

High-tech puts health care on cutting edge

St. Al's, Kootenai Medical Center's equipment helps two Idaho hospitals earn multiple 'Most Wired' labels

By Zach Hagadone
IDAHO BUSINESS REVIEW

Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center places a premium on high-tech health care. Ranked by *Hospitals & Health Networks* magazine as one of the nation's "100 Most Wired" hospitals four years running, Saint Al's is home to one of the region's most sophisticated clinical centers – the Center for Advanced Healing, opened in October 2007 – and dozens of cutting-edge procedures and technological systems.

"People in our community don't need to travel to a major metropolitan area to ensure they have the best options to treat and diagnose illness, injury and disease," said Saint Al's spokeswoman Kristen Micheletti. "We have world-class physician specialists who need the best technology to treat stroke, heart attack, trauma, cancer, premature babies, etcetera. And advanced technologies also can catch disease in its earliest stage."

The Center for Advanced Healing – with a nine-story, 400,000-square-foot Central Tower – has 160 private rooms, a 16-suite surgical operating theatre and 32-bed intensive care unit. Designed to be the "operating room of the future," the facility features on-line x-ray capability, voice-controlled lights and equipment and HDTV flat-screen televisions.

It's also stocked with innovative and

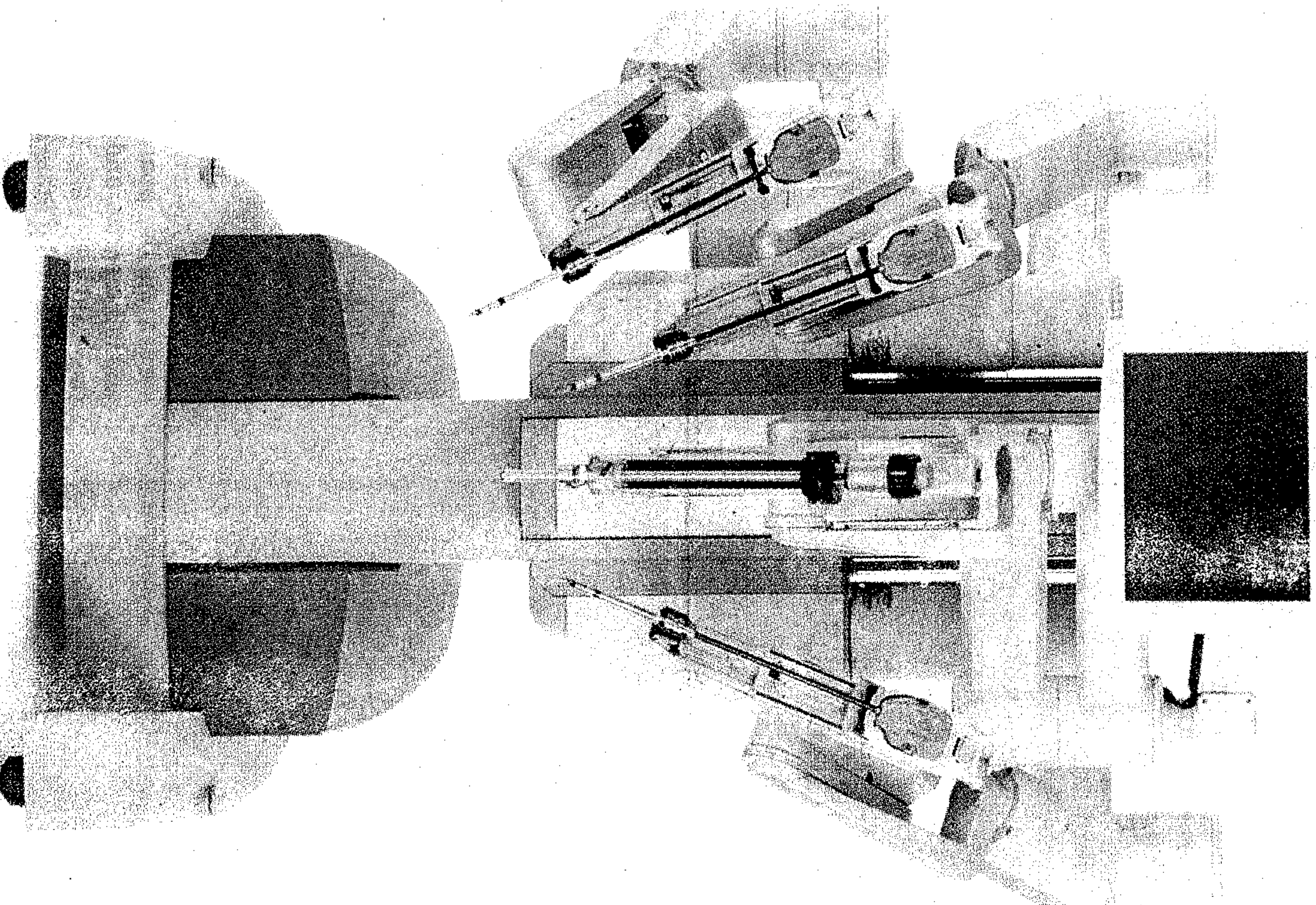


PHOTO COURTESY OF KOOTENAI MEDICAL CENTER

Both Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center in Boise and the Kootenai Medical Center in northern Idaho utilize the daVinci Surgical System to help physicians perform delicate procedures.

TOP 100

Hospitals, pg 4F

revolutionary processes and equipment, including: highly sensitive 64-multislice CT scanning capable of giving a full scan in 10 seconds, then reconstructing it in 3D; Novalis shaped beam surgery, a non-invasive radiation treatment option for cancer, tumors and vascular disorders; neurointerventional bi-plane angiography, which dissolves and treats aneurysms and blood clots in the brain; and the daVinci Surgical System, a top-of-the-line robotic platform that gives surgeons the ability to perform extremely delicate procedures in a minimally invasive way, reducing pain and speeding recovery time.

Along with fellow multi-year "Most Wired" honoree Kootenai Medical Center in northern Idaho, Saint Al's is one of only two hospitals in Idaho with the daVinci surgical solution. Saint Al's was the first to bring Novalis shaped beam surgery and 64-slice CT scanning to the state, and in 1900, was also the first Idaho hospital to bring in x-ray technology.

"We purchase and use advanced medical technologies to provide state-of-the-art diagnostic, surgical and treatment options for our patients, and to ensure the best and safest ways to heal," Micheletti said.

See CUTTING EDGE, pg 2F

Hospital mortality rates decline with rising use of technology

CUTTING EDGE from pg 1F

She said the benefits of pursuing high-tech solutions in health care are readily apparent, especially according to one very crucial benchmark. On average, hospitals with a "Most Wired" ranking have risk-adjusted mortality rates 7.2 percent lower than other hospitals, even after taking into account hospital size and teaching status, she said.

"Being named a '100 Most Wired' hospital demonstrates Saint Alphonsus' commitment to bringing faster and more precise delivery of health information and care to our patients and the community through advanced technologies," Micheletti said. "The tangible benefits include increased patient safety, quality of care, reduced medical errors and improved patient outcomes."

She said some of the advancements that led to Saint Al's "Most Wired" ranking included "filmless," or digital, radiology; Telehealth, which connects homebound patients to their health provider; its endovascular suite; Tele-Cardiology, which enables heart specialists to quickly compare and share detailed information remotely; Telebaby video conferencing; high-speed wireless Internet connections on the hospital's campus; SARFICWeb and SaintAls.com.

Many of those technologies relate

directly to communication – something Micheletti said is an integral part of fulfilling the hospital's mission of offering Idahoans health care services based on "a compassionate mission to heal the body, mind and spirit of those in need."

"New technologies give health care providers more treatment options and improved communication with other clinicians/physicians and the patient," she said.

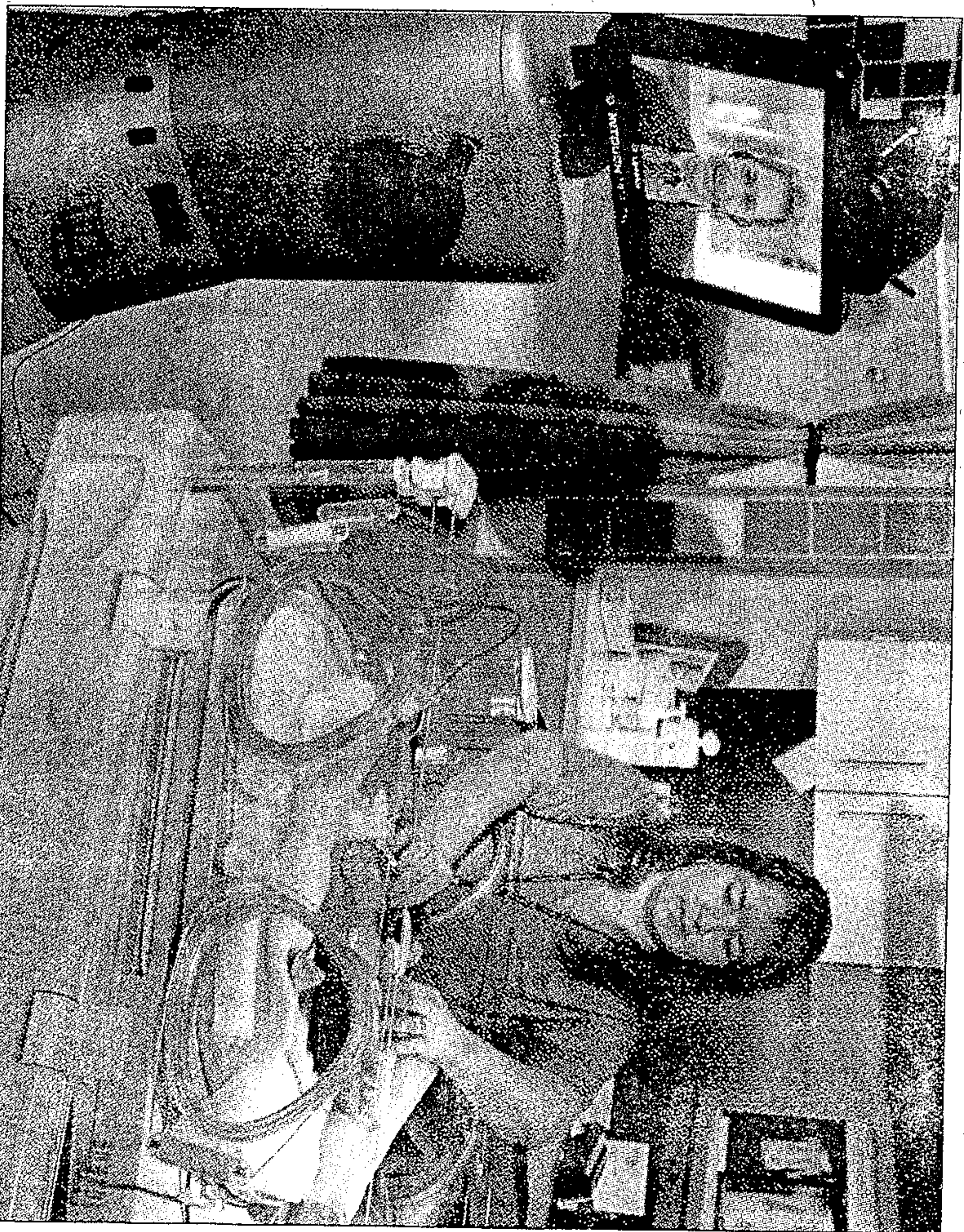
While it's tough to argue against the benefits of cutting edge health care, some medical professionals and industry experts say that "high-tech" doesn't automatically translate into "high quality" care.

"The most wired hospital isn't necessarily the best decision-making organization," said William Bria, MD.

Bria, chairman of the Association of Medical Directors of Information Systems and chief medical information officer for Shriner's Hospitals for Children, was speaking at the 2008 Physician-Computer Connection Symposium in July, and his remarks were reported by *Healthcare IT News*.

"Just how dangerous is this report?" he said.

Micheletti said while that argument can be made, Saint Al's holistic mission ensures that it uses technology where appropriate, without losing sight of the human element.



COURTESY PHOTO

One of the many innovations that has led to St. Al's 'Most Wired' ranking includes the video conferencing concept called Telebaby. Above, a physician remotely directs a pediatric nurse.

"Technology, just for the sake of having it, is not a guarantee for exceptional outcomes," Micheletti said. "Healing involves treating the body, mind and spirit, and we've invested in caring for our patients not only with technology,

but an environment proven to enhance healing, safety and improve outcomes. The best health care is a combination of 'High-Tech, High-Touch,' with a constant review of quality measures and outcomes to offer the safest health care."