



Hospital pumps up cardiac care

By [Jim Hunter](#)

Oak Hill Hospital of Hernando County is about to get into the cardiac care business in a bigger way.

The hospital, two miles east of U.S. 19 on State Road 50, is opening its new Heart Institute next month, and will offer more intensive cardiac catheterization services as well as open heart surgery in its new addition.

Oak Hill CEO Mickey Smith said that with the new Heart Institute he expects to see even more interest from Citrus County residents because the hospital will be doing open-heart surgery.

Smith, a Citrus County resident himself, said the hospital already gets Citrus residents from the Sugarmill Woods area who are actually closer to Oak Hill than the two Citrus County hospitals.

The hospital's new, upgraded specialization for cardiac services offers Citrus residents another option in their cardiac care, he said.

Currently, only Citrus Memorial in Inverness offers intensive cardiac care in the county. Its \$14.2 million Heart Center opened in January 2004, and was the first facility in Citrus County where patients could get open-heart surgery.

Oak Hill previously had a cardiac catheterization lab, but now that service will be expanded and upgraded to interventional catheterization with state-of-the-art equipment. It will be coordinated with the open-heart surgical unit that will offer a range of services from coronary artery bypass to heart transplants.

Seven cardiac surgeons from two groups from Bayonet Point, Gulf-to-Bay Cardiovascular & Thoracic Center and Bayonet Point Cardiac Surgery Associates, will perform the surgical services.

The hospital's Heart Institute services will include coronary stenting and drug eluting stenting, CT scans, intracoronary thrombolytic therapy, implantable cardiovascular defibrillators and intravascular coronary ultrasound, as well as intensive care, recovery and rehab units.

The physical facilities in the 24,000-square-foot institute include a

registration area, pre-op testing section, a new catheterization lab, two oversized dedicated operating suites, a six-bed recovery unit, 10-bed intensive care unit and a rehabilitative care section. The open heart program and heart surgery operating suits alone cost \$7.5 million, the hospital said in its press kit.

In addition to spending about a \$1 million on a cardiac ultrasound system and a cardiac monitoring system, the hospital also has spent more than \$2 million on new MRI and CT scanners in the past few years, according to hospital officials. All told, the hospital said it has spent \$30 million in the past five years on new equipment and facilities.

Smith noted that the hospital also is going to a state-of-the-art digital information system that digitally stores, shares and transfers all equipment imaging and hospital records. The hospital's patient care and medication records are being integrated into a system that allows hospital staff to immediately check, add and transfer information. The system includes a program that doublechecks medication against prescriptions, medication charts and other records to drastically cut down errors in administering drugs. By next year, the hospital will be 90 percent computerized, he said.

Smith said that next year the hospital also will begin a program of housing hospitalists at Oak Hill. Those will be doctors who practice only at the hospital.

While the new facility offers a new array of cardiac services, the hospital also has a corollary program for the treatment of strokes. Smith said the program treats stroke patients as aggressively as heart attack patients.

All in all, he said, inviting Citrus residents to check out Oak Hill, "The hospital has a lot to offer."

With 204 licensed acute care beds, Smith noted, the hospital will be the largest in both Citrus and Hernando counties. It also will be the only hospital in Hernando to offer open-heart surgery.

For more information about cardiac treatment offered at the hospital, check the hospital's Web site at: www.oakhillhospital.com.

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