

# health at heart

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A publication from Flagstaff Medical Center

## Back on the Road

Thanks to Expert Care

Your Guide to the Newest

## Heart Surgery Technique

## A New Life

How Weight Loss Surgery Helped One Woman Lose Nearly 200 Pounds

## Tomorrow's Technology, Here Today

FMC Adds Robotic Surgery



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# Quality Measures: Raising the Bar at FMC

**F**lagstaff Medical Center makes providing the highest quality patient care a priority. As a healthcare consumer, we urge you to take advantage of reports that show how hospitals are performing.

Hospitals are becoming increasingly transparent in reporting data about how safely and effectively care is delivered. This means consumers can obtain easy-to-understand information about how hospitals measure the quality of their care as well as view reports about how FMC measures up to other hospitals.

### A Dependable Measuring Stick

One way FMC ensures it is continually striving for excellence in patient care is through its membership in the Hospital Quality Alliance (HQA). This national public-private collaboration was developed to encourage hospitals to voluntarily collect and report performance information to improve the quality of care delivered in hospitals nationwide.

Several highly respected organizations form this collaboration, including the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the Federation of American Hospitals and the Association of American Medical Colleges. The HQA assesses quality by focusing on whether hospitals are meeting critical care practices that have been shown to be best practices for treating heart attacks, heart failure and pneumonia. Additionally, HQA looks at best practices designed to prevent infections resulting from surgery.

“FMC knows that to provide exceptional care, we need to continually challenge ourselves to improve,” said Deb Candelaria, director of Quality Management at FMC. “Last year, FMC exceeded the national and state averages in the majority of the HQA indicators. That’s great, but for us it is not enough – we want to continue to improve our performance. From senior administration to front line employees and physicians, we are all focusing on this goal because we’ve made patients our purpose at FMC.”

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FOR A DETAILED REPORT OF FMC’S QUALITY INDICATORS AS MEASURED BY CMS, VISIT  
[WWW.HOSPITALCOMPARE.HHS.GOV](http://WWW.HOSPITALCOMPARE.HHS.GOV)





## Back to the Good Life

A world-renowned mule trainer, Flagstaff resident Roddy Lará wasn't about to let cancer keep him out of the saddle. Fortunately for Lará, the Cancer Center at Flagstaff Medical Center was nearby and ready to help.

**W**hen he was initially diagnosed, Lará (pronounced LaRay) sought treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale; however, he wanted to stay closer to his home and his mules. When he heard about the Cancer Center at FMC – only 15 miles from his home – he decided to make an appointment. He met with Andrew David, M.D., a radiation oncologist at the Cancer Center, and was amazed at the treatment options that were available.

"The Cancer Center had such a homelike atmosphere and the staff was so nice," Lará said. "I came to know everyone really well, and I love them all. I would much rather be treated by people I know."

### Offering the Latest


In addition to the friendliness of the staff, Lará was impressed by the state-of-the-art treatment options at the Cancer Center. The center is the only one in Northern Arizona that offers intensity modulated radiation therapy and image-guided radiation therapy. These techniques allow physicians to increase the radiation to the tumor with pinpoint accuracy while sparing healthy tissue.

"The doctors at FMC really know their stuff," Lará said. "I feel confident in them, and that's half the battle right there."

### Caring for the Whole You

The Cancer Center offers a wide variety of support services to patients, including nutrition counseling, relaxation and art therapy programs, as well as a transportation service for patients who can't drive themselves to their appointments.

"We provide a number of additional services so that we're not just treating the disease, we're treating the whole person," said Jeff Axtell, director of Oncology Services for FMC. "We want to help patients cope personally as well as physically as they begin their lifelong cancer journey."



**"We recognize that it's not just about cancer treatment, it's an introduction to a whole new way of living."**

– Jeff Axtell, director of Oncology Services at Flagstaff Medical Center

### Back to Life

Cancer has been a journey for Lará. He considers himself lucky to have Dr. David and the staff at the Cancer Center with him on his journey. Today, Lará is cancer-free, but he continues to drive 15 miles to the center for tests each year in case his cancer comes back.

"I'm lucky to be alive, and I owe it all to Flagstaff Medical Center," Lará said. "I'm really thankful to the medical staff here, and I just can't say enough good things about them."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE CANCER CENTER AT FMC, VISIT [CANCERCENTERATFLAGSTAFF.COM](http://CANCERCENTERATFLAGSTAFF.COM).



Flagstaff resident Roddy Lará is now back in the saddle thanks to the professionals at the Cancer Center at Flagstaff Medical Center.

# New Surgery Technique

## Gets Heart Patient Back on the Road

Patients with atrial fibrillation have a new treatment option that can eliminate the need for lifelong drug therapy. The revolutionary Thoracoscopic or Stand-Alone Maze procedure is minimally invasive and often cures atrial fibrillation. Flagstaff Medical Center is the first hospital in Northern and Central Arizona to introduce this breakthrough technology.

After being diagnosed with atrial fibrillation, the most common form of heart rhythm disorder, Bob Russell (seen here with his wife, Linda) chose to undergo Stand-Alone Maze surgery at Flagstaff Medical Center. He can now ride his Harley Davidson in good health. ▶

**A**t age 70, Bob Russell and his wife, Linda, still ride their Harley Davidson motorcycle. They have taken many long distance trips, including several trips to the Sturgis, South Dakota rally.

"It's the trip to get there, not the destination, that provides the thrill," Russell said.

However, their love for the open road was interrupted when Russell was diagnosed with a serious heart problem. He had visited his physician because he was experiencing shortness of breath, low energy and was very tired all the time.

"I thought I had pneumonia," Russell said. "Never in my dreams did I think he would tell me I had a heart condition."

### A Surprising Diagnosis

Tests showed Russell was suffering from atrial fibrillation, the most common form of heart rhythm disorder. His physician told him he needed to go to the Emergency department right away, because the biggest concern for those diagnosed with atrial fibrillation is an increased risk for a stroke.

"A local cardiologist prescribed the standard treatment of blood thinners to reduce my risk of having a stroke and beta blockers to slow my heart rate," Russell said. "I wasn't thrilled at the idea of having to be on these medications for the rest of my life."

Russell disliked the medications' side effects which included asthma-like symptoms, low energy and rectal bleeding. He sought the expertise of another cardiologist who understood his intolerance to the medication and recommended an appointment to see Steven Peterson, M.D., Flagstaff Medical Center's cardiothoracic surgeon.

Dr. Peterson explained a new surgical option for patients diagnosed with atrial fibrillation. Until recently, surgery only was used to treat atrial fibrillation when a patient had another condition that required open heart surgery. A new, minimally invasive surgery was giving patients an alternative. If Russell agreed, he would be the first patient at FMC to undergo this new procedure.

### Moving Forward

Russell's next step was to find out as much as possible about this new procedure, and he spent hours reviewing information. He and his wife eventually decided that the new surgical procedure was the right choice.

On Aug. 8, 2007, Russell had Thoracoscopic – or Stand-Alone – Maze surgery at FMC.

"The surgery was uncomfortable, but it certainly was less invasive, had less risk and offered a faster healing time than open heart surgery," Russell said.

His surgery required only four small incisions and did not require being put on a heart and lung bypass machine. By the first of September, Russell was feeling better than he had in two years.

"I was able to breathe better, my energy level increased and to my great satisfaction as a longtime church choir member, I was able to sing again," he said.

Russell is now back to work in his profession as a certified public accountant.

"This surgery gave me back my quality of life," he said. "Linda and I hope to be back on the road again soon, riding that Harley Davidson."





# Minimally Invasive Treatment for Atrial Fibrillation

**A**trial fibrillation, the most common form of heart rhythm disorder, affects about 2.5 million Americans with approximately 300,000 new cases diagnosed per year. It is predicted that 5.6 million patients will be diagnosed with atrial fibrillation by the year 2050. Atrial fibrillation is a condition of the heart in which the upper chambers do not beat in a synchronized or coordinated manner with the lower part of the heart.

Patients with atrial fibrillation experience an irregular heartbeat and can suffer from shortness of breath, lethargy and palpitations. Patients are required to take blood thinner medications to reduce their risk of stroke, as well as other medications to attempt to control the beating of the heart.

## Maze Surgical Techniques

Conventional Maze Surgery is the standard for surgical cure of atrial fibrillation. It continues to be used successfully, but it is a complicated procedure that isn't appropriate for all patients. Patients at FMC can now benefit from a new, minimally invasive option. Please see the table below for a comparison of the traditional surgery to the new option.

## First in Northern Arizona to Offer Procedure

Flagstaff Medical Center is the first hospital in Northern and Central Arizona to perform this breakthrough procedure for the surgical treatment of atrial fibrillation.

"We now are able to disrupt the electrical impulses causing the irregular heartbeat and promote normal rhythm without open heart surgery," said Steven Peterson, M.D., cardiothoracic surgeon. "This cutting-edge, minimally invasive surgical procedure represents an exciting new treatment option for the millions of patients who are diagnosed with atrial fibrillation. We are pleased to be the first to bring this new technology to the residents and visitors of Northern and Central Arizona."

Thoracoscopic Maze Procedure	Conventional Maze Surgery
<p>Surgeon works through three or four small incisions in between the ribs without dividing the sternum.</p> <p>Is performed on the beating heart with no bypass machine required.</p> <p>No incisions on the heart itself. Surgeon uses heat to interrupt flow of abnormal electrical signals.</p> <p>Offered as a stand-alone procedure. Used when patient does not need open heart surgery for another diagnosis.</p> <p>Minimally invasive procedure offers many benefits, including less postoperative pain, faster recovery, reduced risk of complications and shorter hospital stay.</p>	<p>Surgeon must divide sternum (chest bone) to access heart, heart-lung machine may be required.</p> <p>Surgeon uses a heated or freezing probe with direct access to the heart to interrupt flow of abnormal electrical signals.</p> <p>Typically performed in combination with another open heart surgery.</p> <p>Procedure is very successful, but it does not offer all of the post-operative benefits seen with a minimally invasive surgical approach like the thoracoscopic procedure.</p>



# Robotics: The Future of Surgery Is Here

While robotic surgery might sound like something out of a science fiction movie, it's actually an advanced surgical tool that will help surgeons at Flagstaff Medical Center perform more precise procedures.

**W**ithin the past 20 years, minimally invasive surgery (MIS) has taken the field of surgery by storm. Today, many of the common and more advanced surgical procedures can be performed with MIS techniques, which dramatically reduce the incision size, lessen post-operative pain and ease recovery for patients.

The da Vinci Robotic Surgical System – the latest generation of MIS – provides those same results while allowing surgeons to perform even more delicate procedures. FMC will be the only facility in Northern and Central Arizona to offer this level of care to patients.

“The name ‘robotic surgery’ is a little bit of a misnomer, because it makes patients think the surgeon isn’t involved with the procedure, and that’s not the case at all,” said Brenda Munns, R.N., C.N.O.R., director of Surgical Services at FMC. “The surgeon

is in complete control of each and every movement the robot makes, and the end result is a tremendous benefit to patients.”

### Advanced Surgical Technique

During surgery with the da Vinci Surgical System, miniature instruments and a tiny camera are inserted through small incisions in the body. The surgeon performs the surgery using a three-dimensional television monitor and two hand-held controls. The controls translate his or her own hand movements to the instruments attached to the robot.

“Because the instruments have better mobility in the tight spaces within the patient’s body, the da Vinci system allows greater precision and control than what the surgeon would typically have on his or her own or using other MIS technology,” said Robert Berger, M.D., F.A.C.S., a general and bariatric surgeon at FMC.

“The da Vinci system lets us perform procedures that we couldn’t do with standard MIS instruments.”

When surgeons at FMC begin using the da Vinci system this month, it will be used for weight loss surgery and some general surgical procedures. The program will be expanded to include gynecological and cardiovascular procedures. Urological procedures will be added this summer.

“The da Vinci system is a true breakthrough in surgical technology, making surgeries less invasive than ever before,” Dr. Berger said. “We’re pleased to be the only hospital north of Phoenix offering this cutting-edge technology.”

### Standing Alone

Flagstaff Medical Center is proud to be the only facility in Northern Arizona that will offer the da Vinci Robotic Surgical System, a state-of-the-art surgical tool that allows a higher level of precision and control for surgeons.



**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SURGICAL SERVICES AND THE DA VINCI SYSTEM AT FMC, VISIT [FLAGSTAFFMEDICALCENTER.COM](http://FLAGSTAFFMEDICALCENTER.COM).**



After weight loss surgery at Flagstaff Medical Center, Victoria Rogers is enjoying life more than ever before.

# The Best *Is Yet to Come*

**W**eight loss surgery at Flagstaff Medical Center helped Victoria Rogers lose nearly 200 pounds, allowing her to be a full participant in the life of her dreams.

## **An Answer at Long Last**

Rogers, who has a family history of diabetes, heart disease and obesity, had been dieting since age 8 without any success. By the time she was in her early 30s, her weight had risen to a life-threatening 336 pounds.

“I had chronic back pain, cellulitis (inflammation due to infection), sleep apnea (the sleep disorder that can lead to heart disease), acid reflux and prediabetes,” Rogers said. “I also was unable to get pregnant, which was very disheartening to my husband and me. I knew I had to get the weight off to save my health and regain my life.”

## **A Personal Touch**

Patients who meet the criteria for bariatric surgery work with their surgeon to decide which procedure is best for them. Rogers met with Dr. Berger and his caring staff, who thoroughly discussed her options. Based on her health, Rogers and Dr. Berger determined the Roux-en-Y gastric bypass (RGB), was the best option. In gastric bypass surgery, a new, smaller stomach is created. It is the most common of the bariatric surgery procedures, because it produces the most rapid weight loss results.

## **Rapid Results**

Bariatric, or weight loss surgery, is the most effective solution when a person’s weight is classified as morbidly obese, a condition that is usually accompanied by one or more serious health risks. Candidates for the surgery must typically have:

- a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher
- obesity-related health problems, including sleep apnea or heart disease, with a BMI of 35 or higher

“The goal of bariatric surgery is the rapid resolution of life-threatening health conditions,” said Robert Berger, M.D., F.A.C.S., bariatric surgeon at Flagstaff Medical Center. “Patients who have been battling conditions such as diabetes for years may see a change as soon as they go home. Many can stop or reduce their medications after losing 20 to 30 pounds, which usually takes about a month.”

## **Geared for Success**

“After losing 170 pounds in 13 months, I have learned that eating is not as important as my overall health,” Rogers said. “I can now do things I’ve always wanted to do but couldn’t – like start a family and ride the rides at Disneyland.”

FMC OFFERS MONTHLY INFORMATIONAL SESSIONS ON WEIGHT LOSS SURGERY. FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [FLAGSTAFFMEDICALCENTER.COM](http://FLAGSTAFFMEDICALCENTER.COM) OR CALL FMC AT 1-800-308-1367.

# On Your Side

At Flagstaff Medical Center, weight loss surgery patients work with a caring and specially trained support team to ensure success. Our comprehensive program includes psychological, exercise and nutritional counseling. Monthly support groups also are provided to ensure patients continue to meet their goals. When you choose FMC, you choose a staff dedicated to quality and helping you live a healthier life.



# Stay Heart Smart

In honor of American Heart Health Month this February, Flagstaff Medical Center urges you to know the symptoms of a heart attack to help keep you and your loved ones safe.

Many people think of heart attacks as causing sudden, sharp chest pain. However, there actually are several symptoms of a heart attack, including a feeling of pressure, squeezing or fullness in the chest.

Other symptoms of a heart attack may include:

- cold sweats
- lightheadedness
- nausea or vomiting
- shortness of breath
- stomach pain
- upper body pain

“People need to be familiar with the symptoms of a heart attack so they won’t try to deny a heart attack is occurring or diagnose themselves,” said Gigi Sorenson, R.N., M.S.N., director of Cardiovascular Services at FMC. “If you think you’re having a heart attack, call 911 immediately. The quicker you get to the Emergency Department, the quicker we can implement measures to prevent further damage to your heart.”

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A HEART ATTACK, VISIT [FLAGSTAFFMEDICALCENTER.COM](http://FLAGSTAFFMEDICALCENTER.COM).**

## Put on Your Dancing Shoes

Heart patients at Flagstaff Medical Center are dancing their way back to good health through monthly ballroom dance classes as part of its Cardiac Rehabilitation program.

“Dancing is an aerobic activity that improves balance, stamina and mental acuity,” said Karen Evans, R.N., a cardiac rehabilitation nurse at FMC. “There’s also a definite social benefit that is especially important for heart patients. Getting together and meeting others with cardiac conditions creates a great support network.”

Classes are geared to all physical and dance levels, and include instruction on the waltz, swing and rumba. Rob Greenberg, M.D., and wife Kathleen Greenberg, a nurse at FMC, teach the classes. The classes are held in the Cardiac Rehab Fitness Gym next to the cafeteria. All classes are free and open to the public.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE DANCE CLASSES, CALL FMC CARDIAC REHABILITATION AT 928 214-3565.**



## Patients Are Our Purpose

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**We want your feedback!** Contact Janet Dean, FMC director of Marketing/Public Relations, at 928 773-2081 or [janet.dean@nahealth.com](mailto:janet.dean@nahealth.com). You also can fax comments or questions to 928 773-2395, or send correspondence to:

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