



Pittsburgh Pediatric Mechanical Cardiopulmonary Support Reaches to Florida

McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine faculty member [Peter Wearden, MD, PhD](#), surgical director of Pediatric Heart and Lung Transplantation and director of the Pediatric Mechanical Cardiopulmonary Support Program of the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, assistant professor of cardiothoracic surgery at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, and deputy director of pediatrics at the McGowan Institute, is a member of a team of medical professionals at Children's who are using advanced and innovative technologies to perform life-saving procedures on children in need of cardiac support. Dr. Wearden is the leader in the field of pediatric mechanical cardiopulmonary support and receives numerous clinical patient cases from doctors and hospitals outside the Pittsburgh area. He is widely recognized for his clinical innovations where he has adapted existing technologies and devices to address the needs of these tiny patients.



In adults, when supplemental cardiac support is needed as an interim measure, surgeons may elect to implant an artificial heart pump. The pumps that work for adults are not suitable for infants and children. On numerous occasions Dr. Wearden has successfully adapted a pediatric heart pump, the [Berlin Heart](#), which underwent a [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) evaluation trial at Children's and 14 other hospitals nationwide.

The Berlin Heart is an extracorporeal artificial heart pump—or ventricular assist device (VAD)—that keeps children with life-threatening heart failure alive while awaiting a heart transplant. The device has also been used effectively as a bridge to recovery. Mark Roth, [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#), reported the story of 2-year-old [Ethan Gradowski](#) who was placed on the heart transplant list in early November 2008 due to narrowing of his arteries as a result of acute inflammation or a reaction to medications following a routine repair of an atrial septal defect (a hole in the wall that divides the heart's two upper chambers). He was placed on the Berlin Heart (then an experimental device) shortly thereafter to wait for a donor heart. As Ethan waited and with the help of the Berlin Heart his tiny body slowly began to heal itself. The Berlin Heart gave his arteries the rest they needed to recover, and in late December 2008 Ethan was successfully weaned from the device.

Announced recently, a partnership effort between St. Joseph's Children's Hospital in Florida and the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC has been established to provide highly specialized cardiovascular care for patients ranging from babies in the womb to adults with congenital heart disease. Patient care will be conducted inside St. Joseph's Heart Institute, a new 35,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility located on the hospital campus in Tampa. In addition



to collaborating with St. Joseph's Children's Hospital's multidisciplinary cardiac team on surgical and non-invasive cardiology services, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC's experts will provide additional support to patients, families, and caregivers in St. Joseph's Children's Hospital's cardiac intensive care unit via telemedicine.

The partnership brings the support of Dr. Wearden as well as pediatric cardiothoracic surgeon, Victor Morell, MD. Dr. Morell previously led the pediatric cardiac surgical team at St. Joseph's Children's Hospital.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to bring our unique expertise in pediatric heart surgery to families in Florida," said Dr. Morell. "We share a commitment with St. Joseph's Children's Hospital to provide the absolute best possible pediatric care to patients and families from the Tampa area and beyond."

Illustration: Dr. Peter Wearden examines 3-year-old congenital heart patient Natali Perez at St. Joseph's Children's Hospital in Tampa. (PRNewsFoto/St. Joseph's Children's Hospital)

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