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Global vascular institute will take heart in Buffalo

Joint effort on cardiac care center is boost for city and medical campus

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To keep the human body healthy, it is necessary to see how it all fits together. You know, leg bone connected to the thigh bone, only infinitely more complex, with veins and ligaments and neurons and stuff.

To provide Buffalo and Western New York with a 21st century system of health care, the people responsible for building it are showing that they understand how it all needs to fit together.

And it is fitting that the first creation of the new health care regime in Buffalo not only deals with the care and understanding of the human heart, the poetic center of everything, but also is a cooperative endeavor of Kaleida Health and the University at Buffalo Medical School.

Buffalo's global vascular institute is to rise on the downtown medical campus, near Kaleida's Buffalo General Hospital. When it opens in 2011, it will be a facility that both provides care — five floors of Kaleida's \$150 million merger of its heart, vascular and neurosurgery operations and an expanded emergency room — and research — five floors of UB's \$118 million medical laboratories.

The idea for this project, and for other changes to follow as the new Great Lakes Health works out the future cooperation of Kaleida, UB and Erie County Medical Center, is that it will greatly improve the quality and availability of care locally by ending expensive duplication and gaps in health care offerings, attract the best in both practicing physicians and cutting-edge researchers and provide top-quality training to the next generation of doctors.

This, the informed thinking goes, is just what Buffalo, or any city, needs to do to provide the best health care money can buy at a time when we are running into the limits of how much money we can spend on health care.

Medical technology arms races, of the sort that put Kaleida and ECMC on an expensive treadmill, have to end. And some kind of overall plan has to be worked out to maximize quality, minimize cost and see to it that paying (i. e., insured) customers with the money that keeps hospitals afloat are not moved to seek care in cities 200 miles away.

Such planning and cooperation has been the basis for the successful expansion and improvement of health care



facilities in such rust belt cities as Pittsburgh and Cleveland, benefiting not only the medical community and its patients but the overall economy of each community.

Medical care and higher education, essential components of a modern livable city, economic elements that cannot easily be outsourced overseas, are key to the vitality of any city. Buffalo still needs lots of care and lots of rehab. But the downtown heart-vascular center is a huge step in the right direction.

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