

SPOTLIGHT: WEEMS CHIEF NURSING OFFICER CANDI FOX, MSN, RN, LHRM

Some young people take years to figure out what they want to do with their lives. Candi Moses Fox, however, already knew that she wanted to pursue a nursing career during her senior year (1993) at Apalachicola High School. The future chief nursing officer at Weems volunteered during her high school years at the nursing home in town. She understood, then, she liked helping people. When she got the chance to gain early admission to Gulf Coast Community College during her senior year, she signed up for courses that put her on the pre-nursing track.

That early choice has led her to the achievement of both an associate of arts degree and associate of science degree in nursing from Gulf Coast Community College, a bachelor of science degree in nursing from Panama City's Florida State University Campus in 2005, and to her latest milestone—the completion of the Family Practice Nurse Practitioner program which earned her a master's degree in nursing from FSU in Tallahassee in April '08.

What does that mean for Candi and Weems? It means she joins an elite percentage of nurses in America who have advanced education, certification and clinical training across a wide spectrum of primary, specialty and outpatient care. For Weems, she sets a high educational standard for all the nurses she supervises. Fox says many of those nurses ask her questions about her professional development and some now are taking courses to finish various higher degrees.

Fox says she is charged with looking at the overall picture of clinical care delivered at Weems. "I constantly ask myself, 'Are we giving good care? Are we being safe--protecting our patients, our employees, and our facilities?'" To translate her concerns into tangible outcomes, once a month Fox chairs a Performance Improvement Committee, which involves all the hospital's department managers. The committee focuses on things like safety of the environment, medication safety, infection control, risk management, and emergency systems, among many other issues. The group targets specific improvements in these areas and follows up each month to see how well they are doing.

How is the new clinical relationship developing between TMH and Weems? "I work with Barbara MacArthur, chief nursing officer at TMH," she says. "We took a list of things that she and I thought they could help us with, and one by one, we (continued on Page 3)



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FIRST DAY OF MAMMOGRAPHY AT WEEMS IS GOOD DAY FOR FRANKLIN COUNTY WOMEN

Studies show only a little over half of U.S. women aged 40 and over had a mammogram within the last year. A mammogram is an examination of the breast, using X-ray, in order to detect tumors before they can be felt. A woman has a good chance of survival if a cancerous breast tumor can be detected early and treated.

Therefore, it has always concerned Gayle Dodds, Chair of George E. Weems Memorial Hospital Governing Board, that there has been no mammography service in Franklin County since she has lived here. "As a retired RN with a husband who was an ob-gyn, I have always recognized the significance of women's health," she said. "I know women have to receive the specific health care that they need. Over the last twenty years when I would ask someone in the county if she had had a mammogram, so many times the answer was: 'No. I will not go out of the county to do that,'" Dodds recalled recently. "I firmly believe you can't mess around with your health," she said.

Dodds, the hospital board, and CEO Chuck Colvert, who wrote a grant to obtain a mammography machine for Weems and Franklin County, all were eager for Weems to offer mammograms so that women would not have to go out of the county. They knew more local women will be likely to get the vital screening if it is convenient.

The hospital received a license for its mammography program from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in April. The mammography department opened for business on April 28 with two radiological technicians Charlotte Williams, director of radiology, and Jeanne Sorrell trained and ready to perform the X-rays.

Six Franklin County women lined up to receive mammograms on the first day. An 84-year-old was the first to be examined. "It's so wonderful that it's here,"



Off and running: Weems Memorial Hospital's mammography department received its license from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in April.



Wendy Durham(left)and Charlotte Williams, Weems director of radiology, talk about the applications of the hospital's Senographe DMR mammography machine.

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the 84-year-old said. "I've had to go before to Panama City with Croom's Transportation. It's more personal in this one," she said happily. "It's beautiful. It's nice."

Another woman who got her examination the same day said she also always traveled to Panama City for the screening and much preferred to do it locally. "This was very comfortable," she said. "It's just a couple of seconds. You will be more likely to have it done," she concluded. Yet another woman at Weems on April 28 confided, "It's been like ten years since I've had one. I did it because I didn't have an excuse," she said. All the women interviewed emphasized they believed in supporting their local hospital.

If you do not have health insurance, you are encouraged to contact the Franklin County Health Department for information on local (Franklin Needs, Inc.) and state programs that may cover the costs of this important screening. Medicaid and Medicare cover one annual mammogram for women over the age of 40.

"That women may be more likely to have a mammogram because it is now offered locally, that's what makes me the happiest," Dodds said on the first day mammograms were available in Franklin County. 

NOT JUST “PINK LADIES” ANYMORE

Weems has a new volunteer service organization, the Weems Hospital Auxiliary, and the welcome mat is out for both men and women. A “tea” for new and prospective auxiliaries in the cafeteria at Weems on April 15 drew more than a dozen people.

Hospital CEO Chuck Colvert greeted all those attending by telling them their interest in serving the hospital will make health care in our community stronger. “One of the elements of a good hospital is good community involvement,” he said. He congratulated attendees for wanting to be part of the goal of improving the health of our community.

Governing Board Chair Gayle Dodds was on hand, as well, to tell the group how much the hospital board appreciated their interest. “We have been without a volunteer group for a number of years and we are delighted to have you back,” she said.

The group of volunteer “pink ladies” Dodds referred to was organized several years ago by Philaco Club member and community volunteer Hazel Robinson. When Robinson moved away from the community, the group dwindled. Ginny Griner, hospital human resources director, said Robinson returned to Apalachicola in recent weeks for a visit and was delighted to see old friends at the hospital and see the many positive changes that have taken place at Weems in the last couple of years.



Hardy Bush(left)and Layvonne Register, head of Weems Auxiliary, will begin volunteering in June.

At the April 15 gathering, Griner noted that the earlier group of women had made a mark on Weems. “We’re looking for the person who will provide a service to the staff, the patients, the families and the community,” she said. Griner also explained new auxiliaries would be doing a variety of tasks.

She used data inputting as an example of the new kinds of tasks a hospital needs doing in the 21st century. “We are going to digitalize our medical records,” she said. “If you are the type of person who likes computers, you may want to help us with that.” Saying not everyone is comfortable working with patients, she pledged the hospital would do its best to match a volunteer’s comfort level with their assignment.

Eight people already have completed their paperwork, education, and training and are ready to begin volunteering, Griner said. It is necessary to have a physical (which you can do at the Weems ER), complete an employment application, and go through a hospital orientation process in order to be cleared to volunteer. Layvonne Register has consented to be the head auxiliary and will begin scheduling volunteers for service in June, Griner said.

The men and women who are signing up to become members of the Weems Hospital Auxiliary display a willingness to give of their time and talents in helping others. If you, too, feel the tug to give a few hours of your time each week to improving the health care in our community, please call Ginny Griner at 653-8853.



Did You Know?

◆ Weems Memorial Hospital and Weems Medical Center East have an informative web site at www.weemsmemorial.com. One page of the site is devoted to the new management agreement between Weems and Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare. In addition, six 90-second spots about Weems are airing six times a day on Forgotten Coast Television, Franklin County’s locally owned cable channel. You can view some of the TV spots by visiting the web site.



◆ Shands Hospital Arts in Medicine (AIM) program and Weems Memorial Hospital have launched the first AIM program in a rural hospital setting in Florida. Since 1990 the program has been introduced into several urban hospitals and outpatient clinics in Florida. With AIM at Weems, the program will be tested in a less populated area. The initiative, a collaborative effort between the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs and Shands, will bring visual, literary, musical, and performance arts to the healthcare settings at Weems. Several local artists in Franklin County met in February to learn how to become involved.



◆ Medical professionals are concerned about a new staph bacterium that is resistant to antibiotics. It has a long name but is known by the acronym MRSA. MRSA can cause a serious infection. Another problem with MRSA is that it is contagious and can be spread to other people through skin-to-skin contact. A good way to prevent the transmission of MRSA is to wash your hands often.

There is a test for MRSA, and Weems, like most hospitals, is performing the test at admission. Sometimes, a person is dismissed from the hospital before the results are known. If this becomes your situation, be assured Weems will contact you if your results indicate you have an active case of MRSA or are a carrier. Then, it will be necessary for you to contact your health care provider to get treated for MRSA. If you do test positive for MRSA, there are ways to live with it and lessen its impact on you and others.



◆ The recent physical plant and equipment upgrades at Weems Memorial Hospital include a revamped operating room. The new OR equipment obtained includes a C-arm (a tool which contains a fluoroscope that provides X-ray images to guide a surgeon as he/she performs surgery). Using the C-arm, Weems medical staff physician Dr. Shezad Sanaullah, who is board certified in cardiology, performed the first pacemaker implant in over a year at Weems on March 3. The event signified that the OR at Weems is once again open for routine procedures like this one. “Residents would much rather have these routine surgeries performed locally,” Dr. Sanaullah maintains. “People are more comfortable where they are familiar with the hospital and with the people at the hospital,” he says. Ask your physician about doing your next minor surgery at Weems.



SPOTLIGHT *continued...*

are working on these things,” Fox explains. “The new things we implement, we want to be sure it works for us and everyone is comfortable with the new procedures before we move on to the next.” On a personal level, Fox notes it’s very nice to have collegial support. “I’m the only one in this area at my level of responsibility. Before I had no one to go to, but now I have every resource of TMH at my disposal.” TMH is a large regional tertiary hospital with a Level II trauma center (provisional), specialty centers, and lots of staff training opportunities.

Then, the young manager signals she may not be through with her own journey of professional growth. She admits the doctoral level of nursing education still beckons invitingly someday on her track of helping people. Right now, Weems employees and patients are at the center of her concerns. “I want to make sure we take care of our patients, but also we want to take care of our employees—their professional growth and development are part of the quality of care for our patients.”



Dr. Shezad Sanaullah prepares outside the newly reactivated operating room at Weems to implant a pacemaker in a patient.