The Eisenhower Center for Family Medicine

Let our family take care of your family

By: Roxanne Jones

From Left: Tate de Leon, MD; Kinder Fayssoux, MD; Vanessa Ho, MD; K. Douglas Thrasher, DO, and André de Leon, MD.

If you would like the convenience of having one physician who can care for every member of your family, the Eisenhower Center for Family Medicine is just what the doctor ordered.

Located at the Eisenhower George and Julia Argyros Health Center in La Quinta, the Center for Family Medicine is home to a team of five faculty family medicine physicians, as well as a team of associate family physicians who care for patients of all ages, from newborns to the elderly, giving you a one-stop resource for managing all your family's health concerns at every stage of life.

"One of the greatest benefits of having a family physician is the comprehensiveness and breadth of family-based care," says Maureen Strohm, MD, Program Director, Family Medicine Residency. "Busy moms and dads don't have to make separate appointments with different doctors for their children and themselves — everyone can be seen by one doctor, in one place.

"Fundamentally, we evolved from the older general practitioner (GP) model of providing care across the spectrum of medical needs," she continues. "With specialty training, we provide routine preventive care, urgent care, chronic disease management and virtually everything in between." [See sidebar for more about the services that family physicians provide.]

"Family physicians can essentially care for 85 to 90 percent of patients' needs," she adds. "For many people, their family doctor will be the primary physician they'll see through much of their life, with the occasional surgeon or specialist consulted for certain issues."

For example, Dr. Strohm says, some people think they have to see a dermatologist for routine skin care, but for the average person with sun exposure, a skin check can be incorporated into his or her annual exam.

"The same goes for patients with high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes," she notes. "We can address chronic diseases as well as preventive health, including diet and stress management."

"In fact, we aim to integrate lifestyle modifications into much of the care we give to our patients," she adds. "This is fundamental to all health issues, and has a much broader impact than just taking a pill. It also underscores the emphasis that family medicine places on treating the whole person."

"Another valuable aspect of family practice is getting to know everyone in the family as individuals," notes Dr. Strohm. "This enables us to understand family dynamics from all different perspectives so we can address the emotional and psychological needs of the individual and the family."

The comprehensive training that family physicians undergo makes them uniquely qualified to care for such a breadth of patients and conditions (family physicians complete four years of medical school and a three-year family medicine residency). In fact, as a teaching hospital, the Eisenhower Center for Family Medicine is playing a vital role in teaching the next generation of family doctors. In addition to providing family medical care for the east valley, the Center is a clinical training site for Eisenhower's family medicine residents, now in their first year of a three-year residency program for which Dr. Strohm serves as program director. The five family physicians who see patients at the Center serve as core faculty. The scope of the training that Eisenhower offers has made it an extremely popular program.

"Only four percent of hospitals opening new resident training programs are fully matched," says Dr. Strohm, referring to the computer matching service that all residents go through to apply to residency training programs across the nation. "And we were in that small percentage." In fact, she notes, "We're two months ahead of where we were last year in terms of filling interview slots for next year."

The need for primary care physicians is profound, Dr. Strohm continues.

"There are pockets in the valley where there's only one primary care physician for every 9,000 people," she says. "The national standard is 1 for every 1,800. Plus, many primary care physicians in the valley are nearing retirement in the next ten years, so there's an even bigger need coming up."

"The good news is that nearly 95 percent of family medicine residents go on to practice primary care, and most residents stay to practice in the community where they trained," she continues. "So we've built a training program and a practice that our residents can join.

"We're very excited to provide this access to care for the valley today — and tomorrow," she adds.

Dr. Strohm is an eloquent champion for the field of family medicine.

"If we do it right for the families we care for and the physicians we train, it's transformative," she says. "It automatically brings in a level of self-reflection that I don't think you get in any other profession. It's truly a calling. And it's why we like to say, 'Let our family take care of your family.'"

The Services that Family Physicians Provide

Family physicians are dedicated to treating the whole person, and they are qualified to diagnose and treat a wide range of conditions in patients of any age and either gender. Among the services they provide are:

- Physical exams and preventive care, including healthscreenings
- Children's health care and well-child visits
- Family planning and routine women's health screenings such as breast exams and Pap smears
- Diagnosis and management of common medical conditions
- Care for chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes, high cholesterol and heart failure
- Mental and behavioral health care
- Referrals to specialists, when needed

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