Out of the Woods, a Mayo Clinic Emerges: 
A Commentary on the History of Mayo Clinic in Florida

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In January 1864, Dr William W. Mayo opened his private medical practice in Rochester, Minnesota.1,2 We can be quite certain that on that day, he could not have imagined that his solo practice would eventually evolve into one of our nation’s premier medical centers with more than 4000 full-time physician staff members and more than 50,000 employees working at 3 major campuses in Rochester, Minnesota, Jacksonville, Florida, and Scottsdale and Phoenix, Arizona, and in 70 other communities in Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Georgia.

One of the most important milestones in the history of Mayo Clinic was its decision to first expand from Minnesota to Florida in 1986. This decision was not an easy one, and it took several years of deliberation for the Mayo Clinic leadership to finally accept the offer from Mr J. E. Davis and other civic leaders from Jacksonville to help host a southern campus that built on the same values (but expanded the practice) that theretofore was exclusively in Rochester. Multiple reasons were given for being cautious about an expansion in a second city, including the feeling that the success that Mayo Clinic had achieved in Minnesota was largely a result of a dedicated workforce unique to the Midwest, composed largely of individuals raised on the work ethic of farm life. Attempting to reproduce this in other parts of the country was perceived to be problematic. Also, trying to develop an academic medical center from scratch in a city far removed from Mayo Clinic’s headquarters in Minnesota was uncharted territory. The success of developing a Mayo Clinic in Florida required visionary and dedicated leadership with unrelenting commitment to the ultimate goal. It is safe to say that few individuals in 1986 predicted the level of growth and accomplishment that has been achieved in the past 27 years at Mayo Clinic in Florida.

Essential Elements for Success of Mayo Clinic in Florida
This commentary—a part of the celebration of Mayo Clinic’s 150 years of service to humanity—will reflect on the history of Mayo Clinic in Florida, examine the essential elements that have contributed to the successful development of an academic medical center in just 27 years, and celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of the Florida staff that made this growth possible (Table 1).

Patients. Thirty years ago, the 400 acres of land on which the current Mayo Clinic campus in Florida resides was an undeveloped forest of live oak trees, pine trees, and palmetto shrubs, close to the Atlantic Ocean’s Intracoastal Waterway. The property was surrounded by natural and man-made lakes. The land was donated by long-standing Mayo Clinic patients Mr J. E. Davis and his family, who had the vision of one day having a Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville to serve their community. This was without question the most critical element for the success of the Mayo Clinic in Florida: the unwavering support and pride of its patients who wanted to see the Florida facility succeed.

The initial support of the Jacksonville community was incredible. For several days of the first week of the opening of the Mayo Clinic in September 1986, the local newspaper, the Florida Times-Union, published front-page and other articles that reported on the progress of the project. This level of support from the local community and patients has persisted and grown over the years. All the buildings on the Florida campus are to a great extent a result of donations from grateful patients and community support. Of these, perhaps none is more important than Mayo Clinic in Florida’s first integrated clinical practice building, the Davis Building (Figure 1). This edifice not only serves as the cornerstone of the entire...
clinical, education, and research operations at Mayo Clinic in Florida but also remains a lasting testament to the immense support of Mr. J. E. Davis, his son A. Dano Davis (a benefactor and former member of the Mayo Clinic Board of Trustees), and other members of the Davis family.

The largess of the Davis family in supporting critical buildings on campus was followed by individual, family, and group gifts in support of the Birdsall Building (neuroscience research), Griffin Building (cancer research), Stabile Building (graduate and postgraduate education), Gabriel House of Care (lodging facility for transplant and cancer patients), and Mayo Clinic Hospital (see “Clinical Care” section), among others.

**Staff.** The second essential element for the success of Mayo Clinic in Florida is its loyal full-time, salaried workforce that is committed to the provision of excellent patient-centered medical care. The development and enhancement of a teamwork culture defines Mayo’s excellence. On opening day in September 1986, we had a waiting list of devoted and dedicated Mayo Clinic patients, the majority of whom had previously experienced the Mayo Clinic Model of Care at our Minnesota campus. However, the growth of the practice depended not only on these patients but also on visits from new patients who were eager to experience for the first time Mayo Clinic’s widely respected physicians, staff, and organization model.

The full integration of the inpatient and outpatient practices with full-time salaried staff all under one administrative structure—all elements that were modeled after the Rochester practice—was an essential catalyst for the needed growth in Florida. Initially staffed with 36 mostly young, Mayo Clinic-trained physicians (to make sure the Florida facility was

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**TABLE 1. Essential Elements for Success of Mayo Clinic in Florida**

- Outstanding patient-centered care that results in loyal patient and community support
- Outstanding team of full-time salaried physicians and paramedical staff committed to patient-centered care
- Leadership committed to the vision of creating a Mayo Clinic that is based on the well-established Mayo Clinic primary value (i.e., “the needs of the patient come first”)
- Commitment to education and research with the development of outstanding programs in clinical, translational, and basic research and residency and fellowship programs
- Engagement in the community by the Mayo Clinic staff
- Robust academic collaborations with the Nemours Children’s Clinic, Wolfson Children’s Hospital, University of Florida, Community Hospice of Northeast Florida, and University of North Florida

**FIGURE 1.** The Davis Building at Mayo Clinic in Florida.
instilled with Mayo Clinic values and culture), the Florida facility has grown to more than 500 physicians, including over 190 resident physicians and fellows, and a workforce of nearly 5000 in 2014. More than 500,000 patients from over 140 countries and from every state in the United States have been served at the Mayo Clinic campus in Florida, an extraordinary achievement by itself. With this rate of growth, Mayo Clinic in Florida will soon approximate the size of the Rochester clinical staff and clinical activities at the time Mayo Clinic in Florida was launched.

**Leadership.** The eventual development of a Mayo Clinic in Florida, and subsequently in Arizona, was a result of visionary and committed leadership. This expansion occurred despite the fact that in order to achieve this goal, the institution had to infuse considerable resources and be patient while the practice matured. One of the concepts that leadership promoted was that there was a need for a “critical mass” of physicians in order to achieve financial stability. Specifically, local leadership estimated that a minimum of 150 full-time staff physicians was needed to achieve break-even financial status, and this prediction was later proven correct. Leadership’s focus on patient safety, quality of care, and patient satisfaction has culminated in the recognition of excellence at Mayo Clinic in Florida by many organizations, including the Leapfrog Group.

**Clinical Care.** The commitment to patient-centered care whereby contributors embrace the Mayo Clinic primary value that “the needs of the patient come first” has been the main catalyst for the success of the Florida campus. The development of internationally recognized tertiary care clinical programs not available in the community, including solid organ and stem cell transplant programs, tertiary neurologic and neurosurgical care, and the full integration of the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center program, are some of the main clinical contributions from the Florida campus (Table 2).

The integrated group practice efforts on the main Mayo Clinic campus in Florida were forever augmented by the opening in 2008 of the Mayo Clinic Hospital (Figure 2), a facility that included 214 beds and 22 operating rooms at the time of its opening and was expanded by an additional 90 beds in 2013.

**Research.** The success of Mayo Clinic has depended on its commitment to education and research in addition to patient-centered care.

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**TABLE 2. Selected Contributions From the Mayo Clinic in Florida Staff**

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<th>Research accomplishments</th>
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| - Generation of a transgenic mouse model of Alzheimer disease  
- Codifying the benefits of trastuzumab in the adjuvant treatment of breast cancer  
- Discovery of tau gene mutations associated with frontotemporal dementia and Parkinson disease  
- Description of recombinant gene alterations in breast cancer  
- Directing and participating in a national stenting vs endarterectomy trial for treatment of carotid artery stenosis |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Education accomplishments</th>
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| - Starting 31 fellowship and 12 residency training programs over the past 20 years  
- More than 1000 resident physicians and fellows will graduate from Mayo School of Graduate Medical Education training programs at Mayo Clinic in Florida by 2014  
- Education programs in all 5 schools: Mayo School of Health Sciences, Mayo School of Graduate Medical Education, Mayo School of Continuous Professional Development, Mayo Medical School, and Mayo Graduate School |

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<th>Practice accomplishments</th>
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| - More than 500,000 patients served from every state and more than 140 countries  
- Electronic medical records system introduced and developed in collaboration with Cerner Corporation in 1992. The Florida campus was the first Mayo Clinic campus to become paperless in 1994  
- Innovative contributions to the largest solid organ transplant program in the world (liver, kidneys, pancreas, heart, lungs, small bowel) with programs at all 3 campuses (Florida, Minnesota, and Arizona). More than 3800 solid organ transplants performed in Florida by 2013  
- First and only allogeneic unrelated stem cell transplant program in the northeast Florida region, in collaboration with Nemours Children’s Clinic and Wolfson Children’s Hospital  
- Tertiary care neurology programs  
- Fully integrated Mayo Clinic Cancer Center (National Cancer Institute—designated comprehensive cancer center) at all 3 Mayo Clinic campuses |
The development of education and research programs at Mayo Clinic in Florida was never questioned and was promoted by its leaders and the staff. Research was developed first with the introduction of cancer clinical research protocols shortly after opening the Florida campus. Basic and translational research rapidly developed next, with a focus initially in neurodegenerative disorders and with the addition of cancer cell biology research efforts. The success of the initial research endeavor was in part due to (1) the development of research programs along themes that would help develop a critical mass of investigators and (2) encouraging both laboratory and clinical investigators to work together to find solutions to better treat specific diseases.
The recruitment of world-class researchers further enhanced the Mayo Clinic in Florida's research growth. This expansion resulted in the successful incorporation of the Florida campus and Arizona campus as integral parts of the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center’s National Cancer Institute grant approval in 2008. The grant was successfully renewed (for another 5 years of support) in 2014.

The basic sciences research staff at Mayo Clinic in Florida in 2014 consists of 36 senior investigators, 112 postdoctoral fellows, 11 PhD students, and 307 laboratory personnel who were the recipients of $27 million in extramural funding in 2013. A sampling of the many important contributions of the research staff are listed in Table 2.

**Education.** Education has always been an integral part of Mayo Clinic and one of the main motivators for the initial creation of the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research by the Mayo brothers (Drs William J. and Charles Mayo, sons of Dr William W. Mayo). This dedication to education has continued at Mayo Clinic in Florida as shown by the formation of 31 fellowship programs and 12 residency programs over the past 20 years, including programs in most areas of adult medicine and surgery. Currently, these programs are training 199 physicians and have graduated 973 physicians, including many members of our current Mayo Clinic staff at all 3 major campuses and affiliated practices. The excellent patient-centered, cutting-edge care that is provided at the Florida campus is markedly enhanced by an environment of constant learning and accountability, integral components of our training programs.

**Community Engagement.** The active engagement of the staff at Mayo Clinic in Florida in volunteer activities throughout the community—including leadership roles in United Way campaigns, provision of care to underserved populations, the development and support of patient advocacy groups, and the development of patient advocacy events (including the National Marathon to Finish Breast Cancer among others)—have strengthened the ties with the Jacksonville and surrounding communities and contributed considerably to our success.

**Academic Collaborations.** Robust collaborations between the Mayo School of Graduate Medical Education and outstanding academic programs in the greater Jacksonville area in pediatrics (Nemours Children’s Clinic and Wofford Children’s Hospital), trauma (University of Florida Health Science Center), hospice (Community Hospice of Northeast Florida), and obstetrics (University of Florida Health Science Center) have markedly enhanced Mayo Clinic in Florida’s educational and research efforts. The Mayo Graduate School also collaborates in the graduate-level training of University of North Florida students.

**A View Into the Future**

Mayo Clinic in Florida now has nationally and internationally recognized clinical, research, and education programs, with more than 500 full-time physicians and scientists, including over 190 resident physicians, fellows, and doctoral and postdoctoral research trainees. This growth is a result of a vibrant partnership among patients, the community, and Mayo’s dedicated staff and the commitment from leadership to the Mayo Clinic Model of Care. The further integration of all of our campuses into one Mayo Clinic will further accelerate the growth of our programs and the achievement of ongoing improvements in patient care. Without a doubt, the Mayo brothers would have been proud of the successful expansion of their vision to the Mayo Clinic in Florida campus.

**Acknowledgments**

I thank Leo F. Black, MD, for his insight and review of this article. Dr Black was CEO of Mayo Clinic in Florida from 1991 to 1999; his leadership guided the critical exponential growth of Mayo Clinic in Florida’s practice, education, and research programs during that decade. I also thank Ms Julie Griffin and Ms Nell Robinson for providing the statistics on education and Mr Jeff Scheffel for the data on the research programs. I thank William L. Lanier, MD, for his review and contributions to the article’s content.

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**REFERENCES**