

Deliberate Expansion Leads To Growth For OSF Medical Group In 2023

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ALTON - According to the 2023 US Physician Office Market Report, as published by BusinessWire (a Berkshire Hathaway Company), physician office visit volumes are expected to increase through 2029. Also, according to the report, the overall percentage of patient visits declined in 2020 due to the pandemic and has since risen roughly 10%, with the projection to continue to increase in 2023.

OSF Medical Group can certainly attest to that projection and market conditions as 2023 brought increased physician office volumes to its Riverbend region locations in Alton, Godfrey, and Bethalto.

“Our growth in 2023 was fueled by the combination of 1) employing additional primary care and specialty providers and 2) offering expanded programs and services for our patients,” says Sharon K. Tippet, Director, Physician Practices, OSF Healthcare – Alton Medical Group. “Throughout 2023 and as we begin 2024, we continue to see demand for increased access to primary care and specialty care services.”

Expansion in provider services in primary care centered mainly on the OSF Medical Group Godfrey location (6702 Godfrey Road) within family medicine and pediatrics:

- Susan Reynolds, MD, board-certified family medicine physician, has accumulated more than 38 years of medical practice with experience in telemedicine, urgent care, and family medicine.
- Lori P. Balchik, APRN, board-certified pediatric nurse practitioner, has allowed OSF Medical Group to expand access in pediatric medicine by collaborating with Ameera F. Nauman, MD, board-certified pediatrician.

“In addition to Dr. Reynolds and Nurse Practitioner Balchik, we’ve added Courtney M. McFarlin, PA, board-certified physician assistant, to our provider roster in Godfrey,” Tippet. “Even though Courtney primarily practices in our Bethalto location, she enhances our family medicine practice in Godfrey while also providing specialty services in dementia/geriatrics and memory care which are interests of hers.”

Also at the Godfrey location is OSF PromptCare, a walk-in clinic designed to assess and treat sudden minor illnesses and injuries for patients when their primary care provider is busy or unavailable. “In the second half of 2023, we welcomed Keli Stewart, APRN, and James Hopper, PA, to address the increased patient volumes that we are seeing at OSF PromptCare,” Tippet states. “Utilization of walk-in clinics will only continue to rise, and not just here in the Riverbend region, but across the country. Adding Keli and James to our provider roster ensures that OSF PromptCare has the resources to manage the growth of on-demand health care services.”

Two priority specialty care services within OSF Medical Group also received valuable resources in the form of new and additional providers.

First, Deena M. Brown, APRN, a board-certified family nurse practitioner, began offering women’s health specialty care appointments through OSF Medical Group in Alton. Brown, who also has a full-time family medicine practice through OSF Medical

Group in Alton, meets with female patients 14 years-of-age and older seeking access to women's health specialty care on Fridays from 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m., in the OSF Medical Group office location at 2 St. Anthony's Way, Suite 300 (Alton).

“Deena is a native of the Riverbend region, and her existing family medicine practice is a tremendous asset to expand into women's health,” Tippet explains. “Women's health has been a special interest of Deena's so it was only natural for us to expand her role into this specialty care area.”

Next, in a strategic effort to enhance cardiology specialty care in the Riverbend region, Laurinda Harjai, DNP, FNP, RN-BC, joined OSF Medical Group – Cardiology, continuing access for patients in need of cardiology care. Harjai is located at OSF Saint Anthony's Medical Office Building, Suite 305, #2 Saint Anthony's Way, in Alton. Harjai sees patients Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

“Cardiology is a top priority specialty care service line for any integrated health care system and medical group,” Tippet says. “Laurinda's experience and background are impeccable, and just as we anticipated, she has quickly established a very busy cardiology practice here in Alton.” As an added benefit, Harjai works in collaboration with the SSM Health/SLUCare Physician Group (St. Louis, MO) cardiology team to strengthen the cardiology services through OSF Medical Group – Alton and OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center.

Beyond adding new providers, OSF Medical Group introduced several new services for patients in the Riverbend region to take advantage of in-person services as well as online and virtual technologies to manage their everyday health care needs.

OSF Medical Group – Alton (#2 Saint Anthony's Way, Suite 205) introduced a Nurse Clinic in 2023 that expands access to much-needed primary care services through a full-time nurse navigator assisting patients in a variety of programs and services that address:

- Diabetes education
- Urinary tract infections (UTI)
- Identify and schedule acute care visits (i.e. COVID/flu vaccinations, appointment scheduling)
- Chronic health care management
- Congestive heart failure (CHF)
- Hypertension (i.e. high blood pressure)
- Advanced Care Planning

- Power of Attorney
- End of Life Directives

“All of the services and education that we offer through our Nurse Clinic are directly aligned with common diagnoses and necessary needs that we see every day,” Tippet says.

Patients and visitors to the OSF Medical Group – Godfrey location can get connected to care through the OSF OnCall Connect Bar which helps individuals more effectively manage their health care anytime, anywhere. “Our digital health navigators have tools at their fingertips to help anyone enroll in and navigate the programs they need in real time,” Tippet explains.

Among the services offered through the OSF OnCall Connect Bar include:

- **OSF MyChart** – a comprehensive tool that can help manage an individual’s health, such as:
 - Activate an individual’s account and reset their password
 - Save time by utilizing eCheck-in
 - Request or grant proxy access on a loved one’s account
 - Find the right primary care provider or specialist
 - Schedule and manage appointments
 - View test results
 - Ask your care team a medical question, view medications or request refills

SilverCloud - A service where patients can sign up for a free app available by phone, tablet or computer to support an individual’s mental health and wellness

OSF OnCall Connect – assisting patients with enrollment in and navigating programs including:

- Chronic condition monitoring
- Health and wellness
- Pregnancy and postpartum

“Our OSF OnCall Connect team may not be available at all times, but patients and proxies can access OSF MyChart assistance by calling (855) 673-4325 or they can utilize drop boxes at any of our locations in Alton, Godfrey, and Bethalto,” Tippet states.

Because diabetes is an identified community health problem in the Riverbend region, OSF Medical Group – Godfrey and OSF Medical Group – Alton have acquired IDx-DR technology to help assist in detecting vision loss from retinal images, which can help prevent blindness in diabetic patients. “Currently, diabetes patients have an annual exam,” Tippet says. “But inconvenience and cost are reasons some patients with

diabetes are not regularly screened for the disease. The key with this technology is that it can help make the clinical decision.”

Finally, what made 2023 even more successful was receiving recognition from the Riverbend region in being honored with three (3) awards:

- OSF PromptCare was voted “Best Urgent Care” for the second consecutive year in the “Best of the Best” awards program sponsored by The Telegraph and Hearst Community Media Group.
- Ameera Nauman, MD, board-certified pediatrician, continued her consecutive year streak of receiving “Best Pediatrician” in the “Best of the Best” awards program, and additionally, she was one of 10 honorees in the 2023 “Women of Distinction” awards program sponsored by the YWCA of Southwestern Illinois.

“We’re going to use the positive momentum that was generated in 2023 to fuel even more growth in 2024,” Tippet says. “We’re very grateful for our Mission Partners (i.e. employees), who ‘serve with the greatest care and love’ every day, but most importantly, we’re especially thankful our patients for trusting us with their health care needs.”

Learn more about OSF Medical Group in the Riverbend region – and OSF HealthCare – by visiting www.osfsaintanthonys.org.