



Koweta Health Clinic Grand Opening Ceremony

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“Community, Wellness and Healing: A Dream Realized”

by

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It is an honor to be here today for this wonderful and much anticipated grand opening of the Koweta Health Facility. I really appreciate the opportunity to be a part of today’s event and want to thank Principal Chief Ellis and Second Chief Berryhill for their invitation to speak today.

Dedicating this beautiful new facility is cause for both celebration and reflection. “Community, Wellness and Healing: A Dream Realized,” the theme of this grand opening, really says it all. The goal of attaining and staying in good health can best be realized when it is a community-wide effort centered on a state-of-the-art facility such as yours.

We at the Indian Health Service (IHS) are very proud to be a partner with the Muscogee Creek Nation in this Joint Venture Construction Program that completed this health facility. I congratulate former Principal Chief Perry Beaver for conceiving this new center and current Principal Chief Ellis for carrying it through to completion. We all have high hopes that the Koweta Health Facility will enhance the health care of the Muscogee Creek Nation.

The new clinic will serve a projected population of over 8,500 Tribal members throughout the service area. This new facility will handle more than 30,000 primary care patient visits per year with an approved staffing level of 171. The health center will expand existing services and also will provide a myriad of new services. The clinic will provide important ambulatory services such as audiology, dental care, eye care, and primary care, along with ancillary services such as diagnostic imaging, pharmacy, and physical therapy. Behavioral Health services, one of our main focus areas for Indian Health, will include mental health, social work, and a child behavior unit. Preventive health services, also part of our agency’s health prevention efforts, will include public health nursing, public health education and Women-Infant-Child services. Additional support services will also be provided at the facility. These services, which focus on wellness and health promotion, will help develop and maintain healthy lifestyles for your people. The Koweta Health Facility will be a working symbol of wellness for your community.

The text is the basis of Dr. Grim’s oral remarks at the Grand Opening of the Koweta Health Facility in Coweta, Okla., on June 15, 2006. It should be used with the understanding that some material may have been added or omitted during presentation.

We at the IHS are now developing an IHS-wide system of holistic care for each and every patient. By this I mean that we must look carefully at each of our patients and how we can best improve their mental, physical, social, and spiritual health at each hospital, clinic, or center. We must take that extra moment to connect our patients and their needs to our full range of existing services and evaluations. We intend to treat the whole patient and his or her family in the context of their Tribal community. It is clear that this is far and away the most effective, efficient, and long-lasting prescription for treating chronic illness.

Closely related to this planned system of care are three initiatives I have established as Director of the IHS: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Chronic Disease Management, and Behavioral Health. These initiatives are linked together and have the potential to achieve positive improvements in the health of Indian people.

Through our Health Promotion and Disease Prevention initiative, the IHS is preparing for the future of Indian health care. We know we must emphasize the primary prevention of chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and injuries, if we are to continue to improve and maintain the health and wellness of Indian people and communities through the next generations. Working in concert, the IHS and Tribes have taken a number of actions aimed at health promotion and disease prevention. This includes numerous programs and partnerships to promote healthy lifestyles and improve community health, such as the “Just Move It Campaign.” This nation-wide campaign has a goal of getting one million Indian people *up and moving*. Currently nearly 150 Tribal communities are actively participating in this program.

As I have mentioned, in Indian country and across the nation, we are struggling with chronic diseases, especially diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and depression. In fact, chronic disease has replaced acute disease as the dominant health problem in America, and is considered to be the principal cause of disability and use of health services. The IHS Chronic Disease Initiative is focusing on using innovative and state-of-the-art approaches to helping individuals manage chronic disease and minimize its impact on their health and function.

We know that in order to effectively address chronic disease, we must address a wide spectrum of contributing factors, ranging from the quality of prenatal care to the availability of employment opportunities. That is why it is important to have all federal, Tribal, Urban Indian, and state public health agencies and organizations, as well as other public and private organizations, working together as part of a continuum to improve health and eliminate health disparities.

Behavioral Health may be the underlying thread through all of these initiatives. Addressing behavioral health and mental health issues in our communities is crucial, and we need to increase our focus on screening and primary prevention in mental health. We know that mental health issues such as depression can also make chronic disease management more difficult and less effective. And that the high rates of suicide, domestic violence, homicide, and sexual assaults in Indian communities are a reflection of a host of mental health issues.

And we are realizing more and more how important it is to begin addressing mental health issues at a young age, before problems becomes entrenched. Researchers supported by the National Institute of Mental Health have found that half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14; three quarters have begun by age 24.

Achieving wellness in mind, body, and spirit takes considerable dedication and teamwork. The Muscogee Creek Nation wisely has taken the lead for its people by creating and

carefully planned this beautiful facility. I know it will proudly serve many generations of Muscogee Creeks to come.