

Medical Education Goes Live And Global.

Telesymposium on minimally invasive direct-access heart surgery will be viewed by surgeons worldwide.

CLEVELAND, Sept. 23 /PRNewswire/ -- On September 27, telesymposia become truly global mechanisms for medical education. On that day, "World View Through 8 Centimeters," a telesymposium on innovative minimally invasive direct-access (Min-DA) cardiac valve surgery techniques, will be downlinked to heart surgeons, cardiologists, and other health care professionals around the world.

The Cleveland Clinic has partnered with the WorldCare Foundation and Baxter Healthcare Corp. to expand access to continuing medical education among doctors in all parts of the world. Live downlinks will be established in a total of 40 cities on five continents, including Boston, Los Angeles, Copenhagen, Mexico City, Cairo, Beirut, Istanbul, Buenos Aires, Bombay, and numerous others.

Last year, the first telesymposium on Min-DA valve surgery, which also involved the Cleveland Clinic and Baxter Healthcare, focused on a predominantly U.S. audience. In contrast, the greatest number of participants this year are located outside the United States. Telesymposia such as this one, give physicians around the world interactive and immediate access to information involving new medical technology, promising to raise global medical standards at an unprecedented pace.

"Given the large volume of patients treated at the Cleveland Clinic, we are fortunate to be able to share our experience with minimally invasive direct-access cardiac valve surgery. New technologies and alternative therapies are emerging worldwide. Satellite technology gives us a chance to exchange information in an efficient and dynamic way on behalf of patients all over the world," said Delos M. Cosgrove, M.D., chairman of the Cleveland Clinic's Department of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery.

"Telesymposia not only spare health care professionals from the time and cost of traveling to other cities to learn new procedures, they provide them a better view of the operations," said Robin Gibbs, vice president of Global Marketing, Cardiovascular Surgery, at Baxter Healthcare. "Through this telesymposium, participants will have a front-and-center view of the surgery, making it easier for them to observe and discuss the procedure."

The non-profit WorldCare Foundation is an initiative of the WorldCare Group, a leading global telemedicine company. Among the foundation's broad range of international humanitarian endeavors are continuing medical education, health education and healthcare delivery solutions.

The WorldCare Foundation's goal is to promote world health utilizing telecommunication technology.

The telesymposium, supported by an educational grant from Baxter Healthcare, will be broadcast live from the operating rooms at the Cleveland Clinic and

the Bella Center auditorium in Copenhagen on the eve of the 11th Annual Meeting of the European Association of CardioThoracic Surgeons. (The telesymposium begins at 12:00 p.m. eastern standard time and 6:00 p.m. in Copenhagen.) The program will use the latest video technology to demonstrate live Min-DA valve surgery performed by Dr. Cosgrove. Participants also will view other direct-access and port-access minimally invasive cardiac surgery techniques, which were pre-recorded for this event.

"Before telesymposia, surgeons had to learn new surgical procedures by literally looking over another surgeon's shoulder in the operating room. With travel costs and time constraints, it could take years before new surgical procedures were seen by doctors around the world," said Dr. Cosgrove. "Now it takes only a few hours to share valuable medical information with hundreds of other doctors across the globe -- information that can save and enhance patients' lives."

Attendees will learn how to select appropriate candidates for Min-DA valve surgery, as well as how to apply the surgical techniques to their practices. Participants also will have the opportunity to pose questions to Dr. Cosgrove while he operates and to an international panel of cardiac surgeons via moderator Albert Starr, M.D., director of the Heart Institute at St. Vincent's Hospital in Portland, Oregon.

Min-DA valve surgery is performed through a small opening in the chest, instead of requiring a complete sternotomy. Min-DA valve surgery consists of direct visualization, an operative incision site of no more than 10 centimeters and physician-preference cannulization techniques. In selected patients, the new technique may result in fewer complications, less pain after surgery, quicker recovery time, and lower cost.

Since performing the first Min-DA aortic valve surgery at the Cleveland Clinic in January 1996, Dr. Cosgrove has performed more than 500 (499 as of 9/16) Min-DA procedures involving the mitral and aortic valves. Overall, the Cleveland Clinic maintains a higher volume of heart valve surgeries -- standard and minimally invasive combined -- than any other medical center in the United States.

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CONTACT: Holli Birrer, 216-444-0142, or Rob Whitehouse, 216-444-8927,

both of The Cleveland Clinic Foundation