

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

UMHC CONGENITAL HEART SURGEON MAKES MISSISSIPPI HISTORY

For more information contact Patrice Guilfoyle at (601) 815-3940 or pguilfoyle@umc.edu. Photos can be found at http://publicaffairs.umc.edu/image_gallery.html.

JACKSON, Miss. – Dr. Jorge Salazar, University of Mississippi Health Care's chief of congenital heart surgery, has performed the state's first arterial switch on a Heidelberg newborn.

On Aug. 4, Salazar performed the Medical Center's first arterial switch procedure on Zavin, a complex procedure that involved switching the heart's major arteries, which are reversed, back to their normal position and moving the delicate coronary arteries with the aorta. With the help of a highly-skilled team of medical professionals, the surgery was successful.

"It's one of the most complex heart surgeries done in children, and it's the first time it has ever been performed in the state of Mississippi," Salazar said. "This surgery represents the fact that we offer all congenital heart services here in Mississippi with excellent results."

Since joining the Medical Center in April, Salazar and the congenital heart team have operated on 55 children with heart defects – all with excellent outcomes.

Georgianna Joe noticed her youngest son Zavin's strange breathing when he was three days old. "I could see his stomach going in and out, in and out. He was breathing heavy," she said.

The mother of two older sons, ages 8 and 9, couldn't shake her concern, so she told a nurse, who alerted a physician.

"He told me when he listened to his heart, he heard an echo. They said his oxygen level was low," Joe said.

A short time later, an AirCare crew flew to Laurel to bring Zavin to the University of Mississippi Medical Center for a thorough examination. The diagnosis: transposition of the great vessels and a ventricular septal defect.

Transposition of the great vessels reverses the way blood circulates through the body, reducing the amount of oxygen in the blood. Without adequately oxygenated blood, the body can't function properly.

In other words, Zavin was born with two major heart vessels switched and a hole in his heart.

"I remember when they told me. I just cried a lot," Joe said. "But we had lots of prayers."

Before Salazar joined the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Zavin and his mother would have had to abruptly leave the state and fly to another medical center to repair

the defects. Instead, they made UMMC and Mississippi history.

Dr. Giorgio Aru, professor of surgery and heart transplant surgeon, said UMMC continues its legacy as a frontrunner in the treatment of cardiovascular diseases.

"For many years, the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery has been actively looking for a national leader in pediatric cardiac surgery totally dedicated to the creation and leadership of a pediatric cardiac center," he said. "We were finally able to recruit Dr. Salazar, who has the skills and the vision necessary to place the University of Mississippi Medical Center at the same level of the major centers in the country for pediatric cardiac care."

Joe said support from hospital staff helped her cope with stress during what's typically a joyous time. Often, her husband, Roberto Arellano, had to work and care for the other children while she remained at the hospital.

"It was scary at first, but whatever that would help him survive, we had to do it," she said.

Salazar said the congenital heart program is just one way the Medical Center is working to improve children's health.

For that, Joe said she was grateful. Zavin's heart is now completely normal, and he will have the opportunity for a normal life.

Hospital beds have been Zavin's only home since his birth July 21. Joe looks forward to taking her now 1-month-old son to meet family and friends for the first time and to finally sleep in his own bed.

08/30/10

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The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. University of Mississippi Health Care represents the clinical programs of the Medical Center and includes University Hospitals and Health System and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's citizens. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at 601-984-1100 or visit us on the Web at <http://info.umc.edu/>.