

Eisenhower Smilow Heart Center Launches Valve Repair Program



A teaching hospital, Eisenhower hosts Japanese doctors Tomoki Shimokawa and Hidetaka Wakiyama, who observe Eisenhower Drs. S.N. Mitruka (center) and Joseph Wilson (right) performing a valve replacement.

Eisenhower Smilow Heart Center has launched its collaborative Valve Repair Program, ensuring that Coachella Valley residents do not have to leave the Valley for comprehensive heart care. Cardiothoracic surgeons and cardiologists at Eisenhower are working together, utilizing state-of-the-art technology for valve repair or replacement surgeries. Eisenhower cardiologists employ transesophageal echocardiography (TEE) to assist cardiothoracic surgeons prior to, during and after valve repair or valve replacement surgeries, offering the surgeons valuable imaging of the structure of the heart. It is critical for the surgeons to view the heart from a number of angles in real time while surgery is in progress. "TEE is a significant imaging source for surgeons during a complex surgical procedure as well as an important method of assessing the outcome," says S. N. Mitruka, MD, Board Certified Cardiothoracic Surgeon at Eisenhower Medical Center, "making this an important collaborative program that benefits patients greatly."

A fist-sized pump composed of muscle tissue, the human heart contains four valves that open and close for blood flow. When a heart valve is functioning properly, it opens and closes fully, allowing the blood to flow in one direction only. When it is diseased, the valve can either fail to close tightly, backing up blood or fail to open completely, restricting the flow of blood. If left untreated, valve disease can result in heart failure. Fortunately, diseased heart valves can be repaired or replaced. Although some valves are abnormal at birth or as a result of a disease, such as rheumatic fever, most valves simply deteriorate as a result of the aging process. Symptoms of heart valve disease can range from mild to severe, including chest pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, palpitations, fainting or dizziness, swelling of the feet, ankles or abdomen, and abnormally low or high blood pressure.

For more information about the Eisenhower Smilow Heart Center's Valve Repair Program, please call the Eisenhower Smilow Heart Center at 760-837-8450.