

# SPOTLIGHT

## Mercy Family Health Center and Family Practice Residency Program

In an era when many physicians are moving toward increasingly specialized fields, the old-fashioned family doctor is alive and well in the north state. Every year, six new residents join Mercy Medical Center Redding's Family Practice Residency Program.

"Family practice is a board-certified specialty, even though it may sound strange to call it a specialty," says Duane Bland, M.D., Director of the Residency Program. "It's different from other specialties in its broad scope."

In a given week, family practice residents might treat a low-income woman expecting her first baby, a little boy with a sore throat, an elderly woman with osteoporosis and a homeless man with HIV. By treating a wide spectrum of conditions, residents prepare themselves for the variety of patients they may encounter when practicing in a rural setting. The program, which is affiliated with the UC Davis Medical School, also prepares residents to treat underserved members of the community and to fill unmet health needs.

"We have a strong emphasis on community outreach," says Dr. Bland, "not just among our students but also our faculty members." One faculty member is the Director of the Hill Country Community Clinic, another serves as Medical Director of Golden Umbrella, and another helps runs a local HIV clinic.



Duane Bland, M.D. right, confers with resident.

As part of their training, residents work in the Mercy Family Health Center, where a majority of patients are insured by MediCal and Medicare. They work with low income and high risk pregnant patients at the Mercy Maternity Clinic, and they travel to Fall River Mills and Mt. Shasta to provide care in a more rural setting.

The Residency Program combines the best of old-fashioned medicine—including nursing home visits and an occasional house call—with training in cutting-edge technology and techniques. The Residency Program recently received a state grant that provided funds to assist in organizing a conference on hand-held computers for rural physicians. Residents have also worked with telemedicine technologies that permit virtual consultations with far-away specialists. Mercy Foundation North received dollars to help fund software for the hand-held computers and to support telemedicine projects.

More than 40% of graduates go on to practice medicine in underserved areas in California. Family practitioners discover deep rewards from involvement in this facet of medicine.

"In family practice, we focus on how we can positively affect the lives of the patients we care for," says Dr. Bland.

To support the Mercy Family Health Center or the Family Practice Residency Program, contact Mercy Foundation North at 530-247-3424. ♦