



Fort Carson-MEDDAC News

New model offers more same day appointments

By: Stacy Neumann, Medical Department Activity Public Affairs

A new appointment experience is on the way for Evans Army Community Hospital's beneficiaries. MEDDAC debuts a model called "Open Access" on April 1st for all Family Medicine Clinics, the Internal Medicine Clinic and Pediatrics.

"When you call, our goal is to offer your first appointment within three hours," explained Maj. Chris Sloan, chief of Clinical Operations Division. "The intent is, when you need health care, we'll have space for you. It's about taking care of today's business...today."

Modifying the appointment model for those clinics is part of Army Medicine's focus on creating a patient-centered experience. To prepare, Sloan's team first had to redistribute the number of patients assigned to a medical provider. That's why some beneficiaries recently received notices that their primary care manager had changed.

Sloan explained, "We are now right-sized across the board. Reducing the size of assigned patients means patients have access to their primary care manager when they want to see them. This is patient driven change."

Providers said they are eager to see how beneficiaries respond. Chief of Primary Care Lt. Col. Joel Tanaka emphasized, "It shows that we are dedicated to focusing on processes that are patient centered. We know we can't claim to be patient centered until you say we are." The new appointment model applies to all types of primary care visits.

"Feeling a bit under the weather? You can get a same day appointment. Have the day off from work and need your annual physical or well visit? You can get a same day appointment," said Sloan.

The new model should also ease the flow into the Emergency Department. Sloan estimates that 25 to 35 ED cases each day should really be seen at the patient's primary care clinic. The new system ensures they will get that timely appointment. However, beneficiaries should note that same day access does not mean he or she will get the exact hour that they want. In addition, there may be unforeseen patient surges and challenges, particularly during times like flu season.

Tanaka pointed out, "Just keep in mind that we are transforming our culture, which can have bumps in the road. We hope to learn quickly. Patients can make this transition easier by giving us feedback on ICE cards,



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talking to a member of their core health care team or by filling out their Army Level Provider Satisfaction Surveys. We want to understand and meet our patients' expectations of access to care and customer service."

The adjustments to implement the appointment scheduling model have all been made behind the scenes. Beneficiaries should continue to use the same Access to Care Line at 526-2273 to make their primary care appointments.