



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information contact:

Ben Roberts
Director, Public Relations & Communications
O: 229-312-5180
C: 229-343-7499
benroberts@phoebehealth.com

New Procedure at Phoebe Helps Patients with Heart Failure

Albany, Ga. – Annie Clyde was sick and scared and frustrated. She had been diagnosed with heart failure, and her condition just kept getting worse. “I was throwing up. I couldn’t hardly breathe. I didn’t want to eat. I couldn’t sleep at night. Anytime I tried to walk or do anything, I gave out of breath,” she said.

Annie, a resident of Lee County, is only 51 years-old, but she began to worry she wouldn’t live much longer. “I’m just gonna be honest. I thought I was going to leave this world,” she said.

Heart failure is a chronic condition that occurs when a weakened heart cannot pump well enough to supply the body with the amount of oxygen-rich blood it needs. Phoebe Electrophysiologist Dr. James Coman said, “it’s like an eight-cylinder engine operating on two cylinders.”

He said patients with advanced heart failure are typically on multiple medications but still often end up in the hospital two or three times a year, usually for at least a week at a time. More than 25 years ago a treatment called cardiac resynchronization therapy (CRT) was introduced, but about half of advanced heart failure patients don’t qualify for CRT.

Phoebe is the only hospital in south Georgia to offer a new procedure that opens treatment to many more heart failure patients. “The number of patients who qualify for this therapy is enormous, and I would expect a lot of people in the region to benefit from it,” Dr. Coman said.

The Optimizer® Smart Mini is a minimally invasive implantable device that delivers precisely timed electric pulses called cardiac contractility modulation (CCM) therapy. CCM helps the heart to contract and pump. Dr. Coman is the only physician in Georgia south of Eatonton and Augusta who is authorized to implant the Optimizer® Smart Mini, and in August, Annie Clyde became the first patient at Phoebe to receive it.

“She came back for a follow-up visit just 10 days after the procedure, and she was a completely different person. She jumped off the exam table and started doing deep knee bends with a big grin on her face to show me how good she felt,” Dr. Coman said. “It’s a remarkable example of the kind of improvement you can get from this technology. She can now do all daily activities without any restrictions,” he added.

Annie went home from the hospital the same day of her procedure, and she was shocked at the immediate impact it had on her daily life. “The difference is I can walk and I can breathe,” she said. “I really feel like I have a future that I can look forward to. Before this, I didn’t think I had a future.”

Annie got emotional as she talked about the Phoebe Electrophysiology team who cared for her and gave her that future to look forward to. “These are happy tears,” she said. “They are wonderful. They are sent from heaven. If it wasn’t for them, I don’t know what I would do. They were just a great team. I just love them.”

In clinical trials, 81% of patients who received this treatment had significant improvement in their heart function, allowing them to return to normal daily activities without any problems. 40% of them improved to the point where they could exercise without any limitations.

“It’s very beneficial for these patients,” Dr. Coman said. “Their lives improve dramatically. They stay out of the hospital. And their healthcare costs go down.”

Annie is happy she was the first person in our region to reap the benefits of this therapy, and she hopes other heart failure patients will follow her lead. “Please get it. I would tell them a million times, yes,” she said. “The procedure sure is doing me some justice.”

Heart failure patients interested in seeing if they may qualify for the procedure should talk with their primary care physician or cardiologist who can refer them to Phoebe Electrophysiology for a consultation.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: Attached photo shows Dr. James Coman with the Phoebe Electrophysiology team that implanted the first Optimizer® Smart Mini device.

