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Morton Plant Hospital Offers Radiation Therapy For The Heart

Patients who may have experienced a re-narrowing or reclogging of their heart vessels months after coronary artery stenting may be candidates for a new treatment called Intravascular Brachytherapy.

Morton Plant Hospital is the first hospital in the Tampa Bay area to offer Coronary Intravascular Brachytherapy, a localized radiation therapy that may prevent stented heart vessels from reclogging.

"Brachytherapy may help a number of patients who have experienced in-stent restenosis, or a re-narrowing of the heart vessels," said Michael D. Williamson, M.D., Medical Director of Morton Plant Hospital's Cardiac Catheterization Lab. "Until now, some patients had to undergo balloon angioplasty repeatedly on the same blockage. Having this technology available will significantly reduce the need for re-treatment."

The procedure, approved by the Food & Drug Administration in November, may benefit thousands of Americans who suffer from in-stent restenosis each year, a complication that plagues 20 to 25 percent of angioplasty patients. The condition occurs when scar tissue builds up within the stented segment of the artery. To prevent recurrent narrowing of the vessel, the narrowed stent is reopened with conventional balloon angioplasty followed by localized radiation. Patients who undergo Brachytherapy typically spend one to two hours in the cardiac catheterization lab. The

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radiation is contained within a lead-based container and is only released through the catheter, thereby ensuring the utmost safety for the patient and medical personnel. The dose of radiation to the body is less than a chest x-ray.

Morton Plant Hospital is currently using a gamma radiation system, which was developed by Cordis Corporation, a Johnson & Johnson Company. Results of one gamma study demonstrated that patients treated with Cordis' radiation system had 41 percent fewer instances of in-lesion restenosis and 36 percent fewer major adverse coronary incidents (ie: heart attack or death) compared to patients assigned to placebo therapy.

"Brachytherapy has been used effectively for years in oncology treatments, and it is now proving to be highly effective in the setting of intravascular therapy," said Robert F. Geisler, M.D., Medical Director for the Lykes Center for Radiation Therapy at Morton Plant Hospital.

Furthermore, some physicians say the new therapy may be advantageous for diabetics.

"Having new technology to treat so many diabetic patients with in-stent restenosis may make a profound impact on the health of this community," said Patrick A. Cambier, M.D., the first interventional cardiologist to perform brachytherapy at Morton Plant Hospital. "Brachytherapy is another effective tool we can use to counteract this life-threatening disease."

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