Southern Regional is Embracing Family Medicine’s Changing Times

Fayetteville’s Southern Regional-AHEC Family Medicine Residency Program (SR-AHEC) was established in 1976 and is dually-accredited by the ACGME and the AOA. The program is affiliated with Duke University Medical Center, yet incorporates medical education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Campbell University, and East Carolina University. The program’s clinical facility sits directly across from its primary teaching hospital, Cape Fear Valley Medical Center. Cape Fear Valley is a 765-bed hospital providing Pediatric, Cardiac, Medical and Surgical intensive care, OB/GYN, Emergency, Cancer and Cancer rehabilitation services.

SR-AHEC serves a diverse patient population through an integrative, team-based approach. The program’s main ambulatory clinic, the Family Medicine Center, serves approximately 29K patients annually, the bulk of which are insured by either contracted, TriCare, Medicare, and Medicaid payors. The clinic’s on-site services include radiology, pharmacology, complete diagnostic lab services and behavioral care. The program currently utilizes GE’s Centricity electronic health record system and was just recently awarded NCQA PPC-PCMH Level I recognition. SR-AHEC is the seventh NC-based Family Medicine residency to achieve NCQA PCMH recognition.

The most attractive aspect of SR-AHEC for incoming physicians is its unopposed status within Cape Fear Valley Medical Center. With no other residencies based in the hospital, each resident has the opportunity to work directly with attendings almost immediately upon entering.

“One of our strengths is that we are an unopposed residency. So if you want to work, and get your hands wet, come here,” noted Interim Residency Director Dr. Samuel ‘Woody’ Warburton. ‘Our residents really get a deeper clinical training experience - and earlier - because of this arrangement.’ The program also supports this with a number of strong community-based rotations.

Dr. Warburton also noted that because the program brings together both allopathic and osteopathic teaching faculty, residents can take advantage of a greater degree of musculoskeletal approaches.

SR-AHEC was the first osteopathic-accredited residency in the state and with Campbell University’s anticipated medical school on the horizon, it is expected to continue to add key benefits.

Residency training in Family Medicine is an intense time for all new physicians. SR-AHEC emphasizes life-work balance and encourages monthly resident outings and activities. This keeps the program close-knit and family friendly. The program also pays close attention to overall resident duty hours. ‘All of our residents make their numbers and our duty hours are real. We take duty hours seriously, don’t have violations, and are proud of that,’ noted Dr. Warburton. Dr. Warburton also indicated that SR-AHEC is in a good position to adapt to the coming duty hours changes since Cape Fear Valley already operates a night-float system.

SR-AHEC is coming off a strong MATCH this past March, having recruited seven new physicians. The program has instituted a couple of changes to its recruiting process that impacted its success. Residents have become more engaged in the process and are taking on a much larger role in interactions and interviews. Another improvement has been its new ‘individualized second-looks’ where applicants are invited to re-visit the program and experience a half-day of hospital and office rounds. This experience provides them with a closer glimpse of both in-patient and clinic operations. The program is also using some web-based tools to ensure that all applicants hear the same message.

“I think the future for our program looks very bright,” noted Warburton. ‘We have a very strong program, strong faculty, and we embrace change as well.’

SR-AHEC is currently recruiting for a Residency Program Director, and looking to supplement its current teaching faculty. Longer term, it is anticipated that a new clinical facility will help it stay on the cutting edge, especially as it continues its patient-centered transformation.

“It’s real important - and we tell our applicants - that this is the way primary care and family medicine is going to be practiced in the future. (As a resident) you want to be learning in that kind of practice,’ commented Warburton.