

As Seen in the
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DOCTOR'S *Life*

Physician As Executive

Bill Harwin, M.D.

President, Florida Cancer Specialists



Doctor's Life sat down with Bill Harwin, President of Florida Cancer Specialists, to talk about this organization's spectacular growth and find out how he balances the management of 63 physicians, 24 locations and a support staff of 630 people in addition to seeing patients.

Our growth...wasn't my initial plan. When I came here, I just wanted to practice in Lee County, Fort Myers and Cape Coral. It has just been a lot of different deals and expansion and growing the practice over a number of years. In recent years almost all of the expansion is situations where other doctors approach us and are interested in joining a group and being part of an organization. We emphasize growing in a geographical sense so it is a contiguous area. We are now as far north as Tampa and Clearwater on each side of the bay and as far south as Naples. We are actually adding another group probably of 5 doctors in July in Tampa. We expect to be by the beginning of next year right around 70 doctors.

D *What do you look for in addition to geography when adding more physicians to the group?*

I think I look for physicians that are going to be team players, that are going to be hard working, personable and can get along well with other people, other physicians and patients. Most of the doctors are board certified medical oncology and also hematology in addition to internal medicine. But we just practice our sub-specialty of oncology and hematology.

To add to our group they have to be hematologists or oncologists and most of the time anyone who is younger needs to be trained in both hematology and oncology. After medical school it is 3 years of internal medicine and a 3 year fellowship in hematology and oncology

[Managing 63 doctors is] difficult because they tend to be individuals, not the typical corporate-type person... We really do try to emphasize teamwork, because when

you are in a group practice, especially a sizeable one, you can't always have everything your own way. So you have to compromise and try to be willing to do things with the group as a whole...It is always difficult to achieve, but that is what we strive for

D *How do you balance a patient load with the running of a business of this size?*

What I try to do is have one day a week that I concentrate on the business side, so I am not in the clinic all the time. In reality the job of running the business is really 24/7/365 because there are issues all the time. There is constant email so it is difficult to retain the ability to see patients when I keep getting interrupted...so I try to have a separate day.

In addition we have a Chief Executive Officer; she is not a physician. She has a masters in public health.

D *Has the recent down-turn in the economy affected your business?*

I think to a great extent we are not affected [by the economy], but we see some effects...I am personally extremely busy all the time and I think I always will be because I have been here so long and am so established. We have noticed some drops that are attributable to this; I think there is a greater percentage of uninsured patients by a slight amount...Our southwest Cape business is a little bit down. It's definitely been an effect from just less people being here.

D *About the availability of money for expansion, has there been any impact on your goals?*

No there hasn't been. We have been banking with SunTrust and we have had no problems with our credit line or borrowing. They like customers like us. There really hasn't been a problem.