

BUILDING A COMPREHENSIVE AORTIC CENTER

A LETTER FROM FRANK R. ARKO III, MD



Dear physicians, health professionals, and hospital administrators,

Building a comprehensive aortic center presents a unique set of challenges to the delivery of cardiovascular care. Improving that quality of care should be the main goal of any comprehensive aortic program. Developing your institution's capa-

bilities and reach is possible with a commitment to more efficient processes, improved data tracking and measurement, and training more effective teams.

Our field is resplendent with existing technologies and emerging innovations, the accumulated efforts of many professionals' commitment to patient care, deep wisdom, and hard work. But have we maximized the synergy between these innovations at all levels of health care delivery? Physician leaders, nurse leaders, and hospital administrators share the responsibility to organize, consolidate, and employ these advancements in a coordinated fashion.

To date, there has been little formal discussion of what best constitutes an aortic center program. To advance this discussion, a day-long summit of aortic program leaders and key members of the aortic team—seasoned aortic center physicians, nurses, and administrators—convened in San Francisco on February 28, 2015, to share their own program's learnings. This special issue of *Endovascular Today* captures key insights from that discussion, featuring decision points pivotal for any institution and successes implementing greater institutional capabilities. Participants included physicians, advanced care providers, nurses, and administrators from the following institutions:

- Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
- Intermountain Medical Center (Salt Lake City, Utah)
- PinnacleHealth Hospital (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania)
- Sanger Heart & Vascular Institute (Carolinas HealthCare System, Charlotte, North Carolina)
- Stony Brook University Medical Center (Stony Brook, New York)
- The Heart Hospital Baylor (Plano, Texas)

We explore challenges in implementing an aortic center at the institutional and individual levels. We recognize that challenges confronting one institution might not be a problem to another and that each institution's journey will likely be unique. But there are also common threads of success detailed in this issue:

- Taking an honest inventory of one's institutional capabilities and weaknesses is essential to turn them into strengths
- A focus on interdisciplinary collaboration and relationship- and team-building
- Training and education must be continuous and formative to improve the skill of all team members and identify future educational needs
- Outreach and marketing requires forethought, active planning, and timely execution
- Investments in process efficiencies are just as important as investments in tangible resources and supplies

We are privileged to belong to a vibrantly engaged part of medicine with an opportunity to embrace innovation and work closely with other specialties to take your institution to the next level. Developing an aortic center is certainly a worthwhile endeavor that can yield much for your health care team, your institution, your patients, and community at large.

Whether your institution is early in this process or fine-tuning an already robust program, I hope this supplement serves as a useful framework from which you can continue to build.

Sincerely,
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