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December 20, 2003

President George HW Bush Visited the Houston VA Medical Center

HOUSTON - Former President George HW Bush visited the Houston VA Medical Center (HVAMC) on Wednesday, December 18, 2003 to meet veterans who were treated at the hospital and learn about the hospital's vascular surgery program.

Bush's arrival was greeted by Mr. Edgar Tucker, the HVMAC director, and Dr. Michael DeBakey, a pioneer cardiovascular surgeon at the Baylor College of Medicine. He heard about the latest minimally-invasive treatment strategies for patients with vascular diseases at the HVAMC.

Briefed by Dr. Peter Lin, the chief of vascular surgery at HVAMC, Bush learned about the new and innovative way to treat patients with aortic aneurysm and carotid disease.



Dr. Peter Lin discusses with President George HW Bush regarding the new treatment of vascular disease at the Houston VA Medical Center.

An aortic aneurysm is a ballooning of the largest artery in the body, which can result in rupture and death. Lin explained to the Former President that a new catheter is now used to insert a sleeve-like device through the groin which can effectively treat the aortic aneurysm. This technique can be used for aortic aneurysm both in the abdomen and in the chest. Patients who were treated with the new technique, also known as endovascular repair, typically spent 2 days in the hospital, in contrast to 2-3 weeks if they underwent the traditional open surgery.

Bush visited the hospital at the request of Dr. Peter Lin, chief of vascular surgery, and learned that HVAMC has one of the largest minimally-invasive vascular surgery programs in the VA system and has treated veterans from all across the country.

Bush also learned the latest treatment strategy for carotid artery occlusive disease, a condition in which severe blockage in the neck artery can impair the blood flow to the brain resulting in strokes. The traditional treatment, which was pioneered by Dr. DeBakey, is performed through a neck incision in which the blockage is removed from the neck artery followed by the repair of the artery. The President learned a similar minimally-invasive way of treating the neck artery blockage using a small catheter to deliver a stent through the groin to open up the neck artery.

Bush also learned that HVAMC plans to begin construction of the Fisher House in January 2004, which will provide temporary lodging for patients and families who travel a long way to receive treatment at the HVAMC.

Bush met with families and patients who were previously treated at the HVAMC for either endovascular aortic aneurysm repair or carotid stenting placement.

Tillman Guillory, 74, and his wife Loretta, of Kinder, LA., told the President that his abdominal aneurysm operation was performed with minimal discomfort and he was able to go home the next day. They were very pleased with the care provided by the hospital for his endovascular aneurysm operation.

Charles Berry, 65, of Baytown, who served in the Army from 1957 to 1960, underwent a carotid stent placement because of artery narrowing due to a previous operation. "These doctors saved my life. All the doctors and nurses were just superb when they took care of me when I had the stent procedure."

Bush praised the physicians and nurses for the quality of care provided to the veterans. "It's just amazing to learn about these new ways of treating patients with vascular diseases. I'm glad that our veterans are receiving with such a high quality of care."

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