



The Scribe

A publication of the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland

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FOCUS ON EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Tube trial and pneumonia prevention



Evidence sought about whether specialized tube should be standard in EDs.

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OFF HOURS

Life through multiple lenses



Duncan Neilson Jr., MD, photographs everything from birds and landscapes to the night sky.

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Serving the Portland-area Medical Community Since 1884

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May 2019

MSMP wellness program marks growth, progress, new partnerships

By Cliff Collins
For The Scribe

Four years after its founding, the **Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland's Physician Wellness Program** has made strong strides toward addressing a glaring need.

National surveys continue to show that a large percentage of doctors and other health care professionals feel stressed and burned out. Studies also show that doctors tend to seek help to a lesser degree and at a later stage than the general population.

Recognizing that physician wellness is vital to their own well-being and to the delivery of safe, high-quality care, MSMP and the **Metropolitan Medical Foundation of Oregon** launched the Physician Wellness Program in January 2015. It offers free, confidential counseling

specifically tailored to clinicians, with appointments available to them at their convenience.

The purpose of the program is to create a safe harbor for physicians to obtain help. MSMP engaged the services of psychologists and physician development coaches who are experienced in working with doctors and other health care professionals. Seasoned counselors can help with stress, burnout, patient loss, litigation fears, “all the things physicians are up against and for which they feel they don’t have a pathway for help,” said **Amanda Borges**, executive director of MSMP and MMFO. “Doctors often don’t take care of themselves, for many reasons. We are doing our best to tackle all the barriers that prevent them from seeking care for themselves.”

For example, the program addresses physicians’ concerns about confidentiality and privacy. Clients using the service meet privately with counselors, who are available in three locations on both the east and west sides of town and in Lake Oswego. No diagnosis is made, no insurance billed and no electronic medical record created. In addition, no information is

Physician Wellness Program

To make an appointment with or leave a message for MSMP’s Physician Wellness Program, please call the confidential wellness line at **503-764-5663**. For more about the program, including donation information, and to access many wellness resources, please visit MSMP.org.

disclosed to others without clients’ written consent, and participation plays no role in disciplinary or fitness-for-duty evaluation.

“The privacy and confidentiality aspects of this are the most critical piece, and that is why this is a successful program,” said **Beth Westbrook, PsyD**, a clinical psychologist and one of the counselors for the Physician Wellness Program.

A statistic that underscores the need for such an independent wellness program:

MSMP found that 63 out of 100 health care professionals who are or were clients of the Physician Wellness Program have access to some type of employee assistance program within their own workplace. This figure illustrates that those seeking help from the Physician Wellness Program felt safer and more comfortable in the setting an independent, neutral-site service

See **WELLNESS PROGRAM**, page 4

NOTE TO OUR READERS

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Scribe* newspaper. Please make note of some of the interactive features of this publication. Articles that jump between pages have hyperlinks on the continuation line for your convenience. We have also linked advertisements and other web references to their respective websites.

You can double-click the page to zoom in or out, and grab and drag when zoomed in, to navigate around.

If you would prefer a print version of this paper, we encourage you to subscribe by calling 503-222-9977 or emailing Janine@MSMP.org.

We welcome your feedback, and appreciate your readership.

Thank you.



Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Anderson

PHYSICIAN PROFILE

Ron Naito, MD

The beloved and accomplished practitioner talks with *The Scribe* about his cancer diagnosis, his retirement, and how he is using his illness as a learning opportunity for medical students and fellow practitioners.

“Dr. Naito’s commitment to patient care is legendary, but one of the most remarkable things about him is that he’s improving medical practice and leading the way for other providers even in his retirement.”

– Kristin Anderson, The Portland Clinic Foundation

Please turn to page 5 to read the full article.

‘He’s the essence of what we aspire to be’

A beloved and accomplished practitioner, Ron Naito, MD, shares his cancer journey, creating learning opportunities for medical students, others

By John Rumler
For The Scribe

The same day that **Ron Naito, MD**, was diagnosed with advanced stage IV pancreatic cancer in August of last year, he announced his retirement from The Portland Clinic.

It was a painful decision. Naito, who was just named one of the city’s top doctors by *Portland Monthly* magazine (he also earned that accolade in 2014 and 2017), practiced general internal medicine at the clinic for 33 years.

He is loved and admired by his fellow physicians at the clinic, by the support staff and especially by his patients, the vast majority of them seniors. “I became a geriatrician almost by default,” Naito says with a gentle laugh.

While his career proved to be incredibly rewarding, Naito says that nothing was more meaningful and satisfying than his relationships with his patients and the insights into humanity that they provided. “That was by far the biggest payoff.”

Although he is a private person, Naito has touched the lives of Oregon Health & Science University medical students by participating in the Living with Life-Threatening Illness class, serving as a patient-teacher for a medical student and also being interviewed by the class.

“As physicians, we are always teaching future generations of doctors,” Naito says. “One of the issues we focused on is a difficult one: How does a physician communicate news of a terminal or life-threatening diagnosis to a patient? Even if one has been in a medical practice for a long time, this can be a very difficult task, but it is a learned skill in which everyone can improve.”

In addition, he and his partner, Elizabeth Anderson, are sharing his cancer journey

“In my career working with outstanding doctors across the nation, **I’ve never met a physician more passionate** about practicing medicine and patient care than Dr. Naito. He’s an inspiration to us all.”

— Craig Wright, MD, The Portland Clinic

on Naito’s CaringBridge website. “It’s invaluable in keeping family and friends updated,” he says. “I encourage anyone with a serious or life-threatening illness to consider this resource.”

‘An inspiration to us all’

Growing up in one of Portland’s most prominent families, Naito rejected lucrative careers in business or property development to become a physician. “I’m an old country doctor, but one who uses modern technology,” Naito says. “What’s a better feeling than helping someone?”

After earning his medical degree from OHSU in 1978, Naito completed his residency and internship at Good Samaritan. He joined The Portland Clinic in 1986, where his deep commitment to his patients and his caring relationships with them became legendary, says Craig Wright, MD, the clinic’s chief medical officer.

“In my career working with outstanding doctors across the nation, I’ve never met a physician more passionate about practicing medicine and patient care than Dr. Naito. He’s an inspiration to us all,” Wright says.

Kristin Anderson, executive director of The Portland Clinic Foundation, praises Naito’s generosity and many acts of philanthropy to the community at large

and also to The Portland Clinic Foundation.

“Our foundation is relatively new, and Dr. Naito was one of our earliest champions. Thanks to him, we’ve grown rapidly. By May, we’ll have disbursed more than \$125,000 in grants to local nonprofits that fight racism, poverty, food insecurity, education and health care inequities, and many other worthy causes,” Anderson says.

Before joining the clinic as chief executive officer in 2015, Dick Clark worked with Naito’s extended family in various civic endeavors. “While the Naitos built vibrant neighborhoods making Portland the city it is today, Ron was maintaining the health and wellness of the community in his own very personalized way.”

‘A relationship-based doctor’

At OHSU, Naito is working closely with Susan Tolle, MD, director of OHSU’s Center for Ethics in Health Care, on an increasingly important area of focus for medical students: communicating with skill and compassion critical information and difficult news to patients.

Naito received his own diagnosis in a somewhat halting fashion. “First, I was told I had gastritis. Then pancreatitis. Even when my pancreatic tumor marker came back markedly elevated, I was told that my diagnosis might not be pancreatic cancer.”

Improving such physician-patient



Ron Naito, MD

Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Anderson

communications is of paramount importance to Tolle, who graduated medical school at OHSU just a year ahead of Naito, also with a specialty in general internal medicine. She says Naito is such a unique and valuable asset, she wants to clone him.

“Ron is such a relationship-based doctor. He’s the essence of what we aspire to be as doctors and communicators and what we hope our medical school graduates will become.”

OHSU’s new Program in Compassionate Communication is drawing rave reviews and the university is now recognized as the first medical school in the nation to make proficiency in compassionate communication a graduation requirement.

Naito says many people have asked him for advice on how to best prepare for their own death, even if it is likely many years in the future. “My advice is to practice mindfulness and meditation, to be fully present in the moment, to spend time on your spiritual life, and, of course, one needs to rethink what is really important in life.”

Tolle says Naito is such an inspirational role model, she hopes his message can continue to reach medical students for many years.

“The qualities and skills Ron brings to the compassionate care of patients are the very same ones we need in health care today. Fortunately, he wants to be filmed so he can continue teaching and mentoring our medical students for decades.”

Says Anderson: “Dr. Naito’s commitment to patient care is legendary, but one of the most remarkable things about him is that he’s improving medical practice and leading the way for other providers even in his retirement.

“At a time when most people would focus on their own needs, Dr. Naito is using his illness as a learning opportunity for medical students and fellow practitioners by helping to create more compassionate care for those facing life-threatening conditions. That kind of selflessness is rare and remarkable, and is entirely in keeping with his passion for helping others.” ■

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