Info, Insight & Inspiration for Metro Detroit’s Maturing Adults

Turn to pages 6 & 7 for Dr. Graddy article and the geriatric services provided through the region’s healthcare systems.

Dr. Graddy educates participants on use of a medical device during a session at PACE
Top Detroit Area Eldercare Doctor Decided on Career at Age Sixteen!

She’s compassionate and smart and loves elderly patients. A board-certified Geriatrician, Gwendolyn Graddy-Dansby, M.D. has been serving Detroit’s senior citizens since 1987 when she joined Henry Ford Health System (HFHS).

During her tenure with HFHS she has served as Medical Director for the Boulevard Temple nursing home, clinic geriatrician and since 2001, Medical Director of Michigan’s first PACE program.

PACE or the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly has the mission to keep frail, nursing home-eligible senior citizens in their homes in their community by using a multidisciplinary approach to their care.

Dr. Graddy — as she is affectionately and commonly known — is one of 7,500 United States certified geriatricians. According to the American Geriatric Society’s (AGS) projections, the nation needs an estimated 17,000 geriatricians to care for about 12 million older Americans projected to need care as Baby Boomers age. Few medical students are choosing geriatrics, putting the future supply of geriatricians in jeopardy.

“Not a lot of medical students and residents go into geriatric care,” Graddy says, “the subspecialty pays a lot less than others. But geriatrics also requires that the physician be able to provide optimal care for patients with multiple chronic conditions in addition to functional limitations and disabilities.”

“Dr. Graddy has a lot of perseverance when she treats participants. She will exhaust all avenues until she identifies what the problem is and how to resolve it,” said one PACE Southeast Michigan participant.

Dr. Graddy says that she decided at age 16, to become a geriatrician after watching her grandfather die at 78 from metastatic prostate cancer.

“It hit me hard and I believe that he may have been able to live longer or suffer less if he had sought treatment for his pain. I decided then that I was going to do something about this. I always had a sense that older people are important. They deserve quality care.”

For 15 years and counting, Dr. Graddy has served as Medical Director of what is now called PACE Southeast Michigan, a nonprofit health care organization co-sponsored by Henry Ford Health System and Presbyterian Villages of Michigan.

“Our program focuses on improving and maintaining not just quality of life but quality of death and dying.” During her dedicated time as Medical Director, Dr. Graddy has some distinctive accomplishments. She created the center’s first hospice program, now called Comfort Care. She implemented several programs that helped reduce hospital readmissions and she expanded the behavioral health treatment to include individual and group therapy.

The adult child of an 87-year old mom, Graddy is a graduate of the University of Michigan and Wayne State University School of Medicine. She has been consistently named as Hour Detroit Magazine’s “Top Doc”. In 2015 she received Henry Ford Health System’s Diversity Hero Award and was named Crain’s (Detroit Business) Healthcare Hero.

“I love what I do and I love who I do it for,” says Graddy. “Our elderly are the most vulnerable. They deserve it.”
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Beaumont’s Geriatric Evaluation

The Beaumont Geriatric Evaluation Center provides a comprehensive evaluation for issues impacting aging adults:

- Memory improvement
- Balance
- Losing weight without trying
- Physical therapy
- Lung conditions
- Depression and other conditions
- Nervous system wellness and treatment
- Pain of any kind: hip, back, stomach, neck, headache, knee or joint pain

Families may be concerned that a loved one is not managing at home alone and may benefit from an in depth evaluation or diagnosis. These include: exhibiting changes in daily routines or habits, withdrawal, experiencing increased cognitive or medical problems. Clinic Director Dr. Christine Chelladurai DO is a Board Certified Geriatrician and Internal Medicine Doctor. Jennifer Lacasse is a clinical nurse specialist and social worker, who handles additional services when necessary.

The center requires a referral from a primary care physician or internist and works as a subspecialty to support the primary physician. The evaluation is a comprehensive 2-3 step process to best assess, diagnose, treat and educate patients and their families on the issues of aging adults. They will receive tools that assist with their needs and transitional life planning. The center’s services are covered by most insurances and the patient does not have to be a Beaumont patient to participate. Families often say, “We wish we had known about this service 3-5 years ago.”

Geriatric care is a wonderful specialty and care-partner that focuses on enhancing quality of life to bridge the gaps and challenges of aging. Beaumont has two offices. Call today for more information. St. Clair Shores, MI: 586-447-8021, or Berkley, MI: 248-551-8305. The services can make caring for an aging parent or loved one less overwhelming and improve the journey for everyone.

St. John Providence Programs for Senior Citizens

The St. John Riverview Senior Wellness Center in Detroit provides a variety of programs at little or no cost to enhance the physical, emotional and spiritual health of seniors. The goal is to support those age 55-plus in the community, to live longer and healthier lives. Programs include:

- Diabetes education
- Exercise
- Healthy lifestyle classes on nutrition and stress management

New classes are continuously added. Membership is free. Just come by and fill out a form to receive a membership packet. Benefits include a yearly health risk appraisal and free classes and programs. For more information, call the center at 313-499-4035.

Both St. John Macomb-Oakland Hospital in Warren and St. John Hospital and Medical Center in Detroit have Acute Care of the Elderly units that address the unique needs of patients 65 and older, with a special focus on safety, mobility and independence. A team of nurses, pharmacists, dieticians, physical therapists and social workers has completed specialized training in geriatrics to prevent common health problems related to hospitalization of the older adult patient. They work together to plan and coordinate patient care. For more information, visit stjohnprovidence.org or call 866-501-DOCS (3627).

From Henry Ford’s medical centers and hospitals to its physician in-home patient visits, they are proud to offer services tailored specifically to people as they age. At three metro area Geriatric Clinics, they offer comprehensive assessment consultations that evaluate a senior’s memory and cognition, fall risks, weight and nutrition needs and other health and wellness concerns specific to the elderly population.

Henry Ford’s primary care physicians and geriatricians work with a team of specialists who all aim to help senior citizens avoid the ill effects of aging and remain healthy and vital. Service areas include the following and more:

- Behavioral Health
- Home Health Care
- PACE Southeast Michigan
- Falls Prevention Clinic
- Vision Rehabilitation Center
- Visiting Physicians

“Just as children have their own unique issues that require specialized treatment by a pediatrician, as one gets older, senior adults should also have specially trained medical professionals who are able to address their unique and specific physical, mental and emotional needs in a personalized manner,” says Mirza Beg, M.D., division head of Geriatric Medicine at Henry Ford Health System.

For more information visit henryford.com/seniors. To schedule a Geriatric Clinic appointment, call 1-800-HENRYFORD (436-7936).

Henry Ford Health System’s Geriatric Medicine and Senior Services

Urban Aging News