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## CU medical students train at Evans

By Jeff Troth, MEDDAC PAO

Evans Army Community Hospital is one of several southern Colorado hospitals working with the University of Colorado School of Medicine to provide clinical rotations for third year medical students.

"This has been in the works for over a year," said Col. (Dr.) Blake Graham, medical student education coordinator. "Any good medical institution gives back to the community, and in training future doctors we are doing just that."

Due to a nation-wide shortfall of doctors, the University of Colorado School of Medicine increased the number of students admitted into its medical program. But, hospitals in the Denver area were already saturated with third and fourth year students doing clinical rotations.

For this reason the university opened a branch in Colorado Springs, which is in charge of medical students who are doing their clinical rotations in southern Colorado hospitals. Besides Evans, these hospitals include Memorial Hospital, Penrose hospital, and the Colorado Mental Health Institute at Pueblo.

"The Army is good at training people. So it made sense that we participate," said Graham. "The 10 students here will be everywhere in the hospital that we have an experience to give them."

For over a year, the future doctors will be at Evans doing rotations in internal medicine, neurology, family medicine clinics, OB/GYN, pediatrics, surgery, orthopedic surgery and radiology.

"I am excited about this opportunity," said Col. (Dr.) Steven Birchfield, Evans' Deputy Commander for Medical Services. "But, while we are here to train the medical students, we are making sure that we don't take away anything from our patients. They will actually get two medical providers looking at them instead of one."

According to Birchfield the medical students are paired with doctors to mentor them. Students see every third patient. This offers the patients more time with a provider and a more detailed review of their concerns.

After the medical students' one-on-one time with each patient they consult with their mentor, who makes the final decision on a course of treatment.

"The mentor is the one who is responsible for the overall care of the patient," said Graham. "And the mentor is responsible for writing prescriptions, or ordering labs or x-ray."

Birchfield said that the patients benefit in more ways than just having two providers looking over their case. The medical students are asking the hospital staff a lot of questions.

"They are bright, young, energetic students who are super excited to be out of the books and are eager to apply all their clinical curiosity," said Birchfield. "So they are asking questions of our staff. This refreshes our own clinical skills and ties us back to the basics of medicine, allowing us to grow as an organization.

"This [collaboration with the UC School of Medicine] is something that this hospital has needed to do for a very long time," said Graham. "By providing this training we are now an upper echelon of care. It's a new level of training and teaching that shows we are an institution that is concerned with making medicine better."



Prior to an appointment, Air Force Lt. Col. (Dr.) Nathan Evans and Kevin Forey, a Colorado University medical student, go over the patient's latest lab results. Evans is assigned to the 10th Medical Group at the U.S. Air Force Academy, but with duty at Fort Carson's Evans Army Community Hospital. (Photo by Jeff Troth)