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SAINT THOMAS RESEARCHER CO-AUTHORS SIGNIFICANT CARDIAC STUDY PUBLISHED IN NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE

NASHVILLE, TN - James Baker, MD, a cardiologist and electrophysiology specialist at Saint Thomas Hospital, was a co-author and steering committee member of a recent study that has been published by the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The article, "Cardiac-Resynchronization Therapy in Heart Failure with Narrow QRS Complexes," concludes that cardiac-resynchronization therapy, a device-based method to treat heart failure, is not effective in patients with narrow QRS complexes. This result is in contrast to the significant improvement seen with CRT in heart failure patients with wide QRS complexes.

Dr. Baker was the primary investigator at Saint Thomas, which enrolled the second-largest number of patients in the multi-site national study. In all, researchers worked with a total of 172 heart failure patients at 34 locations for six months to see if cardiac-resynchronization therapy improved their oxygen consumption during exercise.

The results showed that a number of patients with narrow QRS complexes saw an increase in their exercise capacity, but the increase was not statistically significant when compared to members of a control group that did not receive CRT.

Dr. Baker says that, despite not showing the positive results some had expected, the study will be a valuable milestone for future research. It's important, he says, to know that there are limitations to the use of CRT, which was developed around the turn of the century and has proven beneficial to many late-stage heart failure patients with wide QRS complexes.

"None of us want physicians assuming they can help patients by expanding the treatment beyond known indications," Dr. Baker says. "You still have to scientifically test your opinions."

The study's findings were presented earlier this month at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2007 conference in Orlando, Fla., by John Beshai, MD, its principal investigator and an assistant professor of medicine at the University of Chicago. Indicative of the strong interest in the study is the fact that it took just six weeks to be written by the researchers and published online by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, one of the premier healthcare research publications. For many research studies, that process can take as long as a year.

The study will also be featured in the Dec. 13 print edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, which is published weekly by the Massachusetts Medical Society. To access the Journal's online version, go to content.nejm.org.

Looking ahead, Dr. Baker says the recent study's findings will enable cardiologists to better identify heart failure patients who might benefit from CRT - as well as avoid unnecessarily putting certain patients through invasive surgeries. They may also spur some further research into the best way to diagnose the specific causes of heart failure.

"CRT has been the standard of care since early this decade, but there has always been a group of patients who haven't responded to the treatment," he says. "We know we still have room to improve and to find other ways to identify patients we can help."

Research Institute, system supports cutting-edge research

Dr. Baker's research is supported by the Saint Thomas Research Institute, which facilitates cutting-edge research across the four-hospital Saint Thomas Health Services system in Middle Tennessee.

"We're proud to support Dr. Baker in his research," says Kathy Taylor, Director of the Saint Thomas Research Institute. "Like many of the researchers we support, he is consistently able to enroll large numbers of patients in ground-breaking research. We're excited to contribute our resources to his goals and help develop and test promising treatments."

As one of the key areas of focus at Saint Thomas Research Institute, Cardiology represents more than 60% of active trials. Having set the regional standard for cardiac research over the last several years, the past year in particular has marked a vast season of growth for Saint Thomas Research Institute in Cardiology along with other specialties.

Cardiology also is a key service line of the larger Saint Thomas Health Services organization, which is recognized regionally and nationally for its heart care. Earlier this fall, the system created a new division called Saint Thomas Heart to bring under focused leadership the cardiac services of its four hospitals as well as an extensive network of community clinics, a regional chest pain center network and two joint-venture catheterization laboratories.

“As one of the nation’s leading cardiac care networks, Saint Thomas Heart is the only organization in Middle Tennessee able to contribute so meaningfully to important research like Dr. Baker’s,” said Tod Lambert, Cardiac Service Line Executive with Saint Thomas Health Services. “We’re proud of the market-leading cardiac resources we have and we’re excited about our growth plans for 2008 and beyond.”

About Saint Thomas Research Institute

Saint Thomas Research Institute is a four-hospital clinical research site consisting of four Middle Tennessee hospitals, more than 2,000 physicians and 1,600 beds. A partner and system-wide resource that simplifies the research process, Saint Thomas Research Institute takes on the bulk of the administrative load so that physicians can concentrate on working with their patients. The Institute is nimble, responsive and efficient, using an outsourced Institutional Review Board to get studies launched and enrolled quickly. For more information, contact Wesley Lauterbach, Director of Business Development, at 615-222-3077 or wlauterbach@stthomas.org.

About Saint Thomas Heart

Saint Thomas Heart aligns all of Saint Thomas Health Services’ heart services, including an extensive network of community clinics, the Saint Thomas Chest Pain Center Network with 10 regional partners, and two joint-venture catheterization laboratories, under the leadership of Tod Lambert.

About Saint Thomas Health Services

Saint Thomas Health Services is a faith-based ministry with more than 8,000 associates serving Middle Tennessee. Saint Thomas Health Services’ regional health system consists of four hospitals - Baptist and Saint Thomas in Nashville, Middle Tennessee Medical Center in Murfreesboro and Hickman Community Hospital in Centerville - and a comprehensive network of affiliated joint ventures in diagnostics, cardiac services and ambulatory surgery as well as medical practices, the Center for Spinal Surgery, clinics and rehabilitation facilities. STHS is a member of Ascension Health, a Catholic organization that is the largest not-for-profit health system in the United States. For more information, visit www.sths.com.

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