



Home

# Northside Hospital's Comprehensive Cardiovascular Care

---

By: Michael Ferguson

Wednesday, February 5, 2014

**Northside Hospital Heart and Vascular Institute marshals the expertise of board-certified cardiologists and vascular surgeons to treat the spectrum of cardiovascular conditions with the most innovative technology available.**

The Heart and Vascular Institute brings together a wide range of cardiovascular capabilities at all three Northside Hospital locations in Atlanta, Cherokee and Forsyth and throughout Metro Atlanta.



“We individualize each treatment to the patient’s needs to minimize risks and maximize benefits,” says Joseph Ricotta, MD, MS, FACS, Northside Hospital Chair of the Vascular Section and Medical Director of Vascular Services of the Heart and Vascular Institute. “If patients see vascular surgeons but have concomitant cardiac

issues, we can send them down the hall to our colleagues, so we can offer imaging studies, catheterization and medical management all at the same time.”

## On the Leading Edge

Michael Balk, MD, FACC, Medical Director of Cardiology at Northside Hospital Heart and Vascular Institute, explains that clinicians emphasize expeditious diagnoses and treatments.

---

“Our group has the experience and confidence that come from performing thousands of procedures. We provide a unique combination of compassionate care, preventive cardiology and advanced therapeutic techniques to the Greater Atlanta population.”

— *Michael Balk, MD, FACC, Medical Director of Cardiology at Northside Hospital Heart and Vascular Institute*

---

Northside Surgery 250



The cornerstone of Northside Hospital Heart and Vascular Institute is its full capabilities, which include advanced treatments for A-fib, aortic aneurysms,

## Northside CardioVascular Symposium

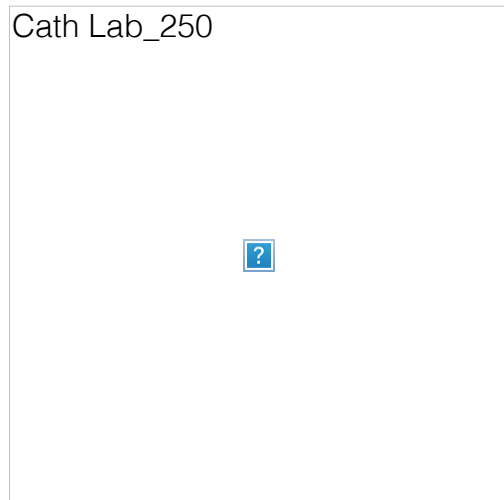
In conjunction with its Heart and Vascular Institute, Northside Hospital will present the Northside CardioVascular Symposium 2014 on Saturday, April 26, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at The Ritz-Carlton Atlanta.

Experts in cardiology, vascular surgery and electrophysiology will lead seminars that will spotlight innovative methods for treating the spectrum of cardiovascular diseases,

carotid artery disease, coronary artery disease, heart failure, heart attacks, stroke, high blood pressure, peripheral and renal artery blockages, blood clots, and varicose veins.

Northside also has the distinction of having the only surgeon in the United States using custom-modified fenestrated-branched stent grafts to treat thoracoabdominal aortic aneurysms. Dr. Ricotta obtained an investigational device exemption (IDE) from the FDA. These grafts enable minimally invasive complex aortic aneurysm treatment — even in emergent situations.

“If patients come in with an emergent case in which the aneurysm has ruptured or is about to, you can’t wait,” Dr. Ricotta says.



The IDE enables him to create and implant these custom devices with approval from the FDA. Using CT images, he designs each stent graft to fit the patient’s anatomy. Then, he

including atherosclerosis, aneurysms, carotid disease, coronary artery disease, ischemic heart disease and peripheral artery disease (PAD). The seminars will also enhance physicians’ ability to provide appropriate counsel and referrals to patients diagnosed with those diseases. Primary care physicians and physicians in the fields of anesthesia, cardiology, surgery, oncology, obstetrics and gynecology, neurology, and nephrology are urged to attend, as are pharmacists, physician assistants and nurse practitioners.

Participants must register by Monday, April 21. The Ritz-Carlton Atlanta, 181 Peachtree St. NE, offers a discounted Friday night rate for participants.

Northside Hospital is accredited by the Medical Association of Georgia to provide continuing medical education for physicians. Northside Hospital designates this live activity for a maximum of 6.25 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

For more information, contact Medical Education at 404-851-6795 or [meded2005@comcast.net](mailto:meded2005@comcast.net). For hotel reservations, call 800-241-3333 and mention the Northside CardioVascular Symposium.

endovascularly places the stent graft through punctures in the femoral arteries, sparing patients the trauma of surgery.

In a paper published in a 2012 issue of the *Journal of Vascular Surgery*, Dr. Ricotta shared results indicating the procedure significantly reduces mortality rates associated with open surgery for emergent situations.

“The mortality risk associated with open surgery is between 50 and 75 percent,” Dr. Ricotta says. “Our paper shows the mortality risk for custom-modified fenestrated-branched endografts is 7 percent. For emergencies, there’s nothing else like it available right now.”

### Access Points

While Northside Hospital’s vascular surgeons offer game-changing procedures that aren’t readily available elsewhere, equally significant advancements are available in cardiology. A unique, well-tolerated catheterization approach, as well as innovative imaging studies, advance the standard of cardiovascular care in the Atlanta area.

Traditionally, interventional cardiologists use the femoral artery for catheterization procedures, such as coronary arteriography, balloon angioplasty and stenting of the coronaries and bypass grafts. However, factors such as obesity and venous blockages in the lower extremities can complicate catheterization via femoral access, Dr. Balk explains.

Radial access for catheterization offers a number of advantages for all patients, including patient safety and comfort, fewer transfusions, and a shorter hospital stay. Serious bleeding complications are eliminated. After femoral catheterization, traditional post-procedural protocol requires up to six hours of bedridden recovery, using clamps or sandbags to mitigate the risk of bleeding. But the radial artery is more easily compressed after the procedure, allowing patients immediate mobility, Dr. Balk says.

At the Heart and Vascular Institute, patients can leave their beds and enjoy the comforts of the radial lounge, which Dr. Balk describes as a coffee shop-like area where patients relax with coffee and TV.

"Patients love this," he says. "Those who had prior catheterization and angioplasty the old way and then had a radial access procedure will never go back."

## Better Interior Images

To bring innovative procedures such as these to Atlanta, Northside Hospital Heart and Vascular Institute's clinicians rely heavily upon board-certified imaging specialists, who have access to leading-edge imaging capabilities. Chief among these is specialized equipment for CT angiography — a noninvasive method of obtaining 3-D interior images of blood vessels.

The CT scanner takes pictures from various angles, and computer software then translates X-ray images into 3-D pictures. Using an IV, cardiologists inject contrast dye and ask the patient to hold his or her breath for 12 seconds. The patient can then go home, and by use of sophisticated programs, the images can be processed to provide a noninvasive coronary arteriogram. The test has incredibly high predictive value — far better than stress testing — for ruling out coronary disease.

While nuclear stress tests can take several hours to complete — and deliver higher doses of radiation — CT angiography can be completed in less than one minute, according to Dr. Balk. From its images, physicians can diagnose a variety of conditions,

## Protecting Survivors

One of the unique challenges facing 21st century medicine is the expanding survival rate of cancer patients. While medical advances in the latter half of the 20th century greatly reduced mortality rates associated with many cancers, some radiation and chemotherapies can cause unexpected and latent cardiovascular complications.

Physicians in Northside Hospital's oncology and bone marrow transplant programs partner with its Heart and Vascular Institute to promptly identify and treat patients who may develop cardiovascular issues, such as arrhythmia and dysfunction.

"We are experienced in taking care of these complex patients," says Michael Balk, MD, FACC, Medical Director of Cardiology at Northside Hospital Heart and Vascular Institute. "Patients and their primary care physicians can be confident they're being treated by specialists with excellent track records of treating people facing similar challenges."

including aneurysms, blockages, cardiac tumors and diseases of the pericardium.

CT angiography also plays a major role in preventive health care, Dr. Balk explains.

“We can diagnose coronary heart disease earlier because we can see moderate blockages that wouldn’t otherwise show on stress tests,” he says. “This may allow us to preemptively prescribe cholesterol medications to lower the chance of future heart attack.”

## Community Resource

Because physicians at Northside Hospital Heart and Vascular Institute use innovative techniques and technologies, they can handle complex procedures. At the same time, no condition or symptom is too small. Their collective expertise offers referring physicians a valuable resource for all phases of cardiovascular disease management.

“There is no question or disease too minor or insignificant,” Dr. Ricotta says. “It’s never too soon to refer patients to us. We’d rather be called upon early so we can better manage patients and avoid future procedures.”

---

*For more information about Northside Hospital Heart and Vascular Institute, please visit [northside.com](http://northside.com) or call 404-851-6550.*

**Source:** MD News February 2014, Metro Atlanta Edition