Industries

Tailored treatment

Inova's center is expected to advance a growing medical field

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by Robert Powell

The biggest story in Virginia health care last year was Inova Health System's purchase of the 117-acre former Exxon Mobil campus in Fairfax County.

The property, bought for $180 million, will be the site of Inova's Center for Personalized Health, a campus for physicians, researchers and educators working in the growing field of personalized medicine.

The field involves medical treatments tailored to the needs of patients based on their genomes.

Inova's move has been hailed as pivotal in Northern Virginia's efforts to diversify its economy and become less dependent on federal spending.

Gov. Terry McAuliffe also has identified personalized medicine as a potential growth area in his efforts to create a "New Virginia Economy."

The new Inova campus is located across the street from Inova Fairfax Hospital. The 833-bed hospital had net patient revenue of $1.23 billion in 2014, according to the nonprofit organization Virginia Health Information (VHI).

Inova Fairfax is third on a list ranking the commonwealth's top hospitals in terms of 2014 net patient revenue. The top hospital on the list is VCU Health System in Richmond, which had revenue of $1.36 billion, and second was University of Virginia Medical Center with $1.24 billion. Three Inova hospitals are among the 25 hospitals on the list.

Beyond these high-revenue facilities, however, many small, rural hospitals are facing financial problems, according to the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association. The group cites VHI data showing that 25 percent of Virginia's acute-care hospitals and nearly 42 percent of its rural hospitals operated at a loss in 2014. One rural hospital, Lee Regional Medical Center in Southwest Virginia, closed in 2013.

An increasing number of Virginia's nonprofit rural hospitals have joined large health systems in recent years. South Hill-based Community Memorial Healthcenter, for example, became part of VCU Health System in 2014. It has been renamed VCU Community Memorial Hospital.