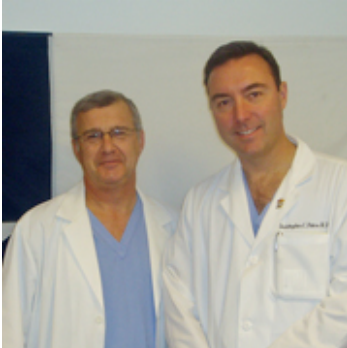


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*Dr. James O. Wright and
Dr. Christopher C. Peters*

Cedar Rapids

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National Stories

Healthy Living

Iowa City Cardiovascular Surgery

By Margaret Nixon

Visiting with a surgeon about an upcoming operation can be stressful and often frightening. However, one glance at the colorful finger paintings mounted on Dr. Christopher C. Peters' wall and the Christmas toys stashed in the corner should put even the most terrified at ease.

Located in Suite 304 of the Mercy Medical Plaza in Iowa City is the Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery Clinic, which originated with Dr. Courtney Harris approximately 15 years ago. Dr. Christopher C. Peters and Dr. James O. Wright are the current surgeons on staff and this past August marked the one-year anniversary of the professional partnership between the two. Dr. Peters joined the staff in 2004 while Dr. Wright began working at the clinic in 2003. The match between the two surgeons seems to be a fit as they have successfully completed over 400 surgeries since their start together.

As cardiovascular and thoracic surgeons, Drs. Peters and Wright treat patients with heart and lung disease. The doctors are able to meet with patients who have been referred to them and decide which medical procedure would be best suited for them. Then, the surgeries are performed at the Mercy Hospital in Iowa City where the clinic has privileges. Principal cardiac procedures that Drs. Wright and Peters perform are coronary artery bypass, valve repair, and valve replacement. Common vascular procedures that they execute are aortic aneurysm repair, peripheral arterial reconstruction, and varicose vein ablation. Pulmonary resections, esophageal resections, and mediastinoscopy are all among the common thoracic procedures that Drs. Peters and Wright undertake. They also perform peripheral vascular surgery, which includes treatment of varicose veins.

As it is a common condition, Dr. Peters estimates that he sees two to three patients a week needing treatment for varicose veins. The latest treatment for varicose veins is the Closure procedure, which the clinic offers as an outpatient surgery. According to VNUS Medical Technologies, Incorporated, the Closure procedure has proven to give patients less post-operative pain than what patients have experienced with vein stripping surgery. Some of those who have undergone the Closure procedure have been able to return to normal activities within a day. "It's a much less invasive and probably more effective way of treating what we call venous insufficiency," states Dr. Peters. "People have been very satisfied with the results. We're able to do it in the office with no anesthetic other than local anesthetic. They walk out and go back to work and have pretty remarkable improvement on the way," affirms Dr. Peters.

Patient satisfaction is the key to happiness for Dr. Wright and Dr. Peters who both work approximately 40 hour weeks and are on call for the Mercy Hospital patients 50 percent of the time. "It's fun to have patients be happy with what you do," expresses Dr. Peters. Both doctors are confident in their ability to establish good relationships with their patients and feel that Mercy provides a friendly and personal environment. Patients are generally treated within one to two weeks of a consultation with either Dr. Wright or Dr. Peters and sometimes patients enter surgery the next day. "Sometimes we may be very busy, but you can't really control when people come in with illness," stated Dr. Peters. He estimates that 35 percent of the clinic's patients are for cardio issues, 45 percent vascular issues and 20 percent thoracic or lung issues.

Even though the two have only been in the same clinic for a little over a year, Dr. Wright

and Dr. Peters have formed a healthy working relationship. Dr. Peters characterizes their partnership as "phenomenal." "We bounce off difficult problems between each other," states Dr. Peters of his work with Dr. Wright. He praises Dr. Wright for being technically proficient and skilled as a surgeon. "He practices with a great degree of intellectual honesty and fairness, and he's really interested in what is right for the patient even if it doesn't benefit him (Dr. Wright) financially," states Dr. Peters.

A native of Lawrence, Kansas, Dr. Peters feels fortunate to be living and working in a similar community in which he was raised. He attended medical school at the University of Kansas and then went on to complete his general surgery residency at Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. Later, he completed his thoracic surgery residency at the University of Oklahoma. While stationed in Hawaii, Dr. Peters met his wife, Julie, who was a traveling nurse at the time. "I met her first at a Halloween party I threw," recalls Dr. Peters with a smile. Now, married for almost 12 years, the two have three children ranging in age from four to eight years old and have one dog. "The dog gets all of the attention now," jokes Dr. Peters. Most of his free time is spent with his family and he also enjoys many outside activities such as skiing and playing tennis. Dr. Peters values the education that his children are able to receive in Iowa City and finds the city to be "delightful." He said that he doesn't anticipate moving in the near future even though he does miss being in Colorado where he last lived before moving to Iowa City.

Dr. Wright was born and raised in

Texarkana, Texas. He attended UT Southwestern Medical School and then proceeded to finish his general surgery residency at the University of Alabama. The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics is where Dr. Wright finished his thoracic surgery residency. Just before joining the Iowa City Clinic, Dr. Wright worked at the hospital in Mason City, Iowa for five years. He has three grown sons and enjoys woodworking and horseracing in his spare time. Of Dr. Peters, Dr. Wright has only glowing comments. "He's very well-trained and is an excellent technician. He's very easy to work with. It's been very valuable to discuss common problems with him," says Dr. Wright. Like Dr. Peters, Dr. Wright is very impressed with the Mercy Hospital and especially enjoys the well-trained staff. "I like surrounding myself with capable people," expresses Dr. Wright of his skilled team.

Lori Fuller is the physician's assistant at the clinic and has spent the most years out of all of the current employees at the clinic. She assists with surgery, helps harvest the veins when a bypass surgery takes place, and helps take care of patients in hospital and clinic. Lori is very skilled at developing healthy relationships with her patients and their families, says Dr. Peters. He asserts that Lori is an integral part of the practice.

For information regarding the Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery Clinic call 1-319-337-3604. The Clinic's address is 540 East Jefferson St, Ste 304, Iowa City.

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