

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

The Humboldt Medical Community has been suffering from a shortage of doctors for a long period of time. We can't say that it is unique to the area as this problem exists in many areas throughout the United States. Recruiting has been painful and the results less than we would like but we must keep trying. We have heard and read about the reasons and they are many. One of the reasons scares me and I hope that it improves. That is the lack of communication by some staff members. Doctors have their hands full and need all the help they can get from those in the supportive roles. Recently a friend of mine was scheduled for a test at one of the hospitals. She showed up at the designated time only to find that the hospital had nothing on its schedule. Some phone calls quickly uncovered the reason. The staff member in the doctor's office failed to make the phone call to the hospital to make the arrangements. Some weeks before that, the patient had occasion to make phone calls to the doctor's office. Each of the three times that she called, the staff member she wanted was not available. The patient's phone number was taken with the idea that they would get back to her later in the day.. The patient never received any of the return calls promised and finally had to make a personal visit to the office for satisfaction. Were these problems the result of over worked personnel or indifference on the part of the staff member? We will never know but we do know that problems such as these tend to interrupt a patient's request for help and spreads distrust. The physician is too busy to get involved in such matters but it is a reflection on her or him. This is where a good office manager comes into focus. He or she can make the difference in how a patient is treated and reflects directly on the doctor. One of my sons recently underwent surgery at the University of California Mission Bay Medical facility located in San Francisco. Everything went like clockwork and he was treated with care and respect. I attribute this type of wonderful service to one of our local doctors and his capable staff who arranged for the second opinion and made the successful surgery possible. The local doctor's ego did not get in the way of his wanting the best for his patient. I can remember years ago when a rumor was circulated that some local doctors were fee splitting. This was

far from the truth. The doctors involved were not afraid to ask for help in the form of second opinions when they ran into problems.

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