



NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Ross Norton

864.512.3765

ross.norton1@anmedhealth.org

AnMed Health first in the Upstate to offer implant device as alternative to warfarin

(Anderson, S.C. – March 21, 2016) –AnMed Health is among the first hospitals in the region to offer patients with non-valvular atrial fibrillation (AF) an alternative to long-term warfarin medication with the newly approved WATCHMAN Left Atrial Appendage Closure (LAAC) Implant.

Dr. Matt Sellers, of AnMed Health Arrhythmia Specialists, on March 17 became the first physician in the Upstate to implant the WATCHMAN device in a patient. AnMed Health Arrhythmia Specialists remains the only place in the region to offer the device.

For patients with AF, sometimes called A-Fib, who are considered suitable for warfarin by their physicians but who have reason to seek a non-drug alternative, the device can help reduce the risk of AF-related stroke. The WATCHMAN Implant closes off an area of the heart called the left atrial appendage (LAA) to keep harmful blood clots from the LAA from entering the blood stream and potentially causing a stroke. By closing off the LAA, the risk of stroke may be reduced and, over time, patients may be able to stop taking warfarin.

People with atrial fibrillation have a five times greater risk of stroke. Atrial fibrillation can cause blood to pool and form clots in the LAA. For patients with non-valvular AF, the LAA is believed to be the source of the majority of stroke-causing blood clots. If a clot forms in the LAA, it can increase the risk of having a stroke. Blood clots can break loose and travel in the blood stream to the brain, lungs, and other parts of the body.

“The new WATCHMAN LAAC Implant provides physicians with a breakthrough stroke risk reduction option for patients with non-valvular AF,” said Dr. Rick Henderson of AnMed Health Arrhythmia Specialists. “For patients with non-valvular atrial fibrillation who are seeking an alternative to warfarin, the WATCHMAN Implant offers a potentially life-changing stroke risk treatment option which could free them from the challenges of long-term warfarin therapy.”

Warfarin sometimes doesn't work for patients who otherwise are suited for the drug, according to Henderson, because some people suffer side effects and some simply do not take the medication as prescribed.

AnMed Health Arrhythmia Specialists can be reached at 864.512.4530.

Implanting the WATCHMAN Device, which was recently approved by the FDA, is a one-time procedure that usually lasts about an hour. Following the procedure, patients typically stay in the hospital for 24 hours.

About Atrial Fibrillation

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a heart condition where the upper chambers of the heart (atrium) beat too fast and with irregular rhythm (fibrillation). AF is the most common cardiac arrhythmia, currently affecting more than 5 million Americans. Twenty percent of all strokes occur in patients with AF, and AF-related strokes are more frequently fatal and disabling. The most common treatment to reduce stroke risk in patients with AF is blood-thinning warfarin medication. Despite its proven efficacy, long-term warfarin medication is not well-tolerated by some patients and carries a significant risk for bleeding complications. Nearly half of AF patients eligible for warfarin are currently untreated due to tolerance and adherence issues.

For more information on the WATCHMAN Implant, visit: watchmanimplant.com.

AnMed Health is a 695-bed, not-for-profit health system serving the Upstate and northeast Georgia. The system is anchored by AnMed Health Medical Center, a 461-bed acute care hospital which has earned the prestigious Magnet® designation. The five-hospital system includes AnMed Health Women's and Children's Hospital, AnMed Health Rehabilitation Hospital, Cannon Memorial Hospital in Pickens, S.C., and Elbert Memorial Hospital in Elberton, Ga. With more than 400 physicians and 3,700 employees, AnMed Health is Anderson County's largest employer. Learn more about AnMed Health, an affiliate of Carolinas HealthCare System, at www.AnMedHealth.org.

About Boston Scientific

Boston Scientific is a worldwide developer, manufacturer and marketer of medical devices that are used in a broad range of interventional medical specialties. For more information, visit: www.bostonscientific.com.

WATCHMAN™ Left Atrial Appendage Closure Device from Boston Scientific

The WATCHMAN Device is a permanent implant designed to close the left atrial appendage in the heart in an effort to reduce the risk of stroke. With all medical procedures there are risks associated with the implant procedure and the use of the device. The risks include but are not limited to accidental heart puncture, air embolism, allergic reaction, anemia, anesthesia risks, arrhythmias, AV (Arteriovenous) fistula, bleeding or throat pain from the TEE (Trans Esophageal Echo) probe, blood clot or air bubbles in the lungs or other organs, bruising at the catheter insertion site, clot formation on the WATCHMAN™ Closure Device, cranial bleed, excessive bleeding, gastrointestinal bleeding, groin puncture bleed, hypotension, infection/pneumonia, pneumothorax, pulmonary edema, pulmonary vein obstruction, renal failure, stroke, thrombosis and transient ischemic attack. In rare cases death can occur. Be sure to talk with your doctor so that you thoroughly understand all of the risks and benefits associated with the implantation of the WATCHMAN Device.