

June 3, 2020

To Our Valued Colleagues,

Given the events we have all faced over the last two months, we want to update you on the status of our cardiovascular services at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) and Rutgers Health while highlighting the measures that we have taken to ensure our patients' safety as we resume elective services.

Per the NJ Governor's Executive Order 145 effective on **May 26, 2020**, RWJUH has resumed full cardiovascular services including open heart, minimally invasive, robotic, and transcatheter valve procedures, as well as our advanced heart failure, heart transplant, and mechanical circulatory support programs.

Further, to ensure the safest and highest quality cardiovascular care, RWJUH has implemented **new preventive protocols and practices** including:

- Ongoing COVID-19 screening and universal testing for all cardiac surgery patients and RWJUH staff
- In-hospital temperature screening checkpoints with no-touch thermometers
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times including facial protection for patients and staff
- Limiting patient exposure to designated cardiac care areas and essential staff
- Rigorous sanitation procedures including Tru-D UV Light Disinfection

Our **consultation and evaluation, treatment and discharge process** are focused on greater convenience, improved access and time to treatment to support minimizing the duration of time in the hospital. This includes:

- Telehealth, including virtual medical consultations both prior to and following procedures
- Streamlined "one-stop shop" for pre-admission testing
- Designated parking and separate entrance for patients visiting the hospital
- Regular status updates to families regarding their loved ones
- Video chat (e.g. FaceTime, Skype) options to maximize patients' connections with families while in the hospital
- Continuous, remote home cardiac monitoring of patients after discharge

The RWJUH Cardiac Surgery program is a recognized national leader in **Rapid Recovery Protocols** designed to decrease the amount of time each patient spends in the hospital; faster return home; and faster return to function. As a result, our patients' hospital stay after cardiac surgery is notably less than national benchmarks. This is accomplished through an emphasis on:

- Less-invasive approaches to open heart surgery, including minimally-invasive valve surgery and minimally-invasive and robotic bypass surgery
- Same-day discharge after catheter-based cardiac treatments, including TAVR, MitraClip, and Watchman
- Use of Enhanced Recovery After Cardiac Surgery (ERAS) post-operative protocols focused on minimizing pain, minimizing opioids, rapid mobilization, and maximizing nutrition

One Robert Wood Johnson Place  
New Brunswick, NJ 08903

732.828.3000

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In addition, as New Jersey's premier academic medical center, RWJUH patients have access to cutting-edge therapies that are not offered elsewhere through our numerous **clinical trials**. These include therapies for:

- Mitral Regurgitation: transcatheter mitral valve replacement (SUMMIT-Tendyne) and transcatheter mitral valve repair (Clasp/PASCAL)
- Aortic Stenosis: TAVR for patients with symptomatic (Accurate) and asymptomatic aortic stenosis (EARLY TAVR)
- Aortic Insufficiency: TAVR for aortic insufficiency (JenaValve-AR)
- Tricuspid regurgitation: transcatheter tricuspid valve repair (Clasp/PASCAL)

Given our institution's emphasis on preventive and safety measures, minimally invasive approaches and rapid recovery, and our affiliation with Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School an international leader in COVID-19 testing, we firmly believe that RWJUH is uniquely positioned to provide you with the safest and highest quality cardiovascular care in the region.

### **For Elective Outpatient Care**

Please contact the Division of Cardiac Surgery during regular business hours at **(732) 235-7231** to schedule outpatient or TeleHealth Consultation. We are committed to providing you with an appointment within 7 days of your request.

### **For Urgent Care, Inpatient Transfer, or During Off-Hours**

Contact the RWJUH Transfer Center at **(732) 481-8011** or our physicians directly to facilitate urgent or emergent care.

Thank you,



Leonard Lee, MD  
Chair and Professor of  
Surgery



Mark J. Russo, MD, MS  
Associate Professor of  
Surgery  
Chief, Cardiac Surgery  
Director, Structural Heart  
Disease



Anthony Lemaire, MD  
Associate Professor of  
Surgery



Hirohisa Ikegami, MD  
Assistant Professor of  
Surgery  
Director, Heart Transplant  
and Mechanical Support

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