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Dignity Health St. John's Regional Medical Center Cardiologist Successfully Performs 100th Watchman Implant Surgery

Heart surgeon provides advanced cardiac care to Ventura County patients

OXNARD, CA – February 8, 2021 – St. John's Regional Medical Center (SJRMC), a Dignity Health hospital, is pleased to announce that cardiologist Ali Sovari, MD, has successfully performed the 100th Watchman Left Atrial Appendage Closure (LAAC) Implant surgeries. This innovative device is implanted using a minimally-invasive catheter-based delivery system.

“Surpassing 100 procedures is a testament to the team’s commitment to ensuring excellent patient care, safety, and service,” said Ali Sovari, MD, Medical Director of Cardiac Electrophysiology Services at St. John's Regional Medical Center and St. John's Pleasant Valley Hospital. “I’m proud to be part of a robust multidisciplinary team of cardiologists, structural heart disease specialists, and nurses, who have received extensive training, which allows us to offer this life-changing implant to eligible patients.”

For patients with Atrial Fibrillation (AFib) who are considered suitable for warfarin by their physicians but who have reason to seek a non-drug alternative, the Watchman Implant is an alternative to reduce their risk of AFib-related stroke. The Watchman Implant closes off an area of the heart called the left atrial appendage (LAA) to keep harmful blood clots from the LAA from entering the blood stream and potentially causing a stroke. By closing off the LAA, the risk of stroke is reduced such that patients can stop taking warfarin for atrial fibrillation.

People with AFib have a five times greater risk of stroke. This irregularity can cause blood to pool and form clots in the LAA. For patients with non-valvular AFib, the LAA is believed to be the source of the majority of stroke-causing blood clots. If a clot forms in the LAA, it can increase one’s risk of having a stroke. Blood clots can break loose from the heart and travel in the blood stream to the brain or, more rarely, to other parts of the body.

Implanting the Watchman Device is a one-time procedure that usually lasts about half an hour. Following the procedure, patients typically go home the following day. Blood thinners are continued until an ultrasound confirms that the procedure worked as expected, usually 45 days after the initial implant.

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To learn more about cardiac services at St. John's Hospitals, please call St. John's Cardiovascular Coordinator, Lorraine Herrick, RN, at **805.216.0502**.

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About Dignity Health St. John's Regional Medical Center

St. John's Regional Medical Center is a 265-bed acute care, award-winning facility. Serving Ventura County for more than one hundred years, St. John's is the first and only Certified Thrombectomy-Capable Stroke Center in Ventura County and a recipient of the American Heart Association's, Get with the Guidelines-Stroke Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award. Designated as a STEMI Receiving Center, St. John's is highly recognized in the community for excellence in cardiac care. Our Cancer Center is accredited by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer, and our Integrated Breast Center is accredited by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers. SJRCM houses a comprehensive Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, providing specialized care to the tiniest patients as well as a Beacon Award-Winning Intensive Care Unit. Each hospital is supported by an active philanthropic Foundation to help meet the growing health care needs of our communities. Learn more at dignityhealth.org/stjohnsregional.