

**TO MEDIA:**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**EXCELA HEALTH CARDIOLOGISTS SURPASS 200 WATCHMAN™ IMPLANTS,  
ELIMINATING PATIENTS' NEED FOR BLOOD THINNERS TO TREAT A-FIB**

**GREENSBURG, PA, February 2023** ...For more than 15 years William Hoy managed his atrial fibrillation with blood thinners and heart rate control medications. The 68-year-old Export man never let this heart condition get in the way of his busy concrete construction business or his recreational interests.

Now retired, Hoy was enjoying one of many boating adventures in Key West last July when he fell, injuring his head. Initially, he thought little of the incident, and when symptoms appeared, he attributed them to COVID. In reality, Hoy had suffered two brain bleeds. Upon returning to Greensburg, he visited his Excelsa Health cardiologist Juan Chahin, MD, who suggested he might be a candidate for the WATCHMAN™ Implant, which would eliminate his need for blood thinners and reduce his risk of stroke.

During the February observance of National Heart Month, Hoy is among more than 200 Excelsa Health patients celebrating their WATCHMAN™ Implant, one of several minimally invasive procedures performed by cardiovascular specialists in the Heart Center at Excelsa Health Westmoreland Hospital.

As many as 6 million Americans deal with atrial fibrillation, or A-fib – an irregular heartbeat that can cause complications like blood clots, stroke and heart failure. To guard against the likelihood of these occurring, doctors typically prescribe blood

thinners, which come with their own risks, such as excessive or uncontrolled bleeding. The WATCHMAN™ implant offers an alternative to such medications.

During the hour-long procedure, the doctor inserts a small catheter in the patient's groin to implant the WATCHMAN™ device in the left atrial appendage without any surgery or incisions. Once the device is in place, heart tissue will grow over the implant to seal off the appendage and close it off from circulation so clots can no longer be formed in the structure.

Often discharged within hours of the procedure, Excela Health patients will remain on blood thinners for 45 days. At that time, a cardiologist will perform a transesophageal echocardiogram or TEE to confirm that there's no blood flow around the device and no clot on the device. The patient will then be able to stop using blood thinners.

With the risk of clots being eliminated, so is the need for blood thinners.

"The biggest risk as A-fib progresses is the formation of a blood clot in the heart that can then travel to the brain and cause a stroke," said Bassel Sayegh, MD, the Excela Health electrophysiologist who performed Hoy's WATCHMAN™ procedure. "Bill Hoy was fortunate that his fall didn't have greater adverse effects and that we were able to provide an intervention that allowed him to be weaned off blood thinners."

While anti-clotting medications have been around for more than a century, the WATCHMAN™ has been available in the United States since 2015. The WATCHMAN technology is the most studied and implanted left atrial appendage device in the world and has been used to treat more than 150,000 patients in 75 countries.

The Hoy family couldn't be more pleased that such an option was available at Excela Health. "I want to get the most out of life," affirmed Hoy. "My wife, Jayne, and I have two sons and four grandchildren between them to enjoy, and we travel a lot. I'm an otherwise healthy guy. This procedure definitely will prolong our active lifestyle."

To learn more about WATCHMAN, visit [www.excelahealth.org](http://www.excelahealth.org).