

TRICARE opens for eligible retirees

Lois Walsh

Team Eglin Public Affairs

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. -- Retirees 65 or older can look forward to additional medical care if they meet the eligibility requirements of TRICARE for Life.

TRICARE for Life (TFL) is a comprehensive health benefits program that is available to uniformed services retirees, their spouses, and their survivors who are age 65 or older and enrolled in Medicare parts A and B.

Eglin's regional hospital has plans to enroll additional patients in an effort to provide full medical support to include sub-specialty and surgical care.

Col. (Dr.) James Jablonski, 96th Medical Operations Support Squadron commander, said the hospital's goal is to enroll approximately 250 beneficiaries per quarter for a total of 2,000 patients during the next two years. The reason for opening enrollment is to provide the hospital staff with a patient mix that will help maintain the staff's skills. Retirees offer medical challenges not normally seen in the active-duty population.

"Peacetime care doesn't always translate into the high level of treatment our staff sees in inpatient battle units," said Jablonski, who saw first-hand the skill sets needed when he deployed to Afghanistan.

Retirees interested in applying for the program must fill out a short application form which asks for current medications, chronic medical problems and hospitalizations. The applicants will be notified within 30 days whether they are accepted, waitlisted for further evaluation, or not accepted into the program.

Jablonski said some medical conditions like dialysis and severe congestive heart failure would be reasons for rejection because the continued inpatient care needed is not currently available at the hospital.

"We want to reach people who can be treated in the clinic and then cared for if they need admission to our hospital," he said.

Applications are available at the pharmacy and the refill pharmacies. All applications will be reviewed by the internal medicine staff. Eligible patients will be contacted and offered enrollment with a primary care manager at the medical group.