

Katie Johnson:

Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness show, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. Oftentimes a place for us to introduce some new providers who have joined our health care system and that's the case today. We actually have two special guests. Our medical staff is growing a lot this fall, and we have two of our newest providers joining us this morning. Both Dr. David Brett, a family medicine physician who is joining our Battle Lake Clinic team and Berit Spidahl, who is a physician assistant joining us in the Podiatry and Wound Care Clinic.

Katie Johnson:

I'll start out with Dr. Brett, you have been familiar with Lake Region Healthcare serving in our Emergency Room as a contracted physician between the years of 2010 and 2016, as I understand it, and have finally decided that it's a place you'd like to practice longterm and are relocating with your wife to Battle Lake. First of all, welcome and if you would share with us just a little bit about your background and what you've been up to leading up to joining Lake Region Healthcare's medical staff.

Dr. David Brett:

Good Morning. I've lived in Minnesota for greater than 20 years. I met a girl from Northern Minnesota, she's from just south of Roseau. She's a nurse there, we worked up there a lot over the past 20 years. I liked Minnesotans in general and the state because it's very rural. I'm a rural guy. I like farm country, lake country, woods. It's got all that. I have been out in California the last three years or so working first in Northern California, then in Central Coast and in Southern California at some family practice clinics, more rural settings. Although the last job I had was more urgent care. My four children, and my youngest lives in LA, that's how I got out there. The others are distributed in Minnesota, and a couple other states. They're there all over the place. But my wife and I discussed returning to a smaller town in Minnesota as we got a little older.

Dr. David Brett:

We like to garden. We like to be part of the land, whether it's gardening or fishing, or hunting, or being outside. Those are the kinds of things that my wife and I like to do. But we're both looking to find a new medical home, or a new community where we agree with the philosophy of the group. This is an independent group here at Lake Region and we both enjoy that. My wife has been a nurse in a critical care hospital, smaller than this for her whole career. She's done everything. She also likes it here. I worked here in the ER 2010 to 2016. At that time the ER director was Mike Van Valkenburg and he was actively involved in trying to get me to actually move here. He's no longer working in the ER, he's retired, but he's the guy that told me a lot of positive things about the area around here.

Katie Johnson:

Sure, kind of planted the seed at that time, huh.

Dr. David Brett:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Katie Johnson:

Just took it a little while to take root.

Dr. David Brett:

Yeah, exactly. That's what he would say.

Katie Johnson:

Yeah. Well, that's great. It certainly sounds like the Battle Lake community, I happen to have grown up in Battle Lake, but will fit very well with the things that you're talking about. I think one of the unique things that you'll bring to a family practice in a small clinic is your experience in emergency medicine. You talked about having that experience here through the contracted services with a company that you mentioned before we got on the air, Wapiti, and you've worked in emergency medicine too. Can you maybe talk a little bit about how you feel that makes you maybe a better family practice physician as well?

Dr. David Brett:

It's funny because before I even did family practice I had a separate residency in anatomic and clinical pathology and lab medicine, and then decided after finishing that that I wanted to see patients again. So I did a second residency, which is kind of a crazy thing to do, but it means that I'm a clinical guy, but I'm also a lab guy. So, on top of that I ended up working in a lot of ERs and lately urgent care, which is its own thing. Those sort of experiences make me well-suited for places like Battle Lake or an urgent care like you have in town here, because the volume increases during the summer. So, I'm used to seeing ... I enjoy seeing high volume.

Dr. David Brett:

But I also have an interest because of my lab background in cancer screening, infectious diseases, dermatology, things like that. So, what's important to me when I see patients is to try to, if it's a physical, we just get it done, but also if there's time in a clinic to expand the search and look at the old records and sort of turn over any and all stones with patients that have multiple medical problems. So, that's not typical of an ER doctor. So I kind of come from both camps.

Katie Johnson:

Right, right. I think it brings together the two nicely and particularly in a small community having a physician with that breadth of experience and knowledge I think can be extremely helpful. Do you have any particular areas of professional interest given the many things that you've had the opportunity to work with through the years?

Dr. David Brett:

I guess it's interesting that you ... As I think about what happened to me over the past three years, I was ... Pre-pandemic I went to work in Northern California where vaccinations are fairly mandatory. It's a rural clinic, it's a funded clinic. So, the government's involved in parameters and vaccinations are one of those. So, I was involved in setting up a program like that and doing that on a daily basis pre-pandemic. Then was already in that setting when we had to start thinking about the COVID testing and whatnot. So it would be spring of 2019 when the ... April, May.

Dr. David Brett:

I started in a busy urgent care outside of Los Angeles during that time. The company owns 22 different urgent cares and they had a full lab, full x-ray, full everything. So, a lot of the urgent cares in Southern

Cal shut down during the COVID in June, July. About 60 to 80% of them shut down from Santa Barbara down to San Diego because of people really didn't know what to do with the COVID patients. We didn't, we opened our doors and we went into a surge volume. We were seeing a tremendous number of people, but we had our own lab testing, our own PCR, our own antibody testing. We had it all. So we were able to basically address the COVID from ... The only we didn't do is vaccinate, interesting, because it was an urgent care. But that was relegated to other clinics.

Dr. David Brett:

I was involved with thinking about what are we going to do for these patients through the whole thing. Again, also, I was just this last year I was working through the Delta variant as well. So, I was working in a state where we're seeing a lot of ... These patients are seeing the doctor. They're not being seen by tele-visit, or they're actually going in.

Katie Johnson:

So, given that experience, I mean, what a fascinating experience and place to be during the beginning and an early times of COVID. Given that experience and what you know from your experiences these past couple of years, what's your advice to people here right now given what's happening with increasing numbers, vaccine hesitancy, all of those things kind of coming together at a perfect storm right now?

Dr. David Brett:

My advice has always been, go and talk to your doctor. It doesn't matter what your age is, and what your status is, but your doctor's going to have to look at every patient as an individual. There's no one answer for everybody. There's a lot of in-between answers as well. So, I look at patients as individuals anyway, even more so with the pandemic. We'd much rather you get your advice from your doctor or your provider than off the internet or the TV. Yes, watch the news and keep up on it, but then bring those questions to your provider.

Katie Johnson:

Yeah, absolutely. That's excellent advice. You've talked a little bit about what you enjoy doing when you're not working, and what you're looking forward to in Battle Lake. Any other thoughts, are you looking to settle right in the community, and what are you looking forward to in terms of being part of both the Lake Region healthcare family, and the Battle Lake Clinic community?

Dr. David Brett:

We haven't got a place yet but we are looking to settle down that way. we're going to be looking for something that has a little room outside for fishing, and gardening and whatnot. There's lots of small lakes to fish, every species of fish you can fish around is within this area. My wife and I have done a lot of fishing all over the place. Fishing wise, I guess. We don't hunt quite as much as we used to.

Katie Johnson:

So maybe we'll have to explore the idea of a fishing podcast as an extension of our Lake Region healthcare information that's valuable to our community. [laughter... 'somebody already has one'....] Anything else you'd like our community, or our listeners to know about your practice and you joining Lake Region Healthcare at the Battle Lake Clinic?

Dr. David Brett:

I guess when I think of myself as an individual, I'm kind of a regular guy. So I try to approach patients from where they're at. What do you do for a ... Like, if it's a man, what do you do for a living? Are you a farmer, are you mechanic, businessman? How do you fit into the community? I like to get to know people on a basic level. Before it was a doctor I've done different jobs. So, I've been told by many people that's how I relate to people. I guess I definitely use that skill in the ER, urgent care, I always ... So that's going to be my approach to wherever I'm working. My favorite part of the day is what happens behind the door with the patient. So, a lot of other people, the nurse, may not see it but the patient will.

Katie Johnson:

Well, I have to say again, it sounds like a great fit with our person centered commitment here at Lake Region Healthcare. Everything you've said about getting to know people, relating to them, treating them as individuals really strikes a chord. I know that the Battle Lake community will be happy to have you and your experience, and your wife along in the community and providing the healthcare services that they know they can trust. Right there in Battle Lake. It's been great to get to know you a little bit better.

Katie Johnson:

Shifting gears, I want to turn over to visit with Berit Spidahl, now, for a few minutes. Berit is another of our new medical staff team members joining us this month. Berit is going to be working in the wound care and podiatry clinic. As you may recall, Dr. Naomi Schmid, one of our podiatrists has recently taken on the role of Chief Medical Officer and is cutting back her clinic practice in that regard. That opened up the need for another person to join our podiatry and wound care team. Berit sounds like a perfect fit.

Katie Johnson:

She's here to help us introduce her to the community and welcome her to the Lake Region Healthcare family today. Good morning Berit.

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Good morning.

Katie Johnson:

Thanks for taking a few minutes to join us. Let's let our listeners get to know a little bit about your background prior to coming to Lake Region Healthcare. Where are you from what you've been doing up until this point?

Berit Spidahl, PA:

All right. I'm from Fergus Falls originally. I've sort of moved around since I graduated, but this is where I'm settled now. I spent most of my 20s just working different jobs, performing music, and then when my son was born I went back to school and started the track to become a PA.

Katie Johnson:

Awesome.

Berit Spidahl, PA:

So, during that time, I was also working with adults with developmental and physical disabilities.

Katie Johnson:

So what was it that inspired you to say I want to go back to school to get my PA?

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Well, I've always had a really strong interest in health and wellbeing, natural medicine. I've looked into a lot of different alternative therapies. So that's just been a passion of mine. Then when I went back to school, I decided to pursue the biology track for that reason with health and wellness emphasis. I guess having a child you're motivated to want to provide a stable future for them. So, that played into my choice to pursue the PA track. Then I really wanted to find a position that would be fulfilling for me that served others. Just something that could challenge me and help me grow into the future. I feel like practicing as a PA really checks all those boxes.

Katie Johnson:

Oh, absolutely. So Lake Region Healthcare and our recent addition of a wound care clinic, kind of a extension of our podiatry service, is where you'll be spending most of your time. What was it about Lake Region Healthcare, or that position specifically, that really interested you?

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Well, I actually had the opportunity to do a lot of my training here at Lake Region. I spent a lot of time with the orthopedic team, got to know a lot of members of the podiatry and wound care teams, and just really enjoyed my time here. I had nothing but good experiences. So, when that position opened up I jumped on it.

Katie Johnson:

Awesome.

Berit Spidahl, PA:

I've heard nothing but good things about Dr. Schmidt. So that's just really helped sway my desire to work here at Lake Region. I can just also tell by all of the staff I've met that people are just really invested in the health and wellbeing of their patients, and that's just really important to me.

Katie Johnson:

Yeah, absolutely. Dr. Naomi and Dr. Steve Schmid podiatrists here, as you mentioned, do a fantastic job and we hear nothing but great things about their team, and specifically about the wound care clinic, as that has gotten off the ground. Tell us a little bit more about the services that are offered. We haven't spent a lot of time on this show actually talking about the wound care center. So, talk a little bit about what you expect you'll be offering as far as services.

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Well, from what I've seen down there they treat a lot of chronic wounds, pressure ulcers, diabetic foot ulcers, things like that. They also will treat acute injuries. Say, for example, table saw injury, it sounds like there've been a lot more of those recently. Infections, infected surgical wounds. They offer a broad range of services, more than I can even-

Katie Johnson:

Yeah, absolutely.

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Tell you about right now, and it sounds like they're just growing.

Katie Johnson:

Right, and it's one of those things you don't really appreciate it until you need it. Particularly in those acute situations, right.

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Yep.

Katie Johnson:

The feet, the care of our feet is something that some of us, many of us, are not great at. Especially when it comes to choosing shoes, perhaps. I'm talking about myself here. Do you have some tips for protecting your feet from injury, or from some of those chronic problems that people tend to develop in their feet?

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Yeah. First and foremost just taking care of your overall health. Healthy diet, exercise, and you can avoid those chronic conditions that can lead to foot complications like diabetic neuropathy, things like that. Also just pay attention to your feet. Check them over from time to time, make sure your nails are staying clapped, you're moisturizing, keep them dry. Then just, like you mentioned, good shoes. I'm totally guilty of that too. Making sure you have that support and proper footwear.

Katie Johnson:

Yep. All excellent tips. What about advice for, maybe, when you should seek help for foot problems? It's something that can maybe just kind of nag along for a little while, too long before we help in certain instances, what are some of the indicators?

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Well, if you have new pains that have been going on for a few days and aren't improving that's a good reason to come in. If you have any sort of acute injury to the lower leg, foot or ankle then we are the people to see. People who just can't even take care of their nails, I mean, we offer those services as well as chronic conditions, if you have, examples, Bunyan's or-

Katie Johnson:

You mentioned foot injuries, and Dr. Steve Schmid is a fantastic foot surgeon. Will you be assisting with surgeries at all?

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Yep. I'll be assisting with surgeries on Wednesdays. So, I hope to be the first assist for those and than following up with patients after that.

Katie Johnson:

Oh, fantastic.

Berit Spidahl, PA:

I'm excited about that, I really love it.

Katie Johnson:

Yeah. That's great. And a good reminder about the nail care services too. A lot of people aren't aware that we offer that service as well. What is it that you are most looking forward to about this position?

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Well, like any position I'm just really excited to get to know the patients, form those relationships. I feel like, especially in wound care, you have the opportunity to really get to know the people you're serving. I'm very excited about the team that I'm joining. Like I said, I've heard great things, so it'll just be really fun to form those relationships with my fellow employees as well.

Berit Spidahl, PA:

I also just love the variety of the position, all of those hands-on procedures that's right up my alley. So, I'm excited just to be able to spend time in the wound care clinic, in the OR, possibly outreach with the community. So, yeah.

Katie Johnson:

Sounds like a great variety. What about when you're not working? What are your hobbies? What do you like to do?

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Well, I have an eight year old son, so I love obviously spending time with him. We do a lot of art together and I like going to watch him play football. I love to bake. I've been baking for years. Reading. I love music. So discovering new music, going to live shows, and then just anything out in nature. I love to hike, bike, walk, run.

Katie Johnson:

Oh, that's great. Great. You can bake for us any time, so.

Berit Spidahl, PA:

You know what I probably will too.

Katie Johnson:

Awesome.

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Especially at the beginning, when I am trying to make friends.

Katie Johnson:

Nothing like bringing baked goods to make some friends.

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Right.

Katie Johnson:

Anything else you'd like us to know about your practice, your philosophy of care, any of those things that you'd like to let our listeners know about before we wrap up today?

Berit Spidahl, PA:

Well, my philosophy really just aligns with Lake Regions. It's a person centered care. So patients come first. As far as getting appointments you can just call the appointment line here at Lake Region and ask for podiatry and me by name if you'd like.

Katie Johnson:

Absolutely. Well, again, thank you both. It's been nice to get to know you and introduce you both to our listeners. Again, Dr. David Brett, our new family medicine physician in the Battle Lake Clinic, and Berit Spidahl, Physician Assistant, in our Podiatry and Wound Care Center.

Katie Johnson:

My guests today on Apple a Day, and Dr. Brett, Berit, and Katie all reminding you, there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Thanks for listening and have a great day.