



Salina Regional
Health Center

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Watchman™ device offers alternative to blood thinners for people with common heart rhythm disorder

(April 11, 2017) – Salina Regional Health Center and cardiologists with Mowery Clinic recently began offering a new treatment for patients with non-valvular atrial fibrillation, a common heart rhythm disorder, that serves as an alternative to long-term anticoagulation medication used to reduce risk for stroke.

Patients with atrial fibrillation have a five times greater risk for stroke than people with normal heart rhythms and are commonly prescribed blood thinners to prevent clots from forming in the heart. Researchers estimate that 90 to 95 percent of clots from atrial fibrillation form in the left atrial appendage. Clots that enter the blood stream from the heart can cause a stroke.

The new treatment uses the Watchman™ device from Boston Scientific, which is implanted in the left atrial appendage to close the appendage where blood can pool and form clots. The Watchman™ is placed using a heart catheterization procedure through the femoral vein similar to the way stents and balloons are used to open blocked arteries.

Patients typically spend one night in the hospital following a procedure and then are free to go home with minor restrictions including precautions against lifting and strenuous activity. Patients continue to use blood thinners for about six weeks following the procedure while the body forms a tissue lining over the device to permanently close the left atrial appendage.

“Our first two cases went exceedingly well,” said Maria Baldasare, M.D., a Mowery Clinic cardiologist. “This procedure has the potential to impact the lives of many people.”

A significant number of people have adverse outcomes from being on blood thinners including varying forms of internal bleeding. Others, due to occupational risk or risk from falling, cannot take blood thinners because of the potential for internal bleeds associated with trauma.

“Many people with atrial fibrillation are not on blood thinners because of perceived or actual risk from blood thinners and have no protection from a stroke,” Baldasare said. “The WatchmanTM device has been shown to be just as effective as warfarin (a common blood thinner) to prevent stroke.”

Salina Regional Health Center is a leader in providing cardiology and cardiothoracic surgery services to the region through its Heart Center program.

“We’re excited to bring this level of technology and clinical expertise to people throughout the entire region,” said Terry Hauschel, Salina Regional executive director of operations. “The Watchman procedure is one of those medical advancements that truly impacts and changes people’s lives. Cardiology has been an important focus for our organization from the very beginning. This advancement clearly takes us to a new level in cardiac care.”

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