

New Physician to Join Family Practice in July

Written by April Peregoy

After a long, hard search to find more physicians to work at Family Practice Clinic of Holyoke, members of the East Phillips County Hospital District Board are delighted to announce a new doctor will soon be practicing here.

At its regular meeting Tuesday, Nov. 25, the board signed a contract with Dr. Danielle McClellan, M.D., who is currently a third-year resident at Poudre Valley Hospital in Fort Collins. She will be joining the clinic staff in July of 2009 following her graduation in June.

Said MMH administrator John Ayoub, "We're pretty excited about her. She and her family visited the hospital three times for interviews, so we were able to get a good feel for how she would fit in. What we found is that she's not just a good doctor, but also has the type of personality we are looking for."

Ayoub added the clinic continues to look for one more physician to join its staff. The board has an engagement with a recruiting firm to help them find possible applicants.

Budget news

More good news was given to the board when, in his administrator's update, Ayoub told members the district beat its budget for October for the first time this year. The reasons he gave for the extra revenue included the addition of the new nurse practitioners and the hard work of the accounts receivable department.

Members of the department's staff, Julie Vernon, Cassandra Sieck, Deb Schimonitz and Barb Salyards, were recognized and thanked by the board Tuesday for their efforts, and their ability to be below 60 days every month.

Final approval of the 2009 budget was given by EPCHD with a few minor changes. A reduced bottom line for the year now stands at \$103,000. Big expense items found in the budget include the Electronic Medical Record Project, which could cost between \$200,000 to \$1 million. However, Ayoub said the board is working to keep expenses as minimal as possible.

Also included is an upgrading project for the hospital's information technology system. The board is looking to create a wireless system that will allow staff members to take their tablets with them from room to room to work on.

Ayoub emphasized the wireless network will be for staff only—the general public will not be able to access it from personal computers in the hospital. \$145,000 was budgeted for the update.

Board sets quality care goals

Providing efficient, quality care to its customers is a mission of EPCHD, and on Tuesday night, board members received a balanced scorecard of the third quarter to review how the district is doing on reaching its objectives. The scorecard showed the hospital is doing well with its objectives of improving employee satisfaction and building a culture of operational excellence.

Financially, however, the district is struggling to meet some of its goals.

After reviewing the scorecard, the board then set to work defining its goals for the next quarter. A discussion was held on whether it is reasonable for the board to expect perfection when setting goals, or if it should strive for improvement only.

For instance, during the previous quarter, the district received a score of 62 percent for staff practicing proper hand hygiene techniques. In order to improve that score, the board discussed whether to set a goal of scoring 80 percent or a perfect 100 percent.

In the end, the board decided it is not being unrealistic to expect the district to score 100

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percent (or in the case of medical errors, zero percent), though any improvements should be celebrated.

Areas in which the board is seeking improvement include low budget deviations, patient satisfaction, clinic follow-up calls, medication errors and employee satisfaction.

Other business

In other business, the EPCHD board:

—changed its meeting dates to the fourth Monday of every month until March of 2009. This is to accommodate Ayoub and president Steve Young, who will be attending EMS classes on Tuesday nights.

—set a Thursday, Dec. 11 special meeting at noon to review and pass a resolution to certify no changes will be made to the mill levy.

—discussed the FCC Pilot Program, of which MMH is a participant. The program is providing \$4.6 million in funds for the construction of a state broadband network that will connect all the hospitals in Colorado.

Currently, MMH is already a participant of the High Plains Regional Health Network, and Ayoub explained the FCC will be able to plug in to the hospital through the existing structure. This means it will likely be one of the first hospitals to be connected.

—was given a tour of the surgery department by Cindy Lock, and then viewed the new recognition and history wall.

—discussed what groups of people around the community the Community Linkage Committee should meet with in order to get a good idea of how the board and MMH are viewed by the public. They also reviewed a fact sheet of the hospital that will be given to those the committee meets with.

—heard a report from Ayoub on his attendance at a Colorado Hospital Association meeting in Fort Morgan. He said he was given the chance to speak with CHA president Greg Brophy on budget projections for 2009, how the lower numbers will affect Medicare and Medicaid programs and other possible money sources to make up for them.

—was notified the clinic's Plan of Correction, to rectify deficiencies found during a state survey, was accepted by the state. Ayoub noted the board and hospital staff are working hard to make sure the new building complies with the state's standards, and said the state is very happy with their progress so far.

—held an executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel issues.