



# Winter Haven Hospital's *Cardiac Catheterization Lab*



By Donna Kelly

Pastor Glenn Giles had no fear as he waited for his cardiac catheterization to begin – his faith in God went a long way in calming his nerves. But he also had trust in the team of men and women, all of them trained professionals, who were preparing to inject a dye into his arteries and check the stent they had put in last December.

“They were cordial, nice, very professional, good folk,” Giles said of the team of doctors, nurses and technicians who work in the Winter Haven Hospital Cardiac Catheterization Lab – commonly referred to as the Cath Lab.

Giles said that while any heart-related procedure sounds daunting, Winter Haven Hospital Cath Lab personnel have certainly earned patients’ trust.

“They’ve done it hundreds of times. They know what they are doing,” said Giles, who didn’t miss any time in the pulpit of Shamrock Baptist Church because of the procedure.

“I tell people to go ahead and relax. Just trust them and let them do their job,” he added.

The department – under the direction of Registered Nurse Rob Roy, and Orlando Marrero, Registered Cardiovascular Invasive Specialist

– includes five registered nurses, three respiratory therapists, five lab technicians, two cardiologists and four interventional cardiologists.

Last year, Cath Lab staff completed 620 angioplasty procedures, including those involving stents – tiny, flexible wire mesh tubes that hold arteries open – and rotoblaters, which are used to remove calcified coronary plaque. They implanted 230 pacemakers and defibrillators and performed an additional 2,300 diagnostic heart catheterizations during the year.

The latest data from the American College of Cardiology (ACC) database shows that the Winter Haven Hospital Cardiac Cath Lab is in the top 10% of hospitals in timely interventions for an acute heart attack. This is referred to as D2B time (door-to-ballon time). It measures the time from the patient arriving at the hospital until the time the artery is re-opened in the cath lab.

Cath Lab secretaries Shirley Gibson and Beverly Eskdale keep each day organized by scheduling procedures, creating the physician’s on call schedules, keeping families informed of their loved one’s status and other duties.

Roy and Marrero are quick to give credit to the entire staff, from the secretarial and transport employees to physicians, nurses and technologists.

“We have a very experienced Cath Lab team and we deliver the very

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highest patient care. They strive to be the best,” Roy said. “They do a great job.”

He credits Cath Lab Supervisor Orlando Marrero with the lab’s professionalism and efficiency. Also an instructor for the Cardiovascular Technologist Program at Polk Community College, Marrero stresses the importance of education and holds training classes for employees working toward Registered Cardiovascular Invasive Specialist or Critical Care Registered Nurse credentials, and that includes each nurse in the lab.

“Orlando (who also has a MBA) is every manager’s dream,” Roy said. “Everybody is dedicated to raising the bar and Orlando has brought that.”

Training and experience has enabled the staff to streamline the cardiac catheterization procedure. Between 7 and 21 procedures may be performed in one day.

A patient begins the process in Outpatient Admitting where he or she completes paperwork. From there the patient goes to the fourth floor of the Hospital’s Swann building where he or she has an IV put in and receives information about cardiac catheterization.

Here patients meet Benny Diaz, who is always ready with a smile and words of encouragement as he transports patients to the Cath Lab.

“I do my best to make them comfortable and to help alleviate their fears,” said the soft spoken but affable Diaz. “I tell them, ‘Don’t be scared of this. Our doctors do tons of these every year. You are in good hands.’”

Upon arriving at the Cath Lab, the patient meets their technologist and nurse who ask a series of questions, insuring they understand the procedure and get answers to any questions they have about the procedure.

In the Cath Lab Suite, patients are placed on a table and their blood pressure and heart rate begin to be monitored. The catheter is inserted and the procedure begins.

Patients are covered with heated blankets to keep them warm while in the Cath Lab.

Each patient receives care from a team of professionals during the procedure. A registered nurse administers a sedative and continues to monitor patient’s vital signs. At this point the Cardiologist begins the actual procedure. Nurses and technicians circulate around the room, monitoring equipment and providing whatever the cardiologist needs. Technicians and nurses keep a record of everything that takes place during the procedure.

“The team is highly specialized. Each team member has a job to do,” said Interventional Cardiologist Clay Sizemore. “I coordinate the action between individual team members.”

Nursing staff administer anesthesia, which Dr. Sizemore describes as similar to that used by a dentist when a tooth is pulled. The doctor then

takes the catheter, which looks like a wire, and threads it through the femoral artery toward the heart. Patients might feel a slight pressure as the catheter punctures the skin and is advanced through the artery. It is normal for the patient to have a flushing feeling as the dye is injected. Once the dye is injected, moving real-time x-ray pictures are taken of areas of interest to the doctor.

If the physician doesn’t find a blockage, the catheter is removed and the patient can go home after a brief wait time.

“There are no stitches and no scarring,” Sizemore said.

Blockages are normally treated during the procedure if consent was given by patients.

“For a blockage that is amenable to balloon angioplasty and stents, they can be and usually are implanted at the time of the diagnostic test,” Sizemore added.

Dr. Sizemore said that complications are rare, but when they do occur, the staff is ready for them.

“The technology and training has advanced to the degree that major complications are extremely rare,” he said. “Anytime you do an invasive procedure there are risks, but our team is well trained in managing complications if they arise.”

The atmosphere in the Cath Lab is relaxed but professional. A genuine mutual respect and trust exists between those in the lab that is evident to patients. Staff may joke about each other’s taste of music while preparing for the procedure, but once it begins, all attention is on the patient.

Giles said this atmosphere helped him feel at ease during the experience.

“They all have a good working relationship,” Giles said, adding that he believes this is a result of having performed so many heart catheterizations as a team. “You kind of get to think like that person (when you’ve worked so much together). It seems they can almost read each other’s mind and know what to do.”

Ask these team members what they like most about their job and their answers will all include one common thread – making a difference in patient’s lives.

“I love the fact that we can see someone with chest pain, having trouble breathing and in pain, and we can help that person and save a life,” said Respiratory Therapist Danny Lopez, a nine-year Winter Haven Hospital employee with nearly three years in the Cath Lab.

Ashley Adkins, RN, loves the challenging, fast pace of the Cath Lab. She enjoys the easy communication between fellow team members and the interaction with patients. But one quality of the job is all encompassing.

“We save lives,” she said with a smile, and turned to join her team as another patient is brought to the lab.

*The latest data from the American College of Cardiology indicates Winter Haven Hospital’s Catheterization Lab is performing in the TOP 10% of similar units in the U.S.*

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