

UMC participates in regional mental-health summit

By REGAN TUTTLE Editor | Posted: Wednesday, October 12, 2016 12:00 am

Uncompahgre Medical Center participated in the Behavioral Health Summit last Wednesday at the Peaks Hotel in Mountain Village. The event was organized by Tri-County Health Network.

UMC Executive Director Scott Bookman said that in the last year, San Miguel County has seen an increased suicide rate. There is a general lack of access to mental-health resources, he said.

According to data UMC provided, one in four people have a behavioral-health condition, and depression is the third common cause for a health center visit.

For last week's summit, UMC Director of Nursing Nichole Long served as a panelist and gave a presentation of UMC's work in mental healthcare. Her message coincided with that of the overall forum: the importance of integrated healthcare and that there should be no stigma attached to receiving mental-health services.

Bookman said UMC is leading the area in its comprehensive approach to healthcare because the clinic integrates mental-health services. In 2012, the clinic went into partnership with the Center for Mental Health to have a provider located on site at UMC.

Bookman said that in the past, the mental-health provider took referrals from the medical clinic to schedule appointments. The mental health part of the clinic mostly operated as an outpatient model.

In the last year, that has changed. Now, the clinic is even more integrated so that the mental-health provider can work with the medical provider on demand. During a medical appointment, if the doctor or physician's assistant determines a need, the mental-health provider can be brought in to help a patient in working through barriers to wellness and with goal-setting.

"If we don't treat people in their totality, they don't get better," Bookman said. "... Our community is so independent and reluctant to ask for help, it's critical to offer mental-health services along with the others."

According to Bookman, the American culture has lost the ideal of the old Norman Rockwell image — the family doctor who developed long-term personal relationships with patients. In the modern world, most people visit various medical centers that are large and sometimes impersonal.

Now, he said, people are realizing the importance of holistic care.

"The world knows we need to take care of teeth, body, medications and mind to treat a person entirely," Bookman said.

UMC does house, in addition to its medical clinic and mental-health office, a dental clinic and a new pharmacy. He said the dental clinic portion of UMC can and does work with the mental-health provider, too.

“We’re the only center in the region that has those four on site,” he said. “When you come here, our ability to take care of those at once sets us apart.”

Bookman said the resources are invaluable for a community so rural and remote.

Long’s presentation, he said, ended with applause and follow-up questions from participants. Telluride Medical Center and River Valley Health Center of Olathe also participated.

Bookman said he hopes that anyone with a mental-health concern contacts UMC. The clinic is fully staffed, five days a week, to support mental healthcare.