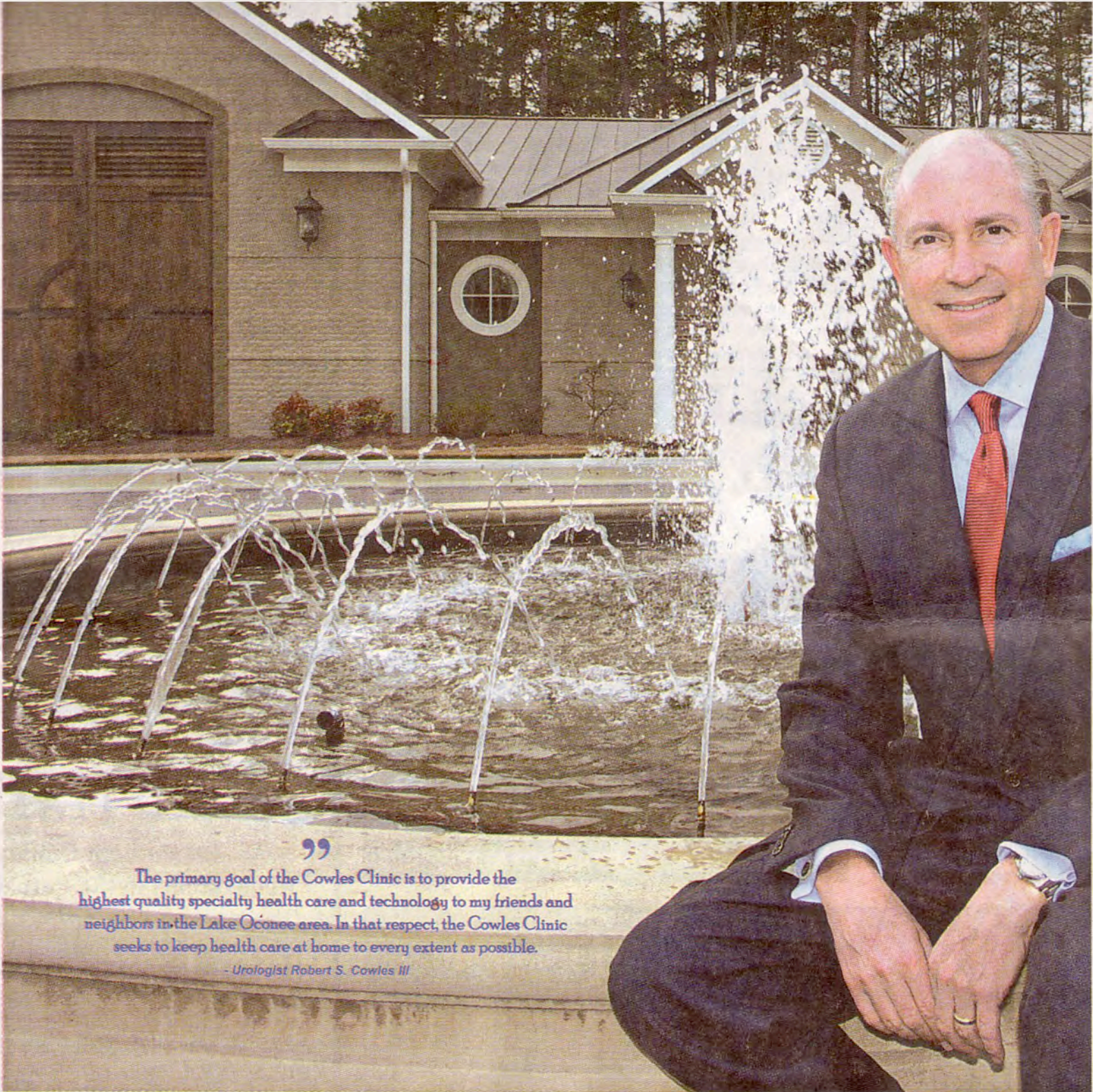


Cowles Clinic

provides high quality specialty health care and technology
to the Lake Oconee area



”

The primary goal of the Cowles Clinic is to provide the highest quality specialty health care and technology to my friends and neighbors in the Lake Oconee area. In that respect, the Cowles Clinic seeks to keep health care at home to every extent as possible.

- Urologist Robert S. Cowles III

By M. Elizabeth Neal

Two years ago, Urologist Robert S. Cowles III could count on the fingers of one hand the medical specialists practicing fulltime at Lake Oconee.

He was, in fact, one of the very few. Today, 23 physicians in 17 different specialties practice at the Cowles Clinic on Linger Longer Road. The cancer center he fought so long for is under construction and scheduled to open in August, combining both radiation therapy and full chemotherapy services under one roof.

As development of the medical complex enters Phase III, Cowles is planning a new practice building for incoming pediatric and internal medicine groups.

Pediatrician Chris Bassett, from Florida, is so eagerly awaited in

the area that he will begin seeing patients in temporary quarters at the complex until his building can be constructed, Cowles said.

A shortage of children's doctors affects all counties surrounding the lake and the rural areas beyond.

The clinic currently is in discussions with nephrology (kidney) groups and orthopedic surgeons

"Chris plans to be practicing here within two months, and will be a very welcome addition to the clinic. He will be at Lake Oconee fulltime, and will make pediatric health care available to patients 24/7. His philosophy is that you can't be a pediatrician unless you are willing to work nights and on weekends," Cowles said.

The clinic's Imaging Center already offers mobile MRI, and is framed and ready for regular and mammography X-ray, a bone density scanner and a prized, 64-slice CT the clinic will install as soon as state certificate of need (CON) issues are

Cowles Clinic continuing to expand



A recent architectural rendering of the Georgia Center for Total Cancer Care, currently under construction at the Cowles Clinic at Lake Oconee, and scheduled to open in August. For an update of recent developments at the Cowles Clinic, see Page 1B.

'Cowles Clinic'

resolved. The complex's full-service medical laboratory has been inspected three times by the state, earning a 100 percent score on all three inspections.

"That's almost unheard of for a de nouveau lab (one started from the ground up, without affiliation with a parent company laboratory)," Cowles said with pride.

In the last three months, the clinic's Executive Health Care Program attracted business executives from across the nation, as well as France, Spain, Germany, Austria, England and Belgium. The clinic currently is in discussions with nephrology (kidney) groups and orthopedic surgeons, he said.

In the past year, a physical

therapy group, a Sleep Health lab, neurology group, cancer specialists, Ob/Gyn, pain management specialists, plastic surgeons, vascular specialists, an ophthalmic retinal specialist, and a podiatry group have joined cardiac care and other physicians at the clinic.

Many, like Cowles, are affiliated to some degree with St. Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta. As one of the nation's top cardiac centers, and one of Georgia's top-ranked tertiary care centers, "St. Joseph's is a good match for us," said Cowles. "They have a true interest in the community."

The hospital's open-arms policy toward the indigent has been a particular help to the clinic as it absorbs more

patients from the area who are uninsured and unable to shoulder the costs of specialty medical care.

"Many of the patients from the Good Samaritan Clinic and others in the area no longer have ready access to hospital care now that Minnie G. Boswell is not publicly owned," Cowles said.

But the primary goal of the Cowles Clinic is to provide "the highest quality specialty health care and technology to my friends and neighbors in the Lake Oconee area," he said. In that respect, the Cowles Clinic seeks to keep health care at home to every extent as possible.

"When I first came here, 85 percent of residents in the area went out-of-county for

health care services. Our goal is to enable that 85 percent to stay home. We also mean to become a (national and international) destination health care campus. This is a top resort area, widely recognized. A recent patient in our Executive Health Care Program was a European executive who fell on the slopes at Vail. He came here for rehabilitation for six weeks. These patients will help us afford the highest quality technology, and patients in our area will be able to take advantage of that. A lot of people across the country are watching us as a prototype for rural specialty health care in the future," he said.

The physician's much-pub-

licized skirmishes with the state over certificate of need requirements are not over. A Fulton Superior Court Judge dealt Cowles a setback in his efforts to abolish the CON process in Georgia several months ago, with an appeal of that decision scheduled Aug. 4 in the Georgia Court of Appeals. Further appeals up to the State Supreme Court are almost inevitable, regardless of the August victor, he acknowledged.

Under current law, Cowles will need a CON for both the imaging center and a multi-specialty outpatient surgery

center he is eyeing in the future. The 18 months and tens of thousands of dollars spent in obtaining a CON for the cancer treatment center still rankles. And then there's the question of that hospital he has long been rumored to want.

Cowles sidesteps that one with alacrity. For awhile longer, at least, it will dwell in the valley of speculation.