

New specialty to focus on advanced heart failure and heart transplantation

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The new medical subspecialty of Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiology will lead the way in providing technically advanced yet cost-effective care for patients with heart failure, says a perspective article in the March issue of the *Journal of Cardiac Failure*, official publication of the Heart Failure Society of America (HFSA) and the Japanese Heart Failure Society, published by Elsevier.

"First and foremost, this action represents an essential advance for patients with heart failure and their families," according to "Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiology: A Subspecialty Is Born," written by Dr. Marvin A. Konstam of Tufts Medical Center, Boston, and other leading U.S. heart failure experts. The proposal to establish the new subspecialty, originated and advocated by the HFSA, was approved late last year by the American Board of Medical Specialties. The first Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiologists will be certified in 2010.

The new specialty is needed because of the rapid progress in treatment options for patients with heart failure, such as heart transplantation and ventricular assist devices (VADs). "As a result, a subspecialty has arisen de facto, with more than 40 cardiology programs in the United States providing training in the area of advanced heart failure and a growing number of individual cardiologists offering a varying spectrum of expertise," Dr. Konstam and colleagues write.

While most heart failure patients will continue to be managed by general

internists or cardiologists, the new subspecialists will serve as consultants for patients with worsening heart failure and those who need more advanced care. Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiologists will also play a critical role as leaders of specialized services, such as transplant centers and heart failure clinics. They will be cardiologists with experience in managing the entire spectrum of patients with heart failure and proficiency in the expanding range of treatment techniques.

For the first five years, cardiologists who can document high-level experience in Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiology will be qualified to sit for the certifying examination. After that, one-year accredited training programs will be available for physicians after they have earned their board certification in Cardiovascular Disease through the ABIM.

"This development speaks for the remarkable advances in the management and outcomes of patients with heart failure, which just a few decades ago was associated with a very poor prognosis and for which there were few therapies," comments Barry M. Massie, M.D., Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Cardiac Failure*. " This perspective, authored by several of the leaders who developed and shepherded the certification process to its successful culmination, highlights the rationale for formalizing training the training process for specialists in this field and the requirements for certification."

More information: "Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiology: A Subspecialty is Born", by Marvin A. Konstam, Mariell Jessup, Gary S. Francis, Douglas L. Mann, Barry Greenberg. *Journal of Cardiac Failure*, Volume 15, Issue 2, March 2009, pages 98-100
doi:10.1016/j.cardfail.2008.12.012 The article will also appear in *The Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, Volume 53, Issue 10, March 10, 2009, pages 834-836, www.onlinejcf.com

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