

Greenacres Hospital adds R30-million to cardiac facility

Following its R30 million investment in upgrading its cardiac facility for the diagnosis and treatment of heart diseases, Netcare Greenacres Hospital will act as the Eastern Cape referral centre for heart cases.



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The electrophysiology (EP) unit, where heart rhythm problems are treated, is being expanded as part of the upgrades at the facility and will enhance the capabilities of the hospital's cardiac centre.

Netcare Greenacres Hospital GM, Gloria Murison, says cardiologist Dr Neil Hendricks, who is an expert in the field of electrophysiology, has joined the cardiac team at the facility. "Electrophysiology is a highly specialised field and there are just a handful of cardiologists in the South African private sector who have specialised in this field. We are very fortunate to be working with Dr Hendricks and are privileged to be bringing this service as a first to the Eastern Cape."

Extending cardio services

The upgraded EP facility will offer a range of services in this field including EP studies, radiofrequency ablation, cryoablation, drug therapy, tilt testing and a pacemaker service. Cardiac ablation is a highly advanced procedure that uses a catheter to destroy or block damaged electrical pathways in order to restore normal heart rhythms. Energy in the form of heat (radiofrequency energy) or cold (cryoablation) is used to destroy tissue that has been causing electrical 'short circuits' within the heart.

The hospital already offers a pacemaker service, whereby single, dual chamber and biventricular pacemakers are implanted to treat heart failure as well as implantable cardioverter defibrillators (ICDs) and single, dual chamber and CRT (cardiac resynchronisation therapy) devices.

The specialists practicing at the cardiac centre also perform cardiac bypass or open-heart surgery; undertake coronary angiograms, a diagnostic investigation that uses dye and special X-rays to show the condition of a patient's coronary arteries; insert stents, a procedure in which a mesh 'tube' is used to hold open diseased arteries causing blockages in blood flow. In addition, the hospital offers a paediatric cardiology service, under Dr Lungile Pepeta, a cardiologist who

specialises in this field.

New system for children, elderly

The upgrade of the cardiac facility will also include the introduction of bi-plane imaging technology. This state-of-the-art system ensures less exposure of patients to potentially hazardous radiation and dyes, which is particularly important in children and the elderly.

Dr Mike Dean, a cardiologist at the hospital, says that the heart is among the most vital of all human organs, pumping blood containing oxygen and nutrients throughout the human body, without which we simply could not survive. A number of conditions may affect the heart's functioning, including abnormal heart rhythms, heart disease, heart failure and angina - chest pain generally caused by an obstruction or spasm in the coronary arteries.

Murison points out that the cardiac centre incorporates a number of specialised facilities, including a coronary care unit, cardio-thoracic ward, intensive care unit (ICU), two cardiac catheterisation laboratories and the EP unit. She says the hospital is spending R25 million on technology and equipment and more than R5 million on building alterations to upgrade the centre.

"The team of specialists are able to treat heart conditions with the latest technology - all at this single centre. A great advantage of offering such a comprehensive cardiac service is that we can provide patients with a quick referral service to the appropriate cardiac specialist for their type of heart condition. We expect the hospital to become the referral centre for private cardiology cases throughout the Eastern Cape," concludes Murison.

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