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# Healthcare Takes A Leap Forward in Territory with Opening of the St. Croix Surgical Center

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**Inside the St. Croix Surgical Center** By. Ernice Gilbert, VIC

ST. CROIX — Healthcare in the U.S. Virgin Islands needed vast improvements and advancements before the catastrophic storms of 2017. But when Hurricanes Irma and Maria walloped the entire territory, including bringing healthcare almost to a halt at both the Juan F. Luis Hospital and the Schneider Regional Medical Center, the quality of public health care in the USVI dipped further. From the closure of JFL's dialysis unit (recently reopened), to an emergency room that continues to be the bane of residents, along with inadequate funding, the hospitals are simply not up to par.

The public hospitals, then, need undergirding from private operations with the capability and capacity to provide quality healthcare to locals with state-of-the-art equipment. That, too, has been lacking, and so the U.S. Virgin Islands has been at a disadvantage in healthcare — one of the essentials of life and a key factor for many who would consider either moving, starting a business, or even vacationing in the territory.

Enter Dr. Brian C. Bacot, a board certified physician who was fellowship trained in adult reconstruction, joint replacement and sports medicine. Dr. Bacot is the founder of Comprehensive Orthopaedic Global, known as [COG](#). It had long been his desire to compliment the territory's public health offerings with state-of-the-art medical care using state-of-the-art medical equipment. To accomplish this, however, Dr. Bacot needed to corral a group of physicians offering a host of medical services who were willing to embark on the ambitious — and expensive — journey. Then, they needed to find a location that would fit all these services — called a medical campus — that would serve as a one-stop shop for patients.



After years of planning, the vision is finally coming to fruition. Today, at the former Innovative Building where Viya currently has its offices, the St. Croix Surgical Center — the most ambitious unit of the campus — opens. It will join a suite of medical services all in the same building, collectively called Liberty Medical Development. Among the offerings you'll find the St. Croix OBGYN with Dr. Anne Treasure, COG, VI Oral Surgery with Dr. Horace Griffith (the space is still under construction), VI Dental, and general surgeon Dr. Renee Georges. Dr. Bacot is also expecting ancillary services in a space on the campus that is yet to be occupied.

Dr. Bacot sees the opening of the surgical center as a major leap forward for healthcare in the USVI. He spoke with the Consortium last week about the equipment and what patients can expect. He said the surgical center, which includes three state-of-the-art operating rooms, was established to meet the needs of Virgin Islanders who have had to travel for care.

"This facility is meant to meet that exact need; that apprehension that you can't get the same kind of quality healthcare that you would stateside. That's what we've built. We designed it to have all the state-of-the-art equipment in order to provide those services. We've staffed it with highly qualified, specialized physicians who can provide those services, and we've provided it inside a facility that is well structured, well managed, and that will allow for any procedure that can be done in the states to be done here, in an appropriate setting.

Dr. Bacot and his partners see the surgical center and campus as a positive contribution to the community.

"We have U.S.-standard healthcare that we can deliver to you in a way that you would expect it, with the quality that you expect," he said. The facility will also be certified with important players like the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services and the Joint Commission, among others. The campus will accept patients with or without insurance, Dr. Bacot said. He also revealed that the surgical center will facilitate short stay-overs. "So we want to be able to bring people in and have the ability to keep them overnight with the ability to monitor, and then be able to go home the next day," he said.

Below, Dr. Brian C. Bacot (Ernice Gilbert, VIC)



Dr. Bacot described the campus as one also geared toward medical tourism, which he said starts at home by providing care that would cause Virgin Islanders to feel good about receiving certain levels of treatment at home. "Medical tourism number one is keeping those who currently shop for their healthcare off island, as much as possible on island. Secondly, we look at the people who come and visit us, and we want to be able to say if you dock a cruise ship here, we have safe, valuable and available healthcare for you, where you can go to and receive the services that you want expeditiously and at the same level and quality that you meet anywhere else in the world," Dr. Bacot said.

The campus also wants to partner with local businesses as an underlying basis of support, "so that they can recruit people in without worrying about healthcare."

The territory remains in a mode of recovery two years after the storms, and while progress has been made, the USVI is far from recovered. Dr. Bacot said the medical campus intends to be positive part of the rebuild as it pertains to healthcare.

"Want to be part of the solution for the recovery. We want to be a part and parcel of how healthcare develops to a new level. We have the opportunity to now map out what we want healthcare to look like 20 years down the road for ourselves and for our children," he said. "We would hope that at every point we could be part of that vision."