

## **News - Our Health News**

### **Multi-Specialty Ambulatory Care Center Moves Forward**

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*Approval Sought for Integrated Facility in Appleton's Northeast Business Park*

In an exciting first for the Fox Cities, an innovative partnership of ThedaCare, its employed physicians, and Appleton area independent specialty physicians will seek approval from the City of Appleton to develop a multi-specialty ambulatory care center at E. Capital Drive and Roemer Road in Appleton's Northeast Business Park.

ThedaCare acquired the 53-acre site adjacent to The Guardian Insurance Company in 2005, with plans for the facility first announced last May.

Designed with patients in mind, the \$34 million, 156,000-square-foot, three-story facility will integrate primary care and specialty care through shared registration and scheduling for all services, state-of-the-art endoscopy and diagnostics, ancillary services, and same-day access for all providers and services.

Unique in this partnership is that ThedaCare, individual employed physicians of ThedaCare, and Appleton area independent physicians will all be equity owners of the facility. "This is more than just a number of physician offices and services going into a new building," said Robert Vlach, MD, of Valley Urologic Associates and a member of the steering committee that is leading the development of the care center. "This is a true, seamless partnership that will bring our patients access to primary care, independent specialty physician care, and state-of-the-art diagnostic services. It will all be integrated with one-stop scheduling and registration, and direct collaboration between providers of different specialties to the benefit of our patients."

Practices relocating to the new facility include ThedaCare Physicians-Internal Medicine, Appleton,; ThedaCare Physicians-Family Practice, North Appleton; Valley Urologic Associates; and Fox Valley Nephrology Partners. ThedaCare Orthopedics Plus and Fox Valley Surgical Associates will maintain satellite offices in the new building. The Outpatient Treatment Center at Appleton Medical Center and the Regional Sleep Disorders Center at Theda Clark Medical Center will also relocate to the new care center. Radiology Associates of Appleton will provide radiology services. A number of other independent Fox Cities physician practices are also considering whether to relocate to or open satellite facilities in the new building. The design includes adequate "shell" space to accommodate new physicians and services.

Outpatient visits to hospitals now outnumber inpatient visits by 20-1, notes ThedaCare President and CEO John Toussaint, MD. "Unfortunately for the consumer, many health systems have responded to this trend by retrofitting inpatient facilities to deliver ambulatory care, or by building very expensive inpatient hospitals that are 90 percent outpatient facilities. We believe this integrated outpatient facility will be more convenient for patients than navigating through an inpatient hospital, and create greater value by delivering more timely and effective care at a lower cost."

"As a family physician, part of my role is to help my patients receive the health care services they need at every stage of life and in a variety of circumstances," said David Anderla, MD, of ThedaCare Physicians-North Appleton, a member of the ThedaCare Board of Trustees and a partner in the new facility. "This ambulatory care center will make that process so much easier for my patients, whether they have a minor medical problem, need a simple X-ray or lab test, or have a more complex set of needs requiring multiple physicians and services in a single visit. "From the perspective of practicing family medicine, the added benefit of regular, face-to-face consultation with physicians from many other specialties will help me better meet my patients needs," said Dr. Anderla.

Ancillary services will include a comprehensive lab, phlebotomy, and advanced CT, PET CT, MRI, state-of-the-art endoscopy, ultrasound, and digital mammography and imaging. All of these services will be owned and operated by ThedaCare and connected through a single registration process as well as a shared electronic medical record, to serve the patient needs of each of the physicians. A coffee bar-type food service, owned and operated by a third party, will also be included in the building.

According to Dr. Dean Gruner, chief medical officer of ThedaCare, the concept of locating multiple physicians offices and ancillary services in a single facility has been around for years, but in nearly all cases, these physician offices and services are unrelated to each other and are simply tenants of a third-party landlord.

“The idea of bringing a health system, employed and independent physicians, and ancillary services together as equity partners in a free-standing ambulatory facility with shared services and real-time consultation across specialties is a new concept for Northeast Wisconsin,” said Dr. Gruner. “It is more convenient and less costly both in time and money for the patient. It is more efficient for the physicians and will lead to better outcomes, and the partnership vests all of the owners in the clinical and financial success of the facility.”

The building will be built to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) specifications. Its features for efficiency and safety will allow it to reduce waste, conserve energy and water, and reduce operating costs, which will qualify it for rebates and other incentives. Assuming that the design and permitting process proceeds as expected, construction is expected to begin in June with a projected opening by July 2009.

ThedaCare ([www.thedacare.org](http://www.thedacare.org)) is a community-owned health system consisting of Appleton Medical Center, Theda Clark Medical Center, New London Family Medical Center, Riverside Medical Center, ThedaCare Physicians, and other health care services. ThedaCare is the largest employer in Northeast Wisconsin with nearly 5,400 employees.

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