

HERO AT HEART

Dr. Gary Goodman



This year, 1.2 million Americans will have a heart attack. Half of them will die.

The truth is that heart disease is still the number one cause of death of adults in America — and in Michigan. But the heart doctors of Providence Heart Institute are working to change that. And that's why we salute this week's Hero At Heart.

Meet Dr. Gary Goodman, Chief of Cardiovascular Surgery at the Providence Heart Institute.

Q: Dr. Goodman, when did you know you wanted to be a doctor?

A: Halfway through medical school. I wasn't one of those people who knew from the age of 5. I had a strong aptitude in science, but it wasn't until the end of college – along with some pressure from my parents to get a career – that I chose to be a doctor. Medicine seemed like a good fit, and I developed an interest in cardiac surgery during my residency. I get that decision validated daily when I participate in sustaining a patient's health when they encounter a life threatening condition. The technical demands and success rate of cardiac surgery are constantly challenging but always rewarding.

Q: What do you think are the challenges of practicing medicine?

A: Certainly in terms of cardiac surgery, the aging population and ability to treat heart conditions in the advanced stages pose a challenge to practicing medicine. As aspects of cardiac illness become more complicated, it is a continuous challenge to achieve good results under progressively complex circumstances. The next challenge will be facing the fiscal task of caring for the aging baby boomers with the same excellent outcomes.

Q: What makes a good patient/physician relationship?

A: Honesty on both sides of the table. A good doctor will not only be a medical professional, but also, in a way, a humanist. Attending to the personal side of medicine is very important. If a doctor can empathize with the patient, the relationship and treatment will be a success.

Q: What's on the horizon in heart care?

A: Technology in cardiac surgery is accelerating at an incredible pace. These advancements provide surgeons with exciting opportunities to achieve improved results with minimally invasive procedures. A new operation to correct Atrial Fibrillation, which affects more than 2 million Americans, has proven to be very effective. Other technical surgical approaches to heart failure such as pacemaker implantation and heart remodeling are also achieving great results.

Q: What is some medical advice the world can't do without?

A: It's ironic that we are often guilty of not following our own advice. Patients today are smarter; however, they often don't take the time to receive the proper screenings, or to understand and manage the cardiac risk factors. Primary prevention of illness is preferable to effective treatment.

Q: Why did you choose St. John Health?

A: I grew up in New York and trained in Florida, but I came to southeast Michigan 25 years ago. I chose St. John Health because they are, by far, the most extensive system. With hospitals in many counties, St. John Health provides excellent care to a broad array of patients. St. John Health is a health care system that is truly for everyone. As a faith-based organization, St. John is head and shoulders above other systems because they treat the patient as a whole person—body and soul. The commitment of the medical staff, the dedication of the associates and the striving of the administration combine to make an unbeatable team.

To find out your risk for heart disease, visit us online and take our 2-minute heart assessment at www.realmedicine.org/heartcheck

You can find Dr. Goodman in his office location in Southfield or at Cardiac Surgery Institute, PC, in Detroit. If you would like to make an appointment, please call 1-888-440-REAL or visit us online at www.realmedicine.org.

Dr. Gary Goodman is an independent physician on the medical staff of Providence Hospital

Providence Hospital in the only hospital in southeastern Michigan with a Cardiovascular Teaching program recognized as a national top 100 heart hospital five years in a row.