

HEALTH

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"Imagine if you were sick. Wouldn't you prefer a quieter hospital environment?"

Kathleen Vidal, director of nursing practice development, University Hospitals



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GUS CHAN | THE PLAIN DEALER

Noise-reduction tiles fill the once-hollow domes above nurses stations on the fifth and seventh floors of Lerner Tower at University Hospitals. Before the renovation, says nurse Kimberly Knight, "If you stood under the dome and were talking, the boss could hear everything you were saying. That's how much power it had. Because you'd get this call, 'What did you say?'"

Turning down hospital noise boosts healing power of quiet

UH project aims to improve patient comfort

CASEY CAPACHI
Plain Dealer Reporter

"Florence Nightingale once said that unnecessary noise is the cruellest form of punishment that we can inflict on our patients," says Kathleen Vidal, addressing a group of nurses who are about to begin their first week at University Hospitals. "When you think about it, that's pretty intense."

As director of nursing practice development, it is Vidal's job to improve the patient experience at UH. She takes a moment, indulging in the silence she is advocating before continuing, "But it's the absolute truth. Imagine if you were sick. Wouldn't



Kathleen Vidal, right, worked with **Joyce Thomas**, left, and **Kimberly Kotora**, center, among others, to reduce noise on several floors in University Hospitals' Lerner Tower.

you prefer a quieter hospital environment?"

The new nurses nod solemnly. Following the class, Vidal, a nurse

for 25 years at UH who left only to serve in the Navy, takes the elevator up to the fifth floor of Lerner Tower, one of three floors that earlier this

year were part of a pilot project to reduce noise and increase patient-satisfaction scores.

Noise, say Vidal and a growing number of researchers, affects patients' ability to rest and recover, as well as the staff's ability to function in a high-pressure environment for numerous consecutive hours.

Vidal stops at one of the three nurses stations on the floor and points to the ceiling above, "Domes were made to project judges' voices. Why are they above a nurses station?"

Those decorative domes and other surfaces on the fifth and seventh floors of Lerner Tower, where patients with cardiac complications are monitored, are now covered in noise-reduction tiles. Other initiatives included repairing squeaking doors and delivery carts, assuring that nurses did not congregate in one area, and minimizing use of overhead paging.

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JOSHUA GUNTER | THE PLAIN DEALER

Janira Lozada and **Maria Rossy**, medical assistants with Neighborhood Family Practice, sort through medical supplies at the center's new offices. Staff at the new location will include a Spanish-speaking family practice physician and family nurse practitioner.

Community health center plans to open its third office

DIANE SUCHETKA
Plain Dealer Reporter

Neighborhood Family Practice — a nonprofit community health center that provides primary health care to adults and children on Cleveland's West Side, regardless of their ability to pay — will open a third office Tuesday, Aug. 14, in the Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood.

An open house will be held from 3 to 7 p.m. Thursday at the new location, 6412 Franklin Blvd., a build-

ing that formerly housed some of Lutheran Hospital's medical offices.

Lutheran is donating office furniture and medical equipment as well as leasing the building to Neighborhood Family Practice to get the center up and running. Local foundations are providing \$200,000 in start-up and operating costs: \$50,000 each from the Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation and the George Gund Foundation and \$100,000, over two years, from the Saint Luke's Foundation.

SEE FAMILY | E3

STRETCHING OUT

Cycling around velodrome, the intense force is with me



ZACHARY LEWIS

Talk about a learning curve.

The Cleveland Velodrome, opening soon, is a veritable school for cyclists, a place to learn, test and apply a whole range of skills previously off-limits to Northeast Ohio.

Now, in addition to the roads and trails, riders here have an honest-to-goodness track to train and race on, 166 meters (one-tenth of a mile) of pure, steeply banked heaven, where big legs, bigger lungs and nerves of steel all will come in handy.

When I first hopped on the track the other day, riding one of several specially designed bikes available for rent at the facility, I couldn't see how I was possibly going to survive my first turn. So steep are the curves — 50 degrees in spots — I was sure I'd tip over and come tumbling down.

But I made it, and then made it and made it again. Centrifugal force soon became a trustworthy friend as I whipped around the oval at speeds well over 20 miles per hour, forcing myself to keep an eye on where I was



MATT LITZLER

Wearing a helmet designed for racing, **Zachary Lewis** speeds around Cleveland's new velodrome.

going, not on the ground beneath me.

As surprised as I was to be riding on a track, I was even more stunned to be doing so in Cleveland, where the very idea of a velodrome once seemed fantastical. Now, though, thanks to the vision and hard work of countless volunteers, it's a gorgeous physical reality, a boon to the region perfectly timed to the London Olympics.

SEE STRETCH | E3

Reproductive Wellness

ANGELA TOWNSEND



Weighing clues to women's health

The last thing on a woman's mind after welcoming her first child into the world is her long-term risk for breast cancer or heart disease. But physicians may one day use the weight of her newborn as a tool to start having those cautionary conversations before mother and child leave the hospital.

A team of researchers at the University of Texas at Galveston recently published two separate articles that looked at those risks.

In July, the journal *PLoS ONE* published an article that suggests a link between infant weights of 8.25 pounds or more and mothers having more than twice the risk of breast cancer than a woman whose firstborn weighed less.

Back in March, the same journal published research that addressed the link between birth weight and the mother's risk of heart disease. It said that mothers giving birth to a firstborn, full-term child weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces have a higher risk of heart disease or heart attack.

Both findings were independent of other factors that contribute to a woman's heightened chance of disease.

The message is not as cut and dried as saying: Give birth to a big baby and your breast cancer risk might go up; give birth to a small baby and you might have a higher chance for heart disease.

That's not enough to seal a woman's fate, said lead author Dr. Radek Bukowski. Rather, he said, the data could be used to help prevent disease.

"It can be important for clinical practice," he said. "This information is fairly easy to obtain, and not invasive. Women remember what their children weighed, especially the first one."

The onset of disease in the women, whose medical records from previous studies the researchers reviewed, didn't happen for at least 30 years, on average.

And that might be plenty of time to steer women toward a healthier track.

Why the risk in the first place?

The researchers point to particular hormones produced by the placenta that in some cases seem to have cancer-causing effects. Those hormones are estriol, anti-estrogen alpha-fetoprotein and pregnancy-associated plasma protein-A.

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YOUR HEALTH: SAVING MONEY



GUS CHAN | THE PLAIN DEALER

Dozens of people wait to have their eyes examined at a MedWorks vision clinic held last summer at The Q.

MedWorks to offer free vision clinic

The nonprofit health organization MedWorks will provide eye exams and glasses — at no cost — to about 400 people at a free vision clinic in Cleveland on Saturday, Sept. 22.

About 2,000 people turned out for a similar MedWorks clinic in 2011, so appointments will be taken this time.

The clinic will be from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the W.O. Walker Center, 10524 Euclid Ave., with 10 eye-exam stations running all day. Some glasses can be made that day, but many will be distributed later.

Appointments can be made Wednesday, Sept. 12, by calling the MedWorks/WKYC Channel 3 phone bank. That number will be released and run in the Tuesday, Sept. 11, edition of the Health section and appear on cleveland.com.

More information is available at medworksusa.org or by calling 216-231-5350.

MedWorks was founded as a way to provide free care to people in need in Northeast Ohio without regard to income, insurance status or citizenship. It held its first clinic in 2009.

— Diane Suchetka

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INSIDE Blossom sounds

Young pianist Daniil Trifonov shines with Cleveland Orchestra in performance at Blossom Music Center. **Details, E2**