trust us. And we’re not just here to sell hearing aids. We’re here to help you in the same way that your doctor is here to help you.

What is your favorite thing about being an audiologist?

Helping people hear better and preventing hearing loss. I have a large prevention background. The preventing of hearing loss for people who are around loud noise exposure – whether it’s a job, or a hobby that exposes them to loud noise – I want them to be



Dr. Tressie Waldo

Position: Audiologist
Age: 48
Undergraduate: University of South Alabama
Master’s degree: University of South Alabama
Doctorate: Arizona School of Health Sciences
Certified: American Board of Audiology
Military service: Air Force (20 years)

aware that there is something that they can do to prevent that loud noise from causing hearing loss. We can’t prevent all hearing losses, but from loud noise, definitely 100 percent preventable if we do the right things.

What is your personal philosophy of health care?

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

Do you get a rewarding feeling when you make a difference for someone?

Oh, yes. Whether it’s they didn’t realize wearing hearing protection was important when they go to the gun range and they start wearing their hearing protection and prevent hearing loss. Or for those who already having hearing loss and have tried hearing aids for the first time, to actually be able to hear their spouses, to be able to hear their children, their grandchildren – things they haven’t heard in a really long time.



Bill Mitchell / Daily Sun

From left, certified medical assistants Amber Leiva and Peter LaCorte look over a patient’s medical record with Dana Gallo, a licensed practical nurse, at The Villages Health’s Specialty Care Center.

Improved access

Villages Health specialists tout benefits of electronic medical records

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

THE VILLAGES

Medical providers at The Villages Health’s Specialty Care Center are quick to tout the importance of an electronic medical record that stores vital information about patients and is readily available during visits.

The system, eClinicalWorks, provides digital records that contain comprehensive health information about each Villages Health patient. It is accessible at any time by primary care physicians, specialists and patients and it eliminates any type of guesswork when it comes to prescriptions or care that has been or is being provided.

And, according to Dr. James Flaherty, an OB-GYN at the Specialty Care Center, there are also many other benefits.

“It organizes things and things don’t get lost,” said Flaherty, who first started using eClinicalWorks in 2007 in his own practice. “Patients don’t come in for their visit and somebody goes, ‘Where the heck’s that paper chart? It was on somebody’s desk yesterday and we can’t find it.’ This way, you have things well organized. When reports come in, they’re immediately available. And the ability to communicate – not just between providers, but to patients – is incredibly improved.”

Dr. Edward Morris, a rheumatologist at the Specialty Care Center, agreed.

“With the ability to simply pick up the phone or send a

message through eClinicalWorks, the communication is so open that I think patients will have a great advantage in getting better care,” he said.

In fact, Morris added, having such open communication between primary care providers and specialists is a game changer.

“It’s going to change the way medicine is practiced to a large extent,” he said. “That’s why I think this concept will grow significantly over the next several years.”

Dr. David Ethier, an orthopedic surgeon at the specialty care facility, said the seamless communication the electronic record provides is essential.

“When the primary care

doctor sees the patient, all of his notes are readily evident to me,” he said. “I can look up what he says. I can see all the labs and all the X-rays he’s done. So it’s definitely going to avoid duplication of testing.”

Jennifer Jordahl, an advanced registered nurse practitioner in women’s health who works alongside OB-GYN Dr. Kathleen Steepy, said she is a huge fan of the electronic record because it clearly shows the medications a patient is taking.

“The medications that we prescribe here can have side effects with other medications that patients take, so it gives you confidence to know that the med list is accurate and up-to-date,” she said. “I’m not going to give them a medication that’s going to interact with what they’re already taking.”

Linda Arredondo, Specialty Care Center manager, agreed, adding that it also is important for the primary care physicians to be aware of medications prescribed by specialists.

“This way, patients don’t have to bring all their pill bottles in and worry about, ‘Did my doctor at specialty tell my primary care that they started me on this drug’ and ‘I don’t remember what that drug was,’” she said.

Shira Small-Cangialosi, a physician assistant and certified diabetes educator, said having such a comprehensive

electronic medical record falls right in line with being patient-centered.

“We all need to be on the same page, as far as each patient is concerned, and that medical record is key,” she said. “I can click on anybody’s note – from anywhere – and I can communicate with any other provider to find out what’s going on with our mutual patients.”

Small-Cangialosi added that knowing exactly what is happening with her diabetic patients is extremely important.

“With diabetics, we have everything from their cholesterol to their heart function to their kidney function to their allergies to their eye care,” she said. “We need to know everything from everybody.”

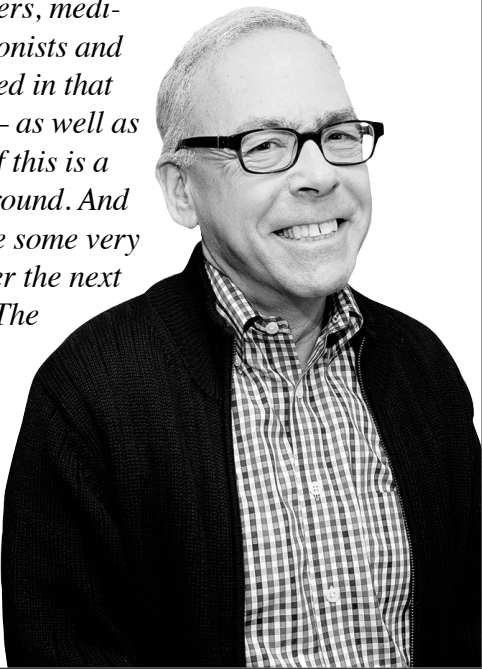
What it all means, Small-Cangialosi said, is that patients coming to the Specialty Care Center from primary care enjoy a smooth and seamless transition between medical providers.

“They don’t have to do the legwork for us to find out where they’ve been,” she said. “We ask them to sign things and then we do the legwork to get it, to have everything all together and to make sure that it’s a part of their electronic medical record. So that going forward, every other person who deals with them within The Villages Health practice has access to everything and it’s a really good thing.”

Creating America’s Healthiest Hometown

Are you having success in hiring medical providers for The Villages Health?

“We’re delighted with the quality of folks from around the country who now want to join The Villages Health model, both from a primary care perspective and a specialty care perspective. We have many physicians we are interviewing. Our physicians, care staff, nurse practitioners, medical assistants, receptionists and secretaries are involved in that interviewing process – as well as our patients – to see if this is a good fit all the way around. And I predict that we’ll see some very significant growth over the next couple of months for The Villages Health with regard to attracting more specialty physicians to our group.”



Dr. Elliot Sussman, chair, The Villages Health

Coming Feb. 15: Villages Health primary care providers weigh in on electronic medical records