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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Idaho State Journal

Pocatello, Idaho

Saturday Dec. 16, 2017

by Shelbie Harris

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Cancer diagnosis inspires doctor to bring medical campus to Chubbuck

Dr. Fahim Rahim of Pocatello celebrated his 44th birthday on Thursday, but less than a year ago he had no idea if he would survive long enough to enjoy it.

In January, Rahim was diagnosed with abdominal cancer that required extensive surgery and an extended stay in the hospital. This experience partly inspired Rahim's decision to collaborate with other local physicians and Bingham Memorial Hospital to bring the Bingham Healthcare Medical Campus to the heart of Chubbuck.

The announcement for the medical campus was delivered on Friday at the Chubbuck city offices.

"I really got to see healthcare from a whole different perspective, which I had not seen even after practicing medicine for 20 years," Rahim said about his hospital stay. "I got to see the perspective of health care from the perspective of the patient, I got to realize what it means to have a trust in your health care team and I realized what it means to have control over my health care and my destiny where no insurance company or big health care corporate giant is telling me who my physician will be or where I need to receive care."

The planned location for the medical campus is an undeveloped 20-acre lot in central Chubbuck and will include multiple buildings constructed over several phases. The campus aims to provide Southeast Idaho residents with more health care and insurance options while also implementing an integrated model of care for its patients.

"We are so grateful for this vision and for this forward-thinking opportunity that we have to see how this will give the citizens in this community and this entire valley different options and different choices," said Chubbuck City Council Member, Josh Ellis. "Competition has always been great in the United States of America. It drives innovation, improves quality and drives costs down. We are really excited for this."

In addition to Rahim and his brother, Naeem Rahim, stakeholders in this development include physician partners, regional health care leaders, development partners, and Bingham Healthcare.

The Bingham Healthcare Medical Campus will also collaborate with the Skyline Surgery Center in Pocatello.

Fahim Rahim said that the groundbreaking for the project should begin in 2018 with the first phase of services including heart and kidney care likely offered at the facility in early 2019.

Eventually the campus will provide orthopedic physicians, laboratories and a pharmacy under one roof on one campus. Once completed, more than 35 doctors will work at the facility.

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Chubbuck Mayor Kevin England said the announcement and planned development couldn't have come at a better time for the city, considering the much-anticipated future growth spurred by a potential interchange to Interstate 15 called the Northgate project.

"We recognize that growth is coming," England said. "We want to see it come in the right way and as the mayor of this city, I see this event that's taken place today being a hallmark in helping us make this city be what it wants to be."

Though many have credited Fahim Rahim as the driving force for the new medical campus, he said it was the community and his patients that spearheaded the decision.

"It's truly our community and my patients," Fahim Rahim said. "They are the ones who really created a need and a vision for us to do something."

As it currently stands, Fahim Rahim said the current health care model for Southeast Idaho residents lacks options, oftentimes burdening patients to select an insurance provider and health care provider with slim to zero options.

"It's really good to have friendly competition, which is a healthy thing in our community," Fahim Rahim said. "The vision that we have here is to create a unique health care model and medical complex in Chubbuck that will serve Chubbuck, Pocatello and the surrounding communities."

Upon his arrival back in Pocatello after undergoing surgery related to his abdominal cancer, Fahim Rahim said that he realized the health care environment in this community was changing very quickly.

"I realized there was a lot of influx of health care corporate giants who are trying to control the destiny of not only of us physicians, but our community members and our patients," Fahim Rahim said. "It saddened me a couple of weeks ago when one of my 80-year-old patients had to drive 20 miles down south for a 15-minute procedure because a facility and physician who were right across the street were not part of her narrow network and she had no other choice... That is an environment that is not American."

But Todd Blackinton, director of marketing and public relations at Portneuf Medical Center in Pocatello, says competition already exists in the area. He said there are independent doctors in town as well as Portneuf-employed physicians.

"I think that Fahim (Fahim Rahim's) big thing is that he feels there is a lack of competition in Bannock County," Blackinton said. "But he's opening a medical campus that has things the community already has competition in. So we already feel like there is competition in Idaho and Bannock County in particular."

However, Fahim Rahim believes that a true medical campus is one that is owned and operated locally, as opposed to hospitals that are owned by parent companies that reside in other states, like PMC.

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“The biggest thing is this vision will be driven by the partnership of the community, of the physicians and families of friends and patients who live in this community,” Fahim Rahim said. “It’s not going to be driven by some third party health care giant who lives in Texas or Nashville or wherever they are who don’t really know us — who don’t really care about us.”

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