

Katie Johnson:

Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day. It's Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness show where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I am Katie Johnson, your host, and my guest today is Dr. Katie Bressler. She is the newest member of the Lake Region Medical Group, and we are so excited to introduce her to our listeners this morning. Thanks for joining me, Dr. Bressler.

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Thank you for having me. Excited to be here.

Katie Johnson:

It is always one of my favorite shows when I get to introduce a new provider, but especially when it's someone who is, number one, bringing such a needed service to our community, both in family medicine and obstetrics, and that has such great local ties. So really excited to share some of your story with our listeners and help them get to know you a little bit better. Let's just dive right in and start by telling us your background. What led you up to this point of joining Lake Region Healthcare?

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Sure. Thank you for such a warm welcome. I'm excited to be here. So I am originally from Duluth, Minnesota. That's where I grew up, but my mom has strong family ties to Fergus, and my parents actually live here in town now. So my journey has just brought me to Fergus in many ways. I grew up coming here kind of over the summers to go use the lakes and visit family, so I've always had a soft spot for the region. I went to the University of Minnesota Twin Cities for my undergraduate education, and I studied biology and Spanish studies. During that time, I studied abroad for a year in Ecuador, which was really an amazing experience to be able to experience a different culture and learn another language.

And then I also really fell in love with OB there. I interned at a public maternity hospital and worked with adolescent moms at that time, so it really sparked a passion for me. And then after graduating from undergrad, I took a couple years off and then did my medical school also in the Twin Cities at the University of Minnesota. And as a part of that, I had a nine-month rotation here at Lake Region, which was truly formative for me. I had the opportunity not only to get to know the community even more in depth as a provider, but also I really was able to see what my practice at that point, a nebulous kind of picture in my head, would look like. And that year really just stuck with me, and it's why I'm back. I just fell in love with OB side of things, but also with the primary care side of things. And from that point on, I really saw myself practicing here and just kept coming back to Lake Region and Fergus.

Katie Johnson:

You maybe touched on this a little bit, but was there something early in your life that kind of triggered you to say, "I know that I want to go into medicine"

Dr. Katie Bressler:

I think it's been kind of multifactorial. My mom was first a RN, she was a flight nurse for many years. She worked in the ERs, then she went back to get her NP, nurse practitioner, degree when I was a young child, but still at that point where it was really in my formative years. And it was really cool to see my mom getting higher education as a kid.

So that was very formative. And then also as a teenager, I had a little lawn business, and I mowed lawns for several community physicians, female community physicians in Duluth. And I think that was also very formative for me in that I just got to know the lifestyle and what the commitment was, and they were really big mentors for me.

Katie Johnson:

You talked a lot about what prompted to decide Lake Region Healthcare was the right place for you. Were there any specific experiences or people during that nine-month rotation here?

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Yeah, I would say it's such a large group of people, but definitely the support staff at Lake Region. During my residency and my fellowship, I came to just see how important that relationship is as you become a physician. And I always just kind of looked back at those nine months here as really a fond relationships with the support staff, specifically on the OB unit, the nursing and the clinic, and then also in the surgical areas, in the ORs. I did that. Comradery is something that's really special, and it's very present here. And I think the passion for patient care and patient safety is really present, and I'm excited to be joining that.

Katie Johnson:

So tell us a little bit more about your fellowship, maybe your post medical school training.

Dr. Katie Bressler:

So after med school, I went back to my hometown of Duluth, Minnesota for a three-year residency and family medicine where I took care of any and all patients and did a lot of both hospital work in working with pediatrics, adult patients, and then also a lot of OB, and then also having primary care clinic. And then after residency, my husband and I moved to Boise, Idaho for a quick year. And in Boise, that was more of just a OB fellowship. So what I did there was I had a small family medicine clinic that I would do, but then I also spent almost all of my time on the OB unit working with maternal fetal medicine physicians and working on managing high risk patients as well as doing cesarean sections if that was needed, or other operative modes of delivery. So getting some more high risk exposure to be prepared to help manage those patients here in Fergus.

Katie Johnson:

Both great experiences for your combined practice of family medicine with obstetrics.

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Yes. I've been really fortunate in my training.

Katie Johnson:

You also were a recipient of the Lake Region Healthcare Foundation Scholarship.

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Yeah, I applied for that at the end of my RPAP year. So RPAP stands for Rural Physician Associate Program. That's the nine months that I spent here. And it was just truly just an honor. More than the monetary reward, it was just an honor to have that. But also it, I think, exemplifies the region's investment in their physicians and in educating all areas of medicine and healthcare. And I think that by

having this kind of philanthropy, it does get folks to come back to Fergus, and it shows that investment early on in our careers. And that spirit of things is why I'm here.

Katie Johnson:

That is exactly what I was hoping to relay to our listeners, to the many people who have been so generous in supporting our foundation and specifically the healthcare education funds that we have set up, that this is the fruit of that investment, seeing people like you come back to practice here. And so grateful for that.

Dr. Katie Bressler:

If you look at a lot of the physicians stayed here, a lot of them did come up through the RPAP program, which is really cool.

Katie Johnson:

Yeah, it is an amazing program. As I mentioned early on, you're going to be offering both family medicine appointments and some OB services. Tell us a little bit more about what your practice will look like and what kind of patients you'll serve.

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Yeah, so my practice is going to be very broad. I think that's one of the strengths of family medicine. So first and foremost, I'm a family medicine physician, and in that umbrella of family medicine, OB is a very well known aspect of our training. So I will be serving patients from infants all the way up to the nursing home. And I do hope to be doing newborn visits as well as nursing home visits, so that'll be great, and chronic disease management and whatnot, too, for our older patients or younger patients. And then also, I'm hoping to have a pretty robust OB practice so that I can really serve the whole family through the whole journey. And that includes other aspects of women's health, including contraception and preconception planning, that kind of thing.

Katie Johnson:

What a great practice. Tell us a little bit about your care philosophy. What's important to you when it comes to providing really high quality care?

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Something that I really love about medicine is that there's kind of two arms of medicine. One is the evidence-based scientific side of my practice, and then there's other side that's kind of the art of healing. And I love that those two things can join and just be a part of my everyday life. And so my philosophy of care really just involves both of those things. Trying to stay up-to-date with the latest and greatest in the guidelines and the evidence that's always changing in healthcare as well as in family medicine and in primary care, creating those bonds with my patients and understanding what makes them tick, and, okay, this is where the guideline is really going to serve my patients well, and oh, maybe this is a piece of their individual life where we need to simplify things or do it a different way and get creative together.

Katie Johnson:

It's the prime example of what a relationship with a primary care provider should be, having that person that knows you, knows your family, and can help you manage your health in the best way possible, personalized.

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Yeah, and I think that comes down to trust more than anything.

Katie Johnson:

Right. Absolutely, absolutely. As you might have heard, we've made a big transition recently to a new electronic medical records, so we are on the Epic system now. I'm guessing maybe you've worked on it before and your thoughts on how this will impact your practice and patients' ability to manage their own health?

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Sure. I think it's going to be great. I actually worked on Epic both in my residency, which I did in Duluth, and then my fellowship in Boise, Idaho. And Epic, it's a more universal healthcare product, so to speak, a way that we communicate with each other as healthcare providers, as well as with patients through the MyChart platform. And I think it just makes things more seamless. I think for patients right now, it might not feel that way because it's a little bit bumpy switching from... It's kind of like going from gravel roads to asphalt, just figuring out how to drive a little bit differently. And there's going to be a learning curve, and I bet that's going to last a good year, but I've seen in other systems that it pays off so much and just keeping things more seamless.

Katie Johnson:

Yeah, I think you said it well, and have a very realistic expectation. That's good. A year of working through it, and in the end, it will be worth it. Let's talk about what do you like doing when you're not working?

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Sure. I'm pretty outdoorsy. My husband, Patrick, and I try to get outside every chance we get, whether it be running or biking, cross country skiing, getting out on the water. We really enjoy canoeing and going up to the boundary waters, getting our dogs outside with us. We've been pleasantly surprised by all the public land around Fergus, so that's been a joy this fall as I've had some time off and getting to go pheasant hunting and whatnot.

Katie Johnson:

Oh, yeah. And what a great fall it's been, right?

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Yeah, it's been wonderful.

Katie Johnson:

Well, it sounds like you are in the right place, both professionally and personally. Is there anything else that you would like our listeners to know about your practice or about yourself individually?

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Sure. I'd like to portray how excited I am to start. There's a lot of joy in medicine, and I hope that to be able to share that with my patients.

Katie Johnson:

And you are accepting new patients, right?

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Yep. Absolutely.

Katie Johnson:

Dr. Bressler's schedule is open and we are looking forward to filling that schedule up and meeting the need both for family medicine and OB here in our Fergus Falls clinic. Before I let you go, one tip for listeners. We're entering the holiday season, a really busy, stressful, food-filled time of the year when we're also under a lot of exposure to illness. RSV, influenza, all of that. What would be your takeaway for patients this time of year?

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Boy, we've been through a lot with COVID, and I think we're all so sick of it, myself included. But I think just remembering to keep up the basic public health pieces of infection prevention, which includes frequent hand washing, staying home when you're sick, masking when we're sick, and then especially being careful around folks who might be immunocompromised such as babies, elderly folks, pregnant women, and anybody with immunocompromising chronic conditions, and so just keeping that in the back of our minds as we enter the holiday season. I know that we all want to see our loved ones and enjoy that, but I think with small adjustments such as even throwing a mask on if you're around grandma and coughing, those kinds of things can really help both our family members as well as our community and our healthcare workers.

Katie Johnson:

Yeah, good advice. Just back to the basics, right?

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Yup.

Katie Johnson:

We know, we just need to practice it. Well, Dr. Katie Bressler, family medicine with obstetrics joining our Fergus Falls Clinic, we're so happy to have you here. Thanks for taking some time to help our listeners get to know you better this morning. And again, welcome to Lake Region Healthcare.

Dr. Katie Bressler:

Thank you, Katie. Happy to be here.

Katie Johnson:

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Dr. Katie Bressler, my guest today on Apple a Day, and she and I both reminding you, we are here for you, always. Have a great day.