PACE of Southwest Michigan Establishes Full-Time Medical Team

ST. JOSEPH, MI – Dec. 7, 2021 – PACE of Southwest Michigan is proud to announce that it has a full-time, PACE-employed medical provider team for the first time in several years. The PACE provider team consists of medical director Jennifer White, MD, Dietmar Grentz, MD, Sherry Simpson, NP, and Thomas McConnell, NP.

“The United States is falling short on the number of primary care physicians needed on a national level,” Health Care Trends reported in September. “The situation is even more serious in rural areas.”

Along with many other health care organizations in the community, PACE has faced challenges in recruiting full-time primary care providers. However, with its growing reputation for clinical quality and compassionate care, PACE now has an outstanding full-time medical provider team.

When PACE of Southwest Michigan opened its doors in 2012, Keith Van Oosterhout, MD, was the first PACE primary care physician and medical director. After he left years later, PACE employed excellent physicians, but some were contract positions.

“Our participants, patients and families deserve a consistent medical team to care for their physical and psychosocial needs,” said Jim Schlaman, CEO. “I am delighted PACE is able to provide the highest quality and compassionate care from physicians and nurse practitioners working full-time with our seniors.”

Dr. White joined PACE in 2020 as a locum primary care physician and accepted the position of medical director in August. She continues to provide patient care to participants. She received her bachelor’s degree at Southern Adventist University School of Medicine and medical degree at Loma Linda University and completed her residency at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, MI. She is board-certified in internal medicine.

Prior to joining PACE of Southwest Michigan, Dr. White was a primary care physician at Senior CommUnity Care in Lansing, MI. She also worked at Borgess Hospital, in Kalamazoo, MI, in bariatric medicine and outpatient internal medicine and as a locum hospitalist.

“My goal is to provide person-centered care that focuses on what is most important to seniors living with chronic illness and to help them and their families navigate the sometimes confusing and challenging decisions that may arise when living with chronic illness,” said Dr. White.

Dr. Grentz joined PACE in September. He earned his medical degree at Loma Linda University School and completed his residency in family medicine at Hinsdale Hospital in Hinsdale, IL. Prior to joining PACE, he was medical director of Occupational Medicine at Unity Point Health Finley Hospital, in Dubuque, IA, and a physician at Visiting
Physicians Association, Sparrow Medical Group, and Physicians Neck and Back Clinics.

“I was attracted to a position at PACE because of the team approach to caring for elderly patients with multiple medical problems,” Dr. Grentz said. “This approach makes it easier to meet the many needs of our participants since care is coordinated under one roof, rather than being in multiple places with different providers and caregivers from various organizations.”

Simpson joined PACE of Southwest Michigan in 2014. She received her BSN and MSN from Andrews University and is board-certified as an Adult Nurse Practitioner and Hospice and Palliative Care Nurse Practitioner. Previously, she worked at Southwestern Medical Clinic, in Bridgman, MI; Lakeland, in Niles, MI; Southwestern Medical Clinic, in Berrien County, MI; and Hospice at Home in St. Joseph, MI.

“I enjoy being a part of a multidisciplinary team that works together to meet the diverse needs of our participants,” Simpson said. “The PACE model puts the participants first and does not have some of the typical barriers one might encounter in a typical community outpatient setting. As a provider, I can more readily and comprehensively work with each participant to address their needs. I educate, support, and guide each participant in helping them achieve their goals of care. The PACE model focuses on each participant as the unique person they are, and the entire team works toward helping each participant meet their individual goals.”

McConnell joined PACE as a contract nurse practitioner in May and accepted a permanent position last month. He will begin as a permanent PACE provider on Jan. 1, 2022. He earned his BSN at Wayne State University and his master’s degree in Adult Gerontology Primary Care at Madonna University. He is a member of the Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association and the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association and is board-certified in Adult Gerontology Primary Care, with specialty certifications in hospice and palliative care. Previously, he was a provider at Providence Hospital, in Southfield, MI; Beaumont Wayne Hospital, in Wayne, MI; and the offices of Dr. B. Gandhi, Neurology, in Wyandotte, MI.

“Comfort should be a part of every participant’s care plan as we treat them for their chronic illnesses,” McConnell said.

The Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) is a unique option for older adults who wish to remain in their home as they age. PACE provides and coordinates their medical and therapeutic care, including in-home assistance, medications, and transportation to medical appointments. Nationally, 137 PACE programs operate 272 PACE centers in 31 states, serving more than 54,000 participants. PACE of Southwest Michigan opened in September 2012 and currently serves 230 participants.

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