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## Tanka Ke Zani Oti Elder Clinic held at Rosebud Hospital

By Archie B. Beauvais Special to the Times



**Dr. Robert Schreiber has specialized in geriatrics for more than 20 years and teaches at Harvard Medical School. He was the specialist for the elder's clinic since 2002.**

ROSEBUD - Ruth Thomas, a Physician Assistant at Rosebud IHS coordinates an Elder Clinic known as "Tanka Ke Zani Oti", a name given by beloved Lakota Elder, Ollie Napesni.

Normally, the Elder Clinic is held each Wednesday during the year, however, during this time the Rosebud Hospital is hosting volunteer geriatric specialist, Dr. Robert Schreiber of the Harvard Medical School between Aug.

14 and 21.

The Rosebud Sioux Tribal Community Health Representative program is an integral part of this clinic and with support and encouragement from Clinical Director, Dr. Valerie Parker, the Elder Clinic has become an established weekly specialty clinic focused on the needs of tribal elderly.

Sicangu Lakota Elders who attend the clinic are given an incentive and provided with a comprehensive variety of treatment options according to their specific needs which include: chronic disease management, a medication review, fall risk assessment, medical equipment, pain management and referral to specialty services such as optometry, dental, nutritional counseling, social services, mental health and physical therapy.

Dr. Schreiber has specialized in Geriatric Medicine for over 20 years, teaches at Harvard Medical School and directs the healthcare for over 4,000 seniors every year in the Boston area.

Schreiber said, "We try to understand their belief systems. I am here for them. I will deal with what they want first. It is a partnership as they are the chief of their health care." Schreiber noted that

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nationwide with more "baby-boomers" living longer, what is happening on the Rosebud parallels that population increase. Even on the Rosebud people are living into their 80's and 90's according to Schreiber and they represent a positive role-model for others as it demonstrates the benefits of prevention.

Schreiber was on a trip to Monument Valley in Arizona in 2002 with his family.

After a tour of the Navajo Reservation, at the urging of his wife, Schreiber contacted Dr. Bruce Finke, Head of the Eldercare Initiative of the Indian Health Service and originator of an Elder Clinic at Zuni Pueblo, and sought to volunteer his services. When Dr. Schreiber placed his offer on IHS email, Ruth Thomas on behalf of the Elder Clinic she had created was the only one to respond and invited Dr. Schreiber to come out and share his expertise in Geriatric Medicine for the benefit of the elderly of Rosebud.

This collaboration was a great success and he has returned annually since 2002 with his son Samuel who volunteers while he is here in the clinic.

Last November Schreiber sent a Geriatric Fellow and Attending Physician from his program in Boston to work with Thomas for a week.

There are plans to continue this volunteer relationship in the future and have Geriatric specialists come to Rosebud two or three times during the year to expand these special clinics and allow the visiting Physicians to gain experience working with Lakota elders.

Schreiber said, "I treated Earl Swift Hawk and he taught me so much about the community and understanding Native healing practices. We try to complement that here."

Thomas described the consultative services which she provides along with Dr. Schreiber. She said, "We treat each Elder as an individual. Each is unique and needs an individual plan of care."

Schreiber is able to provide medical advice and consultation including the latest developments that might have implications for the elderly.

For example, he said that based on a recent study done at his institution, he is recommending that elders take 1000 milligrams of vitamin D each day as a way to keep muscles and bones strong, preventing falls and fractures.

He also explained that there are several factors which contribute to sixtypercent of the deaths in this country and for those in poverty that is likely compounded. Such risk factors such as smoking, lack of physical exercise, alcohol and poor nutrition can be modified with preventative measures according to Schreiber. If they make modifications they will be more productive members of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe.

The United States annually spends about \$7000.00 in healthcare dollars per individual, yet we are 35th in the world in life expectancy. More money is not the answer.

The Elder Clinic has facilitated geriatric healthcare here and we



have incredible stories about elders who have embraced lifestyle changes and have made dramatic improvements in their health and quality of life for themselves and their families.

Finally, Thomas said there is a desperate need on the Rosebud to have home healthcare and home Hospice services in order to provide elders with the means to remain independent and stay in their homes as long as possible, but most importantly so that the practice of healthcare is in harmony with the culture and beliefs of the Elder and their tiospaye.

Next week Schreiber will present training to the Medical Staff on Advance Care Planning, which deals with end-of-life issues.

Thomas has presented training to Medical Staff on pain management and palliative care. She said that the emphasis on prevention in primary care medicine and the trend toward end-of-life counseling and planning has added a new and more positive approach to Eldercare.

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