



The University of Oklahoma

Health Sciences Center

The Donald W. Reynolds
DEPARTMENT OF GERIATRIC MEDICINE
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

The Department of Geriatric Medicine at University of Oklahoma College of Medicine was established October 1, 1997. At that time it was the third Department of Geriatrics established in the United States. As of July 1, 1999, it was renamed the Donald W. Reynolds Department of Geriatric Medicine with an \$11.25 million grant from the Reynolds Foundation to develop a required geriatrics rotation for all third year medical students. Ten million dollars of the grant was allocated to endowed chairs for clinician educators, fully matched by the state. The department met and exceeded the provisions of the grant, launching a 4-week required geriatrics rotation for all third year medical students (150+ per year) by the 2003-2004 academic year. The rotation continues as one of the core expectations for University of Oklahoma medical students, with excellent student feedback regarding the faculty and instruction. The department now has 20 faculty primarily appointed to the department and 45 adjunct faculty.

As of 7/1/2007 the department received \$7.5 million from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation to enhance research activities. Six million dollars is for endowed chairs for researchers, and will be fully matched by the state. The focus of this research expansion is neurodegenerative problems of aging and sarcopenia. Dr. William Sonntag, formerly of Wake Forest University, has been recruited as the foundational scientist leading the initiative.

Other department accomplishments are summarized below:

Education

There is curricular content for students throughout the four years of training, including the 4-week core clinical rotation. First year students have the option to participate in a Prematriculation program, in which they are immersed in the world of geriatrics and introduced to Senior Mentors in the week prior to medical school. Second year students are introduced to some of the changes that may accumulate with aging through an exercise where those changes are simulated, titled "Adapting to Health Change." They also learn about the geriatric patient exam during Principles of Clinical Medicine, a course focused on the history and physical exam. Third year students, in the 4-week core rotation, are exposed to the continuum of care of the elderly, including home care, nursing homes, adult day care, outpatient clinics, and acute inpatient care. Fourth year students have the option of taking a geriatrics elective, where more intensive exposure to inpatient geriatric care is provided.

Internal medicine residents are educated through clinical rotations on the Acute Care of the Elderly team, at the university hospital caring for the private patients of geriatricians, and in the geriatrics faculty practice. Education of geriatric medicine fellows has been underway since the program was first accredited in 1995, and is accredited as a one-year clinical training program with openings for 4 fellows.

Since it was established the department has been the home of the Oklahoma Geriatric Education Center (OkGEC), and supports the training of health care professionals throughout the state and region. The OkGEC, first established in 1989, hosts a Summer Geriatric Institute (SGI) that is the signal continuing education event for professionals in the aging network in the state. The 19th annual SGI is planned for July 2008.

Patient Care

Department clinical activities take place at the Oklahoma City Veterans Affairs Medical Center (where the department is headquartered), the OU Medical Center, and at a continuing care retirement community in the suburbs of Oklahoma City. Clinical opportunities at these sites include:

At the Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC):

- a) Extended Care Unit – This is a 33-bed JCAHO-accredited long-term care facility that provides primarily subacute rehabilitation and skilled care to veterans recovering from acute illnesses.
- b) Home Based Primary Care Program (HBPC) – This program provides primary care within the home for approximately 100 frail and homebound veterans within a 30 minute travel time from the Oklahoma City VAMC.
- c) ACE team – This is a team led by a geriatrics faculty member, and enriched with older veterans who are in need of acute inpatient care.

At the OU Medical Center:

- a) Senior Health Center – The Department faculty maintain their skills in direct patient care, and exemplify model geriatric practice, in the Senior Health Center in the OU Physicians Building. Departmental faculty provide comprehensive geriatric assessments as well as continuous follow-up care. Referral to other specialists within the OU Physicians group is easily accomplished, as all relevant specialists are housed within the same building.
- b) Presbyterian Tower inpatients – The department faculty admit their private patients to the Presbyterian Tower where they continue to direct their care with the assistance of internal medicine residents and geriatric medicine fellows.

At Epworth Villa:

Epworth Villa is a continuing care retirement center in the suburbs of Oklahoma City that provides housing for seniors ranging from independent living to standard long-term care and skilled care. Department faculty

Research

Prior to the receipt of the most recent Reynolds Foundation grant, the department focus has been on educational evaluation, caregiver stress, and biodemography. The intent of the new grant is to build upon and strengthen these endeavors, so that basic research can bridge to the bedside, and vice versa.