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## Mercy Medical Center offers convergent procedure for AFib

Mercy Medical Center now offers a treatment option for patients with long-standing atrial fibrillation (AFib) – a type of irregular heartbeat – and associated structural heart changes. The new option is called a Convergent Hybrid Procedure - a convergence of technology and technique. The Convergent Hybrid Procedure combines the expertise of two doctors working together: a cardiothoracic surgeon and a cardiac electrophysiologist.



*David Glassman*



*C.C. Lee*

In a Convergent Hybrid Procedure, the surgeon creates a tiny incision in the patient's upper abdomen instead of a large chest incision as is the case in open heart surgery. That small incision means the surgery is minimally invasive, which can often result in a shortened hospital stay and a faster recovery time for the patient compared to a full-length chest incision. The surgeon uses radiofrequency ablation (targeted heat to destroy tissue in problem areas of the heart to restore its regular rhythm) to create an area of ablated tissue on the floor of the left atrium from the outside of the beating heart.

Later, an electrophysiologist threads a catheter up to the left atrium of the heart. Again using radiofrequency energy, the electrophysiologist ablates regions of the heart that cannot be reached

from the outside and are best approached from inside the heart. The electrophysiologist also closes any gaps that may have developed in the lines created by the surgeon and tests to confirm that all of the target lesions are intact.

"This new, minimally invasive approach provides another treatment option for our patients," C.C. Lee, cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon at Mercy, stated in a press release. "The procedure uniquely combines the best of both traditional catheter and surgical ablation treatments to restore normal heart rhythm, resulting in a hybrid treatment approach to treat complex atrial fibrillation."

"The Convergent Hybrid Procedure allows a surgeon to approach the regions of the heart that are best reached via a surgical approach, and the electrophysiologist to ablate the regions that are best reached with a catheter," stated David Glassman, cardiac electrophysiologist at Mercy.

Dr. Lee performed convergent procedures at his Wisconsin practice before joining Mercy last year. He says the approach allows for an overall improved quality of life; patients feel better and have more energy. Many patients, he says, also are able to go off heart medications, another significant benefit. The recovery time from having the convergent procedure is typically a short hospital stay.