Opened since February 2011, the Transition Center began offering Geriatric Services in April in partnership with the Florida State University College of Medicine. The Transition Center, which also includes Capital Health Plan as one of its partners, was created to provide follow-up care for patients recently discharged from Tallahassee Memorial Hospital who don’t have a primary care physician, don’t have insurance or can’t see their doctor in a reasonable timeframe following their release from the hospital. It’s a place where health care professionals can connect patients to any care they need following their hospitalization, whether this means filling prescriptions, arranging physical therapy or other rehabilitation services, or getting in touch with case management or social work for intervention.

Geriatric services at the center will address the same needs, but specifically for patients over the age of 65. “Tallahassee has one of the lowest percentages of older people in the state, but it also has the lowest number of practicing geriatricians in the state. Geriatric care is still very limited in our local area,” explains Ken Brummel-Smith, MD, an FSU physician and professor in the Department of Geriatrics, who will be helping to provide geriatric care at the center.

Offering a new means of care for geriatric patients unites many goals of TMH and the FSU College of Medicine. “One of the highest populations of readmissions is the elderly,” recognizes TMH Chief Medical Officer Dean Watson, MD, who developed the original idea for the center. “We decided, ‘Why don’t we bring in FSU’s geriatric specialists to do assessments and help address the problem?’” The FSU’s College of Medicine is one of only a handful nationwide to dedicate an entire department to geriatrics and to integrate geriatrics throughout the four-year curriculum.

In fact, only about 25 percent of the nation’s medical schools offer a rotation in geriatrics, whereas all fourth year medical students at FSU complete this one month training period. Now, they will become involved at the center during this time, accompanying Dr. Brummel-Smith or a second FSU physician and professor from the Department of Geriatrics, John E Agens Jr., MD. “We want to make sure that all of our graduates, regardless of their specialty, are good at providing geriatric care,” says Dr. Brummel-Smith.
The center’s geriatric team will provide each elderly patient with a medical checkup and follow-up care for the condition that resulted in their previous hospitalization. They will complete a psychological evaluation and help with social needs, home health and equipment needs, as well. In addition, Chronic Disease Self-Management Training courses will help patients to understand and manage their medications and conditions, so that they can quickly move forward. After all, as the Transition Center’s name implies, it is designed to be a short-term solution; within eight weeks, patients are connected with a primary care physician, having established and initiated a plan of care.

Dr. Brummel-Smith is enthused about all the Transition Center can provide for geriatric patients in our region. “The mission of the college is very focused on geriatric care and TMH is regarded by our community as a top provider of care. I believe this will be an advantage to both entities,” he says.