

40 Years of Device Closure

Reflections from a Country Doctor

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Key Words

ASD closure • Cardiac umbrella • Device closure • Septal closure

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Introduction

2015 marks the 40th anniversary of ASD closure. As I reflect on that day, I remember how quiet the Ochsner Clinic had become. Very little was being said, I suppose in an attempt to limit the nervousness inherent in such an endeavor. We had successfully completed our canine research and were presented with an opportunity to use the device on a 17 year old female that was refusing surgery. I remember the rigors of the approval process, however today, I marvel at how easy it really was.

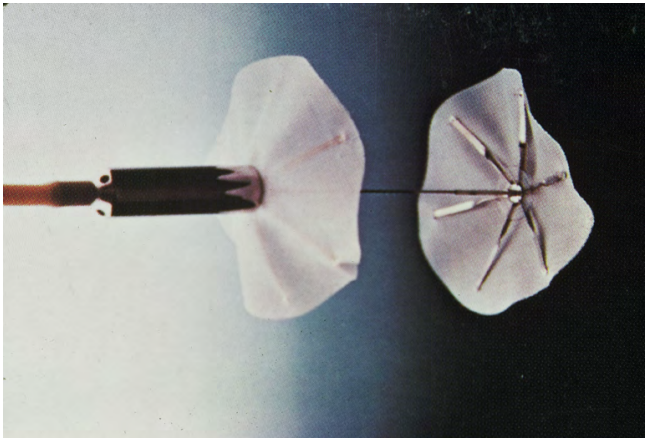
Imagine that day, beautiful weather on a crisp New Orleans spring day, normal by most accounts, but for some, the day would prove to be anything but normal. Imagine the entire hospital administration and the board of directors assembled in the board room receiving moment to moment updates about the procedure. Imagine the cath lab team and the surgical team assembling for this first implant. Imagine the courage of a 17 year old willing to have a procedure that had never been done on a human. Maybe she was protected by the naivety of her age or maybe she believed herself to be immortal (common in that age group). Lastly, imagine the relief, the tears of joy and the thrill of the moment when the umbrella locked in place.

We successfully placed the King-Mills umbrella in 5 patients. They are scattered across the country, from the east coast to the west coast and from the Mississippi Delta to the Rocky Mountains. Their current ages range from 57 to 84 years and all but one are "living large" with children and grandchildren. The 5th patient we implanted the device in, died at age 84, 9 years post implant of Hodgkin's lymphoma. All told, that is about 169 implant years.

The good news is, actually, the great news is, the devices achieved the intended goal and none of the patients had any untoward side effect. Age has a tendency to creep up on us all, and these patients have been no exception, however, I think it is safe to say the King Mills Cardiac Umbrella was a success.

I have been blessed to watch the advances in technology in device closure. Stainless steel and Dacron





have been replaced with metals with memory. Large bore delivery systems have been replaced with much smaller systems. And while our procedure significantly decreased hospital stays for surgical closure, techniques today have allowed procedures to be done on an outpatient basis.

I contend that those 5 patients are the true heroes. They, like the thousands that have followed, put their faith and trust in us to first “do no harm” and in doing so, forged a path for others to come. I eagerly anticipate the day that the ultimate ASD closure device or procedure arrives. I agree with Dr. Bailey who said back in the early 1950’s that a perfect closure won’t leave a foreign object behind.

I am reminded of the Hippocratic Oath that states I will respect the hard-won scientific gains of those physicians in whose steps I walk, and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow. One measure of success is the caliber of people who choose to follow you. In this, I have achieved great success. I tip my hat to those who continue to advance this technology. For what I have found to be true in these 40 years, it is the relationships with my patients and my colleagues that have become my treasured memories.

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