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## Psych program is kudo for PMC

POCATELLO — When the University of Washington chose Portneuf Medical Center to begin a psychiatric residency program, it was a pat on the back for PMC, confirming that it had a top-of-the-line behavioral health clinic.

UW officials visited all the psychiatric units in Idaho looking for a possible partner. “To my big pleasure as the medical director, he picked us as the unit which provided the best inpatient care in Idaho,” says Dr. Predrag Gligorovic, director of the hospital’s BHC. “That’s a huge plus ... for our unit and for PMC that they chose us as the unit which provides the best medical care.”

UW chose PMC not only because of its quality program, but because of the breadth of psychiatric services it includes. Besides inpatient and outpatient services, the BHC includes the largest telemedicine health network in the state, specialty resources such as a metabolic clinic, and Gligorovic is on the leading edge of modern electroconvulsive therapy.

According to PMC officials, electroconvulsive therapy, which is neither painful nor a punishment, bears no resemblance to Hollywood portrayals of ECT such as in “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest.” According to PMC, ECT helps as many as 90 percent of patients.

“The University of Washington did well in picking the program based not only on its quality, but on the scope of work it’s doing in all these areas,” says PMC spokesman Brad Huerta.

“Compared with other programs in the area we have a breadth of services...,” says Brad Reynolds, BHC community education manager. “It would be such a benefit to (the residents) to have experience in all of these different things.”

Two UW residents will each spend two months at PMC this year, four will spend two months there next year and the expectation is that in three years, BHC will have UW residents full time.

The residency program began Tuesday and the first resident to arrive, Dr. Jessica Clarke, says she’s excited to start. “I hope to learn something about inpatient psychiatric care in a semi-rural area,” says Clarke, who is retraining as a psychiatrist after spending several years working with AIDS patients in prisons.

Working in prison, Clarke found many of her patients had psychiatric illnesses as well. “And over time, I got more and more interested in psychiatric care.”

BHC has four psychiatrists on staff and a 15-bed inpatient general psychiatric unit that has about 600 admissions every year. It handled about 400 outpatient visits last month.

PMC officials have high hopes for the psychiatric residency program agreement with UW.

They believe it will not only benefit the residents, who will be exposed to a wide variety of practices, but it increases BHC’s productivity and knowledge and boosts psychiatric care resources for the community.

The residents have finished medical school, are in their fourth year of residency and have been training for several years, Gligorovic says. “They have spent lots of time learning, lots of time probing. Maybe we’ll learn something from them and maybe they’ll learn something from us.”

Boosting the community’s psychiatric resources could be another big benefit of the program, especially since Idaho has received very low scores for its mental health care system from the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Idaho received an “F” from NAMI in 2006 and a “D” this year.

“We certainly need more resources, not just inpatient and acute care services, but also outpatient that people can tap into,” Reynolds says. “Usually there’s a greater chance of psychiatrists staying on board or within the community where they do their residency and that’s another goal of providing the program in this area.”

“Most residents end up staying very close to where they’ve trained, so I think that’s a very realistic goal for the program,” Clarke says.