

Doctors' Day: Cardiac institute switches to physician model

By DEBRA WOOD

Following the successful path of its pediatric cardiology program, Memorial Healthcare System in Hollywood has transformed its Memorial Cardiac and Vascular Institute to an employed-physician model, recruiting two cardiovascular surgeons from central Florida to build the program.

"We are faced in adult heart surgery with an increasing complexity of patients who are older, who are sicker and who have more valvular heart disease," said Richard Perryman, MD, chief of cardiac surgery for both the adult and pediatric programs. "That requires a more coordinated, programmatic approach, rather than surgeons coming in, operating and going back to their offices."

Perryman assumed leadership for the adult program last year after serving for five years as chief of pediatric cardiac surgery at Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, part of the Memorial

system, which employs two cardiovascular surgeons and three cardiologists.

"The hospital-based models have shown we can deliver a more consistent standard of care, because we are always here," Perryman said. "We are a more cohesive entity, because we do not compete. We are here for the patient, with no economic distractions or interpersonal restrictions."

heart surgery, adult as well as pediatric, and aortic surgery.

"Certain subsets of patients can be channeled to certain individuals, rather than everyone doing everything," Perryman said. "It's more of an academic model."

Richard Cartledge, MD, who has been on staff, will be able to maintain his private practice and operate at

(and can be reached at 954-986-6356).

Perryman said South Florida's medical malpractice climate did not adversely affect the health system's ability to recruit new cardiac surgeons, because as a public hospital, it offers employees sovereign immunity.

"It helps, and people like Florida," Perryman said.

Memorial's public status, with the associated medico-legal benefits, and its reputation convinced Gary Allen, MD, chief of the adult cardiac surgery program at Memorial, to move south after serving as medical director of the Heart Institute and the department of cardiothoracic surgery at Osceola Regional Medical Center in Kissimmee. Allen specializes in off-pump coronary bypass graft and aortic valve surgeries.

"In South Florida, off-pump is only done about five percent of the time. We feel we will be able to do it 80 percent

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Perryman said it also allows the institute the luxury of letting individual surgeons develop different interests in terms of adult heart surgery. He will continue to perform congenital

Memorial. To grow the program, Memorial hired two experienced cardiovascular surgeons. The team will see patients at Memorial Regional Hospital and Memorial Hospital West

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or 90 percent of the time," said Allen, adding that patients tend to recover more quickly and go home sooner after off-pump procedures.

Memorial's cardiac surgery program has introduced multidisciplinary rounding to facilitate communication and discharge planning and improve quality of care.

Cardiothoracic surgeon Michael Cortelli, MD, will join Memorial's program in April. He currently is chairman of the department of cardiology and cardiovascular surgery at Brandon

Regional Hospital in Brandon. His specialties include minimally invasive surgical ablation of atrial fibrillation and mitral valve surgery. He indicated that a staff model will let the team develop greater expertise in certain procedures, which should prove especially beneficial for patients with more difficult problems.

"We want to provide comprehensive, expert service to the patients of Broward County and to have this become a regional referral center for cardiac surgery," Cortelli said. "We all bring experience and expertise to the program." ♦

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