

# Clinic: remodel will mean more exam rooms; wide range of services

Continued from front page

medical conditions that don't require a doctor and keep the doctors free to see patients with more immediate problems.

"What we envision when a patient walks in the clinic, when we are done with the triage area, is they will walk up to the desk in medical, they will see that on one side we have a window for regularly scheduled patients and on the other side we will have a window for walk-in patients," said Casale.

Doctors will be able to see walk-in patients during two blocks of time each day. The first block of time will be prior to lunch and the second will be after. Casale said patients who want to see a specific doctor will be given a time when that doctor is available and they can either wait until the doctor is free or they can be seen by an available physician as soon as possible.

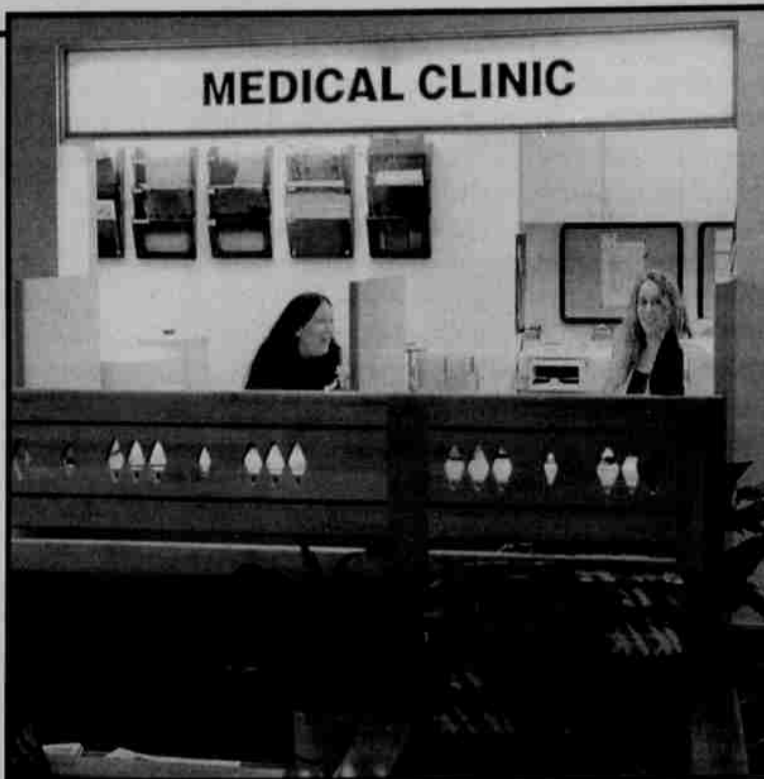
"They are hour-long blocks of time," said Casale. "Each doctor will have an hour-long block of time before and after lunch that has been blocked out just for walk-in patients."

The triage nurse is the only one who will be able to schedule patients to see a doctor during those blocks of time.

"We are trying to be as flexible as we can with our patients," said Casale.

Casale said the optometry department has been moved to another location in the clinic and the area is now being remodeled with new exam rooms.

"It really made sense if we are placing the triage nurse there that we have exam rooms available for the triage nurse to put patients in for the doctor to come and see them," said Casale.



**With the remodel, the reception area of the medical clinic should be able to schedule walk-ins when they arrive.**

Photos by Brent Merrill

The triage nurse will have a certified medical assistant that will aid the nurse in managing those patients prior to a doctor's follow-up.

Casale said one of the new exam rooms will be set-up as a specialty clinic where chiropractic services and an Elders' foot clinic will be stationed. The clinic's massage table will also be moved into the specialty clinic. The triage system would be set up for grand opening by the end of November. Casale said the chiropractor and podiatrist will be contracted for one day a week.

## FOOT CLINIC: Added relief for Elders

According to Clinic Administrator John Casale, the clinic will now have an Elders' foot clinic available one day a week. Casale said Native communities have a greater need for proper foot care, especially in the Elder population.

"The elderly population here probably suffers more from diabetes than other communities," said Casale. "One of the unfortunate side effects from diabetes is poor circulation. When you have poor circulation, you have less blood flowing to those areas, and it takes longer for sores to heal and effected areas are more prone to a variety of medical problems like infection and tissue breakdown."

Diabetes is a lifelong disease caused by an inability of the pancreas to make enough insulin to help glucose enter cells. Glucose is a form of sugar the body uses for energy. The body makes glucose from food. Diabetes causes glucose to reach above-normal levels in the bloodstream and must be controlled.

Casale said the foot clinic is designed to bring the elderly population into the clinic so their feet can be managed.

Elders who have difficulties with their feet can come in and get needed care from a knowledgeable physician. Foot pain can effect the whole body and cause intense discomfort.

"If your feet hurt, your whole body can hurt," said Casale. "If you have poor circulation, you can get your feet massaged and get them warmed up and it is going to make you feel better. It is a really great service."

Casale said the service is not expensive and the benefits to the elderly community are great.

## JOHN CASALE: Clinic administration presents a welcome challenge

By Brent Merrill

With the confidence of a man who knows where he's going and where he wants to take his program, Grand Ronde Health and Wellness Clinic Administrator John Casale is a man on the move.

Casale has worked for the Tribe for more than two years now. He came on board just before the Health and Wellness Center opened in October of 1997.

With more than 15 years of experience in the health and medical field, Casale has served as the chief financial officer at Willamette Falls Hospital in Oregon City. He was also the reimbursement manager at St. Vincent's Hospital in the Portland area.

Casale has also been a health care consultant and worked the Medicaid program for the federal government.

"I have a wide range of knowledge of the administration and finance that revolves around health care," said Casale of his experience. Casale said he knows what it takes to successfully run a health care practice in today's world. He went to work getting the wellness facility up to speed on all commercial aspects of a successful medical clinic.

"At first it was a struggle," said Casale. "But, now we are really coming on strong and we are looking to the future."

Casale said it is his goal to make the Grand Ronde Health and Wellness Center a success. And, even though he wants the facility to be successful financially, he wants the facility to be a lasting benefit to the community.

"More importantly, (than finances) is that ten years from now we want the health of this community to be better than it is now," said Casale of his role in the community. "Fifteen years from now, we want the teenagers we are dealing with right now, to be clean and sober adults."

Casale hopes, in five years, the dental hygiene awareness in the community will improve to that of a more urban area.

"We focus a lot on preventative care and education," said Casale. "What we found, was that people, Native and non-Native, had gone without health care, dental in particular, for years and years and years. People coming in need more than just cleaning, they need jaw re-con-



**John Casale, (right) and Shirley Walkhoff, triage nurse, say the new exam rooms are almost ready.**

structions, bridges made and teeth pulled out."

A nutritionist will be brought on board to help educate people about proper eating habits.

Casale said he likes Indian Country because he sees it as a challenge.

"I saw what they wanted to do here," he said. "I saw what existed here and I knew that this would be a real challenge to make this facility successful and educate not only the public on changes their lifestyles, but to educate the Tribe to what it means to provide a professional, state-of-the-art medicine delivery system."

Casale said the learning curve of employees at the facility has been straight up.

"My hat is off to the people here and what they have done," said Casale of the medical and support staff.