Beating the Freeze

with At-Home Workouts

Joined at the Heart
Fuquay couple shares everything

A Meeting of the Minds for MR Patients
Celebrate American Heart Month
Enjoy Heart Healthy Living Year-Round

Welcome to this special edition of Heart to Heart. In celebration of Heart Month, we celebrate you, our patients and families, and the work you do to achieve your best heart and vascular health! And, we celebrate the exceptional expertise and dedication of our doctors, nurses, cardiovascular technologists/specialists and our clinical support team members who work in partnership with you each and every day!

This February, we have an extra day in the month – let’s make that “our heart day” and take time to balance our heart health - healthy eating, movement & exercise, joyful mindfulness and rest – to the fullest!

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Red Never Goes Out of Style
There is something magical about the way chance encounters can lead to long, loving relationships. Just ask Vincent and Margo Dioguardi. They met on a beach in Staten Island, NY in 1953 and have been together ever since. Throughout the years, they have shared common interests and a love of family and faith. Who knew they would also share a common heart condition?

College, the U.S. Army and jobs took the Dioguardis from New York to Georgia and then back to New York where they stayed for many years. They had five children and enjoyed happy, healthy lives.

In 2004, Vincent and Margo decided to move to Fuquay-Varina, NC to be near their daughter Janice as they aged. “We weren’t getting any younger,” said Vincent. Tragedy struck in 2012 when the Dioguardi’s 54-year-old son died suddenly from a heart condition. “Heart problems were on both sides of the family, but we were both healthy and outliving our families so we didn’t think about it until our son passed away,” said Margo.

The Dioguardis started with a visit to their primary care doctor, Ionna Giatis Kessler, DO, at WakeMed Physician Practices – Fuquay-Varina Primary Care. She referred them to Richard Daw, MD, a cardiologist with WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians.

“Dr. Daw blew the whistle on us,” said Vincent. To Dr. Daw’s amazement, both Margo and Vincent Dioguardi had aortic valve stenosis and needed treatment. Vincent also had a blocked artery.

In addition to having the same diagnosis, both Vincent and Margo were good candidates for a highly specialized procedure called transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR) because of their advanced ages and preexisting health conditions. The minimally invasive TAVR procedure can be an option for individuals who cannot tolerate traditional open heart surgery. Fortunately for Margo and Vincent, WakeMed interventional cardiologist Walter Tan, MD, and cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon Bryon Boulton, MD specialize in structural heart issues and performing the TAVR procedure.

“They both had a good manner about them,” remarked Margo.

Brian Go, MD, an interventional cardiologist with WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians, performed a stent procedure on Vincent’s blocked artery on December 31, 2014. Next it was Margo’s turn. Margo had the TAVR procedure on January 21, 2015. “Margo was braver than I was,” recalled Vincent. “I waited to have my surgery to see how she did.” Vincent then had his TAVR procedure on February 3, 2015.

Margo and Vincent each spent four days in the hospital after their procedures. They appreciated the reassurances they received from their doctors. “Dr. Tan and Dr. Boulton took the time to answer our questions and they looked me right in the eye,” said Margo. “When Dr. Boulton came in to see me, he put his hand on my shoulder and said everything would be fine. It was a comfort,” said Vincent. “They answered our questions, too, so the whole family knew what was happening,” the Dioguardis’ daughter Janice added.

Today, the Dioguardis are living happily in Fuquay-Varina. Vincent goes to the gym several days a week. Margo’s TAVR procedure made it possible for her to have a long-overdue knee surgery, which she is recovering nicely from. They look forward to sharing more happy times together.
A Meeting of the Minds for MR Patients

A new technology and technique bring together cardiologists and heart surgeons to restore quality of life for patients with severe mitral regurgitation (MR) and cannot undergo surgery.

The mitral valve is about the size of a 50-cent piece. It is located between the left atrium and the left ventricle, where it works to keep blood flowing through the heart. “Mitral regurgitation occurs when the mitral valve does not close properly,” explains Frances Wood, MD, an interventional cardiologist with WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians who specializes in complex heart interventions for heart disease including valve disease and disorders.

“Blood leaks through the mitral valve, causing blood to go back to the lungs instead of effectively pumping through the heart.”

MR also produces symptoms that can hinder quality of life. “Shortness of breath, feeling light headed, fatigue, chest pain and swelling in the legs are symptoms of mitral regurgitation,” says Dr. Wood. When left untreated, MR causes congestive heart failure.

Today, nearly 1 in 10 people age 75 and older have either a moderate or severe form of MR. Dr. Wood urges people who have MR to seek treatment before it becomes severe or before they reach advanced age. “In terms of recovery, there can be a big difference between patients who are age 75 and patients who are 85,” Dr. Wood explains.

Mitrail valves can often be repaired rather than replaced with open heart surgery. But some patients do not qualify for surgery. MitraClip® technology and the combined expertise of interventional cardiologists and cardiac surgeons may be the answer for some patients who cannot tolerate open surgery. “It’s a merging of our fields,” says Bryon Boulton, MD, a cardiothoracic surgeon with WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians. Dr. Boulton adds that the MitraClip procedure requires the cardiologist to use a more invasive technique than usual and the cardiac surgeon to take a less invasive approach.

The ‘merging of the fields’ begins long before the patient enters the procedure room. Together, Dr. Wood and Dr. Boulton meet with a potential patient to determine if a MitraClip is right for them. Dr. Boulton explains that a typical MitraClip candidate:

- is severely symptomatic of degenerative MR (limited physical activity, fatigue, shortness of breath, palpitations, etc.)
- is persistent heart failure symptoms despite medical treatment
- is not suitable for surgery due to age and/or medical conditions (recent heart attack, previous infection in the heart, liver disease, etc.)

The physicians also use a diagnostic tool to determine if an MR patient is suitable for a MitraClip procedure. “An esophageal echo helps us understand the structure of the patient’s heart to determine if we think the procedure is appropriate and where to place the MitraClip,” explains Dr. Wood.

The transthoracic echocardiogram (TEE) and the procedure are performed in the WakeMed Heart Center’s hybrid procedure room, which is a combination of an operating room and a catheterization lab. “Dr. Wood and I then work in concert to perform the procedure,” says Dr. Boulton.

The MitraClip is advanced through a leg vein from the patient’s groin area to the heart. The physician then clips together the leaflets of the valve, creating a smaller opening to prevent blood regurgitation.

“The goal of the MitraClip procedure is to help MR patients enjoy improved quality of life and fewer hospitalizations,” explains Dr. Wood.

Dr. Boulton, who is in the nation’s top percentile for open heart mitral valve and aortic valve procedure volumes, sees the minimally invasive approach to heart ‘surgery’ as the wave of the not-too-distant future. “Soon, every modern heart center will have a surgeon who is competent in wire-based procedures,” he says.

Dr. Boulton also sees his collaboration with Dr. Wood and other members of the Heart Center team who work together to correct heart issues as a plus for WakeMed patients. “Our team is positioned to adapt to innovative strategies in the future,” he says.
For years Jennifer had suffered from fatigue and chest discomfort. “I was a smoker so I just attributed my symptoms to that,” she recalls. It wasn’t until she became pregnant with her son in 2009 that her cardiologist WakeMed’s John Kelley, MD, diagnosed Jennifer with pregnancy induced cardiomyopathy, a condition of the heart muscle that does not allow the heart to efficiently pump blood to the body.

Further testing revealed that Jennifer’s heart disease wasn’t a new development and it wasn’t going away after she delivered her baby. “Apparently I had two heart attacks when I was in my 20s and early 30s and I didn’t even realize it,” says Jennifer.

In December of 2009, two months after delivering her son, Jennifer had triple bypass surgery. “Two of my bypasses stayed open but the doctor couldn’t open the other one,” says Jennifer. She had at least one CTO that had been there for quite some time. Simply defined, a chronic total occlusion is a completely or almost completely blocked artery leading to the heart that has been blocked for at least three months. “We can see CTOs continued on page 6
Another Recognition for High-Quality Heart Care

We are proud to announce that WakeMed has been designated a Blue Distinction Center+ by Blue Cross Blue Shield in the area of cardiac care.

Blue Distinction+ heart facilities are shown to deliver quality specialty care based on objective measures for patient safety and better patient outcomes. To earn this designation, WakeMed had to meet and exceed nationally established quality-focused criteria for each specialty area.

ABOUT THE WAKEMED PCI/CTO PROGRAM

Established: 2013
Founder & Lead: Islam Othman, MD, WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians & national faculty member, Boston Scientific, teaching other interventional cardiologists throughout the U.S. about CTO programs.
Success Rate: 94%, no complications
Cases Performed: 90 (as of this writing), at least one CTO procedure is performed every week
State/Regional Comparisons: More CTO procedures are performed at WakeMed than any other hospital in the surrounding counties and region. Dr. Othman is the top performing CTO percutaneous coronary interventionalist in North Carolina.

that are years even decades old,” notes Dr. Othman, a leading CTO specialist who developed the WakeMed Complex PCI/CTO Program.

Jennifer felt better after her surgery, but, with at least one CTO unresolved and active heart disease, her symptoms - chest pain, weakness and fatigue - returned. When medications to manage her symptoms proved ineffective, Dr. Kelley referred Jennifer to his colleague, Dr. Othman.

Dr. Othman successfully performed the procedure to tackle her CTO and restore her blood flow on September 10, 2015. Soon after, Jennifer’s quality of life began to improve. “I felt like a normal human being again!” she exclaims.

Jennifer continues to work with Dr. Othman and Dr. Kelley to improve her heart health, quality of life and ability to keep up with her busy son.

CTOs are present in approximately 20 percent of people who undergo coronary angiograms. If you would like to make an appointment with Dr. Othman to see if the WakeMed PCI/CTO Program is right for you, please call his practice, WakeMed Heart & Vascular Physicians, at 919-231-6132.

Beating the Freeze with At-Home Workouts

The weather outside may be frightful, but exercising is still delightful! What happens when winter weather puts the brakes on your ability to get to the gym to get in your daily exercise? Well, it’s time to get moving in your own home, of course!

According to Melissa Bell, exercise specialist at Healthworks at Cambridge Village of Apex, there are plenty of opportunities to bring the workout home when the weather or other obstacles stand in the way of your trip to the gym.

Exercises like leg raises, wall or incline push-ups, squats or wall sits, standing marches, and step-ups (see illustrations for details) allow you to stay active and fit without a lot of fancy equipment or complex moves.

When you’re caught off guard and need a spur-of-the-moment at-home workout, Bell said that there are many items around the house that you can use to aid in your workout, without additional investment.

“You can use a chair or counter for balance, a step for step-ups or lunges or even stretching, canned goods or water bottles for weights, a dog leash for stretching, a tennis ball for grip strength, a sock filled with beans or rice for ankle or wrist weights,” said Bell.

And if you’re willing to make a small investment in some equipment so that you’re fully prepared for your next at-home workout, Bell suggests investing in two staples — resistance bands and exercise videos.

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“I like the idea of bands because they usually come in packs of four or five bands that people can grow into as they get stronger,” said Bell. “The videos you can either purchase locally or online or find for free on YouTube.”

Before trying any exercise program, though, Bell recommends checking with your doctor, working on proper form with a professional, starting slowly and, of course, staying hydrated!
1 - LEG RAISES
Place all of your weight on one leg, and lift your other leg while keeping your knee straight. Increase intensity by holding the leg up for a few seconds. Decrease intensity by lifting the leg only lightly.

2 - WALL SITS
Place your back against the wall with your feet shoulder-width apart about two feet in front of you. Bend your knees, sliding your back down the wall until your knees are at 90-degree angles. Increase intensity by squeezing a ball or pillow between your knees. Decrease intensity by holding for a shorter time or not bending your knees as much.

3 - WALL/INCLINE PUSHUPS
Stand an arm’s length away from a wall and place your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height with your thumbs touching. Press your body toward the wall as if doing a pushup and push back to your starting position. For increased intensity, push against a counter or the floor instead of the wall.

4 - STANDING MARCHES
With a chair or wall in front of you for support, stand with your feet slightly apart and your arms at your side. March in place, lifting your knees high toward the ceiling. For greater intensity, increase your speed. To decrease intensity, slow down and don’t bend your knees as much.

5 - STEP UPS
Place your right foot on top of a step or stair and press through your right heel to step up. Bring your left foot to the top of the step, then step down, right foot first. Repeat, leading with the left foot. Adjust the intensity as needed by using a higher or lower step.
Celebrate American Heart Month with WakeMed Heart Center

Whether it’s wearing a red dress, bow tie, socks or lipstick, Go Red in your own fashion! By wearing something red on Friday, February 5, you are showing your encouragement for women who are surviving and thriving with heart disease as well as support for the men and women who provide compassionate care of heart patients each day at WakeMed.

Red Never Goes Out of Fashion
Go Red Saturday on February 6 at Crabtree Valley Mall

The Triangle Chapter of the American Heart Association celebrates Go Red for Women with Allscripts, Macy’s and WakeMed Health & Hospitals on Saturday, February 6, from 11 am to 2 pm at Crabtree Valley Mall. Enjoy free heart health and stroke screenings, get office fitness tips, share your personal heart disease survival story at the Casting Call booth for a chance to become a national Go Red for Women spokesperson, get your groove on with line dancing, win prizes and more. Come see us at Crabtree’s Promotion Court (lower level near Sears) and show us how red never goes out of fashion!

Love Your Heart As Much As We Do!

Cameron Village and WakeMed Heart Center are partnering to increase awareness among women that heart disease is their biggest risk and that shopping can be a great cardio exercise. Pick up a heart healthy information card from participating Cameron Village stores and if $250 more is spent in a single day from February 1-14, shoppers can choose from three free gifts:

- a ceramic candle from Bailey’s Fine Jewelry
- a Valentine’s Tea Sampler and Tea Bags from Tin Roof Teas
- an Acrylic Heart Keychain from Moon and Lola

Qualifying shoppers also receive a certificate for a free Total and HDL cholesterol test and blood pressure check from WakeMed. It’s our way of making you aware that heart disease is the number one killer of women...your biggest health threat. So start shopping and get that heart rate up ... because shopping has never been better for your heart.

To see the gifts with purchase or to learn more, visit hearts.wakemed.org

Triangle Go Red For Women 2015-2016 Spokeswomen. (left to right) Jessica, Heart Transplant Survivor; Evelyn, Stroke Survivor; Leeann, Heart Attack Survivor