Large North Jersey medical group expands into South Jersey

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Riverside Medical Group, a large physician practice based in North Jersey, has expanded into South Jersey and has its sights set on becoming a statewide health care provider.

The 40-year-old medical group recently added Main Street Medical Associates in Moorestown and Heights Primary Care in Haddon Heights to the group.

Riverside Medical, which was started by a small group of pediatricians in Hudson County, now boasts more than 250 primary care doctors and specialists at 90 locations in eight counties.

“Over the next 24 months we want to be in all 21 New Jersey counties,” said Dr. Zeyad Baker, a primary-care physician and son of Riverside Medical founder and President Dr. Azzam Baker.

Zeyad Baker said the practice has grown rapidly over the past decade, adding primary care doctors and specialists. Their goal, he said, is to position the group to take advantage of health care’s shift from a fee-for-service system that rewards doctors for how many tests they order and procedures they perform to a value-based system that incentivizes doctors to deliver cost-effective and quality care and keep large populations of patients healthy.

“Our concept now is to take care of entire families and meet all their needs,” Baker said. “We take every insurance, we don’t try to cherry-pick like others do, and we are open seven days a week with some of the longest hours in the country.”

Baker said Riverside Medical’s pitch to the groups it acquires is they will provide all the support a practice needs, from electronic medical record systems to billing so doctors can focus on patient care. “We want doctors to go from worrying about the future to practicing medicine with their chest out,” he said.

Riverside Medical doesn’t pretend to be an expert on all aspects of running a medical practice, Baker said, so it links with organizations like Continuum Health of Marlton, N.J., for practice management services, and Optum, a division of Minnesota-based UnitedHealth Group, for health care data analytics. That combined expertise, he said, has put the group in a position to pursue full-risk contracts with payers, where their compensation is tied to how well their doctors deliver care and meet quality standards.

“Doctors have been waiting for this – being rewarded for doing what’s best for patients,” he said.
Continuum describes itself as a “physician enablement company” that helps doctor offices – that want to remain autonomous – transition to value-based care models. Its services include practice support, revenue cycle management, and population health monitoring and management.

“We look forward to helping Riverside achieve their clinical and aggressive business expansion goals,” said Continuum Health CEO Peter Bailey. “Our entire team is energized by Riverside’s value-based vision for health care and their collaborative approach to our new partnership.”

Baker said one of the reasons Riverside Medical wants to expand into South Jersey is because many of the group’s patients from North Jersey spend summers at the state’s southern Shore points. With doctors in South Jersey, patients who need medical attention will not be directed to providers outside its network during the summer months.

Riverside Medical was attracted to Heights Primary Care in large part because it was familiar with Dr. Michael Renzi, one of the leaders of Continuum. “He’s one of the most respected doctors in the state,” Baker said. “He’s a thought leader and you won’t find a brighter mind when it comes to population health.”

Main Street Medical Associates, Baker said, is comprised of a group of respected and well-known doctors that have been in the Moorestown community for a long time.

“If we were going to go in there and plant a flag, we had to be careful about who we partner with,” Baker said.

Dr. Joseph B. Levin, co-founder of Main Street Medical Associates, cited several reasons for joining Riverside. “Our ongoing commitment to the medical home model coupled with Riverside’s diverse resources and drive to dramatically expand value-based care made this a perfect choice for our practice,” he said. “We continue to be impressed with Riverside’s patient-centered vision and support of our providers.”

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