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Heart Center Implants 700th WATCHMAN™, Uses New FLX™ Pro

*Dropping blood thinners, low complication rates chief reason AFib sufferers pick Health First's
Holmes Regional.*

BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA – Heart surgeons at Health First's Holmes Regional Medical Center on Friday successfully implanted its 700th WATCHMAN™ device and became the first on the East Coast between Jacksonville and south Florida to use the WATCHMAN FLX Pro.

The WATCHMAN is a diaphragm that walls off the left atrial appendage of the heart, the source of deadly blood clots, especially in people with atrial fibrillation (AFib). At Holmes Regional, this is done in a minimally invasive procedure.

On Friday, Health First Cardiac Electrophysiologist Vishal Patel, MD, and Interventional Cardiologist Thierry Momplaisir, MD, teamed up on several of the procedures.

“To me, this shows a commitment by the health system to provide excellent care to our community, better options for our patients, and with very little complications,” Dr. Momplaisir said.

“We take on complicated patients who have been turned away,” said Dr. Patel.

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Several of the procedures on Friday were guided by intracardiac echocardiography (ICE), an alternate modality when the more common transesophageal echocardiography is complicated by other conditions.

The breadth of structural heart procedures performed at the Heart Center, along with its reputation for low rates of complications, makes Holmes Regional an excellent choice for many in the region, Dr. Patel said.

“Especially for patients who are high risk, they should know that we have very robust electrophysiology, valve replacement and heart surgery programs right here in Brevard County.”

For AFib patients who are at risk for stroke, the time-tested therapy is a prescription for blood thinners that prevent clotting, but these drugs have onerous side effects, including intracranial bleeding, and for people with certain risk factors such as high blood pressure, it’s not advised.

The WATCHMAN device can end reliance on blood thinners – “it reduces mortality,” says Dr. Momplaisir. It may also save patients hundreds of dollars a month in prescription costs.

“The procedure is very low-risk, and we usually send people home within 24 hours.”

Dr. Patel said AFib patients should know about Holmes Regional’s track record with WATCHMAN devices. It’s one more way the Heart Center is raising the quality of life in the area. Patients who can get quality care without going far are more likely to get it early, when outcomes are best.

“When their follow ups, their preops, when all of the visits are taken care of locally, there’s a sense of comfort and a sense of familiarity that both patients and physicians should want.”

According to [WATCHMAN FLX™ Pro manufacturer Boston Scientific Corp.](#), the new device features a state-of-the-art coating that speeds endothelialization (tissue healing over the implant), radiopaque markers for better visualization during the procedure, and a 25% larger device for patients with large appendages.

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CAPTIONS

HEALTH FIRST CARDIOVASCULAR Invasive Specialist Chad Spikes, Interventional Cardiologist Thierry Momplaisir, MD, and Cardiac Electrophysiologist Vishal Patel, MD, during a WATCHMAN™ implant procedure on March 1, 2024.



A WATCHMAN™ is a diaphragm that seals the left atrial appendage of the heart, the source of deadly blood clots, especially in people with atrial fibrillation (AFib). At Holmes Regional, this is implanted in a minimally invasive procedure.



At Health First's Holmes Regional Medical Center, many structural heart procedures are offered in minimally invasive procedures with short recoveries. The WATCHMAN™ "is very low-risk," says Dr. Thierry Momplaisir, "and we usually send people home within 24 hours."



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ROBERT "BO" Herrington is a territory manager at Boston Scientific Corp. He was on hand March 1, 2024, to mark the 700th WATCHMAN procedure with Health First Cardiac Electrophysiologist Vishal Patel, MD, and Interventional Cardiologist Thierry Momplaisir, MD.



