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■ MASONIC MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO USE \$6M STATE GRANT FOR RENOVATION WORK, ADD UP TO 30 NEW JOBS

By Eric Reinhardt

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The state has awarded Masonic Medical Research Institute (MMRI) of Utica a \$6 million grant for a renovation and expansion project. Pictured here are (left to right) James Swan, Jr., MMRI board member; John Zielinski, MMRI CFO/director of administration; Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul; Dr. Maria Kontaridis, MMRI director of research, and Jason McCarthy, associate professor of cardiovascular medicine at MMRI. (Photo provided by Masonic Medical Research Institute)

UTICA, N.Y. — Masonic Medical Research Institute (MMRI) of Utica will use a \$6 million state grant to renovate its 5,500-square-foot basement area and increase its laboratory space.

Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul made the grant announcement during her State of the State presentation in Utica on Tuesday.

MMRI said, in a news release, that it will use the funding to renovate a 5,500-square-foot basement and sub-basement to increase laboratory space and accommodate up to five additional research faculty members. The additional researchers will also be able to recruit between four and eight additional scientists to their laboratories, totaling an additional 25 to 30 new jobs.

The project also involves construction of a procedural suite that will allow MMRI to continue its research efforts.

“This investment will continue the groundbreaking and lifesaving research that is being conducted at [MMRI], thanks to the world-class talent [it] brings to the Mohawk Valley, benefiting both the region and state for generations to come,” Howard Zemsky, president, CEO, and commissioner of Empire State Development (ESD), said in the MMRI release.

The grant will help further MMRI’s research and help it develop therapeutic approaches to “move more quickly” into human-clinical trials, per the release.

The funding will also allow MMRI to “continue its transformation into a 21st century interdisciplinary, translational research facility,” expanding its focus from traditional heart disease to other areas including diabetes and obesity, autoimmunity, and cancer.

“These resources will provide MMRI the opportunity to broaden our current cardiac-research program and expand to areas outside the cardiovascular-disease space, such as studying mechanisms that cause neurodegenerative disease, autoimmunity, diabetes and cancer, all in an effort to find novel treatments for these devastating ailments,” Dr. Maria Kontaridis, MMRI director of research, said.



The staff of the Masonic Medical Research Institute (MMRI) in Utica is pictured outside the facility. The state has awarded MMRI a \$6 million grant for a project to renovate its basement area and increase its laboratory space. (Photo provided by Masonic Medical Research Institute)

“The support that we have received from New York State is extraordinary and has allowed us to recruit top tier faculty to the Mohawk Valley from universities like Harvard and Yale and from top research hospitals in Los Angeles and as far away as Saudi Arabia,” David Schneeweiss, chairman of the MMRI board of directors, added.

MMRI is currently involved in a \$25 million, multi-year “transformational” project that the Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council has identified as a “priority project.”

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