


LaGrange Daily News

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■Our view **Doctors Day**

Today is Doctors Day - the final day of what has been observed nationally as "Doctor/Patient Trust Week."

The two observances are appropriately intertwined. With the possible exception of pastor/parishioner, no relationship outside the family circle requires more trust than that of doctor and patient.

And few relationships are more important.

Finding a doctor you can trust and depend on is one of life's great blessings.

And a blessing Troup County residents enjoy in abundance.

Outstanding medical facilities have long been one of Troup County's strengths. We point with pride to our outstanding hospital, excellent clinics and superior facilities, like Hospice LaGrange, the dialysis clinic and our flourishing medical park. Those facilities should only get better with expansions already under way or on the drawing boards.

Health care is a team effort and all contributions are vital. But on this Doctors Day, it's appropriate to reflect on and salute the strong cadre of physicians who call Troup County home.

Many of the doctors practicing here could practice anywhere. They are that good.

The diplomas on their walls, their training expertise and experience equal or exceed those of physicians found in larger cities. Their commitment to compassionate, high quality care is second to none.

It says a lot - and means a lot - that so many gifted men and women of medicine have chosen to practice their high calling here. They value and help preserve the closeknit, friendly lifestyle a small town offers.

And they contribute to the community in countless ways that extend beyond the bedside. In government, in civic affairs, in our churches, in the arts community, our physicians serve us effectively and generously.

Just how important is the medical community in the life of a small town?

Ask the people of Americus, where a deadly tornado wrecked their hospital and other medical facilities and severely disrupted patient care.

Getting their hospital and clinics rebuilt is that struggling small city's top priority. And its doctors are among its greatest heroes, working in tents and makeshift offices and going the extra mile - figuratively and literally - by driving to Albany to continue providing care.

The people of Americus no longer take their doctors for granted.

And neither should we.

While treatments are continuously advancing, the health care delivery system itself is ailing. Costs and access are huge concerns for patients, but doctors face stiff challenges, too - mountains of cumbersome red tape, shrinking government reimbursements, a litigious society.

Recruiting and keeping good doctors is a continuous challenge, and one our community is facing. With Troup's population predicted to grow and some of our finest doctors advancing toward retirement, the local need for doctors is acute and growing.

Competition for the next generation of doctors is intense and policy makers at every level should address those issues that make it hard for small cities to lure physicians. Doctors Day has Georgia origins - March 30 is the anniversary of the first use of ether anesthesia in surgery by our state's own Dr. Crawford W. Long. Troup County patients can take similar pride in our home medical heritage. Yes, in some cases, it is necessary to leave LaGrange for specialized or acute medical care. A community our size can't handle every situation. But in the vast majority of cases, hometown care is more than equal to the task. The trust patients give to their local doctors is well placed.