



BASSETT HEALTHCARE

New Heart Pacing Technology Can Help Many With Heart Abnormalities

A patient came to me recently after having been told more than six months ago that nothing could be done for his heart failure in order to improve his quality of life. Thanks to new heart pacing technology, I am happy to say that I recently inserted a biventricular pacemaker to treat him for heart failure. He and his family now report that he is enjoying life more thanks to his improved health.

Biventricular Pacemakers are just one of the technologies available at the Electrophysiology (EP) Lab at Bassett Healthcare. While standard pacemakers send electrical impulses to only one ventricular chamber of the heart, biventricular pacemakers synchronize both the right and left ventricles, allowing the heart to pump more synchronously. As a result, heart failure symptoms, such as shortness of breath; persistent cough or wheezing; swelling of the feet, legs or abdomen; and fatigue or impaired thinking, are improved.

The EP Lab of the Bassett Heart Care Institute exists for the diagnosis, study and treatment of heart rhythm abnormalities and offers a full range of services utilizing the latest in heart pacing technology, including:

Implantable Cardioverter defibrillators (ICDs) for rapid heart rhythms: If the heart beats too fast, blood isn't pumped effectively throughout the body and brain. This condition can cause irregular heart beat, dizziness, fainting, and may be life threatening. An ICD is a device implanted in the chest that monitors heart rate and automatically directs an electrical current through the heart to restore a normal rhythm.

Explanting cardiac devices: In certain instances, a cardiac pacing device such as a pacemaker may need to be removed or replaced. Explanting a device is more involved than implanting one. Devices tend to heal into the heart and surrounding tissue. Previously we used lasers, but now we use radio frequency (RF) energy to disrupt the scar tissue and remove the device.

Radiofrequency Ablation for rapid heart rate: When medications fail to work for rapid heart rhythm, ablation is an effective alternative. In over 90 percent of the cases it is a curative procedure for people with rapid rhythm in the upper chambers of the heart. Ablation eliminates the abnormal connection in the heart and makes the rhythm normal again without further need for medications. Ablation can also be used to treat atrial fibrillation, the most common form of arrhythmia (irregular heart beat). The procedure

disconnects the upper chambers from the lower chambers to slow and regularize the erratic electrical impulses and generally involves implanting a pacemaker.

Loop Recorder for diagnosing fainting spells: A loop recorder is a device implanted just under the skin that monitors the heart to help determine if dizziness or fainting is a result of heart rhythm problems. With the external monitors we have used for the past 40 years, you could wear them for 24 hours but inevitably the day you wear it is the day you don't have symptoms. Newer external monitors could be worn for a few weeks, but you couldn't shower because of the EKG leads. In contrast, the latest loop recorder is small, has an 18-month battery for long-term use, and does not limit activities, including bathing.

For more information about these or other heart procedures, call 1-800-BASSETT (1-800-227-7388) or visit www.bassett.org.

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