



# MEMORIAL HEALTH SYSTEM OF EAST TEXAS

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## *New Cardiovascular Surgeon Offering Many Firsts for East Texas Patients*

**LUFKIN, TEXAS (May 20, 2009)**... Abdominal aortic aneurysms are the 15<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the United States. In fact, even if a patient is fortunate enough to get to a nearby hospital when an aneurysm ruptures, there is only a 50% chance that the patient will survive. But a patient's chance of survival increases significantly to almost 100% if the aneurysm is discovered prior to rupture. Lufkin's newest Cardiovascular Surgeon, Dr. Taylor Pickett, is introducing a life-saving technique to East Texans that can help prevent an aneurysm from rupturing. Recently, Dr. Pickett performed the first abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) repair through this new outpatient procedure that requires no incision or stitches.

The device used is called a Powerlink stent graft by Endologix. Using a long, thin plastic tube, the Powerlink stent graft is inserted through the groin into the femoral artery until it reaches the aorta, the major artery in the stomach. The physician watches the stent graft travel in the aorta by a method known as fluoroscopy which is real time x-ray images. The stent graft is a single fabric tube with a main body that lines the aorta and two limbs that branch to the femoral arteries. Once in place, the graft allows blood to flow through the artery without collecting in the aneurysm.

"The staff at Memorial Health System of East Texas and the patient was very excited about this new procedure. With no incision or stitches, the patient was immediately ambulatory and was discharged within 24 hours," said Dr. Taylor Pickett.

Carrying blood from the heart to the rest of the body, the aorta is the main artery in the body. AAA is a weakening in the aorta. This weakening allows the aorta to enlarge in size much like a water balloon. After a certain size the aorta can't expand any more, and it may start to leak, or worse rupture. An intervention is often needed to repair this weakness and prevent rupture.

"The typical operation to repair AAA is a long incision in the abdomen from the lower part of the chest to below your navel. This operation takes 3-4 hours, requires an 8-10 day stay in the hospital, usually requires blood transfusions, and has a very long post hospital recovery time. However, this new technology is changing the way surgeons treat patients with AAA." said Dr. Pickett.

Dr. Pickett is the only physician in East Texas to perform the implantation percutaneously with no "cut down" or opening of the skin. The implantation required no actual incision only a slight puncture to

expose the femoral artery for graft device insertion. Since the Endovascular Repair procedure is less invasive than an open surgical repair, patients also experience less pain. Complication rates are lowered due to the delivery system's insertion in the groin versus cutting the abdomen. According to Dr. Pickett, Patients should expect to stay only a few days in the hospital and a minimal recovery from 4 to 6 weeks.

Medicare recently has enacted the SAAAVE Act (Screening AAA Very Efficiently). This allows new enrollees to Medicare to receive a free screening test (Ultrasound) to check for AAA. You may be eligible if you are a new enrollee to Medicare, have a family history of AAA, and for men: have smoked 100 cigarettes or more in your lifetime, or meet various other criteria. Although AAA may go unnoticed, if you develop symptoms, you may experience one or more of the following:

- A pulsing feeling in your abdomen, similar to a heartbeat
- Severe, sudden pain in your abdomen or lower back. If this is the case, your aneurysm may be enlarging or about to burst.
- On rare occasions, your feet may develop pain, discoloration, or soreness because of material shed from the aneurysm

As Memorial Health System of East Texas continues to perform less invasive surgical procedures, patients are recovering faster and returning to normal activities sooner. Through the commitment of its physicians and surgeons and its highly-trained nursing teams, Memorial Health System of East Texas leads the way in performing the most technologically advanced surgical procedures in the deep East Texas area.

### **About Memorial Health System of East Texas**

As the largest health care system in the deep East Texas area, Memorial Health System of East Texas is a private, not-for-profit hospital that provides care to almost a quarter of a million patients each year. Since its inception in 1949, Memorial Health System has paved the way for quality, innovative health care in East Texas. In fact, Memorial consistently ranks among the nation's best for exceptional health care and patient satisfaction.

Memorial Health System of East Texas is comprised of four hospitals—Memorial Medical Center—Lufkin, Memorial Medical Center—Livingston, Memorial Medical Center—San Augustine, and Memorial Specialty Hospital, the only rural long-term acute care facility within the area. Memorial offers a wide array of services, including the newly renovated Arthur Temple, Sr. Regional Cancer Center, which has earned a three-year seal of approval with commendation from the Commission on Cancer. Additionally, Memorial is a regional cardiac care center affiliated with the Methodist-DeBaakey Heart Center in Houston. The hospital also is known for providing the area's only comprehensive diabetes center—The Horace C. Polk Regional Diabetes Center. Other centers of excellence include the Temple Imaging Center that offers some of the most advanced procedures in the area, including PET/CT scanning for cancer and Alzheimer's, 64 Slice CT scanning, Open Bore MRI, 4D Ultrasound, and digital mammography. Other specialty areas include Orthopedic care, Women's Services, Inpatient and Outpatient Rehabilitation, Homecare, Wound and Hyperbaric Therapy, Kidney & Diabetes Treatment, Sleep Disorders Treatment, and Express Lab. Memorial Health System of East Texas—founded and funded by the people it serves.

### **Cutline:**

Dr. Taylor Pickett, Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgeon at Memorial Health System of East Texas.

