

# d front

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Infrequent coffee; "a lot of times, a smoker is in the house; you can't ignore that."

Care of an individual also often involves teaching the family about the problem. He has treated a diabetic woman who continued to have health problems. Her family didn't want her to work differently, so she didn't. Taking care of her health required teaching the whole family about the importance of diet.

Common health problems in Grassy Fork are similar to any other area in the 125,000-high blood pressure, lung problems, and obesity are a few of them. Being overweight, which contributes to many other diseases, is predominant in the area, because of traditional diet, according to Sincic. "Part of it is food preparation." People buy large quantities of food and fry most of their food, which contributes to their health problems, he said.

While trying to treat people, Sincic promotes "self-care. My focus is to take people off medicines—not put them on it." But when necessary, he will. In Tennessee, a nurse practitioner cannot admit patients to hospital, but the nurse practitioner is often the front-line of health care for many Tennesseans. "Everything he does is overseen," said Dr. Michael Frank, the clinic's medical director. And, physicians are a phone call away if complications arise.

Dr. Frank may not be peering over Sincic's shoulder, but "present" is. The clinic's health teams have determined a protocol to manage "certain common illnesses," said Sincic. Also through training, he knows "what is acceptable." He

added, "most illnesses do not require the well care of a physician."

Other illness preventive measures also do not require that a physician be the administrator. Sincic gave two examples—breast examinations and pap smears to detect women's cancers. Also, immunizations are available, he said.

The nurse practitioner also engages other health programs at the clinic, such as WIC—Women, Infants, and Children. The primary care clinic is partially federally funded and the people are offered WIC there. WIC is "prevention too," because women and small children are able to receive better nutrition, he said. Long-term family planning and laboratory services are available at the clinic, too. Samples for more complex lab tests are sent to Cocke County Baptist hospital, but "basics," such as blood sugar analysis, are done at the three local clinics.

Since Sincic has been practicing in Cocke County, he has had very few bad experiences with the people. He has "to think pretty hard" about it, to find one. But a problem does have it: trying to get people that are poor, and can't pay, the health care they need. There's a lot of barriers out there for people to get care. The referral chain is limited. The first question is "do they have insurance?" he said. His good experiences at Grassy Fork Clinic include "a patient has never been turned away."

Oh, by the way. What about the fact that this registered, certified family nurse practitioner is a man, not the often expected woman? His attitude and his patients' is. So?



## Treats with phone too

"I see a lot of people each day over the phone," said Tom Sincic. The level nurse practitioner at Grassy Fork Clinic sees a lot of patients, but "keeps in pretty close touch" with the telephone. He uses the telephone in a lot of "well care," preventing future health problems. (photo by Nancy Oberst)

Tom Sincic, MSN, RN-E, FNP-Retired  
President [HCAO](#)