

HEALTH CARE



Rebecca F. Miller/The Gazette

Mercy Medical Center has won approval to begin offering open heart surgery for its patients. Dr. C.C. Lee, a cardiothoracic surgeon, has been tasked with building the new department from the ground up.

Mercy names doctor for heart surgery program

The first step is to build the team

By Chelsea Keenan, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — Dr. C.C. Lee is no stranger to building a heart surgery program from scratch. Back in 2001, he started a program at Marshfield Clinic in Wisconsin.

Then in 2005, he had an opportunity to do that again at a brand-new hospital opening in town.

And come June he'll do the same at Mercy Medical Center in Cedar Rapids.

"It gives me excitement to start something new, to be able to put my imprint on it," said Lee, who recently was named the hospital's medical director of its cardiac, thoracic and vascular surgery services.

In November, the hospital was given a certificate of need by the State Health Facilities Council to start an open heart surgery program, despite protests from UnityPoint Health-St. Luke's Hospital, which argued the area's needs already

were being met.

"Competition is very healthy," Lee said. "The patients benefit when they can choose where to receive their health care."

Lee received his medical degree from the Medical College of Virginia and completed multiple residencies at George Washington University Hospitals, Harvard Medical School/Brigham and Women's Hospital, and University of Buffalo Hospitals, where he was the chief resident for cardiothoracic surgery.

In Wisconsin, he initiated, developed and maintained a state-of-the-art cardiovascular and thoracic surgery program.

In addition to minimally invasive coronary artery bypass grafting and valve therapies, Lee will bring new procedures to the area, including surgical atrial fibrillation, complex aortic pa-

thologies and robotic thoracic surgery, among others.

Lee said the first step to building a new program is developing a heart team of nurses, surgical techs and cardiologists among other medical

professionals, which the hospital already is in the process of doing.

There will be some necessary training, he said, and once the team feels comfortable, they'll work to schedule procedures by the fall.

Another goal of Lee's is to have a transparent program, with data published quarterly.

"I've always said, we live in a glass house," he said. "You have to do a

good job; it's a brand-new program. We can't have missteps."

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Dr. C.C. Lee, Mercy Medical Center

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