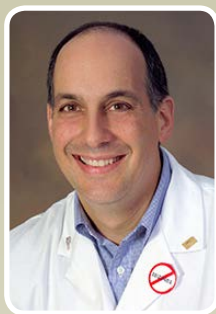




## Bringing Neurology Care to Arizona’s Four Corners Region



Dr. Labiner’s last reservation trip was in January, and he plans to return in July.

Four times a year, UA neurologists drive 1,200 miles across Arizona’s Four Corners area to deliver clinical expertise to an underserved indigenous population that otherwise would have to do without such specialty care or travel several hours for it to Flagstaff, Phoenix or Tucson.

**David Labiner, MD**, head of the UA Neurology Department, has offered neurology clinics at Indian Health Service and tribal health

care facilities on the Navajo and Hopi reservations for about 15 years and bimonthly in Flagstaff for 20 years. Common consultations include treating patients for epilepsy, Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s disease, stroke recovery, headaches and neuropathy.

**“It’s a great experience on many levels and we’re providing a tremendous service to our state at the same time.”**

—Dr. Labiner

Dr. Labiner began offering neurology clinics in Flagstaff in the early 1990s. About 1995, he was asked by an IHS physician if he might expand them to Chinle, Ariz., on the Navajo Nation. That led to more requests for clinics in Winslow, Polacca (on the Hopi reservation near First Mesa), Tuba City and Kayenta, Ariz.

**Joe Salay, MD**, a family practitioner at the Chinle health center for 25 years, said “Having a person come to Chinle and provide those services onsite has benefited a lot of our patients. He provides good care. He’s very thoughtful.” He said Dr. Labiner’s years of service give

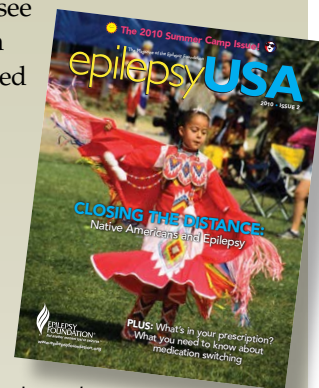
him a trust advantage over newer or transient clinic physicians due to cultural familiarity and continuity of care with both patients and local primary care providers.

**Eric Brody, MD**, medical director, UA Native American Cardiology and Medical Service Program, agreed. “The wonderful thing about the work Dr. Labiner does or work our program does is that we often see these patients here at UAMC when they’re being evaluated or diagnosed with really serious illnesses; and going back to see them when they’re closer to home is not only invaluable from a medical care perspective, but it’s so cherished by the patients.”

Today, Dr. Labiner offers Flagstaff clinics every other month and alternates with UAMC epilepsy specialist **Myrka Torres, MD**, “riding circuit” during the weeklong quarterly trips. Per week, they’ll see about a 100 patients, who may have traveled hours to get to the clinic due to poor roads across the wide expanse of rough, sparsely populated terrain.

The doctors, usually, take a resident along to assist. That’s how Dr. Torres got involved when she was a UAMC resident and fellow. They’ll often have a morning clinic in one place, an afternoon one a couple hours away and, then, drive a few more hours to the next day’s clinic site.

“It’s one of the prettiest places in the state, too,” Dr. Labiner said. “It’s really nice in the spring and fall – not as nice in the winter... Still, it’s a win-win all around. Patients appreciate it, residents enjoy it and it’s a service we as a state institution should help to provide.”



This *Epilepsy USA* magazine, in which Dr. Labiner was featured, focuses on the challenges of providing neurology and other clinical specialty services on Native American reservations. [Click on the image to view.](#)

