

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

"We're going to miss him," said Chase County Community Hospital Interim Administrator Gary Bieganski, referring to the resignation of Dr. Doug Nicholson.

Bieganski said Nicholson has served the hospital and his patients well.

The upcoming exit of Nicholson and the recent departure of Physician's Assistant Carol Cornelius will thin the medical ranks at the hospital and clinic.

Cornelius resigned recently to take a position in Grant where she resides with her family.

That leaves Dr. Jon Richman and P.A.s Jodi Spady and Brandy Hanes to cover the patient load at the clinics in Imperial and Wauneta, along with hospital duties.

Bieganski said the hospital has been actively recruiting a pair of physicians, but neither are available in the immediate future.

In addition, the hospital board is working with some doctor recruitment firms to identify doctors who may be interested in this area.

Locum tenes

Bieganski said the hospital will use locum tenes doctors for a period of time to provide relief for the medical staff.

He said they have a locum tenes scheduled to cover the emergency room during the first weekend in November.

Dr. Lori Ripley, who presently works on the front range of Colorado, is also working some weekends at the hospital.

Bieganski said they are working with a locum tenes doctor who's already familiar with the area.

Bieganski said the locum could work for a one to two-week period in both the clinic and the hospital. That would help take some pressure off the current medical staff.

Bieganski and his staff are reviewing four applications from nurse practitioners and P.A.s interested in working here.

While the hiring of a mid-level provider could occur first, the top priority remains adding a new doctor to the staff, he said.

The schedule at the Wauneta Clinic could be affected, based on the hiring process of a mid-level provider.

The most important thing, he said, is finding people who are compatible with staff and the local communities.