The heart is an amazing muscle. Did you know that the heart pumps about five quarts of blood each minute? That is almost 2,000 gallons of blood through the body each day. The heart beats approximately 100,000 times a day. Did you also know that it takes blood about twenty seconds to circulate through the entire vascular system? That is astounding! We certainly have an amazing Creator.

Many of us take the heart for granted until we experience problems. It certainly gives us peace of mind knowing that Wooster Community Hospital (WCH) offers an advanced Cardiovascular Institute that can take special care of patients close to home.

I was privileged to speak with two Cardiologists from the hospital. The first was Dr. Cyril Ofori, the longest serving Cardiologist who has practiced at WCH for eighteen years. The second was Dr. Daniel Newton, who specializes in Interventional Cardiology.

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Dr. Ofori explained that people come to the hospital experiencing all sorts of heart problems, characterized as either electrical or plumbing problems or problems with the heart muscle.

Maybe your heart skips a beat, or your heart rate is too fast or slow; these may be considered electrical problems. If you are experiencing chest pain or shortness of breath, these may be related to the heart’s plumbing or pumping ability.

Maybe you have heart disease, your valves may leak, or possibly they’re too narrow.

Dr. Ofori informed me that the Cardiologists at Wooster Community Hospital are able to perform a number of tests to evaluate exactly what is going on with the heart.

One such test is an electrocardiogram. This specifically looks at the rhythm problems of the heart. An ultrasound can also be done. This is used to look at the valves and walls of the heart. They are also able to tell whether the valves are leaking or narrowed.

Heart catheterization (heart cath) is another way they can look at the arteries around the heart to see whether any of them are blocked or narrowed. Blocked or narrowed arteries can contribute to a patient’s chest pain or shortness of breath.

Stress Tests and CAT Scans are a few indirect ways of evaluating blocked arteries. Dr. Ofori says they try to focus on what is necessary to take care of the patient’s overall problem.

The Cardiovascular Institute at Wooster Community Hospital has come a long way. Twenty years ago, there was no cardiology department. When it first began, people that came to the hospital with heart problems were helped by a Cardiologist who would come in once or twice a week to see the patients. If you needed a heart cath, you would need to be transferred to another hospital.

Now, Wooster Community Hospital has 6 Cardiologists. During the last fifteen years, they have safely performed more than 6,000 heart catheterizations. They also have visiting Cardiologists from Ohio State University who place pacemakers and defibrillators at WCH.

What is new and exciting for the hospital in Wooster is the fact that they are now able to perform interventional cardiology, led by Dr. Newton.

Interventional cardiology is where they are able to open up the blocked arteries and do emergency angioplasty and stenting for people who experience a heart attack. “This broadens the scope of cardiac care,” said Dr. Newton. “It allows us to not only diagnose a coronary blockage, but now we can quickly treat the patient with a stent right here in Wooster instead of being transferred elsewhere.”

What peace of mind, knowing that you will be taken care of right then and there by a team of highly skilled Cardiologists. This service is available 24/7 - 365 days a year.

This new procedure is life-saving! By opening the arteries so quickly during an acute heart attack, they are able to save and prolong people’s lives and save heart muscle.

Dr. Newton explained, “The longer the artery of the heart is blocked, the more damage that occurs to the heart. So, the more time that goes by without being taken care of, the more muscle is lost. This increases the chance that a person could die or have irreversible damage to the heart muscle.”

If someone comes to the hospital with chest pain or an abnormal stress test and needs an angioplasty, the Cardiologist can open the artery by placing a stent inside the artery. The stent keeps the blocked arteries open so you can have enough blood flow to the heart muscle. This prevents chest pain and shortness of breath. This procedure is extremely safe and successful.

Bill Sheron, CEO/President of Wooster Community Hospital, I added, “Interventional Cardiology was the logical next step in cardiac care for the hospital. For years we have been able to diagnose cardiac issues and blockages, now we can also treat them. We have done thousands of diagnostic cardiac catheterizations over the years. The delay in initiating the intervention—al (stent) service to the state (Ohio), which took an extremely conservative approach to granting permission for community hospitals to offer interventional cardiology. Most other states had no such restrictions.

In summary, Interventional Cardiology has been on our ‘needed services to provide’ list for about seven years. Our Board was educated on the service at a planning retreat two years ago, and clearly recognized the potential benefit to our patients. So this was a collaborative effort between the hospital and a group of dedicated local Cardiologists who wanted to make these services available to patients here in Wooster and surrounding areas. It increases access to routine outpatient care but, more importantly, it can save precious time for a patient who is having a heart attack. We can now literally diagnose and treat the patient in less time than it took them to be transferred to another facility previously. This is more effective care and, hopefully, better outcomes for our patients.”

It certainly has been a busy service in the first three weeks. According to Dr. Newton, “Our program started on at 8 a.m. on December 5th, and we had our first acute heart attack by 4 p.m. the same day. So far we’ve done four acute heart attacks, and 16 total angioplasties, all of them with successful outcomes.”

Dr. Newton added, “The administration and cardiologists at Wooster Community Hospital have been trying to bring state-of-the-art cardiology care to patients. Currently we have a brand new catheterization lab and a second cath lab that should be open in the late spring of 2017.”

Dr. Ofori ended our conversation by speaking to the people in Wooster and surrounding areas. “I encourage you to reach out to the hospital and seek out the services. We are more than willing to work with patients and do all we can to ensure they are getting excellent care, with making sure it is in a very timely fashion.”

To schedule an appointment to see one of the WCH Cardiologists please call: 330-202-5700. And, if you are self-pay, many cardiovascular procedures and services are offered as price packages. For more information please call: 330-263-8336.