

New Cardiac Cath Lab Saves Lives Locally

By Jesse J. Smith



Seen in the new cardiac cath lab are, from left, Karen Hopkins; Leroy Price, RN; Sei Iwai, MD; Falak Shah, MD; Erik Grazier, RN. (HealthAlliance of the Hudson Valley photo) Courtesy

KINGSTON - For heart attack victims, a few minutes can mean the difference between a full recovery and death or permanent disability. Officials at HealthAlliance of the Hudson Valley say a new cardiac catheterization lab will give people in Kingston and surrounding areas access to lifesaving treatment — without an ambulance ride to Rhinebeck or Poughkeepsie.

Officials at the health network and parent company WMCHHealth held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new lab earlier this month. The facility will allow cardiologists at the hospital to perform catheterization procedures, in which a wire is run through a patient's femoral or radial artery directly to a clogged artery in the heart. A balloon-like device at the end of the wire is then inflated, opening the blood vessel and restoring blood flow.

Cardiologist Dr. Falak Shah said prior to the lab opening, patients who came into the ER in cardiac distress would be treated with medication and transported to another hospital for the catheterization procedure. Prior to the lab opening at the Broadway campus, the closest facility offering the procedure was Northern Dutchess Hospital in Rhinebeck.

In addition to the new technology, the hospital chain has also added a pair of interventional cardiologists and nursing staff to support the lab's operation.

"Now, they don't have to leave the facility, we can do the procedure right here, right away," said Shah.

In addition to emergency procedures for patients in the midst of a heart attack, the procedure can also be performed on a non-emergency basis any time doctors detect a dangerously clogged artery. One of the attendees at the ribbon-cutting was 49-year-old city resident April Simpson. Simpson became one of the lab's first patients after she showed up at the Broadway campus ER complaining of chest pain following a pickup baseball game.

Simpson was quickly diagnosed with reduced blood flow to the heart due to coronary artery disease and immediately underwent the catheterization procedure. Simpson is part of a public service and marketing campaign by HealthAlliance to spread awareness of heart attack symptoms and the new services available at the Broadway Campus.

"Without the procedure I had, I could have had a heart attack damaging my heart, or worse, not being able to be here today," said Simpson who added that she was back to work and hoped to be back on the baseball diamond later this summer.

The opening of the new lab comes as WMCHHealth has come under fire for shifting some in-patient behavioral health services out of Kingston and cutting staff at the Broadway campus. But hospital officials say the new lab demonstrates their commitment to providing cutting-edge services locally as HealthAlliance prepares to consolidate all hospital services and an expanded and upgraded Mary's Avenue campus.

"The opening of the cardiac catheterization laboratory at HealthAlliance Hospital is another example of our commitment to invest in the community by bringing more advanced services to Ulster County," said WMCHHealth President and CEO Michael Israel.

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