

Cardiothoracic Surgery



June 2015

News from
Lourdes Health System

Today



Arthur Martella, MD, performing robotic CT surgery.

Transition to Less-Invasive Surgery Benefits Patients

Minimally invasive heart operations—also referred to as sternum-sparing, small-incision or partial-sternotomy procedures—have continued to alter the patient experience in cardiothoracic surgery. Patients have a shorter length of stay, requiring less-intensive care. They return to activities more quickly, with success/survival rates that are at least as good as those of conventional open-heart surgery.

The new philosophy and capabilities in cardiac surgery take advantage of robotic or thoracoscopic procedures, smaller conventional incisions or transcatheter techniques. The strategies rely on improved technology that serves as an extension of the surgeon's eyes and hands, permitting essential and life-saving surgery without the surgeon's hands having to enter the body, and often without the surgical team having to directly see or touch the heart. Under the leadership of Arthur Martella, MD, Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Lourdes, emphasis on minimally invasive operations has helped the Lourdes program to nearly double its volume of cardiothoracic surgery within the last few years.

"This is the future of almost all cardiothoracic surgery," said Atiq Rehman, MD, Director of Surgery for Transcatheter Valve Therapy & Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center. "It results in less blood loss, improved pain control and quicker recovery."

For Both Coronary and Structural Procedures

For the operations, surgeons depend on high-magnification cameras and instruments inserted through small incisions between the ribs. The robotic system uses tiny instruments that offer sophisticated movements. In addition, after minimally invasive procedures, the patient's intubation tube can be removed more promptly, usually right after surgery in the operating room, allowing the patient to go to a regular post-surgical bed rather than intensive care.

"This is the future of almost all cardiac surgery."

— Lourdes cardiothoracic surgeon Atiq Rehman, MD

The Lourdes team is using the minimally invasive approaches for:

- CABG, usually reserved for patients who need one or at most two bypass grafts and performed as a beating-heart procedure, in some cases working with cardiac interventionalists to place stents at the same time, in a hybrid surgical approach.

- Correcting leaky heart valves and septal defects (structural heart operations in which echocardiography is important during the procedure to monitor results).

"Quality-of-life studies during recovery appear to favor the less-invasive approaches," said Dr. Rehman, who is also Director of Quality & Performance Improvement for Lourdes cardiovascular services. Patients typically leave the hospital in a few days, and often return to work within roughly three weeks; whereas, traditional open surgery may require months for the same healing.

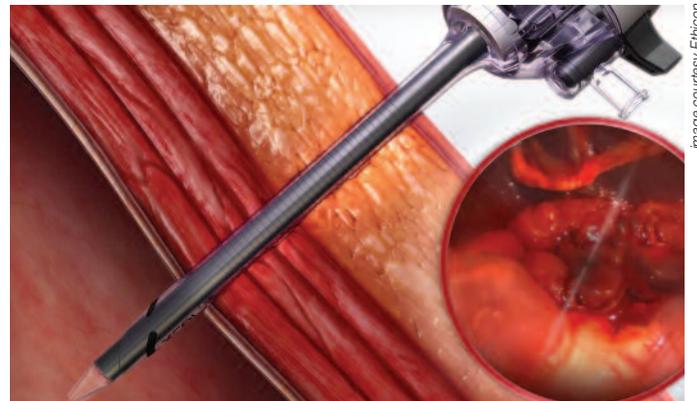


Image courtesy, Ethicon

For minimally invasive cardiothoracic surgery, specially designed trocars provide port access to the chest without the need to cut bones or large muscles. Among many benefits, the approach can lower perioperative complications such as infection.

Smaller Incisions and Transcatheter Procedures

The Lourdes team performs the procedures through small incisions needed for ports or through a small thoracotomy. (Mini-thoracotomy incisions are four inches in length, compared to incisions of more than twice that size for conventional open surgery.) Hemisternotomy (partial upper sternotomy) is also a less-invasive, partly sternal-sparing approach.

Lourdes minimally invasive cardiothoracic surgery has also become one of the top programs in the region for transcatheter procedures for valve repair and replacement, including transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR). Dr. Rehman recently performed one of the first transapical transcatheter mitral replacements (done along with a transapical TAVR, as the first such double transcatheter valve replacement performed worldwide). ✨

For more information, visit www.lourdesnet.org or call 1-888-LOURDES (1-888-568-7337).



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St. Francis and Lourdes Partner for Regional CT Surgery Center

Lourdes Health System has partnered with St. Francis Medical Center in Trenton, NJ, to form a regional center for cardiothoracic (CT) surgery, focusing on minimally invasive, sternal-sparing approaches to cardiac operations. Lourdes and St. Francis, both members of Trinity are each known as leaders in heart care.

St. Francis is the only hospital in Mercer County that performs CT surgery. It treats patients in a new \$3.7 million hybrid cardiovascular operating room. Nationally recognized CT surgeon Robert S. Poston, MD, recently joined St. Francis as the new Chief of Cardiovascular Surgery. Dr. Poston is also a member of Lourdes Medical Associates.

The Lourdes-St. Francis team provides one of the most experienced minimally invasive cardiothoracic surgery practices in the nation.



Robert S. Poston, MD



Atiq Rehman, MD



Arthur Martella, MD

“This partnership is the premier collaboration between Lourdes and St. Francis—two hospitals with well-established heart centers—and it will yield important benefits for patients,” said Reginald Blaber, MD, Vice President of Cardiovascular Services for Lourdes Health System. Since 2013, Dr. Blaber has helped St. Francis expand its cardiac surgery program.

Dr. Poston specializes in minimally invasive robotic coronary-bypass surgeries. With its surgeons also including Drs. Martella and Rehman (*see page 1*), the Lourdes-St. Francis team provides one of the most experienced minimally invasive cardiothoracic surgery practices in the nation. The goal of the CT surgery service is the triple aim of better care, improved quality and lower cost across both organizations. The surgeons’ combined expertise in sternal-sparing approaches enhances quality efforts through decreased complication rates (e.g., sternal wound infections), decreased length of stay and improved patient experience. ✨

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