

Sutureless Summit at MMC Draws Providers from around the Globe



The 2019 Sutureless Summit, hosted by MaineHealth Education Services, Maine Medical Partners cardiothoracic surgeons and cardiovascular staff on June 20 - 21, was one of the first live-case conferences at Maine Medical Center (MMC). Course faculty included Scott Buchanan, MD; Michael McGrath, MD; Reed Quinn, MD, program director; Walter DeNino, MD; David Robaczekski, MD; Justin Poltak, MD; David Butzel, MD; and Michael Robich, MD. The summit provided intensive presentations of

technical considerations for advanced techniques employed in the use of sutureless aortic valve technology. More than 50 surgeons were part of the summit, including providers from Kenya, Japan, Italy and Canada. Dr. Robich answered questions about the importance of the event:

What does it mean for MMC to host an event like this that draws surgeons from different countries?

Dr. Robich: “We are one of the leading centers in the country using sutureless valve technology. There are a number of advantages to using these valves; they

- shorten the time on a heart-lung machine
- result in excellent outcomes
- provide an ideal platform for future transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR)
- facilitate minimally invasive approaches, which can be a good alternative for patients who are not candidates for TAVR.

This summit was a culmination of our work to build an advanced valve program, and it offered surgeons from around the world an opportunity to learn about this technology and how MMC has successfully implemented these new valves into our practice.”

How does a wet lab support positive outcomes for patients?

Dr. Robich: “The new valve platforms require different skills to implant. The wet lab offered participating surgeons the opportunity to practice and hone their skills. It is critical that surgeons new to these valves fully understand the implantation techniques to achieve excellent outcomes for patients. We taught these techniques based on our extensive experience at MMC.”



What was learned in live surgical cases? How does this type of teaching support cardiac surgeons?

Dr. Robich: “Live surgical cases offer an opportunity for visiting surgeons to see the valves being used. There are many considerations in the use of these valves -- watching implantation will best illustrate many of the issues.

We demonstrated some of the common situations where these valve technologies are most advantageous, and there was a panel of international experts to add to the conversation. We had a robust discussion from surgeons who have experience with these valves and those who are interested in incorporating them into their practice. The world of valve surgery is evolving quickly, and we feel it is important to share our experience with our colleagues.