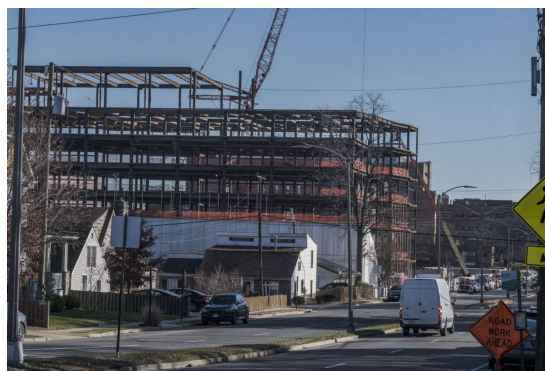


## VHC Health debuts women's health center in new \$250M outpatient facility

Jo DeVoe | November 1, 2023



VHC Health leaders and the namesake of its new Women's Health Center, Charlotte Stump Benjamin, pose before cutting the ribbon for the new health center (courtesy Chia-Chi Charlie Chang, Image Caffeine Photography)

[VHC Health](#), formerly Virginia Hospital Center, debuted a new women's health center Monday afternoon that handles everything from pregnancy to menopause to breast health.

The Charlotte S. Benjamin Center for Women's Health is located on the fifth floor of the hospital's new, \$250 million outpatient pavilion that [opened](#) in the Hall's Hill neighborhood in June.

It is the last section of the pavilion — which has floors for outpatient surgery, endoscopies, physical therapy and imaging services, as well as a pharmacy — to open. The 26,000-square-foot center began seeing patients Tuesday.

There, women can receive care related to obstetrics and gynecology, maternal-fetal medicine, general health and wellness through menopause, genetics, breast health, urology, cardiology, advanced radiologic imaging and vascular diagnostics.

The center is named for Charlotte Benjamin, an Arlingtonian who was active on the VHC Health Board of Directors for decades and served as its chair. She attended the ribbon-cutting on Monday.

A female-led physician team, including Women's Health Center Chief Dr. Kelly Orzechowski, helped design the center and its continuum of services. She tells ARLnow that having an all-in-one center is intended to help busy women streamline their visits and make the most of their appointments.

“I think one of the challenges we have as women is that we're caring for other people in our lives — our children, our spouses or our elderly parents,” Orzechowski said. “If you have a busy schedule, you put others' needs before your own. If you have to go around to different places [for appointments], you're less likely to do them or do them on time.”

For instance, women might make their annual physical but never get around to the mammogram their physician ordered because this involves going to a different facility, farther from home and with more limited hours, she said.

“Our goal was to streamline and coordinate appointment times so if someone has to take off work, our goal is to get all those services done in one half-day,” Orzechowski says.

That extends beyond the women’s health floor, too, she noted. If patients need radiology, cardiology or rehab services, they are an elevator ride away, rather than in a different facility elsewhere in the region. Orzechowski says she believes having these services in one place boosts in-person camaraderie among providers and will “deliver superior care to patients.”

That doctors, particularly women doctors, had any input on the design of the center is a novelty, says Sharon Brickhouse Martin, who consulted on several hospital facilities projects before becoming the Vice President of Health Services Integration for VHC Health. She said the “old school” way of doing things relegated healthcare to doctors and design to specialized professionals.

“It is rare for a hospital organization to involve their doctors in the design and layout of workflow when a new building is under construction,” she said.

Doctors — “the people doing the work” — were at the forefront of designing the women’s health center, down to each exam room, Martin said.

“It has made a huge difference: not only do we feel we delivered a better project, but I’m proud to say we did it in record time. From concept to move-in, in 12-13 months, is unheard of,” she said.

Orzechowski says doctors often get left out because they do not have the time to “dream about how to make things better for patients.”

“It took extra oomph for us to carve out time to talk about our vision, and it took a very receptive administration,” she said.

In total, the new pavilion is six stories tall and, when construction began, VHC did not know what to do with the fifth floor, says Martin. Conversations about how women access healthcare, sparked by Covid, led physicians to suggest a women’s health center. Heavy construction began when the rest of the pavilion was preparing to open.

“We had interested, empowered female physicians and a leadership team open to making it happen this way,” she said, noting that one floor remains unallocated, though several ideas have been floated.

Martin says the timing of the pavilion is fortuitous because, coming out of Covid, many patients want to avoid the hospital if they can.

“That’s peace of mind for patients as well,” she said.