

November 20, 2009

Good Shepherd Performs First Longview Electrophysiology Procedures on Friday

LONGVIEW--Good Shepherd Medical Center officials announced today the first electrophysiological study (EP study) performed in Longview on Friday, November 20, in one of the three Good Shepherd Catheterization Labs. Two EP procedures were performed on Friday morning, an EP study and a cardiac ablation.

Good Shepherd is the only Longview hospital that operates three fully equipped Cath Labs, one with the equipment and capability to conduct EP studies. Good Shepherd invested \$600,000 in the additional equipment needed in August of this year so the new cardiologist to Longview would have the capability to offer electrophysiology services to his patients. An EP study is an invasive procedure that tests the heart's electrical system. The electrical system of the heart generates the heartbeat.

During an EP study, a small, plastic catheter (tube) is inserted through a vein in the groin (or arm, in some cases) and is threaded into the heart, using a special type of X-ray, called fluoroscopy, to guide the catheter. Once in the heart, electrical signals are sent through the catheter to the heart tissue to evaluate the electrical conduction system contained within the heart muscle tissue.

There are a few different reasons why EP studies are performed. The one performed Friday was performed to locate the source of a rhythm problem. A common rhythm problem is premature ventricular beats or PVCs. This is when the ventricles beat sooner than they should and the ventricle is pumping out blood before the atrium has pumped its blood volume into the ventricle. PVCs are a common problem and don't always have an effect on people; however, if it occurs an abnormal amount, the heart is unable to pump the correct amount of blood to the body. This then may cause symptoms such as weakness, fatigue, palpitations or low blood pressure.

An ablation is used to treat abnormal heart rhythms, or arrhythmias. During this non-surgical procedure a catheter is inserted into a specific area of the heart. A special machine directs energy through the catheter to small areas of the heart muscle that causes the abnormal heart rhythm. This energy "disconnects" the pathway of the abnormal rhythm. It can also be used to disconnect the electrical pathway between the upper chambers (atria) and the lower chambers (ventricles) of the heart. In addition to re-establishing a normal heart rhythm in people with certain arrhythmias, ablation therapy can help control the heart rate in people with rapid arrhythmias, and reduce the risk of blood clots and strokes.

Good Shepherd is a 425-bed regional referral center operating a Level II Trauma Center. Approximately 2,000 procedures are performed each year in the Catheterization Labs including Invasive Cardiology, Peripheral Diagnostics/Interventions and Device Implants. Good Shepherd is Longview's only provider of Electrophysiology services and has excellent Code STEMI results with an average door-to-balloon time of 58 minutes, exceeding the national standard of 90 minutes.

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