

3 doctors recruited to Gothenburg

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Brant says unusual for critical access hospital

Recruiting a doctor to fill the vacancy left by family practice physician Dr. David Hult ended up more fruitful than imagined.

In addition to a family practitioner, the search netted an obstetrician/gynecologist and an orthopedic surgeon.

A contract was signed with ob/gyn Dr. Michael Trierweiler but Gothenburg Memorial Hospital has only verbal commitments from the other two doctors, according to Mick Brant, the hospital's chief executive officer.

"It's pretty unusual," Brant said about the critical access hospital attracting a doctor and two surgeons when many are searching for one family practitioner. "It's exciting."

Trierweiler has been a visiting ob/gyn at GMH since spring. He will begin practicing full time at GMH beginning Jan. 1, Brant said, and will continue seeing patients once a week in North Platte where his partner still practices.

Many critical access hospitals don't offer delivery services anymore, he said, noting that Trierweiler has delivered up to 40 babies at GMH and expects to deliver 120 babies a year.

"When babies are born here, family practitioners take care of them and parents can stay home for care," Brant said.

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While at GMH, he said Trierweiler has led training courses in pediatric care for the nursing staff.

Brant said the family practitioner is from Nebraska and has family connections in Gothenburg and Brady. He will begin his practice Jan. 1.

The orthopedic surgeon, who plans to join GMH in February, is from Colville, WA, where he's practiced for 20 years. He will provide general orthopedics and specialize in sports injuries.

Once established at GMH, Brant said the surgeon has the capability to perform up to 500 surgeries a year.

Additional information about the family practitioner was not available at press time.

The new surgeons, and Dr. David Harrington, a surgeon who's been on staff, will be employed by GMH as will the family practitioner.

Brant said GMH will offer to share the surgeons with other hospitals.

Family practitioners Drs. Carol Shackleton and Jay Matzke and physician assistant Aaron Solomon and nurse practitioner Kristen Rickertsen are independent contractors and rent space at Gothenburg Family Practice.

The new physicians will also have offices in the medical clinic attached to the hospital even though they will be employed by GMH.

"It's a new venture for us," said Brant about employing the physicians under a new GMH department.

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To accommodate the three new physicians, he said the hospital will need to expand from one operating room to two and add support staff.

The GMH board has contacted an architectural firm about creating a surgery suite, Brant said, and a master plan for the hospital that includes the old family practice clinic.

GMH board member Mike Bacon, who also heads up the Gothenburg Improvement Company, said the financial impact of three new doctors is significant.

“Hospitals do not make money unless treating physicians admit and treat patients,” Bacon said. “If we want a hospital in Gothenburg, it must be financially strong.”

Years ago, he said the hospital came close to shutting its doors because of financial problems.

“We are financially strong now and we must remain that way,” Bacon said.

He said the new federal health care direction will likely reduce the amount of reimbursement GMH receives.

“Our strategy is not to just survive this problem, but thrive as a health care facility,” Bacon said, noting that new physicians are an integral part of the strategy. “The more services we can provide at GMH, the better we can care for our community and the better off the hospital will be financially.”

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