

TRIBUNE • SCOTTSDALE

# Heart experts explore new procedures at 3-day session

## No. 1 killer focus of interventionists

By **JULIE JANOVSKY**  
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As enamored couples celebrate Valentine's Day today with hearts aflutter, dozens of medical professionals will be converging in Scottsdale today to discuss heart affairs of a more serious nature.

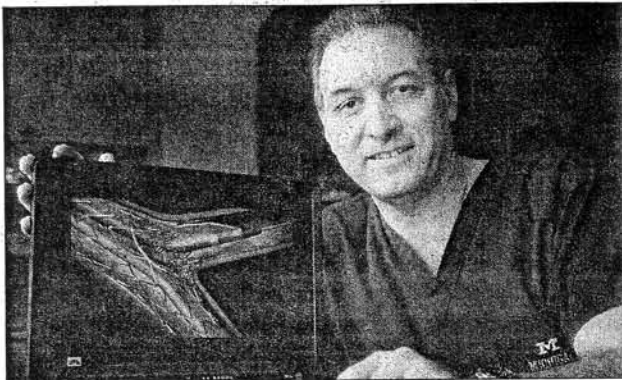
Nearly 300 physicians, nurses and cardiovascular care specialists from around the country are expected to attend the fourth annual Scottsdale Interventional Forum at the Westin Kierland Resort to discuss the latest in heart and cardiovascular research. Co-sponsored by Scottsdale Healthcare, the three-day event will offer seminars geared toward lowering the mortality rate of heart disease.

"There are approximately 1.5 million heart attacks a year in this country. About 40 to 50 percent of those patients die suddenly within two hours of their symptoms," said Rob Gianguzzi, Scottsdale Healthcare's associate vice president of heart and vascular services, speaking on the severity of the disease which the American Heart Association lists as the leading cause of death among U.S. adults.

The forum will include details on innovative heart treatments in development, including "bioabsorbable" stents, said Dr. David Rizik, Scottsdale Healthcare's director of interventional cardiology.

Rizik said current stents — tubes inserted into blocked arteries or passageways to keep them open — are currently constructed of metal and are permanently implanted.

He said a new technology utilizing bioabsorbable stents made of magnesium alloy or lactic acid polymers is being



PAUL O'NEILL, TRIBUNE

**CHECKUPS URGED:** Dr. David Rizik, Scottsdale Healthcare's director of interventional cardiology, says people should treat their bodies to the same kind of care they give their cars.

researched.

After the bioabsorbable stents fulfill their purpose, Rizik said the materials will degrade and eventually disappear. He said this new technology may become available to cardiovascular physicians within the next five years.

Rizik said forum attendees also will learn about a less invasive heart valve replacement procedure that may provide an alternative to the open-heart surgery currently required for this procedure.

Researchers are now looking into a new method called a "percutaneous" valve replacement, that begins with inserting a catheter into an artery in the leg or thigh area. A long tube then extends from the catheter to the heart, Rizik explained.

While researchers are pondering improvements in treat-

ment at the Heart Forum, Rizik said there are a number of ways people can proactively reduce their chances of developing a heart attack, caused by blockages in the arteries that keep oxygen and nutrients from flowing to the heart.

Rizik said smokers and diabetics have a heightened risk for developing coronary heart disease.

Other risk factors, Rizik said, include elevated blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

The classic "chest pain" symptom doesn't always accompany a heart attack, Rizik warns.

Other heart attack symptoms he said include back pain, shortness of breath, and prolonged periods of sweating, nausea and vomiting.

Rizik said people should know their family histories regarding heart disease and diabetes and should see their physicians for health checkups at least once a year.

"People take their car in for steady maintenance. The human body needs steady maintenance as well," said Rizik.

### Heart attack risk reducers

- Stop smoking
- Be physically active
- Eat healthy, avoiding foods high in cholesterol and saturated fats
- Watch your weight
- Drink alcohol in moderation

SOURCE: American Heart Association

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