Ind. Hospital First In Nation To Implant Breakthrough Aortic Heart Valve Device

Franciscan St. Francis Health is the first hospital in the United States to implant a new device that could improve the quality of life for patients with aortic valve disease.

The On-X Aortic Prosthetic Valve with Anatomic Sewing Ring is the most advanced mechanical heart valve and first to address the important concern of distorting the adjacent structures within the heart. The innovative valve is the only mechanical valve that matches the contour of the heart.

The first implant was performed by Marc Gerdisch, MD, chief of cardiovascular and thoracic surgery at Franciscan St. Francis Health and surgical director of the St. Francis Heart Valve Center. Gerdisch, a partner with Cardiac Surgery Associates, collaborated on the design of the device with On-X Life Technologies, Inc.

Gerdisch, an independent physician who chooses to practice at Franciscan St. Francis Health, successfully implanted the device in, a 35-year-old male, from Ellettsville, Ind. The patient sought help at Franciscan St. Francis Health when his condition eluded diagnosis for several months.

Physicians at the Franciscan St. Francis Heart Valve Center found that infection had destroyed the patient's aortic valve and severely damaged the mitral valve. Although Gerdisch was able to repair his mitral valve, the aortic valve required replacement. Fortunately, the advanced On-X valve technology was available at St. Francis Heart Center.

According to Gerdisch, there are several types of aortic valve disease and all of them pose a threat. Aortic valve disease often progresses slowly without obvious symptoms. Once symptoms appear, untreated patients have a poor prognosis. Aortic valve disease is responsible for more than 25,000 deaths yearly.

Studies indicate that up to 50 percent of untreated patients will not survive beyond an average of two years after the onset of symptoms. Fortunately, surgery that replaces the aortic valve can extend the lives of those who suffer from aortic valve disease.

"The On-X heart valve with Anatomic Sewing Ring is a major advancement and allows us to again improve the quality of life for younger patients with aortic valve disease," said Gerdisch. "The new valve permits preservation of normal cardiac architecture and tension is reduced on the tissue where the valve attaches. This type of innovation is designed to facilitate implantation and reduce trauma to the heart, ensuring a greater likelihood of long-term benefit."

On-X valves are designed with breakthrough technology that causes less blood cell damage than traditional mechanical valves.

Franciscan St. Francis Health is one of the leading hospitals for the Prospective Randomized On-X Valve Reduced Anticoagulation Clinical Trial (PROACT). The purpose of this trial is to determine if patients that receive the On-X valve can be safely maintained with reduced levels of blood thinner or eliminating the use of Coumadin (warfarin) altogether.

This landmark trial has already produced important findings that could impact the future for patients that receive a mechanical valve. Gerdisch will be presenting study results at professional conferences internationally this year.

The Franciscan St. Francis Heart Valve Center is the first dedicated multidisciplinary center for evaluation and treatment of heart valve disease in Indiana. As the only Healthgrades 5-Star valve repair and replacement surgery program in Indianapolis for two years in a row, its team of heart surgeons and cardiologists are experienced in managing complex valve disease. By offering advanced surgical techniques not available at most hospitals, the center's staff offers new life and hope to patients.

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