

Saving Lives with Another Remarkable Surgery



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Dr. Frank C. Seifert (left) with Roseann Errante and her husband, Joseph, at news conference following her successful emergency heart surgery hailed as a “medical miracle.”

Frank C. Seifert, MD, clinical associate professor of surgery, made news in August for his contribution to a rare combination of surgeries that saved a pregnant mother and her premature triplets. The case is being hailed as a “medical miracle.”

The mother had developed a life-threatening aortic dissection, a tear in the inner lining of the main artery leading from the heart. Dual emergency operations were performed in the same operating room: a cesarean section to deliver the triplets followed by open-heart surgery, to save her babies’ lives and then her own.

Dr. Seifert led the cardiac team that repaired the mother’s heart. At the news conference held at University Hospital, he said, “We felt, given the crisis we faced, we needed to save as much time as possible. Without question, this was a life-saving surgery.”

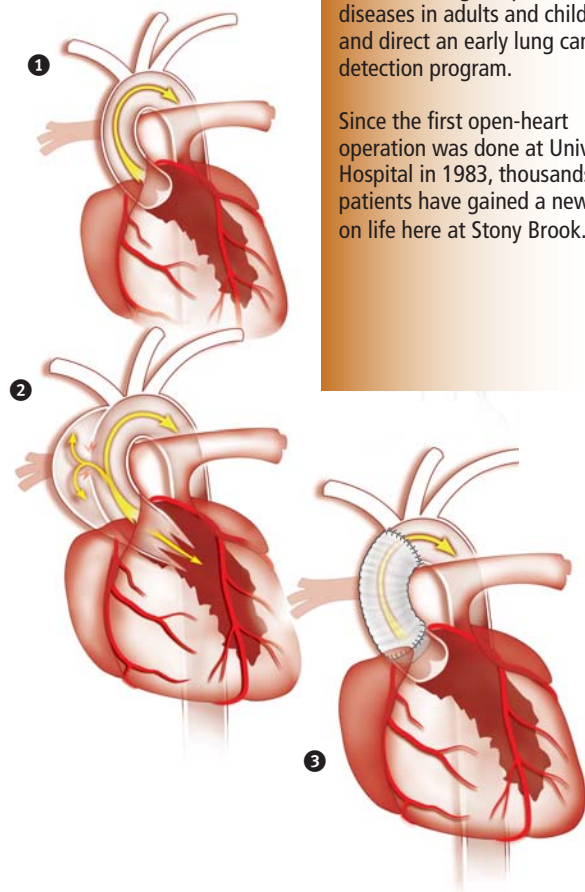
Commenting on the success, Bruce Schroffel, director and CEO of the hospital, said, “This is an extraordinary and remarkable example of what makes our hospital unique in the region. It demonstrates the capabilities we possess in handling these very specialized cases and, most importantly, in saving lives.”

Aortic dissection itself is rare. What made this case so unusual was the presence of triplets, and the need to deliver them immediately.

As Dr. Seifert explained in the *New York Times*, the heart surgery required that the mother’s body had to be cooled and her heart stopped for 90 minutes. These conditions could have been fatal to the triplets. Therefore, they had to be delivered first.

- 1) A normal heart—arrows indicate direction of blood flow.
- 2) Aortic dissection suffered by our patient, showing bulge that damages heart valve.
- 3) The repaired heart with grafted plastic tube that replaces the torn aorta.

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Cardiothoracic Surgery Service at Stony Brook

The cardiothoracic surgery service at Stony Brook University Hospital is the only service of its kind in Suffolk County. Approximately 750 open-heart operations—for both adult and pediatric patients—are performed each year.

Minimally invasive heart surgery is also performed, often resulting in significantly faster recovery for the patient.

Our cardiothoracic team specializes in high-risk and tertiary care types of surgical intervention for patients in all age groups, newborn to adult.

Our surgeons provide consultation and surgical care for patients with advanced forms of heart, lung, and mediastinal disease.

Our cardiac surgeons manage University Hospital’s Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit, which can provide postoperative care for the highest-risk patients.

Our thoracic specialists treat an extensive range of pulmonary diseases in adults and children, and direct an early lung cancer detection program.

Since the first open-heart operation was done at University Hospital in 1983, thousands of patients have gained a new lease on life here at Stony Brook.