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**Children's Wisconsin and UW Health Kids enter new joint venture**

*The collaboration will focus on congenital heart disease*

MADISON and MILWAUKEE, Wis. – Today, UW Health Kids and Children's Wisconsin are announcing a new joint venture for shared pediatric cardiac and adult congenital heart care services.

This collaboration, called Forward Pediatric Alliance, will enable the two health systems to expand patient access and further elevate both organizations' already high quality of care, according to Scott Turner, executive vice president, Children's Wisconsin and president and chief operating officer, Children's Wisconsin Hospitals.

"We have the opportunity to align the incredible work our organizations do," he said. "We are committed to working together to enable the best health outcomes for our pediatric heart patients."

This program is also designed to accelerate innovative research and help train the next generation of pediatric cardiac care providers, according to Nikki Stafford, president of American Family Children's Hospital and system vice president of pediatric services, UW Health Kids.

"This alliance will better help us attract and retain the best pediatric cardiac care providers," she said. "We'll be working together to solve complex problems and ensure our future patients have access to the best quality pediatric cardiac care."

Congenital heart disease is the most common type of birth defect, affecting nearly 1 in 100 births each year.

"We know having a diagnosis of heart disease can be scary for parents, and we want to do everything we can to put their minds at ease," said Dr. Peter Bartz, co-director, Herma Heart

Institute, Children's Wisconsin and professor and chief, pediatric cardiology, Medical College of Wisconsin. "I look forward to working together to elevate the already outstanding care our teams provide our youngest, often sickest patients."

Thanks to medical and surgical advances in recent years, more people born with heart defects are living longer, healthier lives.

"It's our mission to ensure as many children as possible live full, healthy lives, free from lifelong complications due to congenital heart disease," said Dr. Petros Anagnostopoulos, section chief, pediatric cardiothoracic surgery, UW School of Medicine and Public Health. "We believe this alliance directly serves that goal not just for our patients, but potentially for all patients."

The alliance is expected to be longstanding, with an initial 10-year agreement and full implementation anticipated within the first three years.

"It will take some time to create a fully integrated network," Turner said. "We are going to learn from each other and align our strengths to elevate care for pediatric heart patients."

No changes to current provider employment relationships or facility names are expected. Most existing patients will remain with their same providers and clinics. Over time, some providers and staff may provide patient care at both organizations when it is determined by care team leaders that doing so is in the best interest of the patient.

"What makes this alliance unique is that it is made up of two high-quality programs collaborating to ensure kids and families will have access to the best care into the future," Stafford said.

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