

FAU's Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine and Five Palm Beach County Hospitals Form Consortium for Graduate Medical Education

WEST PALM BEACH — Officials from Bethesda Memorial Hospital, Boca Raton Regional Hospital, and Tenet's Delray Medical Center, St. Mary's Medical Center and West Boca Medical Center today signed an agreement to form a Graduate Medical Education Consortium with Florida Atlantic University's Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine. The establishment of this consortium of healthcare providers furthers the University's commitment to increase much needed medical residency positions in Palm Beach County, to ensure that the region will continue to have an adequate and well-trained physician workforce. Medical residencies take between three to seven years to complete depending on the specialty, and are required as part of the training for medical school graduates to become board-certified physicians.

"We are extremely pleased to formalize the great relationships we have forged with our hospital partners," said FAU President Mary Jane Saunders. "Collaborating with these five outstanding hospitals will substantially enrich the educational opportunities available for our medical students, residents and faculty, and will ultimately benefit the generations of patients for whom they will care."

The consortium will provide access to clinical settings for healthcare education, research and patient care services to support and enhance the college's clinical training programs for residents. The consortium will also help ensure that all FAU medical students have the opportunity to interact with residents, a requirement of the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, the national organization that accredits U.S. and Canadian medical schools.

"Working with our local university offers a tremendous opportunity for furthering medical education and improving quality of care in Palm Beach County," said Jerry Fedele, president and CEO of Boca Raton Regional Hospital. "Furthermore, the creation of this consortium benefits the healthcare systems, as the hospitals will play a central role, in collaboration with FAU's College of Medicine, by serving as a training site for residencies in key specialties."

Hospital representatives at the consortium agreement signing included: Roger Kirk, executive vice president and COO and Albert Biehl, M.D., vice president of medical affairs,

Bethesda Memorial Hospital; Fedele and Charles Posternack, M.D., chief medical officer, Boca Raton Regional Hospital; Mark Bryan, CEO and Anthony Dardano, M.D., chief medical officer, Delray Medical Center; Davide Carbone, CEO and William Jeffrey Davis, D.O., chief medical officer, St. Mary's Medical Center; and Mitch Feldman, CEO and Jack Harari, M.D., chief medical officer, West Boca Medical Center, Inc.

"The creation of this Graduate Medical Education Consortium will play a critical role in addressing the looming shortage of physicians in this region," said Michael L. Friedland, M.D., vice president of medical programs and dean of FAU's Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine. "This newly formed consortium is great news for South Florida residents because a significant number of doctors end up practicing their profession close to where they completed their residency programs."

"Bethesda Memorial Hospital is extremely pleased to partner with Florida Atlantic University to provide invaluable support to Palm Beach County's future physicians through the Graduate Medical Education consortium," said Robert B. Hill, president and CEO of Bethesda Memorial Hospital. "Ensuring an adequate supply of physicians is required if we are to continue to provide high quality healthcare to our community."

"On behalf of West Boca Medical Center, we are very proud to be partnering with this Graduate Medical Education consortium, which will further our commitment to providing outstanding patient care in this region," said Mitch Feldman, CEO of West Boca Medical Center.

Statistics from the 2009 Association of American Colleges (AAMC) State Physician Workforce Database indicate that as of 2008, 59 percent of the physicians who completed their residency training in Florida remained in Florida to establish their medical practices (compared to the national GME retention rate of 45 percent), placing Florida fourth nationally in the retention of residency program completers in state practice. The retention rate for individuals who complete both medical school and residency training in Florida is even higher at 75 percent. Despite the critical link between adequate access to residency and fellowship training and an adequate supply of physicians, Florida ranks 45th nationally in terms of allopathic residency positions per 100,000 state population. Because there is a shortage of Florida residency program opportunities, most physicians practicing in Florida received their residency training outside the state, and a significant number of Florida medical school graduates have no choice but to leave the state each year to complete their residency training.

The AAMC has also expressed concern about proposals to reduce Medicare funding for graduate medical education. According to key findings on new physician shortage estimates reported by the AAMC in 2010 (based on projections by the Center for Workforce Studies):

- The number of medical school students continues to increase, adding 7,000 graduates every year over the next decade. It is estimated that at least a 15 percent increase in residency training slots (adding another 4,000 physicians a year to the pipeline) is needed;
- Between now and 2015, the year after health care reforms are scheduled to take effect, the shortage of doctors across all specialties will quadruple. While previous projections showed a baseline shortage of 39,600 doctors in 2015, current estimates bring that number closer to 63,000, with a worsening of shortages through 2025;
- There also will be a substantial shortage of non-primary care specialists. In 2015, the U.S. will face a shortage of 33,100 physicians in specialties such as cardiology, oncology and emergency medicine;
- With the U.S. Census Bureau projecting a 36 percent growth in the number of Americans over age 65, and nearly one-third of all physicians expected to retire in the next decade, the need for timely access to high-quality care will be greater than ever.

FAU's College of Medicine welcomed its inaugural class of 64 students in August. The College's innovative curriculum titled "Integrated Patient Focused Curriculum" features early and continuous community-based clinical experiences and problem-based learning with emphasis on small-group and self-directed learning. From day one of their training and education, students work side-by-side with community physician preceptors in the diagnosis and treatment of patients, applying knowledge learned from the first two years of study to real-life situations.

