



PennState
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Media Contacts:

Erin Fessler, The Erie Community Foundation
VP of Marketing, Community & Government Relations
814-454-0843 / 814-873-2630

Karen Beardsley, UPMC
Manager, Public Relations
814-392-3362

Robb Frederick, Penn State Behrend
Assistant Director, News & Information
814-898-6063

\$6 Million Grant from The Erie Community Foundation Supports the Expansion of Magee-Womens Research Institute to Erie and Creates Biomedical Lab at Penn State Behrend

The Erie Community Foundation (ECF) announced a \$6 million grant, the largest in its 84-year history, to expand the Magee-Womens Research Institute (MWRI) to Erie and create a new biomedical commercialization and translational research lab at Penn State Behrend's Knowledge Park.

The initiative will bring locally-focused clinical medical research trials to the region, improving the health of generations of women while creating a new sector in Erie's economy. Projections are that new federal research dollars flowing into the Erie community will be approximately \$15 million in the first five years and will reach \$50 million by year ten.

The grant, made to the Hamot Health Foundation (HHF) in partnership with UPMC, Magee-Womens Research Institute and Foundation (MWRIF) and Penn State Behrend, will bring the Pittsburgh-based MWRI to downtown Erie, which marks the first expansion of MWRI outside of Pittsburgh. Erie, Pennsylvania is home to multi-generations of families, which means genomic studies and clinical trials can lead to improved and targeted cancer treatments for residents in this region.

In addition to the \$6 million provided by the ECF, the HHF, UPMC, MWRIF, and Penn State have each committed \$5 million to the project. The sum total investment into Erie, PA is \$26 million. "We also expect to add 50 new jobs to Erie by year five, and 195 jobs by year ten, with an average salary of \$70,000 per year," said Hamot Health Foundation Chief Development Officer Charles "Boo" Hagerty.

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MWRI, which is affiliated with both UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital and the University of Pittsburgh, is the largest research institute in the United States devoted exclusively to health conditions affecting women and infants. The institute has achieved #1 National Institutes of Health funding for reproductive health research since 2007 and has led discoveries in the field of reproductive biology and training the future generation of women's health researchers since it opened in 1992.

The Erie expansion will bring expertise and clinical trials in areas of research that are expected to include reproductive development, pregnancy and newborn medicine, infectious disease, gynecology, reproductive endocrinology, women's cancers and women's wellness.

"Each of the project's strong champions is committing multiple millions of dollars to make our region's dreams become reality such as new jobs in our downtown, increased flow of federal research dollars, and improved women's health," said Erie Community Foundation President Michael Batchelor. "Last year we announced a five-year, \$30 million grantmaking and community leadership framework to help transform our region. This collaborative checked all the right boxes, and we look forward to future significant investments in the coming years."

The initial location of MWRI-Erie will be in Magee-Womens, UPMC Hamot, 118 East Second Street. Construction will begin immediately on 3,500 square feet, which will serve as the initial space with plans to expand as the research institute grows. "On behalf of our board of directors, we are grateful to The Erie Community Foundation for committing a significant grant that truly meets its criteria of transforming the Erie community," added Hagerty. "This collaboration will help us leverage significant new federal research dollars to address women's health issues."

"MWRI is uniquely qualified to provide specific research for women because we are focused solely on women's health, reproductive biology and infertility," said MWRI Chief Executive Officer Michael Annichine. "Our researchers have a direct impact on women's lives every day, whether they are developing new therapies that could prevent the reoccurrence of ovarian cancer, or investigating pregnancy complications and their lifelong effects on health. We strongly believe healthier women create healthier communities. This is why we are so proud and excited to expand our groundbreaking research and cutting-edge clinical trials to Erie."

Together with UPMC Hillman Cancer Center, western Pennsylvania's only National Cancer Institute, cancer clinicians and MWRI researchers will work closely to identify potential new diseases where genetics may be a significant factor.

"This new initiative will raise the level of care for women in Erie, where local rates of ovarian, breast and lung cancers for women all exceed state and national averages," said Robert Edwards, M.D., professor and chair of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences at the

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University of Pittsburgh, and co-leader of the Breast and Ovarian Cancer Program at UPMC Hillman. “We will build upon the reputation and clinical expertise we have brought to Erie through UPMC Magee and UPMC Hillman to add research and clinical trials that will be specific to the Erie community.”

The ECF grant and additional funding from Penn State will establish an affiliated research lab at Penn State Behrend, where faculty members and other researchers can develop and commercialize diagnostic tests, surgical devices and start-up ventures that advance the local clinical trials. The college is developing new academic programs in biomedical engineering, biochemistry and bioinformatics to support MWRI Erie.

“This partnership has the potential to transform Erie, directly improving the health of generations of women who live here. It also will stimulate the region’s economy, creating a new hub for clinical medical research,” Chancellor Ralph Ford said. “Penn State Behrend’s Open Lab model of engagement with business and industry and our commitment to collaborative research enables us to partner with MWRI Erie while securing additional research funding from federal agencies, including the National Institutes of Health.”

MWRI Erie will address a critical need in the local economy by attracting significant research funds from federal agencies, national foundations, pharmaceutical and medical device companies, venture capitalists and others who financially support clinical research that results in new therapies and products to improve health. As research funding flows to MWRI Erie, new jobs will be created, with annual salaries ranging from \$40,000 to \$200,000.

This new initiative is also expected to improve the recruitment of top physicians to Erie, including Halina Zyczynski, M.D, a leading researcher and doctor at MWRI and UPMC Magee who has been treating patients in Erie for the past few years. Dr. Zyczynski will now serve as the medical director of Magee-Womens Specialty Services at UPMC Hamot.

“We are already actively recruiting clinicians, nurses, investigators and support staff for this ambitious project,” said Dr. Zyczynski. “It’s exciting for Erie to invest in the cornerstones of urban revitalization including healthcare, research and education, and I look forward to having a greater presence in this community.”

The Erie Community Foundation works to improve the quality of life for all in our region by evaluating and addressing community issues, by building permanent charitable endowments and by promoting philanthropic and community leadership. To learn more, visit www.ErieCommunityFoundation.org.

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