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A policy of patriotism: Derm honored for supporting members of Guard, Reserves

By Lisette Hilton

As the only physician in a practice of 40 full- and part-time employees, dermatologist Charles E. Crutchfield, M.D., of Eagan, Minn., says staff support is key to the smooth running and success of his business.

In fact, his policy of supporting employees in the military recently earned Crutchfield Dermatology the Patriotic Employer Award from the U.S. Department of Defense's National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

Dr. Crutchfield, a clinical associate professor of dermatology at the University of Minnesota Medical School, decided when he opened his practice seven years ago that he would meet and exceed any government requirements for employees who were members of the armed forces — whether that be granting time off for training or holding open their jobs while they served their country.

"We owe a debt of gratitude to any employee that is with the armed services," Dr. Crutchfield says.

Dr. Crutchfield had the opportunity to put his policy into practice when an attorney and National Guard member who had worked with Crutchfield Dermatology in the past was called in 2008 to serve in Iraq.

Maj. Darrin Rosha of the Minnesota Army National Guard was given a year's notice.

"An attorney is just like a physician. ... If you have a certain date where you have to be somewhere for a couple of years, you cannot run your practice up to that date," Dr. Crutchfield says. "You cannot start taking new patients when you know you will be gone next week.

"So, I thought [Darrin] is really doing a great service for our country; why not bring him on board as an employee the last six months before he leaves. He can wind down his practice in the first six months of the year; then we would hire him so that he could work for us, helping with administrative and legal needs the last six months."

Hiring Rosha was a win-win, keeping Rosha gainfully employed as he tied up loose ends at his own practice, Dr. Crutchfield says.

Rosha learned about the Department of Defense's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program and nominated Crutchfield Dermatology in late fall, 2008.



Charles E. Crutchfield III, M.D. (left), of Eagan, Minn., accepts the Patriotic Employer Award, given by the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, from Maj. Darrin Rosha, Army National Guard member and practice employee. Photo: Charles E. Crutchfield III, M.D.

"The committee thought this was a great idea, and, hopefully, other employers could do it, too," he says.

Doctors who have positions available in their practices can help members of the armed services who know they are going to be deployed for duty at a later date, he says. "They are great employees, and it is great for the country."

Rosha left the practice in February 2009 for training, then was deployed to Iraq for one to two years. While at Crutchfield Dermatology, he served as interm administrator, drew up needed legal forms and reviewed contracts, and hired and trained a new permanent practice administrator.

While Dr. Crutchfield so far has had no other employees who have tapped the military support policy, he says he is committed to giving those he does employ the time off needed for training and serving their country, with no questions asked.

In recognition of Crutchfield Dermatology's patriotism, the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve awarded Dr. Crutchfield a plaque and an American flag that had been flown over the U.S. Capitol.

"We also got a recognition certificate and medallion from Gen. John W. Vessey Jr. of the Association of the United States Army," he says.

Dr. Crutchfield says there are no secrets to implementing such a policy, other than making the commitment to support these employees and putting it in writing in the practice handbook.

How you can help

Employers are vital in enabling employees who are members of the National Guard and Reserve to serve the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Defense's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve organization.

The organization offers these suggestions on how employers can help:

- Learn more about the role of the National Guard and Reserve. Attend open houses and public functions at local military units. Talk about the National Guard and Reserve with military and civilian leaders in your community. Ask your employees what they do and how they fit into the "big picture" of national defense.
- Get to know your employees' military commanders and supervisors. Ask them to provide you with advance notice of your employee's annual military duty schedule.
- Put your support in writing by signing a Statement of Support for the National Guard and Reserve. Display it prominently for all your employees and visitors to see. Request your Statement of Support online at www.esgr.mil.
- Examine your personnel policies to see how they accommodate and support participation in the National Guard or Reserve. Do they include provisions for military leave of absence? Do they ensure job opportunities and benefits equivalent to those of other employees? Your local ESGR Field Committee is available to answer questions or offer suggestions.
- Encourage employee participation in the National Guard and Reserve. Recognize and publicize their dedication and commitment to your business and the nation. Your employees' service in the National Guard and Reserve enhances their job performance and value to your organization.
- Seek assistance from ESGR. Call (800) 336-4590 to speak with an ombudsman.
- Call your employees' military commander or supervisor if you have a question or concern. **DT**

For more information:

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