

Farmington doctor prescribes cure for health care system

"Between Dr. Welby and ourselves, we plan to solve the national shortage of family practice doctors," said Dr. Murray Deighton of Farmington. Deighton, a physician at Providence Hospital, was recently appointed chairman of the department of Family Practice and director of the Family Practice Ambulatory Care Program at the hospital.

Family practice doctors, sometimes called general practitioners, should be a patient's first contact and his means of entry into the health care system, Deighton said.

However, the shortage of such doctors is acute—down to about 14 per cent of the Detroit area doctors, with most concentrated in the suburbs. "Shortages of primary care physicians exist all over the city," he said.

WITHOUT THE CHANNELING the primary care physician should provide, prospective patients may end up sicker than they were at the beginning. It might be too late to stop an illness. Patients can be left with bills from visits from specialists. "For example, if her baby gets sick, a woman may call her obstetrician who'll say, 'I cut the umbilical cord, go to somebody else,'" Deighton said.

"You need someone who is going to pay attention to all your needs—someone who is going to evaluate and coordinate your health care and has a tremendous amount of knowledge in medicine."

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—Dr. Murray Deighton

Frustration with the system might lead sufferers to evaluate their own needs.

"If someone has a headache. It could be the result of a tumor. It might also be a result of something else, and a family physician would be able to refer him to the neurologist, ophthalmologist or general internist, according to the problem."

"Without that primary care, he could end up seeing four or five people, each of whom would be sending him a bill."

According to material recently published by the American Board of Family Practice, the responsibilities of the family physician are to evaluate the total health needs of an individual, provide personal health care, and refer patients to appropriate sources when necessary.

IN THE REFERRAL, family practice doctors are to preserve the continuity of care, and act as a coordinator of health services. The description also said they should accept the responsibility for total health care of their patients, with consideration

vested or caught early by familiarity of family habits and inherited traits.

TRAINING FOR the family doctor will stress a horizontal knowledge of medicine—a smattering of the information that has been developed into specialties.

"He will have to know when it's appropriate to refer, when the patient should see a specialist and what is available in community medicine," Deighton said.

Advocates of family practice seem to agree with the Chinese practice of paying a doctor to keep you healthy, stopping payment when you become ill.

"Doctors in family practice have been busy documenting what health is. Traditionalists have concentrated on disease, but our emphasis will be on disease prevention and health maintenance. When the patient gets into a hospital, we've failed."

Deighton maintained a private group practice in the Farmington area for 15 years before becoming a Providence staff member in 1968. He served as part-time chairman of the hospital's department of family practice in 1973 and 1974.

He is also a charter member of the American Academy of Family Practice and is certified by the American Board of Family Practice.

The father of eight children, he is an elder and Sunday school teacher at the Ward United Presbyterian Church in Livonia.



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Yet they must wait for weeks to get an appointment with a specialist, sometimes to discover their ailment is not in the specialist's field.

That's not the way it should be, said Dr. Murray Deighton of Farmington. Deighton is a staff physician at Providence Hospital in Southfield.

He is also director of the hospital's Family Practice Ambulatory Center, a family medical center so new it has not yet opened.

Deighton hopes that a new national emphasis on family physicians will decrease health care costs and streamline the health care system.

It will also not incidentally, result in healthier Americans, Deighton said.

The Providence Family Medical Center will concentrate on comprehensive and preventive health care to individuals and families.

IT WILL BE staffed by family practice physicians, residents and nurse clinicians. Patients will be seen on an appointment basis.

Deighton will not only direct this service, but will supervise a new three-year family practice residency program. The program will train physicians to apply general medicine practices. They will also receive training in medical sub-specialties.

Although Providence Hospital has 86 men in training in 12 medical programs, none of them yet include family practice residents.

However, the program is scheduled to begin in July after two years of planning, and approval by the American Medical Association.

The committee is funny, and has approved only 36 per cent of those programs that applied for review. But Deighton expected no problem at Providence.

"We think we have all the requirements for a good program," he said. Four residents will be admitted to the program.

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