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Dr. Robert Lyss named chief medical officer at Western Sierra Medical Clinic

Dr. Robert “Simi” Lyss, a longtime community leader and local physician, has been hired as chief medical officer of Western Sierra Medical Clinic in Grass Valley.

Lyss, a former regional medical director for Kaiser Permanente, follows Dr. Glenn Thiel, who has stepped down as chief medical officer to work part-time as a clinician at Western Sierra Medical Clinic.

“We’re honored to bring on Dr. Lyss, who has decades of experience, including management positions with some of the leading organizations in health care,” said Western Sierra Medical Clinic CEO Scott McFarland. “Under his leadership, we will continue to provide exceptional medical services and look at opportunities to further improve health care in the region.”

Lyss, a 1953 graduate of Nevada Union High School, went to medical school at UCSF, where he also completed his training as a dermatologist.

He became a staff dermatologist with Kaiser Permanente before numerous promotions within the HMO, from physician-in-chief at Walnut Creek to eventually regional medical director in Kaiser-Permanente northeast region. He joined as medical director and retired as senior vice president for health affairs and chief medical officer for Health Partners of the Southeast, a 140,000-member HMO based in Birmingham, Ala.

“I’m excited to work with the highly skilled medical staff and play an integral role in the future of health care in the region,” said Lyss, who has served as a consultant to Western Sierra during the past few years. “I’ve always been impressed with the commitment to quality health care and the never-ending goal of adding and improving services at Western Sierra Medical Clinic.”

Western Sierra Medical Clinic is the largest outpatient health provider in Nevada County, serving about one of every four residents in the region. The nonprofit has greatly expanded its services during the past year, including adding obstetrics-gynecology, an on-site pharmacy and opening Urgent Care to non-patients at its new Grass Valley health center.

Western Sierra — which provides comprehensive medical, dental and behavioral health care in Nevada, Sierra Yuba counties — also has a health center in Downieville, with another opening this spring in Penn Valley, and operates a clinic at Community Recovery Resources (CoRR) in Grass Valley, at Hospitality House, and in Camptonville and the town of Washington.

“We deeply appreciate Dr. Thiel’s leadership during the past couple of years and the role he has played in helping us expand our services and recruit new providers, and for his oversight of the clinical team,” McFarland said. “He accomplished so much while still providing high-quality care to our patients.”

Thiel will focus on treating patients in Urgent Care at Western Sierra.

“It was my pleasure and honor to serve as chief medical officer,” Thiel said. “Given Dr. Lyss’ depth of experience in health, he will bring a new vision and energy to Western Sierra as its chief medical officer.”