

The Heart of the Matter

By Susan I. Shiber

Photography by Kelly O'Keefe

Make a fist and ponder its size. Just a few square inches, right? Yet something this small – your heart – can mean the difference between life and death. The organ and its chambers are responsible for circulating blood throughout the body, acting as a mighty network to keep people up and running.

Phoenixville Hospital is responsible for keeping those hearts healthy, acting as a powerful network of diagnostic, intervention, surgery, rehabilitation, and preventive services. The comprehensive community facility established an advanced Heart Center in 2003. That year, Dr. Kathleen Magness, chief, division of Cardiology, performed its first cardiac intervention in the hospital's cath lab. Dr. Hans M. Haupt, who joined the staff as director of cardiothoracic surgery through an affiliation with University of Pennsylvania Health System, did inaugural open heart surgery the next day.

Since then, tremendous strides have been made to streamline all aspects of heart care. "Our cardiology program is very comprehensive for a community hospital," says Steve Tullman, president and CEO. "Patients do not need to travel beyond Phoenixville for specialized procedures. They can remain near home, be managed by experienced specialists, and are visited by their primary physician throughout their stays. They receive the personal attention and touch of an experienced staff that is invested in providing the best care. This program couples expertise gained from our University of Pennsylvania affiliation with exceptionally qualified physicians devoted to individualized patient approach."

Jim Williams can't agree more. The Royersford resident, now 66, experienced such severe chest pains during a telephone chat with his daughter three years ago, that he



Phoenixville Hospital Electrophysiologist, Dr. Saeid Sajadi; and Dr. Kathleen Magness, Chief of the Division of Cardiology

Below: Dr. Rajiv Dhawan, Co-director Cardiac Cath Lab; Dr. Herbert Fischer, Interventional Cardiologist; and Dr. Greg Reis, Co-director Cardiac Cath Lab



made an excuse to hang up. "I walked around the house a bit and decided I could live with the pain. Although no one in my family knew it, this wasn't the first time. Sometimes, I

couldn't get my breath, but it always passed and, again, I told myself I could live with it."

This time, Williams had to admit that he *couldn't live with it*. His neighbor drove him to Phoenixville Hospital where an EKG was administered. "While I was in the ER," he recalls, "the pain returned and was so severe that I begged for medication. I don't remember much after that except someone gave me aspirin to chew, and the next thing I knew, I was in the cath lab."

Williams was in the midst of having a heart attack! Dr. Greg Reis, cath lab co-director, inserted one stent immediately and two more the following day. A coronary stent is a small expandable mesh tube that is placed in a patient's narrowed artery, holding it open to improve blood flow. Williams recovered in the



Above: Cardiac Cath Lab Team: Front Row – Rajiv Dhawan, MD, Co-director; Ryan Cooper, RCIS; June Kamon, Assistant; Mimi Woods, BSN, RN, CCRN; Doreen Bearden, BSN, RN MBA-HA; Back Row – Maribeth Artman, RCIS, RT; Shawn Hart, CVT; Alisha Kelly, CRNP; Ryan Greenly, CVT; Tim Morgan, BSN, RN; Gregg Reis, MD, Co-director; and Barbara Speelhoff, CRNP



Left: Dr. Hans Haupt, Director, Cardiothoracic Surgery/Clinical Assistant Professor, University of Pennsylvania Health System; and Dr. Arthur Martella, Cardiothoracic Surgeon/Clinical Associate Professor, University of Pennsylvania Health System

hospital's new intensive care unit, a 24-bed unit with state-of-the-art technology and experienced staff who can manage complex patients. Following a stay in the hospital, he then began rehab. Despite the days he would prefer staying home, the patient faithfully takes advantage of the hospital's Cardiac Rehabilitation department. "A heart attack isn't like a cold. You don't stop treatment when it goes away. I lost 20 pounds and intend to continue setting rehab goals to work longer and harder. I'll be a grandfather early next year and, thanks to Dr. Reis and Phoenixville Hospital, I'll be a healthy one."

Dr. Reis, with University of Pennsylvania Health System for 15 years, saw the potential of Phoenixville Hospital and came on board in 2006. "Activity in the cath lab is brisk," he reports. "When I joined the cardiology



Above: Phoenixville Hospital features one of the largest intensive care units in the region with 24 beds and state-of-the-art technology. Cheryl Wenrich-Smith, MSN, RN, CCRN, Clinical Director Nursing, Critical Care & Cardiovascular Services, oversees the ICU.

staff, we began doing peripheral vascular and completed about 660 interventional and diagnostic cases that year. In 2009, there were 1,587 procedures and, with the third cath lab next year, we anticipate exceeding 2,000. There are always eight people in the lab, and care is readily available as it was for Jim Williams."

The hospital's Heart Station located in the recently opened South Tower is an integral part of its commitment to combat heart disease. Nuclear and non-nuclear cardiac stress testing, vascular ultrasound, echocardiography, EKG, and holter monitoring to record heart rhythms are among the diagnostic tests conducted. In addition, certain minimally invasive diagnostic and interventional procedures such as, transesophageal echocardiogram, cardioversion, and implanted defibrillator threshold testing are provided.

The benefits of sophisticated diagnostic equipment such as this are invaluable. The American College of Cardiology reports a decline in heart attacks, but other related

HEALTHCARE

Right: Cardiothoracic Surgery Team: Christina Harp, PA; Mickey Schmuck, RN-FA; Joseph Oliva, DO, President of Medical Staff of Phoenixville Hospital; Dr. Hans Haupt, Director, Cardiothoracic Surgery/ Clinical Assistant Professor, University of Pennsylvania Health System; Dr. Arthur Martella, Cardiothoracic Surgeon/Clinical Associate Professor, University of Pennsylvania Health System; Lori Fett, CCP; Scott Yoder, PA; Carol Rodenhauser, CRNA; Stewart Leftow, MD, Chairman Department of Anesthesia; Lyn Javier, RN-FA Coordinator; and Allison Carr, RN



diseases are up, warns Dr. Magness. “Congestive heart failure and atrial fibrillation are on the rise,” she states.

Also on the rise is minimally invasive robotically assisted coronary surgery at the Heart Center. Cardiothoracic surgeon Dr. Arthur Martella collaborates with interventional cardiologists to combine bypass grafting with stented angioplasty. The state-of-the-art procedure is known as a Hybrid procedure. Phoenixville Hospital is one of a very few to offer this approach through the use of its da Vinci[®] Si HD robot. “Our da Vinci robot,” declares Dr. Martella, “is a sophisticated tool that allows us to do complicated operations inside the chest with only three- or four-half inch incisions. We are now utilizing it to do bypass surgery on the heart and to remove lung cancers. We feel strongly that this technology represents the future of surgery.”

Last year, comprehensive management of heart rhythm problems at Phoenixville Hospital became possible. Management of patients with abnormal heart rhythms including slow or fast heart beats, atrial fibrillation, and patients in need of implantation or extraction of pacemakers or defibrillators are now addressed. “In fact, we have handled more than 200 electrophysiology cases since we started full-time electrophysiology service at Phoenixville Hospital, and we expect this number to continue to grow,” he remarks.

The Cardiology program was also recently named a Blue Distinction Center for Cardiac Care by Independence Blue Cross. This designation is awarded to facilities that have



Above: Andrea Minahan, RN BC, Coordinator, Cardiac Rehabilitation Services; and Kathy Clarke, RN, MS, CCRN, Clinical Nursing Director, 4th Floor Telemetry

demonstrated commitment to quality care, resulting in better overall outcomes for cardiac patients.

It’s this constant dedication to bringing together the latest programs and highest trained physicians that consistently results in prestigious recognition, such as receiving its second Gold Award for Coronary Artery Disease given by the American Heart Association/American Stroke

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Association Get With The Guidelines® program. Get With The Guidelines is a hospital-based quality improvement program designed to ensure consistent care for cardiac and stroke patients, following the most up-to-date guidelines and recommendations; more than 1,400 U.S. hospitals participate. Those that achieve at least 85 percent compliance to the program's measures for 24 consecutive months, receive the Gold Performance Achievement Award.

Dr. Haupt looks back with great satisfaction at progress made in the Heart Center since that first open cardiothoracic surgery. "Being able to apply complex advanced technology in a community setting is rewarding, not only for the patients, but for our 12 cardiac physicians, as well. We're able to perform many of the same operations that previously were exclusive to Philadelphia hospitals. If someone needs a heart transplant, or LVAD pump as former Vice President Cheney recently received, we send them to Penn. I'm blessed

to be at Phoenixville Hospital and part of the University of Penn affiliation," concludes Dr. Haupt.

According to American Heart Association statistics, cardiovascular disease, which impacts approximately 72 million Americans each year, is the nation's leading cause of death. "Before a heart attack, 60 to 70 percent of patients had non-critical heart disease," points out Dr. Magness. "The patient may have had a 40 percent blockage that became 100 percent in a matter of hours. With immediate intervention, the patient's risk of complications or death from a heart attack drops and stabilizes within days."

Williams exemplifies this assessment. "I was surprised to learn from colleagues in rehab how different heart disease symptoms can be. I experienced pain and shortness of breath, while others mentioned uncomfortable pressure. Some said they were sick and dizzy, but had no pain. Palpitations, unexplained anxiety, weakness, and fatigue are also warning signs."

Dr. Magness notes that these symptoms may not even be heart-related, but extensive testing will pinpoint the cause. Williams cautions others not to wait as he did if pain and problems pop up. "If just one person's life is saved by following my advice, I'm happy that I spoke up."

For a healthy heart, heed his words. Phoenixville Hospital is your source for full-service cardiovascular evaluation and treatment. From diagnostic stress testing to cardiac rehabilitation, a program Williams highly recommends, the hospital's expert staff provides outstanding comprehensive care. •

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