

Practice makes perfect

New facility poised to become model for the nation

BY EILEEN BEAL

Last June, the Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation made its largest grant ever – \$10 million – to Case Western Reserve University toward the creation of the multi-disciplinary Mt. Sinai Skill and Simulation Center.

The center is patterned after the world-renowned Israel Center for Medical Simulation in Tel Hashomer founded by pediatrician Amitai Ziv, who has testified before Congress and briefed the Department of Homeland Security on issues relating to emergency preparedness. The Israeli Center, which opened in 2001, provides medical personnel training to better prepare them to respond to emergencies, including mass war casualties and terrorism attacks.

A collaborative endeavor that was over two years in the making, Cleveland's simulation center will

be staffed by experts from Case's medical, nursing, dental, social science, and engineering schools; University Hospitals of Cleveland; MetroHealth Medical Center; The Cleveland Clinic Foundation; and the Louis Stokes Cleveland Department of Veteran's Affairs Medical Center. Temporarily

housed in the Veterans Hospital, the center will eventually move into the building being constructed on the site of the old Mt. Sinai Hospital.

Education is job one

The major goal of the Center, explains interim director Dr.

Jeffrey Ponsky, is student training and/or the upgrading of skills of medical practitioners and those in allied health fields. Ponsky has been named chair of the department of surgery at University Hospitals and Case Medical School beginning at the end of January.

Teaching is done using "low-tech facilitators" – actors playing patients – and high-tech medical mannequins. These versatile electronic dummies exhibit vital signs such as heart rate, tempera-

Simulation center training should reduce medical errors and improve caregiver-patient communication.

ologists, Inc.

at Mt. Sinai Skill and Simulation Center

ture and blood pressure; they bleed, convulse, and go into shock if they are "mistreated" or "misdiagnosed;" and they can be hooked up to monitors and computers for "virtual" treatment experiences.

Simulation training, notes Ponsky, will help medical students, medical professionals, paraprofessionals, and emergency medical personnel (paramedics, etc.) gain hands-on experience and/or virtual mastery of specific techniques and procedures – all without putting patients at risk. That should reduce medical errors, improve caregiver-patient communication, and reduce health care costs.

In line with this goal, the Center held its first class on Dec. 11th. Video monitoring screens, X-rays, and torso models that are similar to what physicians would see in a patient were used to teach upper and lower intestinal tract therapeutic procedures and techniques for controlling gastrointestinal bleeding.

"It was," Ponsky admits with just a touch of pride in his voice, "a very successful class."

Preparing for the unthinkable

Another goal of the Center is to prepare health care providers for the unthinkable – the chaos, complex patient care, and rapid decision making that would accompany a terrorism attack.

"This is a situation," noted Ponsky sadly, in which the Israel Center has a great deal of expertise.

A third goal of the Center, says Ponsky, who also holds an MBA from the Weatherhead School of Management, is to serve as a research site and development laboratory to grow local biotech businesses.

That kind of growth means working closely with Case's engineering school; testing and/or refining products designed by the Center's corpo-

rate partners, such as BioEnterprise, Early-Stage Partners and Symbionix; and helping to bring to market more precise simulation scenarios, techniques, and medical mannequins.

"We want to develop our simulation centers ... not in the future," says Ponsky, "The industry and jobs to the city."



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...ing, notes Ponsky, will help medical professionals, paraprofessionals and agency personnel gain hands-on experience in a variety of specific techniques and procedures without putting patients at risk. The center will help medical errors, improve care coordination, and reduce health care costs.

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... "We want to develop one of the world's leading simulation centers ... not just for now, but for the future," says Ponsky, "That means bringing new industry and jobs to the city."



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