

Plastic surgeon latest addition to Women's Health Center of West Michigan

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Jeff Engel | The Grand Rapids Press



Emily Zoladz | The Grand Rapids Press Dr. Brad Bengtson explains the Vectra 3-D Imager, a machine that allows patients see what they will look like after a procedure, to a patient Wednesday at Bengtson's office at the Women's Health Center of West Michigan.

GRAND RAPIDS -- Local plastic surgeon, Bradley Bengtson has become the latest practice to join the growing Women's Health Center of West Michigan.

This month, he opened Bengtson Center for Aesthetics and Plastic Surgery on the first floor of the two-year-old building at 555 Midtowne St. NE, just off the Medical Mile district along Michigan Street NE.

Bengtson previously was a partner at the Grand Valley Surgical Center, 2680 Leonard St. NE, which he formed with Dr. Steven Ringler in 2008.

The 1986 Indiana University medical school grad has practiced in Grand Rapids since 1991 and also is known for his charitable surgical work and research on Civil War surgery.

His office becomes the 11th tenant of the Women's Health Center, which is now 85 percent occupied, according to Dr. Adam Blickley, lead developer of the center.

Bengtson is excited to be a part of the "one-stop shopping" for women's services at the building which overlooks I-196. "It's a natural fit," he said.

Blickley, who is a physician with Grand Rapids Women's Health practice on the building's fourth floor, helped convince Bengtson to make the move.

"It really adds to the vision of combining complete women's services," Blickley said.

Bengtson's office employs a physician's assistant, three nurses and three aestheticians who perform "minor skin procedures" such as laser hair removal, he said.

Breast surgeries, including reconstruction for cancer patients, constitute about 60 percent of Bengtson's business, but his center offers other services like rhinoplasties, Botox injections and laser liposuction.

In the new office, where art hangs on the robin's-egg blue walls, a concierge greets patients at the door. They can relax in comfy chairs or at the skin-care bar. And there's a separate post-surgical exit to ensure patient privacy.

"I wanted a warm, cozy, non-medical environment," Bengtson said.

He employs a 3D imaging system that uses pre-operation photos taken in the office to simulate what a patient will look like post-surgery. He said his Vectra machine is one of only a few in Michigan.

The new practice is launching when nationally, plastic surgery procedures have declined during the recession, but Bengtson said his business is rising.

His volume of surgeries increased more than 20 percent in the past year, he said. Meanwhile, nationally volume dipped by 2 percent in 2009, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

His office also saw the number of Botox and filler procedures skyrocket by 100 percent, he said. Botox procedures range from \$150 to \$400, while breast operations can be \$5,000 to \$8,000, he said.

"Patients are doing less expensive procedures," he said. "I think people are looking for less aggressive changes."

Altogether, he performs more than 500 major procedures a year.

Bengtson is an active researcher who has written more than 20 peer-reviewed articles and 10 books and chapters. He has delivered more than 100 presentations for organizations and academies like the International Plastic Surgery Workshop.

He also has co-authored books on Civil War injuries and battlefield medical care, including the "Photographic Atlas of Civil War Injuries."

He and Ringler also have gone overseas to provide free surgical care and, last year, they organized free screenings for Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans who need cosmetic correction or reconstruction of facial injuries.