

Soundbite Script – Don't miss a beat when it comes to heart valve disease

Dr. Alejandro Aquino, Structural Heart Specialist, OSF Cardiovascular Institute

“Valvular heart disease is an important issue to recognize and treat, given the repercussions they may have for patients' health. We currently estimate more than 2% of patients have some degree of valvular heart disease, and it's a growing problem and a problem that we understand is unrecognized and undertreated.”

Dr. Alejandro Aquino, Structural Heart Specialist, OSF Cardiovascular Institute

“There are four valves in the heart. The tricuspid valve, pulmonic valve, mitral valve, and aortic valve. And they function as one way doors keeping the blood going from chamber to chamber as it returns from the body, travels to the lungs to exchange for oxygen, and then returns to the heart and then ultimately is pumped to the body to deliver oxygen to all the tissues.”

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“Oftentimes, these changes are subtle, and the first people to notice are actually the patient's families. And when they come to visit they might be the person to say ‘hey, you know my dad or mom is not quite moving as well as they did six months ago, or last time I saw them. They were doing a lot more around the house or a lot more for fun or going out of the house for hobbies.’ So, again, it's important to recognize that some of these symptoms can be quite subtle. Often a lot of my patients come and they say ‘well, I thought I was just getting older.’ When in reality it is their valve encroaching on their ability to do certain activities.”

Dr. Alejandro Aquino, Structural Heart Specialist, OSF Cardiovascular Institute

From my personal perspective, I think the earlier is better. Most of my patients or a lot of patients that are referred to me have only mild or moderate forms of valvular heart disease. However, it's important for them to recognize exactly what's going on with their heart. And it's important for us to establish a surveillance plan so that when the time comes for there to be a fix, the patient is fully engaged and understands the process.”

Dr. Alejandro Aquino, Structural Heart Specialist, OSF Cardiovascular Institute

“The most important message is awareness. Awareness of the prevalence of valvular heart disease, awareness of the important repercussions they may have to your health, of the importance of being tied into a cardiovascular specialist to perform initial evaluation and determine an appropriate surveillance or treatment plan. If you have any concerns, please contact your primary care provider.”