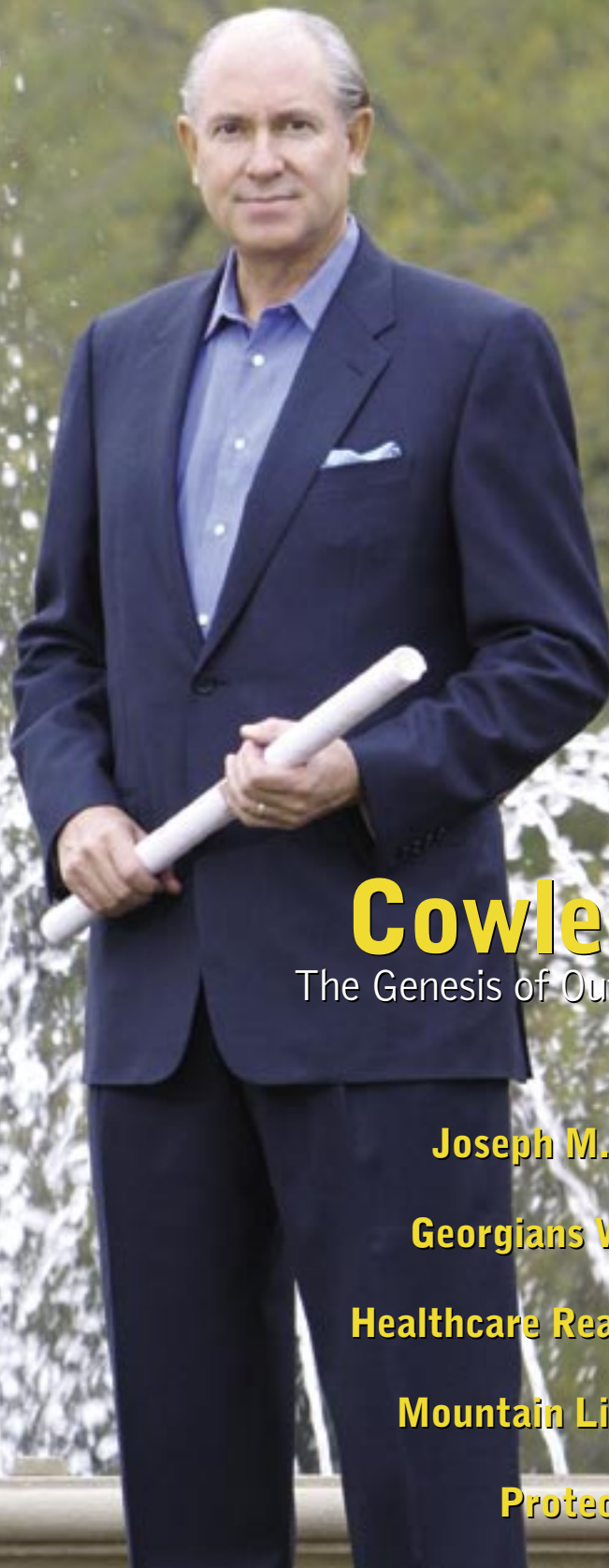


M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS



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The Genesis of Outpatient Medicine

By Kimberly Boim

Urologist Dr. Robert Cowles can't stop thinking about change — changing the way health care is delivered in rural areas like Lake Oconee and Greene County — changing medical models to make health care better, more cost-effective and readily accessible to patients who need state-of-the-art diagnosis and treatment facilities. His 25-year obsession with providing compassionate, high-quality care led to the recent founding of the Cowles Clinic.

The Cowles Clinic is a unique seven-acre, multi-specialty medical campus operating at Lake Oconee in Greensboro, GA. Some are calling it the archetype of 21st century, outpatient-focused medicine.

Dr. Cowles' primary goal is to increase access points for delivering the most advanced, leading-edge health care to residents in rural communities who otherwise would be forced to drive 60 miles or more

Urologist Robert Cowles, M.D., holding a cystoscope, which allows him to look at the interior lining of the bladder and urethra for blockages.



PHOTO BY LELAND HOLDER

for quality, specialty services. The heart of the Cowles Clinic medical campus is their cadre of physicians representing various primary care and specialty fields.

The philosophy is simple, yet remarkable — bring committed medical specialists to the medical campus on a full- or part-time basis and provide them shared access to equipment, on-site laboratory and imaging facilities, and easy access to the talents of one another, all of which make it easier and faster to diagnose and treat patients. Further, by managing patient treatment locally, the doctors at the Cowles Clinic help to improve patient care while reducing health care costs by minimizing hospital admissions.

“The trend to outpatient medicine now has become patient and payer friendly, less expensive, more convenient and accessible, and more competitive,” says Cowles.

Indeed, research conducted by Blue Cross/Blue Shield has shown that, on average, procedures performed in outpatient surgery centers cost 47 percent less than those performed in hospital settings. Further, as the outpatient care market continues to explode, more procedures are being done outside the hospital. Currently, it is estimated that 33 million surgical cases per year are done in the outpatient setting.

THE UPSIDE FOR PHYSICIANS

Lake Oconee's tri-county population (Green, Putnam and Morgan) is estimated to increase 10 – 12 percent per year over the next five years. With its close proximity to Georgia's premier recreational center and generally affluent population, there is an untapped patient base. Cowles Clinic is already attracting interest and commitments from several well-known specialty practices, such as Atlanta Cardiology Group and Saint Joseph's Hospital Multi-Specialty Physicians Center.

Additionally, the Cowles Clinic is slated to become a destination for quality, specialty diagnosis and treatment rather than a branch-of-office acting as a conduit to an out-of-town location for these services. Their belief in customer/patient driven services, enhanced geographic accessibility and utilization of research helps identify specific medical needs. Along with internal medicine and pediatrics, the specialties identified as vital are cardiology, cancer diagnosis and therapy, orthopaedics and urology. Each of these specialties will have a full-time presence at the Cowles Clinic.

“Our overall goal is to continue developing a comprehensive, multi-specialty, cost-effective outpatient system of care,” Cowles adds. By working with residents and health care professionals in the community, the Cowles Clinic plays a role in stabilizing and strengthening the community hospital, ensuring that it stays a viable community resource.



Each cottage at the Cowles Clinic medical campus has been designed with comfort, convenience and privacy in mind. Amenities include warm “lodge” ambience with comfortable waiting rooms.

Other specialties identified for the Cowles Clinic medical campus include dermatology, gastroenterology, neurosurgery, neurology, pain management, plastic surgery, vascular surgery, otolaryngology, gynecology, endocrinology, ophthalmology, pulmonology, ENT, sleep wellness and pediatrics. After the need for physicians’ full-time presence is demonstrated, that doctor will make a full-time commitment to the Cowles Clinic and Lake Oconee residents.

“I am identifying doctors who are going to be committed to providing specialty health care to their patients here in the Lake Oconee

area. I want our doctors, nurses and staff to be an integral part of the community. This means residents will see their doctors at church, school, the grocery store and social events. It adds a level of accountability that cannot be matched in an urban setting,” states Cowles.

Physician affiliation with the Cowles Clinic either full- or part-time offers a unique benefit: The potential for stock ownership interest in two companies that provide essential operating and real estate support services to the tenants of the medical campus.

The success of the Cowles Clinic multi-specialty medical campus is in part due to the flexible approach they have adopted in their work with potential medical group partners. Depending upon the goals of the medical group involved, Cowles Clinic has the resources and the commitment necessary to create a relationship that meets the unique needs of the medical groups.

“While we are currently developing seven acres, the campus has a potential expansion to 25 acres,” he notes. “We can continue to add a variety of medical and health-related services as the need — and demand — arises.”

Private physician offices, multi-specialty clinic, laboratory, Imaging Center, Cancer Center with radiation therapy, Surgery Center and cardiology lab are just part of this development. Specialty physicians can now come, evaluate and treat patients as if they were in the metro area.

Cowles Clinic multi-specialty medical campus has attracted a number of well-respected specialty groups and physicians, including the following:

- Atlanta Center for Urology
- Atlanta Cardiology Group
- Saint Joseph’s Hospital Multi-Specialty Physicians Center
- Atlanta Oncology Associates
- Oconee Medical Arts/Janet Griffin, M.D., Internal Medicine
- Precision Sports Medicine, Lou Pack, M.D.
- Leading National Sleep-Wellness Diagnosis Lab



With all practices located in cottages on the same property, patients can easily walk or drive to each building, reducing stress and anxiety levels.



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About Lake Oconee

Lake Oconee is centrally located between four of Georgia’s largest cities — Atlanta, Athens, Augusta and Macon.

Lake Oconee is home to renowned resort communities — Reynolds Plantation, including the Ritz-Carlton Lodge, Cuscowilla, Harbor Club and Port Armor (all top golf course communities).

It is one of the world’s best golfing destinations, according to *Golf Digest*, featuring six award-winning, championship courses.

A fisherman’s paradise, Lake Oconee’s natural surroundings are perfect for recreational activities.

Lake Oconee’s tri-county population (Green, Putnam and Morgan) is projected to increase 10 – 12 percent over the next five years, according to Becky Cronic, president of Greene County Chamber of Commerce.

A HUGE UPSIDE FOR PATIENTS

The convenience, speed and newer minimally invasive techniques of outpatient procedures have lowered costs for patients, physicians and Medicare itself. Additionally, “outpatient” doesn’t simply mean “out of the hospital;” it means a patient-focused approach to health care. Cowles Clinic patients will be able to come on-site for a short period of time and be seen by a number of physicians, surgeons and therapists in a multidisciplinary setting.

“I hear from my patients that convenience and accessibility are important. I also know that privacy, comfort and personal attention are part of a quality medical experience. We have designed the multi-specialty medical campus and the individual buildings to be relaxing and beautiful,” said Cowles.

With all practices located in cottages on the same property, patients can easily walk or drive to each building, reducing stress and anxiety levels. Each cottage at Cowles Clinic has been designed with comfort, convenience and privacy in mind. Amenities include the following:

- Warm “lodge” ambience with comfortable waiting rooms
- Eleven-foot ceilings with crown molding
- Slate and hardwood flooring
- Granite counters
- Silk grasscloth wall coverings with wainscot
- Original artwork
- Sound System

Exterior features include pastel cote brick architecture, white-columned porticos, glass-paneled doors, ample, close-up parking and highly visible signage and two soothing water fountains.

IDENTIFYING A NEW TREND: EXECUTIVE HEALTH CARE

In addition to services provided to the local community, the Cowles Clinic medical campus will offer an Executive Health Program to anyone throughout the world interested in early disease prevention and detection. Through our partnership with the Ritz-Carlton Lodge at Reynolds Plantation, men and women who come to the Cowles Clinic for the Executive Health Program will be delighted to find world-class accommodations close to the medical campus. According to Cowles, the executive health care concept has been a dream since his early days in medicine.

“My goal is to assemble an expert team in a world-class facility where we can offer complete health evaluation. This service will be of great interest to those living at Lake Oconee, but I also envision that many will travel here for that purpose,” he notes. “I am gratified that since moving here four years ago, many folks from the area and from all over America have come here for urology care and surgery.”

Cowles Clinic is uniquely positioned to offer physicians an attractive alternative location that provides access to a growing population and potential patient base, along with unrivaled lifestyle advantages.

The Cowles Clinic medical campus is located at Lake Oconee, just off I-20 (exit 130, Greensboro/Eatonton).

For more information, visit us at: www.cowlesclinic.com or contact Dr. Bob Cowles, (706) 454-0111 or Don Simpson, chief operating officer, (706) 454-0111. ■