



NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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St. Luke's Is First in Idaho to Offer Latest in Cardiac Care with World's Smallest Heart Pump

-- Technology Offers New Hope for Critically-Ill Heart Disease Patients --

Boise – St. Luke's Center for Heart and Vascular Health is now offering high-risk patients a new option to treat cardiac disease.

In November, St. Luke's cardiologists successfully cleared blocked arteries of two critically-ill patients by using the Impella Circulatory Assist Device, which was approved by the FDA in June 2008.

St. Luke's is the first Idaho hospital to offer the Impella, which was developed by Abiomed, a Danvers, Mass.-based medical device company. St. Luke's is one of about 100 hospitals nationwide that have adopted the technology.

"It's essentially a small-heart pump," said Dr. Robert Duerr, a cardiologist with St. Luke's Idaho Cardiology Associates. "The Impella allows us to keep blood flowing to the heart while we perform balloon angioplasty to open blocked arteries and then place stents to keep the arteries open."

Balloon angioplasty is one of the most common procedures used to treat heart disease and open blocked arteries. The less-invasive, non-surgical procedure is performed in a cardiac catheterization lab. But critically-ill patients typically don't have adequate blood flow to allow for angioplasty.

The Impella pumps up to 2.5 liters of blood per minute, taking over nearly half of the heart's pumping action, which allows the heart to rest and restores the blood flow. Before the introduction of the Impella, the only option was to use an intra-aortic balloon pump, but its blood flow rate is not great enough for high-risk procedures.

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Prior to an angioplasty, the Impella is inserted through the skin in the cath lab via the femoral artery and into the left ventricle of the heart. Blood is then continuously pumped from the left ventricle into the ascending aorta, providing the heart with the steady flow of blood needed during the angioplasty procedure.

Duerr said use of the Impella will be reserved to only the appropriate critically-ill patients.

“This really is the last option for patients with severe heart disease who wouldn’t be candidates for other procedures such as open-heart surgery or a transplant,” he said.

Forty years ago, the first open heart surgery in Idaho was performed at St. Luke’s. Today, St. Luke’s Center for Heart and Vascular Health offers the region’s most comprehensive care for heart and vascular disease. In 2008, St. Luke’s was named one of the top 100 hospitals in the United States for cardiac care by Thomson Reuters.

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On the Web:

Impella Cardiac Assist Device: <http://www.abiomed.com/products/impella.cfm>

St. Luke’s Center for Heart and Vascular Health:
http://www.stlukesonline.org/boise/specialties_and_services/heart/