

# Spreading medical expertise

SOME WNY SURGEONS TRAVEL WORLDWIDE TO SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE

BY TRACEY DRURY

tdrury@bizjournals.com

716-541-1609, @BfloBizTDrury

Western New York surgeons are making themselves known beyond local borders, traveling around the globe for speaking engagements and conference training sessions as well as surgeries broadcast live online.

Those efforts certainly help to build their reputations. But they also go a long way toward growing revenue at their own private practices and at the hospitals where they operate.

Dr. Ryan DenHaese, a neurosurgeon at AXIS Neurosurgery and Spine in Williamsville, has been around the world, including in Italy, Spain, Belgium, Germany, England and Dubai to train on minimally invasive surgery techniques.

Although he's performed some surgeries in Cyprus as part of the American Institute of Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery, locally, most of his surgeries take place at Kenmore Mercy Hospital. DenHaese gets calls from other surgeons and patients from outside the region, but his practice is already quite busy, he said.

"It's self-fulfilling: people look you up on the web, but I can't physically operate any more than I do," he said. "My schedule is completely full. So I think it has built my practice up, and it's allowed me to stay busy."

Surgeons from UB Neurosurgery, including Dr. L. Nelson Hopkins and Dr. Adnan Siddiqui, have also traveled the world, as well as shown off their techniques for years through live webcasts for professional surgical associations. They also bring surgeons to Buffalo to learn what they do and bring it back to their own hospitals. Conferences and training seminars are hosted regularly at the Gates Vascular Institute adjacent to Buffalo General Medical Center.



JIM COURTNEY

*Dr. Ryan DenHaese has traveled around the world to help teach other surgeons about minimally invasive surgical techniques, a practice that's helped him build an international reputation and a thriving practice back home.*

Michael Hughes, Kaleida Health's senior vice president of public affairs and marketing, said both have an impact on the local economy.

"Many of our physicians are well known around the country – and the world for that matter – for the services that they provide. Whether its cardiac, neurology, neurosurgery, orthopedics, general surgery, pediatrics, you name it, their profiles are very, very high," he said.

Nearly every week, he said, doctors from around the world come here to learn about the latest surgical techniques or research findings.

"Think of that – they are coming to us right here in Buffalo, New York," Hughes said. "In the end, most importantly, it helps our community by showing that our health care delivery system is second to none. Tough to put a dollar figure on that."

Sometimes an international reputation comes directly from experience: Dr. Michael Stoffman moved his neurosurgery practice several years ago over the border from Ontario to Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center. That's led to patients following him for care, often paying out-of-pocket to be seen quickly, versus waiting months or years to see a surgeon in Canada, and even longer to schedule a procedure.

A similar phenomenon is happening now with Dr. Bala Gangadhara Reddy Thatigotla, a bariatrics surgeon who offers specialty procedures, said Judi Nolan Powell, hospital vice president of foundation and community relations.

"We're seeing some people from across the United States finding him, but our real focus and where we are really seeing the growth is still the Canadian market," she said.

The same is expected to happen with the new cardiac catheterization lab, which is also led by a Canadian physician, she said.

Some physicians prefer to put a different focus on their international work: Dr. Robert Gatewood, a cardiologist with Buffalo Medical Group, has presented on advances in echocardiography to medical groups as far away as China, Brazil and France.

Gatewood said his main goal was helping other physicians and surgeons learn different ways to keep their patients healthy.

"We've always been looked up on as healers and we're there when there's a medical crisis, which obviously we need to be, but I think we also need to put just as much emphasis on true prevention," he said. "The more we work upstream, the less we're going to see downstream."