Within the healthcare field, cardiac surgery is going through a renaissance. At the forefront of this new generation in care is Cleveland Clinic Hospital, in partnership with Tenet South Florida HealthSystem. It is the only medical center in South Florida with the very latest in robotic technology for heart surgery and some of the field’s most highly trained surgeons.

According to cardiac surgeon Douglas Boyd, M.D., the introduction of computerized, robot-assisted heart surgery represents one of the most significant advances in his field in more than 30 years. Cleveland Clinic has invested heavily in this technology with the acquisition of the latest-generation telerobotic surgery system—Zeus® Microwrist—and is ramping up to be one of the first institutions in the state to use it for heart bypass surgery, pending FDA approval.

Dr. Boyd, who operates in Cleveland Clinic’s open-heart center in Weston, was the first surgeon in the world to perform a totally closed-chest, robot-assisted...
coronary bypass grafting operation on the beating heart, which he performed in Canada. He is among a handful of surgeons who train and mentor others in the use of Zeus, which mimics the dexterity and precision of the human hand. It is operated by a surgeon from a remote, computerized control panel.

“Zeus is a three-armed robot that gives a surgeon an extra hand, which is more accurate and steadier than his real hands,” Dr. Boyd says. “Because the surgeon’s movements are digitized, accuracy and precision are increased. This has made new procedures possible that were previously beyond the limits of human manual dexterity. It truly represents a quantum leap in the field of cardiac surgery.”

As Dr. Boyd explains, the advantage of Zeus is that it can be used in conjunction with an endoscope—a tiny camera that allows a surgeon to see inside—to perform small-incision heart surgery. He points out that in Canada, where he used the first generation of Zeus to perform “beating heart” bypass surgery through pencil-sized incisions, the average hospital stay following this operation is 48 hours.

This is far cry from traditional bypass surgery, which involves splitting the chest cavity through a foot-long incision and placing patients on a heart-lung machine, followed by a recovery period that may stretch for months. With the use of robotic devices such as Zeus, bypass patients can expect less pain and scarring, a significantly shorter recovery period and a lower rate of surgical complications.

With this technology, Cleveland Clinic will be one of the only institutions in South Florida where physicians will be doing a “hybrid” procedure that combines angioplasty—a non-surgical procedure that dilates blocked arteries—with stenting and robot-assisted coronary artery bypass grafting, restoring free blood flow through an incision less than half an inch long. Howard Bush, M.D., chairman of the Department of Cardiology, says this procedure can spare qualified patients from the trauma of major bypass surgery.

Bush emphasizes that the full range of care provided by Cleveland Clinic’s heart center is one of the greatest benefits for patients.

“We have a team of experts including interventional cardiologists and cardiac surgeons backed by specialists from virtually every field of medicine. Working together in accordance with our group practice model of medicine, we provide the full gamut of surgical and non-surgical care, from expert diagnoses to ongoing treatment and, in the case of surgery patients, all necessary follow-up care and long-term monitoring.”

He continues, “With some of the nation’s most well-trained physicians and super-sophisticated technology in a new facility, we’ll be able to offer the highest levels of cardiac care—and we’re right in the heart of South Florida.”

To make an appointment call
Within the fields of allergy and immunology, many effective treatments are available. For example, allergy shots have alleviated symptoms for decades, while new medications and treatments for asthma have made living with the disease far easier.

The chairman of Cleveland Clinic Florida’s Department of Allergy and Immunology, Frank Eidelman, M.D., says it is the proper diagnosis of these chronic conditions and others—as well as individualized medical management—that has made his department a regional referral source for difficult or severe cases.

“As a multi-specialty group practice, we have the resources to thoroughly investigate all cases and get to the root cause,” Dr. Eidelman says. “And once a patient is accurately diagnosed, we can effectively treat the primary condition as well as any associated conditions.”

He notes that conditions such as asthma and allergic rhinitis can be misdiagnosed or be impacted by other medical problems. But with precise usage of diagnostic tools such as allergy testing, rhinomanometry (which directly measures nasal congestion) and others tests, he and his colleagues identify each medical issue and develop customized treatment plans.

Although technical advances improve diagnosis, getting patients on the path to better health always requires personal interaction and attention to both physical and emotional concerns. Education is also a key component.

“So since most of the conditions we treat are chronic, we aim for long-term management,” he says. “We teach patients about each condition, how to decrease their symptoms and what to do in an emergency.”

As an example, avoidance is often taught as a treatment for certain allergies, while asthma patients receive an action plan, which helps them determine if they can self-treat or if they should go to the emergency room in the event of an attack. Knowing what to do relieves anxiety and empowers the patient.

In addition to asthma, allergies and sinusitis, the department treats immunodeficiency disorders and autoimmune diseases, including lupus and vasculitis.
U ncontrollable tremors like those seen in Parkinson’s disease can be disabling. Fortunately, Cleveland Clinic Florida’s Movement Disorders Program is providing relief to many who suffer from such tremors with an advanced treatment known as deep brain stimulation, or DBS.

This method, which involves implanting a device that stimulates certain areas of the brain through electrodes, has been approved by the FDA to control tremors on just one side of the body since 1997. However, last January the FDA approved the expanded use of DBS to control tremors on both sides of the body. This offers tremendous hope to patients who have advanced Parkinson’s and can’t control its symptoms with medication.

“DBS is the most promising treatment we have seen for the most severe symptoms of Parkinson’s,” says Nestor Galvez-Jimenez, M.D., director of Cleveland Clinic Florida’s Movement Disorders Program. “It is at least as, if not more effective than other methods like stereotactic surgery, but it’s much safer because brain tissue is not compromised. What’s more, once it is implanted it can be adjusted without the need for more surgery.”

As Dr. Galvez-Jimenez points out, DBS is also reversible—so if another treatment or even a cure is developed in the future, it can simply be removed and discontinued.

Prior to implanting the DBS device, physicians must first identify the exact locations where chaotic nerve signals generate tremors through “brain mapping,” a process using sophisticated computer technology. Then, neurosurgeons implant tiny electrodes in those areas to restore the brain’s previous balance and block abnormal activity. The electrodes are controlled by a pacemaker-like device implanted under the skin in the abdomen or chest.

Cleveland Clinic Hospital, in partnership with Tenet South Florida HealthSystem, is one of only a few institutions in the region with the equipment and the expertise needed for DBS.

“Few centers qualify to offer DBS because you must have the latest equipment plus a multidisciplinary team,” he says. “That team must include a neurologist with specialty training in movement disorders, a neurosurgeon trained in stereotactic procedures, a speech therapy program for movement disorders, physical therapy, a research coordinator, a program coordinator, and specialized nursing support. We have it all in our program here in Weston.

“Subthalamic DBS is now considered the most effective treatment for the full range of Parkinson’s symptoms, including difficulty with gait and balance,” he adds. “And the fact that it can be adjusted non-invasively translates into better patient care.”

Welcome, New Physicians
Cleveland Clinic Florida is pleased to welcome to its Weston campus the following physicians, who have recently joined the medical staff or will this summer.

- Cardiology, Gian Novaro, M.D.
- Cardiology/Electrophysiology, Sergio Pinski, M.D.
- Colorectal Surgery, Dana Sands, M.D.
- General Surgery, Samuel Szomstein, M.D.
- Gynecology/Urogyn, Minda Neimark, M.D.
- Neuro/Spine Surgery, Robert Isaacs, M.D.
- Ophthalmology, David Jones, M.D.
- Orthopaedic Surgery, Holly Brown, M.D.
Medical Minutes

CLEVELAND CLINIC FLORIDA SKIN CARE CENTER

Within its brand new Aesthetic Surgery Center, Cleveland Clinic Florida is offering a full range of skin care and treatments—including glycolic treatments, deep pore cleansing facials, microdermabrasion, back and shoulder treatments, lash and brow tinting and permanent make-up—to help patients achieve and maintain healthy and beautiful skin. Most treatments are provided by the center’s staff aesthetician, an expert with special training in skin care. For information or appointments, call 954-659-5401.

CLINICAL TRIAL ON BLADDER CONTROL MEDICATION

Among the national clinical trials in which Cleveland Clinic Florida is currently participating is one to study a new way of administering a medication well known for its effectiveness in controlling overactive bladder. G. Willy Davila, M.D., chairman of the Department of Gynecology, says that FDA approval is expected soon for the use of Oxytrol, a patch that delivers the drug Oxybutinin directly into the bloodstream. Not only is the patch easier for patients, but studies are also showing a significant decrease in prior side effects including dry mouth and constipation.

CHEMOTHERAPY “COCKTAILS”

Patients diagnosed with stomach cancer, prostate cancer, and colon and rectal cancer now have a new treatment option. Thomas Niederman, M.D., Ph.D., of the Department of Hematology/Oncology at Cleveland Clinic Florida, has developed novel “chemotherapy cocktails,” which combine various chemotherapy drugs that have individually proven effective against these cancers. Each cocktail is tailored to suit the various tumor types.

The novelty is that these intravenous chemotherapy regimens are not based on standard higher doses of chemotherapy, but on lower doses of each individual agent to decrease the likelihood of side effects. The effectiveness of the treatment is based on the use of multiple drugs in combination. Designed to treat people with cancer that has spread beyond the site of the original tumor—so called “metastatic disease”—the cocktails are non-curative thus far. However, protocols have shown great effectiveness with few side effects, allowing patients life extension with good quality of life.

INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE BLENDS HEALTHCARE DISCIPLINES

Thanks to a generous gift from Al and Katherine Maroone, Cleveland Clinic Florida is currently developing an integrative medicine program. This unique blending of services will provide the best of healthcare, medicine and wellness in one integrated and coordinated format.

“Healthcare providers are recognizing that healing involves more than just medicine. With our integrative medicine program, we’re looking at the full spectrum of care, from a patient’s medical requirements to nutritional issues, emotional or spiritual needs, and more,” says Bernardo Fernandez, M.D., a vascular specialist and chairman of Cleveland Clinic’s Division of Medicine.

Katherine Maroone is glad to see such a program under way in South Florida. “Harvard and Duke have integrative medicine programs, and we wanted to see one here, where we live,” she says. “As a teaching facility, Cleveland Clinic is the ideal place.”

Book a Cleveland Clinic Florida Speaker

The Cleveland Clinic Florida speakers bureau has physicians and allied health professionals with expertise in a wide range of healthcare subjects, from general fitness to the latest research and medical treatments. If you would like someone to speak to your group or organization, please call toll-free, 1-800-691-6555.

We are proud to announce the addition of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida to our list of insurance providers.
Skin Cancer is the most common form of cancer in adults. The good news is that it’s also highly treatable. Treatment has improved dramatically with the introduction of Mohs Micrographic Surgery, a highly specialized surgical technique that preserves healthy tissue. According to the American College of Mohs Micrographic Surgery and Cutaneous Oncology, it offers the highest cure rate of any skin cancer treatment.

Tamara Lior, M.D., a dermatologist on the Cleveland Clinic Florida medical staff, is one of about 600 dermatologic surgeons in the United States who has completed a special fellowship in Mohs surgery. As she explains, Mohs surgeons must be trained in all aspects of dermatology and dermatopathology. Additional training in skin cancer reconstruction is also beneficial.

“The Mohs method involves surgically removing the visible tumor as well as mapping the site and using pathology techniques to find any remaining cancer cells,” Dr. Lior says. “It enables the surgeon to follow the roots of the cancer and remove them while removing the least amount of healthy surrounding tissue possible.”

Once the visible tumor is removed, the surgeon removes tissue-thin layers, examining each layer under a microscope for cancer cells. This process is repeated until no cancer cells are detected; then, reconstructive surgery is performed as necessary.

Skin-Saving Surgery

Mohs Technique Preserves Tissue, Offers High Cure Rate

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This is especially beneficial to patients with facial tumors, very large tumors, tumors near vital functional structures, tumors with indistinct borders or tumors that have recurred.

Dr. Lior points out that Mohs surgery is used primarily for treating basal and squamous cell skin cancer. These are the most common forms of skin cancer, and in most cases are completely curable. The American College of Mohs Micrographic Surgery and Cutaneous Oncology reports a cure rate for basal and squamous cell cancer treated with Mohs surgery of 99 percent.

Make an Appointment

To make an appointment with a Cleveland Clinic Florida physician, please call 1-800-691-6555.