

SOUTHERN MARYLAND

ISSUE 02 • 2011

MEDICINE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF SOUTHERN MARYLAND HOSPITAL



SOUTHERN MARYLAND
HOSPITAL DESIGNATED A
CARDIAC
INTERVENTIONAL CENTER

Page 4

WHEN YOUR HEART
IS OUT OF SYNC

PAGE 3

SERVICES TO
KEEP YOUR
HEARTBEAT HEALTHY

PAGE 10

A NEW APPROACH
FOR CARDIAC CARE

PAGE 8

SOUTHERNMARYLANDHOSPITAL.COM

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

DEAR NEIGHBOR,

When someone is having a heart attack—whether in a grocery store, on a ball field, or at work—getting to a hospital capable of opening blocked arteries is a matter of life and death. With each passing minute, the heart sustains further damage because of a lack of oxygen.

In the past, a patient having a heart attack would simply be transported to the nearest hospital. If the hospital lacked the ability to perform an emergency angioplasty, the patient would be transferred by helicopter or ambulance to a medical center with a team of specialty cardiologists and nurses standing by to perform a cardiac catheterization.

Recognizing that precious time was being lost, the Maryland Institute for Emergency



Ryan Smith Photography

Francis P. Chiamonte, MD, MPH, FACS
Chairman of the Board

Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS), the organization that regulates first responders and emergency departments, created a new protocol requiring first responders to transport heart attack patients directly to the closest hospital with the capability of performing emergency angioplasties.

Basing the new protocol on the University of Maryland's innovative shock trauma system, MIEMSS formed a statewide network of hospitals called Cardiac Interventional Centers. Hospitals in Maryland

licensed to perform emergency angioplasties had to undergo a certification process to assure that every Cardiac Interventional Center met rigorous guidelines for clinical quality, processes, and speed. Southern Maryland Hospital was designated as the sole Cardiac Interventional Center in Southern Maryland.

Now first responders in Southern Maryland are saving valuable time transporting heart attack patients directly to the Cardiac Interventional Center at Southern Maryland Hospital. Patients travel by helicopter or ambulance for rapid assessment in the emergency department and, if necessary, are quickly moved into the catheterization lab where they receive a coronary angioplasty, the gold standard treatment for removing the blockages that cause heart attacks.

Being designated a Cardiac Interventional Center heralds a remarkable achievement—the transformation of Southern Maryland Hospital into a regional medical center. The Cardiac Interventional Center is part of a vision that has guided Southern Maryland Hospital for 30 years. Fulfilling a promise to provide the highest quality medical and surgical specialty care, right in the heart of our community.



Francis P. Chiamonte, MD, MPH, FACS
Chairman of the Board

Southern Maryland Medicine



Southern Maryland Medicine is published as a community service for the friends and patrons of Southern Maryland Hospital. It in no way seeks to diagnose or treat illness or serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Please see your physician if you have a health problem.

Southern Maryland Hospital

7503 Surratts Road, Clinton, MD 20735
(301) 868-8000 or TTY (310) 877-4473 © 2011.

Francis P. Chiamonte, MD, MPH, FACS
Chairman of the Board

Michael J. Chiamonte, MBA
Chief Executive Officer

Richard Ardery
Vice President Marketing

Maureen Theriault
Editor

Loren Blinde, PhD
Writer

On the cover: Dave Smart, Prince George's County firefighter from Forestville Station 23 in Upper Marlboro, and Vipul Kella, MD, vice chair of emergency medicine at Southern Medicine Hospital, off-load a patient into the emergency department.

KEEPING THE BEAT

Sung Lee, MD, treats arrhythmias in Southern Maryland Hospital's cardiac catheterization lab.

What do you think of when you hear the phrase "life-threatening heart condition"? If you're like many people, a heart attack is the first thing that comes to mind. But problems with the heart's rhythm can be just as deadly—sudden cardiac death claims the lives of more people annually than breast cancer, lung cancer, and AIDS combined.

Sung Lee, MD, is a cardiac electrophysiologist, which is a cardiologist who specializes in treating electrical problems in the heart called cardiac arrhythmias.

"We tend to think of the heart in terms of what it does—it pumps blood through the body's blood vessels," Dr. Lee said. "But the heart itself beats as a result of electrical impulses. When those impulses are firing improperly, the heart can short circuit."

HEALTHY HEARTBEATS

While some heart arrhythmias are harmless, others can cause patients to have a heartbeat that is too slow, too fast, or irregular. In the worst case, they may have ventricular fibrillation, which can be deadly. Arrhythmias tend to occur when the heart's overall structure is weakened with age or damage, as from cardiovascular disease or heart defect. Factors such as smoking, stress, and alcohol consumption can also play a role.

Fortunately, there are many devices that can help the heart beat regularly, such as implantable pacemakers, defibrillators, and biventricular pacemakers. Dr. Lee also can implant a diagnostic device—an implantable loop recorder—to correlate a patient's symptoms with the heart's electric impulses.

To implant these devices, Dr. Lee makes a small incision and places the device beneath the skin but on top of the muscle. Then he threads tiny wires through the blood vessels to the heart, where they are connected between the heart muscle and the regulating device. Patients stay in the hospital for less than 24 hours after surgery and can resume all of their normal activities within one month.

To schedule an appointment with cardiac electrophysiologist Sung Lee, MD, please call (301) 891-6574.



Pacemakers **vs.** Defibrillators

Pacemakers and defibrillators are both devices implanted in the body to help regulate the heart's electrical impulses, but they differ in their effects. A pacemaker is used for patients with heartbeats that are too slow. It intervenes when the heart slows down and prompts the heart to beat at a proper pace.

An implantable defibrillator is used to prevent sudden cardiac death from ventricular fibrillation. It shocks the heart into a regular rhythm just as external defibrillators do, but it works directly on the heart muscle from inside the body. All defibrillators have pacemakers incorporated into them as well, so patients with an implanted defibrillator also will be protected against other rhythm irregularities.

IT'S OFFICIAL!

SOUTHERN MARYLAND HOSPITAL IS A DESIGNATED CARDIAC INTERVENTIONAL CENTER

In recognition of the quality emergency care we provide to the region, the state of Maryland has designated Southern Maryland Hospital a Cardiac Interventional Center.



George Rogers, Prince Georges County's firefighter from Clinton Station 25, prepares to transfer a patient to Southern Maryland Hospital's emergency department.

It might begin with an uncomfortable sensation, as though someone is sitting on your chest or squeezing you around the ribcage. Or you might be overcome with feelings of fatigue, weakness, or upper back or abdominal pain. You might break out in a sweat. *Is this the beginning of a heart attack?* You know what to do—chew an aspirin and call 911. But what happens next?

What happens next is good news for heart attack patients across our region—they are now being transported by ambulance

or helicopter directly to Southern Maryland Hospital, where they receive the emergency cardiac treatment they need. That is because Southern Maryland Hospital has been designated a **Cardiac Interventional Center** by the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS), which oversees the state's emergency medical system.

Because of the hospital's high level of emergency cardiac care, patients across the region suffering a heart attack will now be routed directly to Southern Maryland Hospital, where they can receive an emergency angioplasty in the hospital's cardiac catheterization lab.

"Our hospital has been performing emergency angioplasty for eight years, and we're constantly working to streamline the process so we can get to the patient earlier and optimize the result," said Roy H. Leiboff, MD, medical director of the hospital's cardiac catheterization lab. "We are proud to be a part of the state's goal of making timely emergency cardiac care accessible to every resident."

Patients who come through the door with heart attack symptoms are fast-tracked to the cath lab, where they can receive lifesaving coronary angioplasty within minutes.

Coronary angioplasty is a procedure designed to open blockages and restore blood flow within the coronary arteries, which supply blood to the heart muscle. The physician threads a small tube, called a balloon catheter, through the blood stream via an access point in the arm or leg, into the patient's coronary arteries. Once the catheter reaches the blockage, the physician inflates the tiny balloon at its tip, which presses the plaque against the



Cardiologist Roy Leiboff, MD, medical director of Southern Maryland Hospital's cardiac catheterization lab

arterial wall, opens the artery, and restores blood flow. Depending on the location and severity of the blockage, the physician may also place a thin wire mesh tube, called a stent, inside the artery to help keep it open. Coronary angioplasty has been shown to be the most effective means of treating the blockages that cause heart attacks.

difference between total disability and a near-normal quality of life.”

In the event that the patient’s heart attack requires open heart surgery, a Cardiac Interventional Center can stabilize a patient so that he or she is transported safely to a hospital with cardiac surgical services.

“There is really no downside to taking a heart attack



Ryan Smith Photography

Roy Leiboff, MD, and Nathan Elicker, RT, perform an angioplasty in Southern Maryland Hospital’s cardiac catheterization laboratory.

REMOVING BLOCKAGES

The Cardiac Interventional Center system is a new protocol for emergency medical services (EMS) that is designed to streamline emergency care for cardiac patients just as the shock/trauma system does for trauma patients.

“If you have a specific injury or illness, you need a specialty referral center: for a gunshot wound, you need a trauma center,” said First Sergeant Charlie Eisele, flight paramedic with the Maryland State Police, Aviation Command. “For a heart attack, you need a hospital that can perform emergency angioplasty, like Southern Maryland Hospital.”

Rather than transporting a patient to the nearest hospital, which may not have the capabilities to deliver the necessary treatment, EMS will bypass that hospital and take the patient directly to Southern Maryland Hospital. This means patients receive lifesaving treatment in a shorter amount of time, which is critical with heart attack.

“The sooner you can get there, the more heart muscle you can save,” First Sergeant Eisele said. “It can be the

patient to a Cardiac Interventional Center,” First Sergeant Eisele said.

The state’s certification is also a recognition of the high quality of Southern Maryland Hospital’s cardiac services.

“It reflects very well on the high-quality care we provide,” said Srinivas Addala, MD, interventional cardiologist at Southern Maryland Hospital. “Patients do not need to be transported all the way downtown to get high-quality care; they can get it here at home.”

The hospital participated in a comprehensive evaluation and selection process to receive this designation.

“The state’s designation certifies that we meet a set of specific and rigorous criteria and have demonstrated that we are qualified to provide high-quality emergency cardiac care,” said Reba McVay, RN, MSN, administrative director of cardiovascular services.

For more information about the Southern Maryland Hospital’s Cardiac Interventional Center or for assistance selecting a cardiologist, visit SouthernMarylandHospital.com or call (301) 877-5700.



Sgt. Nathan Wheelock, Maryland State Police Aviation Command flight paramedic, and Southern Maryland Hospital's emergency medicine team prepare to off-load a patient transported to the hospital by helicopter.



Ryan Smith Photography

MEDICINE | ISSUE 2 • 2011

SOUTHERN MARYLAND HOSPITAL



IT'S ALL IN THE WRIST

At the Heart Center at Southern Maryland Hospital, we're using the newest techniques to treat heart attacks safely and comfortably.

When a patient having a heart attack comes into the Heart Center at Southern Maryland Hospital, several decisions must be made right away to save the patient's life and minimize damage to the heart muscle. To perform lifesaving percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI, commonly known as angioplasty), the interventional cardiologist in the cardiac catheterization lab must choose an access site to begin the procedure.

Interventional cardiologist Srinivas Addala, MD, has begun to use the radial artery in the wrist for these interventions. The resulting procedure is safer with an easier recovery for patients than a procedure using femoral artery access.

A NEW APPROACH

Many physicians use the femoral artery in the groin for cath lab procedures because its large size makes it easier for the interventionalist to thread catheters up into the coronary arteries. This is especially true in heart attack cases, where the physician needs to open the blockage in as little time as possible. Using the femoral artery for catheterization procedures has several drawbacks, however. There is a risk of bleeding from the punctured artery, and the plug used to close the artery can also cause complications.

Radial artery access solves these problems.

"By using the radial artery as the access site for PCI, we can functionally eliminate the majority of complications," Dr. Addala said.

Because the radial artery is smaller, it closes more easily; patients wear a compression band around the wrist for two hours after the procedure to ensure that the access site has closed. It is not necessary to leave a plug in this artery, which further reduces complications. The radial approach is appropriate for both men and women



Cardiologist Srinivas Addala, MD

Ryan Smith Photography



Dr. Addala accessing the radial artery in the wrist during an angioplasty.

Ryan Smith Photography

and is especially helpful for reducing post-procedure bleeding complications in obese patients.

The post-procedure recovery from radial artery catheterization and intervention is much easier as well. With a femoral artery puncture, patients have to lie flat for eight hours after the procedure.

"Right after the radial artery catheterization, patients can sit in a chair—even get up and walk around," Dr. Addala said.

The Heart Center at Southern Maryland performs hundreds of diagnostic, elective, and emergency interventional procedures in the cath lab each year. Dr. Addala alone has performed dozens of cath lab procedures this year using radial artery access.

"It's something that we will be doing more and more," Dr. Addala said. "When a new technique is both safer and more comfortable for patients, it makes good sense to adopt it."

For more information or to schedule an appointment with cardiologist Srinivas Addala, MD, please call (301) 868-1380.

THE ED: A VITAL LINK IN HEART ATTACK TREATMENT

With streamlined efficiency, Southern Maryland Hospital's emergency department connects heart attack patients with the cardiac intervention they need.



Sandra Banks, MD, emergency department physician, and Eric McDonald, MD, of emergency medicine at Southern Maryland Hospital

With more than 60,000 visits each year, Southern Maryland Hospital's emergency department (ED) handles everything from minor injuries to life-threatening conditions. The ED is also a cornerstone of the services the hospital provides as a **Cardiac Interventional Center**. Patients having a heart attack are routed here directly so they can receive lifesaving emergency coronary angioplasty in the hospital's cardiac catheterization lab.

FROM THE FIELD

If a heart attack patient comes into the ED via ambulance, ED staff can begin to assess the patient's condition before the emergency medical services (EMS) field unit even arrives at the hospital. Thanks to a gift from the Francis P. Chiamonte Foundation, local EMS units are equipped with wireless technology that transmits electrocardiogram (EKG) readings to the hospital. Paramedics can send those readings, which are used to diagnose heart attacks, directly to the ED from the field.

An ED physician reads the incoming EKG results immediately, confirms the diagnosis of a heart attack, and activates the cardiac interventional team. The team is assembled and waiting when the patient arrives, and the patient can go directly to the cath lab.

This gives patients who come to Southern Maryland Hospital an important advantage: time. Time can be the difference between severe disability or death from a heart attack and a near-normal quality of life after recovery. Every minute that

is saved means less damage to the heart muscle. The hospital's ED plays a critical role in its quick treatment of heart attack patients.

STREAMLINED PROCESSES

Many patients come to the ED on their own rather than traveling via ambulance.

"There are many steps involved in getting a patient who walks through the door into the cath lab," said Eric McDonald, MD, chair of emergency medicine. "However, we have developed a set of streamlined processes designed to identify the patient effectively, get the patient's EKG reviewed by a physician, and send the patient to the cath lab for treatment."

Often, patients who walk into the ED are unsure what their symptoms mean.

"It's important for people to realize that heart attacks don't always present with chest pain," Dr. McDonald said. "The symptoms can be subtle. Shortness of breath, weakness, sweating, profound nausea, or chest tightness could all be symptoms of a heart attack."

Dr. McDonald urges patients having these symptoms to seek medical evaluation. Southern Maryland Hospital's ED is ready to ensure that heart attack patients receive quick access to the care they need every hour of every day.

For a free emergency medical information card, call (301) 877-5700. The emergency medical information card is a quick reference of your medical information and medications that can be used by you, your family, and caregivers in an emergency.

DEMYSTIFYING CARDIAC TESTS

Cardiologist Nelson Benjers, MD, tells patients what to expect from some common diagnostic cardiac tests.



Cardiologist Nelson Benjers, MD

Cardiologist Nelson Benjers, MD, uses a variety of diagnostic tests as he helps patients improve their cardiovascular health. “My practice is mainly preventive cardiology,” Dr. Benjers said. “My goal is to identify patients while they are still at risk and to help keep them from ever needing interventions like angioplasty and bypass surgery.”

- **History and physical.** The first step, according to Dr. Benjers, is to talk with patients about their medical history, including any family history of heart disease, stroke, or diabetes. Then he conducts a thorough physical exam, listening to the heart and blood vessels as well as checking circulation throughout the body.
- **Blood tests.** He also orders blood tests, including blood sugar and cholesterol levels as well as testing for markers that may indicate heart disease, such as high sensitivity C-reactive protein.
- **Stress tests.** If a patient is experiencing chest discomfort, Dr. Benjers sends his patients to the Heart Center at Southern Maryland Hospital for

additional outpatient testing. A cardiac stress test evaluates the heart’s function during the exertion of exercise using cardiac monitors and a treadmill.

- **Echocardiogram.** An echocardiogram uses ultrasound technology to look at the structure of the heart and the way blood flows through its chambers.
- **Holter monitor.** A 24-hour Holter monitor checks for irregular heartbeats (arrhythmia), which could result in sudden cardiac death if left untreated.
- **Sleep lab.** Dr. Benjers sends patients to the hospital’s sleep lab for a sleep study if he suspects sleep apnea, which, he notes, is a major factor in heart failure.

“I encourage my patients to use the Heart Center at Southern Maryland Hospital for all diagnostic cardiac tests,” Dr. Benjers said. “It offers accurate, high-quality testing that gives me the information I need to help safeguard my patients’ heart health.”

For more information or to schedule an appointment with cardiologist Nelson Benjers, MD, please call (301) 868-0110.

SOUTHERN MARYLAND HOSPITAL RESOURCE GUIDE

For more details on these programs and others, please call the phone numbers listed or visit our website: **SouthernMarylandHospital.com**

CLASSES

CPR Healthcare Provider Class (Certification/Recertification)

Open to the public.
Preregistration required.
(301) 877-4880

The First Year of Life

One Saturday a month from
9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Hospital Library (ground floor)
Registration required.
(301) 877-5740

Breastfeeding Classes

One Saturday every month from
12:30 to 3:30 p.m.
Hospital Library (ground floor)
Registration required.
(301) 877-5740

Prenatal Childbirth Class

Monday through Thursday one
day a week for four weeks from
7 to 9:15 p.m., or one Saturday
per month from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Hospital Library (ground floor)
Registration required.
(301) 877-5740

Parenting Class

12-week class.
Call for schedule **(301) 909-2318**.

Weight Management for a Healthy Lifestyle – Free!

Second and fourth Mondays
of every month, 11 a.m. to noon.
Colony South Hotel
No registration required.
Call **(301) 877-5700** for information.

Strive for Success Adult Weight Management Program **(301) 877-4661**

SUPPORT GROUPS

Alzheimer's Support Group – Free!

Second Thursday of every month,
5 to 6 p.m.
Hospital Library (ground floor)
Call **(301) 877-5700** for information.

Breast Cancer Support Group – Free!

Third Thursday of every month from
6:30 to 8 p.m.
Colony South Hotel
Call **(703) 437-9595** to register.

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD) Syndrome Support Group – Free!

Hospital Solarium (first floor)
Call **(301) 645-0786** for a schedule.

NAMI/Mental Health Support Group for family members and caregivers – Free!

Second Tuesday of every month from
6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Colony South Hotel &
Conference Center
Call **(301) 856-8221** for information.

The Cardiac, Respiratory, and Sleep Apnea Education group (CARE and AWAKE) – Free!

Cardiopulmonary Rehab Department
Four times a year.
Call **(301) 877-7370** for a schedule.

Stroke Support Group – Free!

Fourth Thursday of every month,
5 to 6 p.m.
Southern Maryland Hospital
Center Library
Registration required. Please call
(301) 877-5858.

Prostate Cancer Support Group – Free!

Second Tuesday of every month,
6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Colony South Hotel &
Conference Center
Call **(301) 877-5700** for information.

OTHER PROGRAMS

Maternal Child Health Center Tours

Hospital Solarium (first floor)
Call **(301) 877-5740** for information.

Ask the Doctor Lecture Series – Free!

Learn the latest information on a
host of medical topics by attending a
lecture series featuring some of the
top medical and surgical specialists
in the Washington, D.C. area.
6:30–8 p.m.
Colony South Hotel &
Conference Center
Both the schedule and topic change
regularly, so call **(301) 877-5700** or
visit SouthernMarylandHospital.com
for more information.

Blood Pressure Screenings

Thursdays from noon to 4 p.m.
Hospital Solarium
Call **(301) 877-5700** for information.

Car Seat Safety Check – Free!

Colony South Hotel Parking Lot
Call **(301) 877-5740** for information.

Southern Maryland Hospital Transport Van – Free! **(301) 877-HELP (877-4357)**

Hospital Volunteer Program **(301) 877-4553**

Mall Walkers Programs – Free!

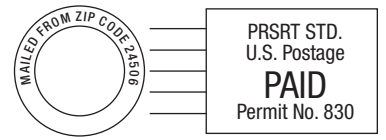
St. Charles Towne Center and
The Centre at Forestville
Supervised, all-weather walking with
FREE blood pressure monitoring.
Call **(301) 877-5700**.

Freedom From Smoking

Eight-week program,
6 to 7:30 p.m.
Cardiopulmonary Rehab Department
Call **(301) 877-7370** to register.

Learn About the Minimally Invasive LAP-BAND® Procedure

Dr. Amin will perform free walk-in
assessments Monday through
Friday from 8 a.m. to noon and from
1 to 3 p.m. For information about
upcoming seminars on this topic,
contact **(301) 877-5700**.



TOP DOC: NORMAN LESTER, MD

Southern Maryland Hospital is delighted to welcome Norman Lester, MD, board-certified otolaryngologist, who recently opened a practice in Clinton.

Dr. Lester completed his medical education, internship, and residency training in the University of Maryland Medical System. His particular interests include the diagnosis and management of diseases and disorders of the salivary glands and thyroid surgery, as well as hearing, sinus, and nasal disorders.

Repeatedly honored as a Top Doctor by *Washingtonian* magazine, Dr. Lester is dedicated to giving each patient personal attention and schedules fewer patients overall in order to give each person ample time.

“Instead of rushing around from appointment to appointment, I like to get to know my patients,” Dr. Lester said.

Although otolaryngology is a surgical specialty, Dr. Lester approaches his patients as a physician first and a surgeon second.

“I treat people medically first to ensure that we consider every option before contemplating surgery,” Dr. Lester said.

Patients respond positively to this conservative surgical philosophy. Dr. Lester considers the whole individual, giving patients advice with the goal of helping them lead healthier lives in general.

“My patients are never just an ear, a nose, or a throat to me,” he said.

To schedule an appointment with Norman Lester, MD, and Clinton Ear, Nose, and Throat, please call (301) 877-0891.



Norman Lester, MD