



THE TAOS NEWS

Best U.S. Weekly Paper- NNA 2007, 2008, 2010
Inland Press Nation's Best Weekly Newspaper 2009

UNM, Taos Health Systems discuss closer partnership

By Andrew Oxford

The Taos News, 7/31/2014

Taos Health Systems is negotiating a closer partnership with the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center.

The collaboration could bring more doctors and academic staff from UNM to Taos, Taos Health Systems Chief Operating and Information Officer Spencer Hamons said Friday (July 25).

“Taos Health Systems remains strong, vibrant and independent. We are not closing; they are not buying us or taking over,” Hamons said. “We are working on affiliations with various departments at UNM. The talks, that began December 2013, could lead to collaboration in a variety of clinical areas, such as emergency medicine, pathology, pediatrics and cancer infusion services, as well as telemedicine consults for intensive care, dermatology, psychiatry and stroke/neurology.”

The 29-bed hospital could also partner with UNM on education and training, including clinical rotations for medical students and medical residencies.

“As an academic medical center with over 1,000 physicians, we have the capability to provide extraordinarily complex care,” said Billy Sparks, Executive Director of Communications and Marketing for UNM Health Sciences Center. The university is not interested in acquiring or operating Holy Cross Hospital, however, according to Sparks.

“There’s a tremendously talented and skilled workforce in place there,” he told *The Taos News*. “We want to complement it not disrupt it.”

Discussions between UNM and Taos Health Systems are ongoing, Hamons indicated, suggesting details could be expected within the next two months.

A closer partnership with UNM may prove financially savvy for Taos Health Systems, Hamons said.

Holy Cross Hospital might seek doctors from UNM to cover shifts for physicians in Taos rather than hire costlier private contractors, he said.

“If we can attract local doctors to come up here to work, we will get a much better product,” Hamons told *The Taos News*.

Though discussions with UNM began late last year, such a partnership was listed among recommendations delivered earlier this month to members of an intergovernmental committee studying the hospital by the union representing some Taos Health Systems employees, indicating broad support for the move.

A patient transfer agreement is also under discussion.

Such an agreement could streamline access to UNM Health Sciences Center, which includes approximately 10,000 employees and has an annual budget of \$1.7 billion.