CHESTER COUNTY HOSPITAL UNVEILS Transfusionless Heart Surgery

TECHNIQUE PIONEERED AT PENNSYLVANIA HOSPITAL MAKES ITS SUBURBAN DEBUT

Last spring, Chester County Hospital (CCH) began offering transfusionless heart surgery to help meet growing demand in the Greater Philadelphia region. There are few cardiac surgery programs in the suburbs that feature these innovative surgical techniques that help patients get the care they need without the use of blood or blood products. This offering can benefit many patients, but is vital for culturally appropriate care for patients with certain religious beliefs, particularly Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses adhere to a literal interpretation of a Bible scripture, Acts 15:29, that says, “to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled...” This is a large population with unique health care needs in the Philadelphia region, including the Chester County suburbs. “Our position is that we refuse whole blood and its four major components: red cells, white cells, plasma, and platelets,” says Terry Robinson, a minister with the Jehovah’s Witnesses. “In terms of transfusionless cardiovascular surgery, I think he’s the best in this region. Rather than say that Jehovah’s Witnesses were outside of the norm, I decided all the cardiac surgeries I performed, I was going to approach them as if the patients were Jehovah’s Witnesses,” he says.

Practice (and More Practice) Makes Perfect

Over a career that has spanned the better part of the last three decades, Furukawa has risen through the ranks of the premier transfusionless heart surgeons in the country. “In terms of transfusionless cardiovascular surgery, I think he’s the best in this region. He certainly has the most experience,” Ford says. “I consult with Jehovah’s Witness patients all over the country, and he is the only name I give out for cardiovascular surgery. On top of his expertise, he’s also kind, compassionate, and respectful.”

Several years ago, Furukawa made a critical decision that significantly impacted his approach to surgery — and is now guiding how transfusionless heart surgeons will be performed at Chester County Hospital. “Rather than say that Jehovah’s Witnesses were outside of the norm, I decided all the cardiac surgeries I performed, I was going to approach them as if the patients were Jehovah’s Witnesses,” he says.

Jehovah’s Witnesses only represented about five percent of the cases at Pennsylvania Hospital at the time, but if we were to only do a Jehovah’s Witness case once in a while, and we had to change the entire team’s practice each time, there would be more room for error. “So I decided that for every case, we would do all the things necessary to minimize blood transfusions,” he continues. “That would be our new standard of care.”

While Furukawa is a central component of the new transfusionless heart surgery program at Chester County Hospital, caring for the patients is a team effort. Much of his motivation for aiming to approach every heart surgery as a transfusionless procedure was tied to fostering cohesion among his support staff. “It’s not the actual surgery that’s complex. It’s just the mentality, the culture that needs to be established from the beginning to the end that’s different from conventional circumstances,” he says.

He began assembling and training his support staff at CCH with the help of Robinson and Ford more than a year ago, in April 2020.

Research proves that Penn Medicine’s pandemic innovations paid off in a big way.

CARE INNOVATIONS SAVED COVID PATIENTS’ LIVES

Nearly two years since COVID-19 first appeared, we have a lot more tools than ever before to tackle the pandemic, including highly effective vaccines and a much better understanding of the disease and its treatments. Now, too, we have the evidence to show that a trio of bright ideas implemented at Penn Medicine to provide the right care in the right places have saved lives and greatly improved the way we care for patients with COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Triage Tool

Released at the height of the Spring 2020 surge, the COVID-19 Triage Tool was developed to give patients an easy, effective way to determine what level of care (if any) they may need in response to COVID-19 exposure or symptoms. It was also designed to ease the burden on health care providers by steering patients with mild cases away from emergency departments and escalating sicker patients to the right level of care. A study in Applied Clinical Informatics noted that the Triage Tool, which comprised a Frequently Asked Questions page and an automated chatbot, categorized the overwhelming majority of patients who used it into the appropriate severity level. For those patients whose symptoms warranted immediate attention, the tool, integrated into Penn Medicine’s systems, directed them where to turn for next steps, instead of toward a call center which would only have to repeat the screening. The researchers say symptom-checking tools like this — whether for COVID or another health crisis—should both improve patients’ experience and safely free up call centers and clinicians to attend to the patients who are most in need.

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Transfusionless Heart Surgery techniques and methods introduced to help with Furukawa, Aylsworth and the team. After performing several procedures in the preoperative, interoperative, and postoperative periods, they sought ways to bring everyone on the same page. “We’ve spent the last year working towards getting everyone on the same page,” Aylsworth shares. Nonetheless, patients continued to need transfusions, “A Paradox,” as Dr. Satoshi Furukawa says.

The team members felt gratified to be acknowledged for their efforts. “I felt honored to be part of this team of committed individuals who are focused on keeping patients safe,” said Drayton. “I’m humbled to have contributed to these initiatives and implementing them in our units.”

Awards Winners
Sara Cohen, MSN, RN, RNC-NIC, NP-BC, WTA
Clinical Nurse Education Specialist
Deborah Drayton, EdD, MSN, RN, NE-BC
Clinical Director of Medical-Surgical & Oncology
Lauren Ellis, MSN, RN, CEN, NE-BC
Nurse Manager of Emergency Department
Victoria Fisher, RN, Behavioral Health Nurse
Stephanie Hollister, MSN, RN
Behavioral Health Nurse
Patty Inacker, DSW, MBA, LCSW
Behavioral Health Service Line Administrator
Maria Joyce, MSN, RN
Resource Manager for Nursing Network Center
Humza Khalid, MD, Medicine Resident
Philip Landis, DNP, RN, CEN, NP-BC
Clinical Nurse Education Specialist
Patricia Maguire, MSN, RN, CMSRN, CNL
5 Cathcart Nurse
Lisa McNamara, MSN, RN, PMHCNS-BC
Clinical Nurse 4, Behavioral Health
Emily Murphy, BSN, RN
5 Cathcart Staff Nurse
Cynthia Onorevelo, LSW, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Clinical Resource Management
Angela Ross, MSN, RN, NCN
5 Cathcart Nurse Manager
Joanne Ruggiero, MSN, RN, MA, NE-BC, CMSRN
Former Clinical Director for Women’s & Behavioral Health Services
Florrie Vaneck, MSN, RN, NE-BC
Director, Nursing Education, Practice, and Magnet Program
Frank Visco, BSN, RN, RN-BC
6 Cathcart Nurse

Pennsylvania Hospital’s (PAH) Quality and Safety Shared Governance Committee presented the 6th annual Josie King Hero Award to a group of staff making a difference in patient safety. Established by the Josie King Foundation — a national organization focused on preventing medical errors and improving care — the award recognizes clinical staff who have demonstrated a commitment to maintaining a culture of safety in their workplace.

This year, the award was presented to a group of employees from the Emergency Department, Behavioral Health, Social Work, and Medical-Surgical, among other departments. Through a collaborative effort, the group developed a brochure centered around care for any patient at risk (PAR) for suicide, self-harm, or harm to others, or for opioid or substance use disorders or elopement (leaving a hospital unsupervised and undetected).

“We conducted a number of root cause analyses and found that the one major factor contributing to patient elopement at hospitals was a gap in communication at the time of handoff of care from one caregiver to another,” said Deborah Drayton, EdD, MSN, RN, NE-BC, clinical director of Medical-Surgical & Oncology, and a member of the PAR workgroup. “We wanted to create a document that would contain all necessary information and protocols for caring for a PAR as staff transition from day to night shifts.”

Displayed on each unit’s safety review board, the brochures can be retrieved by any staff in need of PAR guidance. The brochure provides a checklist of the protocols in caring for a PAR, in addition to best practices for creating a safe environment in a patient room.

To introduce this guide to staff, the workgroup created a virtual escape room. Through accessing a Web link, nursing staff could virtually enter a PAH patient room with the mission to identify ligature risks — anything with a cord, rope, or other material that posed a risk of strangulation — existing in the room. Once all risks were identified, the caregiver could move onto the next level to identify additional risks in another room.

The brochure also offers instruction on using PAR-specific Kardex — an assessment tool containing details about a patient’s care that an employee will give to a colleague following their shift. “To quickly identify a PAR, we would use a gray Kardex, rather than our typical white handoff tool,” said Drayton. “We also use gray gowns for PAR, color-coordinated with their Kardex, and add an image of a gray ribbon placed next to the patient’s room number on the safety board as an alert to all staff working on the unit.”

The workgroup received the Josie King Hero Award at a ceremony on September 28, where they presented the PAR brochure to in-person attendees and those attending online. They received a plaque to acknowledge their efforts in patient safety, which is displayed on 5 Cathcart.

The team members felt gratified to be recognized for their efforts. “I felt honored to be part of this team of committed individuals who are focused on keeping patients safe,” said Drayton. “I’m humbled to have contributed to these initiatives and implementing them in our units.”

Chester County Hospital Unveils Transfusionless Heart Surgery

Technique Pioneered at Pennsylvania Hospital Makes Its Suburban Debut

“Dr. Satoshi Furukawa

“We were excited to expand our cardiac surgical offerings, but recognized the challenge in learning the new ways to perform these procedures without transfusions,” Aylsworth shares.

Transfusions are common in cardiac surgery; he adds. “At most institutions, the cardiac surgical service tends to be one of the largest consumers of blood products.” Nonetheless, the team was eager to learn and bring this offering to their patients.

“We spent the last year working toward getting everyone on the same page,” Furukawa says. “There are nuances in the preoperative, intraoperative, and postoperative contexts that need to be accounted for.”

After performing several procedures with Furukawa, Aylsworth and the team quickly developed a comfort level with the techniques and methods introduced to help reduce intraoperative blood loss.

“We’re Constantly, Consciously Building Trust”

“Part of what makes our program special is the ability to leverage world-renowned specialists in bloodless medicine, like Dr. Ford and her team, to work collaboratively with Dr. Furukawa to optimize care for the Jehovah’s Witness patient population,” Aylsworth notes.

Program coordinator Joseph Riddick Jr. oversees Ford’s trusted patient care coordinators, the vital links between patient and doctor at the center. Riddick is also the point person and link to preoperative medical optimization for all CCH transfusionless heart surgery patients. Last September, he entered his 22nd year at the center. Respect for patients’ beliefs and wishes permeates all aspects of the care administered there, as it will with Furukawa’s new program at Chester County Hospital. It falls to the coordinators, though, to ensure that understanding is formalized.

Upon diagnosis and the recommendation of surgery, Riddick carefully walks through an extensive documentation process with the patient, explaining medical terminology and the implications of certain procedures and blood fractions, as needed. The process is designed to make clear and formalize the patient’s intent at every phase, before, during, and after surgery, removing any chance of miscommunication or misinterpretation about the type of care they are or are not willing to receive. Once complete, everything is registered in the patient’s electronic medical record, which is accessible to every health care provider in the Penn Medicine system.

Throughout that process and beyond, Riddick says the patient care coordinators act foremost as an advocate for the patient. “We want to make sure they know they have someone they can count on to respect their wishes and protect their position until they’re discharged, ” he says. “We’re constantly, consciously building trust.”

Patients build that trust with Penn Medicine as an entire system. Even those patients who have transfusionless heart surgery at CCH begin their care at Pennsylvania Hospital, where they first meet with Ford, a hematologist. Under her care, patients may undergo treatment to increase their red blood cell production or to manage their bleeding risk prior to surgery.

New Advancements

Furukawa says this unique approach to heart surgery is beneficial to his patients. He is working on improving care for patients in other ways, too.

In conjunction with the transfusionless heart surgeries, Furukawa has been honing a developing approach called Early Recovery After Cardiac Surgery. The goal is straightforward: to put patients in a position where they’re eligible to be discharged sooner after their surgery. Patients who undergo transfusionless surgery are at an advantage in this regard, he says. “The fewer transfusions we end up doing, the more chances we have for patients to go home sooner,” Furukawa says. “Transfusions can help to a degree, but complications are more prevalent in transfused patients. So it all works together.”
**Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health Supports LANCASTER PRIDE FESTIVAL**

Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health supports the health and well-being of all the communities we serve, including those within the LGBTQ+ community. Lancaster Pride, or “LancPride,” celebrates Lancaster’s LGBTQ+ community, empowers members and their allies, and promotes the message that everyone in Lancaster County, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, can live fulfilling lives.

Since 2008, Lancaster Pride has been a yearly event that attracts thousands of attendees and seeks to enrich the community while raising awareness of issues affecting LGBTQ+ individuals. LancPride 2021 was held on Oct. 24 at Clipper Stadium, home of the Lancaster Barnstormers baseball team, and drew around 100 vendors and talented performers from across the region.

LG Health has supported LancPride for multiple years — this year, as a top-level sponsor. During LancPride, Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health Physicians’ Comprehensive Care team administered a dozen rapid HIV tests and the Community Health and Wellness Team completed 40 flu shots. In addition, members of the Comprehensive Care team and employee volunteers distributed goodie bags that included branded masks, pens, stickers and a LGBTQ+ “hiring card.” The hiring card included information about medical services relevant to the LGBTQ+ community and job opportunities within LG Health.

“LG Health’s mission cannot be fully achieved without an environment that is inclusive of all communities, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, race or cultural identity”, said Larry Strassner, PhD, MSN, RN, FACHE, chief nursing officer at Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health.

“We were happy to partner with LancPride as it aligns with our efforts to create a more diverse and equitable Lancaster County and to serve a community that needs access to medical care and advancement opportunities,” he continued.

Strassner and his husband David Reed volunteered at the LG Health table. While attendees visited the booth they were invited to fill out a Community Health Needs Assessment survey to help identify health needs in our communities.

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**Finding the Silver Lining, or Not**

Maintain Don’t Gain: Nutrition

The Wellfocused team will share tips and tricks to keep your activity levels up even when life seems to get too far off track.

Maintain Don’t Gain: Fitness

Learn ways to keep your activity levels up even when life seems to get in the way. The Wellfocused team will share ideas to stay motivated and active, especially as the days get shorter and the weather gets colder.

Holiday Fun with Wellfocused

Grab your coffee or your lunch and join the Wellfocused team as we take a break from work and connect with each other. Take some of these ideas home with you to connect with your family and friends on another level.

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**The Penn’s Got Talent competition spotlighted colleagues’ hidden gifts.**

Did you know that your Penn Medicine colleagues include gifted singers, musicians, beldancers, and even equestrian athletes? All of these talents and more were on display in the virtual talent show Penn’s Got Talent, one of the many highlights of Penn Medicine Experience (PMX) Week observed across the Health System in late October.

Hosted by Professor of Clinical Orthopedic Surgery (and erstwhile standup comedian, with the accompaniment of a laugh track) John Kelly, MD, the roughly half-hour show spotlighted eight Penn Medicine clinicians and staff in an effort to help viewers relax from the stress of the past few years.

Viewers watched the performances at their leisure and cast their votes online. And the winner is Natalie Havens, executive assistant with Good Shepherd Penn Partners at Penn Medicine Rittenhouse, with her performance of the aria “En vain pour éviter” from the opera Carmen (pictured above).

Each of the finalists received a swag box with Penn Medicine gear (blanket, baseball cap, coffee mug, etc.) in recognition of the hard work that went into their performances.

Read more about Havens’ remarkable story in this month’s issue of HUPdate! And watch the talent show at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0RzcQJClp](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0RzcQJClp).
CARE INNOVATIONS SAVED COVID PATIENTS’ LIVES

Research proves that Penn Medicine’s pandemic innovations paid off in a big way.

The winners of Penn Presbyterian Medical Center (PPMC)’s fall mask design contest enjoyed expressing their creative ideas to spread the word that masks remain an important part of the uniform as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

Winners of the three major categories — “Most Creative,” “Best Message,” and “Best Overall Design” — were awarded $250, and all the winners had their designs shared in the “5 Things You Need to Know” email that goes out to staff. Volunteer Rachel Greenslatt was also recognized for her colorful rendering of PPMC.

“Voting for the winners was very challenging but, in the end, PPMC senior leaders chose those designs that would appeal to the widest audience of Presbyterian staff members,” said Suzanne Smith, MEA, COVD director of Patient Experience.

Radiology Film Room Clerk LeTanya Brown was excited to win for “Best Message” with her bold red mask on which she wrote in silver, “MAKE LIFE NORMAL AGAIN PLEASE!” She surrounded the words with pearls and added seashells in the corners because her daughter loves the beach. Brown, who dreamed of being a famous fashion designer, said that by “normal,” she meant things like cheering at her daughter’s fourth-grade graduation.

“It hurt so bad, because as a single parent, you look forward to things like this,” Brown said. “I cannot get that fourth-grade graduation back.”

She said she has worn her mask and people have connected with the message.

“Most Creative” went to Roseanne Wu, MD, MPH, an associate professor of Clinical Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. She took inspiration from the University of Pennsylvania shield, turning the chevron into two syringes to symbolize the COVID-19 vaccine. Surrounding the shield are scattered COVID virus particles.

“I wanted to exercise my creative side while designing a mask that would speak to our experience with COVID-19,” Wu said. “I also wanted to emphasize the importance of the vaccine and public health measures for controlling the virus.”

Overall winner Volunteer Services Coordinator Evan Lounidas opted for a clean and simple design, which also featured the Penn shield, and the message, “Keeping Our Patients and Community Safe.” As the overall design winner, he also received a lunch party for his department.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS!