

Richard Gates, MD

Medical Director, Cardiac Surgery
Cardiothoracic Surgeon

Please tell us about your practice.

My practice is about 40 percent adult and 60 percent pediatric heart surgeries. In children with congenital heart disease, neonates ages newborn to one year now comprise close to 80 percent of those cases. It's been an interesting change that is due to improved techniques, particularly with regard to cardio pulmonary bypass.

My medical group, Orange County Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeons (OCTCS), covers five hospitals in Orange County. My practice is based at St. Joseph Hospital, which has the finest medical staff and administrators. It's an exceptionally well-run facility.

At St. Joseph Hospital I do a full spectrum of adult work, both bypass and valve surgeries, and in recent years adult congenital surgeries. SJO is one of two hospitals in Southern California providing comprehensive adult congenital heart care, and last year we did over 200 adult surgery cases. The



adult surgery program at St. Joseph Hospital is a Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) three-star program for three years running, with our outcomes in the top 12 percent of hospitals nationwide. At CHOC, which is also part of the STS congenital program, outcomes are a standard deviation below the average.

I'm board certified by the American Board of Thoracic Surgery, and they recently created a subspecialty certification for Congenital Heart Surgery to demonstrate clinical excellence and training. As soon as it became available I submitted case logs and outcomes and took the exam. I was the 23rd surgeon in the nation to be board certified in Congenital Heart Surgery.

Cardiothoracic surgery is an evolving field. The diseases we're treating are similar, but how we treat them has changed significantly. As medical director I'm trying to position St. Joseph Hospital at the forefront as new technologies evolve. In the county's first bonafide Hybrid OR, we're planning to put in our first percutaneous valve in July. I'm very excited about that; once the de-

vice is FDA approved it will help a host of patients who we haven't been able to treat. Only a few centers have the human device exemption enabling this procedure. It will be our hospital's latest in a long list of heart "firsts." During my stewardship I want to make sure that list continues to grow; that this continues to be a place Orange County looks to as a great cardiovascular center.

How do you feel about changes to the Shared Services Agreement with CHOC?

The two hospitals have always had a mutually beneficial relationship and thrived, and I believe both will continue to do so. Most people like the way things work now, but the reality is children's hospitals need to be freestanding to secure government funding.

What's important to you outside of work?

There's life outside of work? I do enjoy time with my family. My wife is a plastic surgeon with Kaiser Permanente in Irvine (We were Yale medical students together 25 years ago). Our three kids are 16 to 21, with one still in high school and two in college, at George Washington University and UC Santa Barbara. When I have time I like to play the piano, golf, run and bike.



A PUBLICATION FROM THE ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL MEDICAL STAFF OFFICE



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