



SETTING THE PACE

Walk with a Doc leads by example.

By David Frickman | Photos courtesy of Craig Kadooka

On a beautiful October day in Hilo, about 90 people headed to the park to hear a lecture, do some stretching, and walk.

It's not what you would expect a group this size to do at 8 a.m. on a Sunday, but it's become a weekly ritual in East Hawaii, thanks to one doctor and his quest to improve his personal health and the well-being of his community.



Craig Kadooka, M.D.

“We just have fun; it's kind of a semi-social thing,” says Craig Kadooka, M.D., an HMSA participating provider who started Walk with a Doc in May 2014. He's seen participation grow steadily since then. “My idea is to make it as inclusive as possible, so there's no charge. People

start seeing their friends and become friends with other people.

“We start with a 10-minute talk. If I'm lucky,

I'll have a medical student or one of the family practice residents give a talk, or one of the community doctors will talk about a topic. Then we do a brief warm-up and stretch and then we just walk.”

Kadooka became interested in starting Walk with a Doc after reading about the success of the program started by David Sabgir, M.D., a cardiologist in the Columbus, Ohio, area. “As a cardiologist, he was seeing people that were far down to line with their health and believed that if he could get to these people earlier, they wouldn't be in the condition they're in,” says Kadooka. Sabgir's ultimate goal, Kadooka says, was to increase their exercise and activity levels to improve their health.

Kadooka looked at numerous Walk with a Doc programs around the country and discovered that the most successful ones met on a weekly basis. “I knew from the start that for it to have benefit and to have sticking power for the people who joined us, it would have to be



East Hawaii Independent Physicians Association (IPA)

Also in Hilo, the East Hawaii IPA supports well-being programs for patients, including Optimum Well-Being (OWB), in which providers and their staffs participate in an eight-week fitness program at the Hilo Health Cooperative with options for yoga, Crossfit, or a bootcamp-style workout.

One goal of the IPA last year was to help obese patients reduce their body mass index (BMI). That led to the development of Me & My BMI, an eight-month program of nutritional counseling, activity monitoring, and fitness classes with the physician and staff participating side-by-side. East Hawaii IPA Administrator Susan Mochizuki says, "It's so motivating and powerful when the physician champions the fitness program and participates alongside the patients."

often. In fact, at that very first walk, I asked, 'Do you want to come back next week?' Everybody said 'yes.'"

Nowadays, Kadooka says there are usually 60-80 people taking a walk in Lili'uokalani Gardens each week.

"Everybody walks at their own speed. Some people just walk around the garden. Others will walk over to Coconut Island [just off shore from the park]."

First-time walkers get a free T-shirt and pedometer just for participating. There's little chance that the weekly walk will ever be canceled. "We haven't missed a single weekend," Kadooka says. When Tropical Storm Iselle hit Hawai'i Island in August 2014, 15 people still showed up to walk.

Other health professionals join Kadooka each week. "There's a family medicine residency here at the hospital, so the medical director at that program and the residents and the other teaching staff also come to help. An orthopedic surgeon has walked with us. Other family practice docs in town walk with us pretty regularly."

While physicians lead by example and are there to help, the program is designed for patients to learn how to take control of their own health and well-being.

"The idea of medicine being in a doctor's office and being administered by a doctor or a nurse or a hospital, that just has to go out the window," says Kadooka. "It has to be people taking charge of their own health and not rely on the doctor to say, 'Do this, do that. Take this medicine or that medicine.' We need to do it differently and this is making a difference." 