USF Transforming Training, Practice Of Health Care

NEWT GINGRICH TO HEAR DETAILS TODAY

By CAROL GENTRY
cgentry@tampatrib.com

TAMPA — The top doctor at the University of South Florida will brief health care guru Newt Gingrich today on USF's ongoing revolution in medical education and patient care.

Stephen K. Klasko, USF Health vice president and dean of the College of Medicine, said Monday that he will tell Gingrich how USF is "changing the DNA of health care." He uses the gene metaphor to underline the need for more than superficial reform.

USF is "re-engineering" both its training of future doctors and nurses and the system in which its faculty and residents provide care to patients in clinics and teaching hospitals, Klasko said.

USF is about to break ground on new outpatient clinics called Centers for Advanced Healthcare, in which health professionals will work as teams instead of separate specialty groups. Klasko aims to provide state-of-the-art medical care, concierge-level service and technology to promote efficiency and stamp out mistakes.

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Use of technology growing.

Training specialist Kimberly Brown watches monitors of exam rooms as USF medical students train by examining other students who serve as practice patients. Students can review and critique their performance afterward on videotape.
MEDICAL TRAINING

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“When they’re talking about places around the country that are transforming the way health care is delivered, we’re clearly one of them,” Klasko said Monday in a telephone interview.

Gingrich, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, has spent more than a decade pressing for modernization of the health care system, which lags other industries in using technology to become efficient and reduce errors.

He has been invited to address the Florida Legislature this morning about the need for an intelligent health delivery system for the 21st century, based on improved technology. Gingrich is bringing with him David Brailer, national coordinator of health information technology at the Department of Health and Human Services.

Klasko said he wants to stress to Gingrich that modernization of the health system will require a change in the U.S. medical culture. Technology’s impressive, he said, “but unless we can change the way physicians are trained and selected, ... it’s only going to be partially effective.”

Klasko’s briefing, scheduled to take place after Gingrich’s speech to the Legislature and a news conference, was arranged through the Center for Health Transformation, a think tank that Gingrich founded in 2003. Klasko’s contingent is the only private group scheduled to meet with the former speaker during his visit to Tallahassee, according to David Merritt, project director for the center.

USF Health is “a real-life example of what Speaker Gingrich has been advocating since he left Congress,” Merritt said.

The briefing, he said, was arranged by one of the center’s corporate members, Allscripts, a Chicago-based leader in the development of electronic health records. USF Health is one of Allscripts’ clients.

In January, USF Physicians Group, a multispecialty practice staffed by more than 400 faculty members at the medical school, announced it would invest $2 million to co-develop a custom version of Allscripts’ TouchWorks Electronic Health Record. The physicians group said the system would be critical to the operation of its forthcoming outpatient system, the $100 million Centers for Advanced Healthcare.

“We’re not just buying an electronic medical record,” Klasko said Monday. “We’re actually partnering with them on how we can transform ambulatory health care.”

The Allscripts electronic record system will be introduced at all 12 locations of the physicians’ group this year, as well as in two new outpatient clinics. They will open as “paperless” practices, USF says.

USF has already increased the use of technology in the training of doctors and nurses. For example, it employs a videotaping system that enables students to view their own performance in interactions with practice “patients,” in much the same way that golfers review their swing.

Klasko was to be accompanied by Rick Green, chief operating officer of the Centers for Advanced Healthcare, and Jay Wolfson, associate vice president for USF Health. Wolfson is USF’s liaison to a group sponsored by the Tampa Bay Partnership that is developing a regional electronic medical network.

In his briefing, Klasko said, he intends to talk about the many changes in the past year in both technology and training at USF Health. The curriculum has been redesigned so that future doctors and nurses will understand business principles of entrepreneurship, efficiency and customer service, Klasko said, but the faculty needs the same training.

Last summer, Klasko brought in Mohamad Kasti as USF Health’s chief operating officer and told him to design a leadership institute for the medical school faculty. The part-time course for 20 physicians at a time includes training in communication, ethics, conflict management, finance, planning and problem-solving.

Although some of the 400 doctors in the clinical practice group already embrace the concept of reforming the system, Klasko predicted it will take five to 10 years to redesign the culture.

“Changing DNA takes time,” he said.

Reporter Carol Gentry can be reached at (813) 259-7624.