Senior cardiologist demystifies matters of the heart

By Tonya West

For Hometown News

Senior Cardiologist Dr. David Williams of Florida Healthcare in Ormond Beach reaches into his bookshelf, plucks out two devices and drops one in each hand.

"This is the earliest pacemaker," said Dr. Williams of the device that is the size of a yo-yo and weighs three times as much. "All it does is fire 70 beats a minute, it doesn't do anything else."

In the other hand, sits a device the size of a half dollar. "That is a newer model. Every time your heart beats it turns off. If it sees that your heart doesn't beat, then it fires. It stores all that information so we can see what your heart did over the last three months."

Next in the show and tell comes a 4mm stainless steel stent, undetectable in the hand and a millimeter larger than that to which the doctor typically dilates an artery.
"It demystifies a lot of what we do," said Dr. Williams about the array of show and tell objects he discusses with patients. "The days of the paternal doctor who says 'Do what I say and don't ask me any questions' are long gone."

Dr. Williams was an undergraduate at the University of Florida, attended medical school in Philadelphia and returned to the University of Florida-Shands Hospital in Jacksonville as a postgraduate for internal medicine and cardiology fellowship.

It was at Shands where he participated in the first angioplasty procedure in the state with the chief cardiologist from Gainesville at the time. "It took about two hours. We can do angioplasty in about 10 minutes now in an emergency setting."

In addition to his practice, he derives enjoyment by helping teach the medical students from Florida State University College of Medicine at Daytona Beach. "Dr. Lucky Dunn, the regional campus dean, has put together an outstanding program for those students here," Dr. Williams said.

"There's no place I'd rather be," he said. "I love this area."

Dr. Williams moved to Ormond Beach in 1983 and has been full time with Florida Healthcare since 1990. "We are a general cardiology practice and our specialty is interventional, which means that if someone comes in with a heart attack, we can take care of them," Dr. Williams said.

The most common diagnosis is "probably 50-50" between Ischemic Heart Disease (blockages in the arteries) and heart failure. "We manage their blood pressure, cholesterol numbers, advise them on lifestyle, exercise and diet," Dr. Williams said. "People who have heart failure are doing much better than they did 30 years ago because of advances in pharmacology."

"We like to say that our waiting time for an appointment is no longer than 24 hours," said Dr. Williams, who is proud to be affiliated with Florida Healthcare and "with the strongest sub specialists in town."

Annual visits are encouraged. "Cardiology moves pretty fast. New treatments, new drugs, and new ways of doing things come out all the time and if I don't see somebody for several years, they may be on yesterday's therapy."

A surfer since the age of 14, Dr. Williams tries to do all the things he tells his patients to do. "I exercise on a regular basis, manage my own blood pressure, try to lose a little bit of weight, try to get good rest and I don't smoke."

Pay attention to the warnings signs -- any chest discomfort at any age -- and be proactive, encourages the doctor. "Chest discomfort should be looked at earlier rather than later, especially if its exertional in nature, associated with shortness of breath, if you have a family history, you smoke or you have a history of blood pressure and cholesterol problems."