

# LMC's Cardiac Rehabilitation Center opens for patients post-heart issues

By Christian Alejandro Ocampo  
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Laredo Medical Center celebrated the opening of its new Cardiac Rehabilitation Center on Wednesday. The center will focus on helping patients who have suffered from heart issues or are at a high risk of heart disease -- one of the major health issues in the county.

LMC CEO Jorge Leal said the current center is an investment of over \$120,000 in equipment and cardiac monitoring units. It will be run by two staff members as well as with cooperation from local cardiologists who receive patient referrals. The center launched early in May and Leal said it has already served over 20 patients.

“Our vision for the Cardiac Rehabilitation Center is to offer an individualized and personalized treatment plan that includes an evaluation and instruction on physical activity, nutrition, stress management and medication management,” he said. “We are proud to open this brand new facility, which is another major investment we are making to support health care in the region and help people get well and live healthier.”

Cardiac Rehab Manager David Rodriguez said that since May 9, more and more referrals have been provided. A majority of them provide ongoing cardiac services three times a week: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. On Tuesday and Thursday, the new center also serves two dialysis patients who require a more focused approach to



Laredo Medical Center celebrated the opening of the new Cardiac Rehabilitation Center on Wednesday, June 15, 2022. LMC CEO Jorge Leal cut the ribbon alongside LMC staff and community partners.



their rehabilitation process.

“The patients that come in here have an issue with their heart. Either they had open heart surgery -- which is bypass surgeries, they call them CABG patients -- we’ve had heart valve replacements and we’ve had people that have had stints, angioplasties and people that had congestive heart failure or un-

stable angina,” Rodriguez said. “Those are the ones that come in for cardiac rehab.”

He explained the center will open a door for patients who have undergone serious heart surgery and have had heart issues to rehabilitate and live longer and healthier lives. Furthermore, he emphasized cardiac rehabilitation is not an issue just



within the senior community, as he has helped patients as young as 24 years old with a heart valve replacement as a result of issues at birth.

The center itself hosts a number of machines including a row of treadmills, stationary bikes and free weights. Those are accompanied by sitting and standing movements to help treat patients at their

own pace. Rodriguez clarified this is not a simple gym with simple exercises, as patients are under constant monitoring for any irregularities in their cardiac system. In the event where an irregularity is found during the session, the patient is directly sent to the cardiologist for further analysis.

Citing the Hispanic community and its cul-

ture along the border, Rodriguez said diabetes, obesity and hypertension exacerbate the risk of heart failure that takes root in fatty foods that eventually clog arteries.

“Cardiac rehab is a tool these folks can use after they go through a life-changing ordeal, because it’s considered a second life. Without that surgery, they were a ticking time bomb that was about to pop,” Rodriguez said. “This right here is an alternative. After you get that open heart (surgery) to get it fixed, we have to condition the heart to get it stronger.”

According to LMC, during the 12-week sessions, patients are educated on medication, diet modification, smoking cessation and on risk factors leading to coronary artery disease. Their blood pressure, cholesterol levels and diabetes are all monitored as they have extensive communication with their doctors after their cardiac event. The session lasts approximately an hour.

Leal said the cardiac rehabilitation center is the initial point of a program to address heart issues before and after a heart surgery, which may eventually lead to avoiding the surgery altogether in the future. Until then, he added LMC continues to work toward providing primary care through recruitment of primary care providers.

He also touted 16 residents will graduate from the LMC residency program this weekend, with eight lined up to remain in Laredo.

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## Laredo College to offer citizenship program

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LAREDO COLLEGE

The Community Education Division at Laredo College launched a citizenship program that assists qualified local permanent residents interested in becoming naturalized citizens in the Spring semester.

On Sept. 20, 2021, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services awarded \$10 million in grants to 40 organizations to prepare lawful permanent residents for naturalization. LC was awarded \$250,000 through the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program: Citizenship Instruction and Naturalization Services Program. LC was one of the 40 organizations selected nationwide and one of only three in Texas.

This grant aims to promote prospective citizens’ integration into American civic life by funding educational programs, such as LC’s, designed to increase their knowledge of English, U.S. History and Civics. This grant has made the Civics Program possible at LC, where 200 participants will be highly prepared in these three areas. The classes will offer flexible schedules and will continue to be offered until September 2023. Participants must take an oral proficiency test and must attend 80-hours of ESL/Citizenship instruction.

Those who complete the citizenship instruction courses will be able to apply, go through the eligibility screening and become naturalized citizens if qualified. For this process to be possible, LC will be collaborating with the Azteca Economic Development

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and Preservation, Corporation Inc.

“Deciding to become a U.S. citizen is one of the most important decisions in an individual’s life,” LC Dean of Community Education Sandra Cortez said. “If you decide to apply to become a U.S. citizen, contact us and take advantage of this great opportunity.”

Enrollment is now underway, textbooks are provided and classes will be

offered in the morning and evening. Call LC to inquire of the start dates. This program is completely free and available for those who meet the prerequisites.

For additional information regarding this program, call Giovanna Rodriguez at 956-721-5436 or Eduardo Martinez at 956-721-5131, or email giovanna.rodriguez@laredo.edu for more details.

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