

Altrix Primary Care facility opens in Nashua

By ANDREA HANLEY - Staff Writer | Dec 26, 2020



NASHUA – On Dec. 8, a new type of primary care facility opened in The Gate City.

Located at 57 Northeastern Blvd., Suite 202, Altrix Primary Care is the first Altrix facility and is entirely nurse-practitioner operated.

“Altrix is a new primary care, nurse-practitioner-led office,” said Nicole Tsoukalas, lead nurse practitioner for Altrix. “So, we’ll see patients through their lifespan ... and that includes all things primary care – traditional primary care, preventative medicine ... and sick visits while trying to keep

people out of the emergency room with close monitoring of chronic diseases.”

Between Tsoukalas and the another lead nurse practitioner, Steve Gutwillig, the two bring both a highly specialized individual skill set as well as a background in primary care.

“I have a women’s health background, in obstetrics and in general women’s health,” Tsoukalas explained. *“And, Steve has this amazing endocrine background, which most people could relate to people who have diabetes ... so he’s well-verses and skilled in treating that. He also treats hormonal problems, either in men or women.”*

In addition, Tsoukalas mentioned the facility has a strong focus on teen health and general concerns for the age group.

Prompted by a shortage of primary care not only in Nashua, but throughout the nation, Altrix is joining an existing population of nurse practitioner-run facilities. For clarification, that means no doctors.

While the idea of having no physician oversight may be new or confusing to some, Tsoukalas explained that for the past 40 years in the state, nurse practitioners have had *“full practice authority,”* and that there is a *“amazing collaboration between nurse practitioners and physicians that isn’t always seen in other states that allow full practice for nurse practitioners, but here it’s absolutely hand-and-hand.”*

“There’s a primary care shortage throughout the country, so we’re trying to open and see where we could best fill a need,” said Tsoukalas, *“because America’s nurses, the oversight of Altrix that is a public corporation, is a setup that is designed to bring a public benefit to the community. ... Nashua was a really good choice based on the need.”*

What sets Altrix apart from other primary care providers within the region is their individualized approach and care for their patients as a whole-person.

“I think the benefit for Altrix, just in general, (is that) our approach to care is going to be unhurried,” she said. *“Our goal is to allot one hour for a*

new-patient visit, that's really important, especially if we're talking about the baby boomers. Being able to go through people's histories and identify family history or things that you need to be worried about, that one hour is really valuable, and it probably really takes an hour to get to understand what the plan [is] going to be in where this person in front of you is coming from."

Tsoukalas also mentioned follow-ups will be booked at 30-minute intervals and continued, "*I think a lot of us have these experiences, myself included, that you go to your primary care or any physician, or provider, or nurse practitioner, and you might wait a little bit and then you feel hurried. So we're trying to take that away, so we can really give whole-health care.*"

As far as COVID-19 is concerned, Altrix is providing both rapid and PCR testing, depending on the patient's need.

"Right now, we do testing here for our patients," Tsoukalas said. *"We test our patients, we do rapid screening, we provide education (and) we do follow-ups if people are positive, sometimes that's telehealth dependent on what (the patient's) risk factors are for worsening disease, or, we'll bring them back to actually do exams and really lay our eyes on them (to) make sure that they're OK."*

Due to a fear of contamination, Tsoukalas explained that testing is conducted outside the facility in tents

"We do it all in a safe environment so we're not contaminating the clinic and we're not bringing people in to potentially become contaminated from someone that might be positive," she said.

Tsoukalas noted that flu tests are usually conducted on a visit simultaneous to a COVID-19 testing, as the concern for co-infection is prominent this time of year.

In addition, no payment is required on the day of testing. Currently, *"the state is providing these tests ... for the past couple of weeks the state has been providing the rapid tests for free and then the PCR's are getting*

billed to insurance, (so) we're not collecting any money onsite," Tsoukalas said.

For the future, Tsoukalas predicts that Altrix will have a "*robust number of patients*" and believes "*... the need is so great that we will be successful.*"

For more information about the new Altrix primary care facility, visit their website: <http://altrixpc.com>.