

# CARDIOVASCULAR CENTER OFFERS PROMPT PERSONALIZED CARE

*By John Fakler*

**W**hile the quest to cure heart disease remains, Miami cardiologist

Dr. Joaquin Diego and his staff at Cardiology Healthcare of South Florida are prescribing a healthy dose of peace of mind for patients with urgent care and diagnostic tools that perform a full assessment of the cardiovascular system. There are no delays or long waits to get into the outpatient cardiology diagnostics and management center that patients typically face when referred to a specialist by their primary care physician.

"We are here every single day, so we are able to offer urgent

evaluations while maintaining a continuance of care," said Dr. Diego. "Since we don't spend a lot of time in the hospital, we are in the office all the time. If a physician needs us to evaluate a patient today, we are available."

Founded in 2007, Cardiology Healthcare embraces state of the art cardiovascular management, prevention and a holistic approach to heart health that includes diagnostics such as stress tests, nuclear imaging and vascular studies. Physicians at nearby hospitals work with the practice to perform the latest interventions available for coronary artery disease, valvular heart disease and

cardiac arrhythmia management.

CEO, Vicky Diego-Montalvo, manages Dr. Diego's busy practice, which also sees many patients from Latin America and the Caribbean. His wife and partner "is the one person that helped me get to where I am today," he said. "She is the administrator. She's been innovative in the management and how we run the practice. We have a fantastic staff, all loyal and talented and credentialed—you get what you pay for."

That includes fully electronic medical records (EMR), a system Mrs. Diego-Montalvo helped shepherd through the years. She also assists in pre-arranging testing, and often makes arrangements for patients from out of town in nearby hotels to make the

DR. JOAQUIN DIEGO,  
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process more convenient.

“The [Caribbean] islands are somewhat limited with diagnostics,” said Dr. Diego. “Miami is the gateway for Latin America and the Caribbean. It’s good for them to have an institution that will streamline things and offer the latest innovative cardiac care available.”

“The mainstay of the practice remains hypertension and cholesterol management, with emphasis on cardiovascular event prevention” said Dr. Diego, who has practiced medicine in the Miami area for 27 years and worked previously as a staff cardiologist at Baptist Hospital in Miami, South Miami Hospital and Kendall Regional Hospital, among others.

“Our whole society is plagued by it and if you can control these, you can prevent many [cardiac and vascular] diseases.”

The American Heart Association (AHA) and the American College of Cardiology announced a new hypertension guideline Nov. 13. According to the AHA’s Hypertension journal, the new guideline calls for high blood pressure to be treated with lifestyle changes and medication beginning at 130/80 rather than the previous threshold of 140/90. That means 46 percent of the U.S. population will be categorized

as hypertensive, compared to 32 percent before.

Dr. Diego sees heart failure patients, and conducts nuclear diagnostic testing to assess heart function as well as risks of heart attacks and blocked coronary arteries.

“The goal is to avoid the [cardiac] event from taking place. Our approach risk stratifies patients—and we strive for normality management of cardiovascular diseases. The realm of cardiac intervention changed dramatically over the years. Bypass surgery is now uncommon compared to before. The complexity of valve surgical intervention has been simplified and the arrhythmia management has been revolutionized. This translates into giving patient’s a quality of life. Prolonging life expectancy, while maintaining quality of life, is the bottom line.”

Treatment is covered by most HMO insurance plans.

Word of mouth continues to be the primary means behind the growth of the practice, Dr. Diego said.

“We have reached the point that the biggest referral source is our patients. That shows we are doing a good job. The referring physician has to feel comfortable that you assessed the patient correctly then took the time to discuss it with them. This allows the referring physician to help

the patient follow the plan that was instituted for them.”

The practice fully implemented an EMR system ahead of federal mandates.

Its system, IMS has been approved by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT®), a certifying body recognized by the federal government.

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The clinic’s Echocardiogram Laboratory was also granted accreditation by The Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Echocardiography Laboratories.

Among its many endeavors, Cardiology Healthcare handles the cardiology management for Florida International University’s athletic department.

Services provided at its state-of-the-art center include arrhythmia diagnosis and management; comprehensive cardiovascular evaluation; hypertensive management; and pacemaker management.

Diagnostic testing at the facility covers a wide range of the latest technology and procedures such as 2D Echocardiogram w/Doppler; around-the-clock cardiac monitoring, Electrocardiogram, Stress testing, nuclear cardiovascular testing, Vascular Studies, Pacemaker interrogation and much more.

For out-of-towners, Dr. Diego conducts virtual consultations before patients travel to Miami for an evaluation, saving them time and money. Cardiovascular evaluations are typically completed in one to two days.

“Come today,” said Dr. Diego. “Even if we find nothing wrong, we will give you peace of mind.”