
Bills' owner to give UB medical unit \$1 million

By **Henry L. Davis**

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Ralph and Mary Wilson, in an effort to honor the Buffalo Bills' team physicians, today are expected to announce a \$1 million donation to the University at Buffalo Department of Orthopedics and Sports Medicine.

The gift from the Ralph C. Wilson Foundation will support new research and educational programs, particularly for the training of five orthopedic residents and two sports medicine fellows who rotate through the department each year.

"The donation is unprecedented for us and will turn a good program into an excellent one for our residents and fellows," said Dr. John Marzo, the Bills' medical director and a UB associate clinical professor of orthopedics.

The money is earmarked for three initiatives:

- Purchasing an arthroscopy simulator and other equipment to train new physicians. The device, which uses computer software to simulate the minimally invasive surgical procedure, is one of only a few currently in use in the United States, Marzo said.
- Supporting the Buffalo Bills' Sports Medicine Symposium, which brings visiting professors to the university twice a year for lectures and workshops. The sessions cover such topics as the use of cartilage transplants in joint repairs and new ways to perform operations of the anterior cruciate ligament, one of the most important ligaments connecting the bones of the knee joint.
- Hiring a sports medicine clinical research coordinator to oversee research.

With the extra funding, the physicians from the Bills' staff and UB department plan to continue a study looking at the medical and cost effectiveness of performing

chondroplasty, the smoothing of uneven joint surfaces, after repairing a torn meniscus, one of the most common injuries to cartilage in the knee.

"In this surgery, you have a choice of leaving what's known as the articular cartilage alone or smoothing it out," Marzo said. "The downside of cleaning it out is that you lose it forever. There is no healing capability, and it may lead to degenerative arthritis."

"We want to try and learn if the procedure is of value medically and cost justified," he added.

Other studies are planned on concussions and biomechanics.

Marzo is associated with UB Orthopedics and Sports Medicine, the largest orthopedic medical practice in the region, with more than two dozen physician partners, including seven trained in sports medicine.

The Bills' medical staff includes three other physicians: Drs. Leslie Bisson, an orthopedist; Andrew Cappuccino, an orthopedist focused on the spine; and Tom While, an internal medicine specialist.

Marzo said the gift came about after several years of informal conversations among Wilson, Marzo and other team physicians.

"Mr. Wilson is a loyal guy, and he wanted to do something to help the team physicians. I think it was his way of saying thanks," Marzo said.

Anyone can suffer from an acute or chronic orthopedic sports injury. But for professional athletes, torn cartilage or ligaments can risk a player's livelihood.

Just ask Bills offensive lineman Demetrius Bell.

In the sixth game of the 2009 season, he suffered a knee injury that sidelined him for nearly a year. Today, he credits Marzo, who performed cartilage transplant surgery, with saving his career.

"I feel great. I have recovered well, and every day, I thank him," Bell said.

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Ralph takes a lot of heat from our fans and people of Western New York about not spending on the team and being cheap, always waiting on handouts from the NFL and Erie County to make his money. The facts show that Ralph is anything but cheap. Being a smaller market team, the BILLS

payrolls is usually in the bottom 10 every year but never the lowest. We all know Ralph and the BILLS make money. However, it's the poor drafting that has left the BILLS in the cellar for this month. Ralph has always spend on his training and medical staff. The BILLS innovative methods helped Kevin Everett walk today - the Spinal Cord trauma methods the BILLS employed advanced medicine in the field that is used today. As far as I know, Ralph has given \$1 million or more to the University of Miami Spinal Cord Research, the NFL Hall of Fame and now UB in the past few years. And that is only the donations that are made public.

AARON SCHMIDT, OLMSTED, OH on Tue Sep 20, 2011 at 09:17 AM

FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

Thanks. That's MY Ralph C. Wilson Jr.

DOUGLAS TURNER, SPRINGFIELD, VA on Tue Sep 20, 2011 at 09:04 AM

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