

**Tripler Army Medical Center  
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***Transcatheter Occlusion of Patent Foramen Ovale***  
**Tripler cardiologists repairing hearts with high-profile procedure**

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**by Margaret Tippy**  
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HONOLULU –Cardiologists at Tripler Army Medical Center are the only physicians in Hawai'i closing certain types of heart defects by implanting a device through small catheters inserted in the patient's groin.

Lt. Col. Thomas Wisenbaugh, M.D., and Maj. Christopher Becket Mahnke, M.D., are performing a high-profile procedure that repairs hearts called transcatheter occlusion of patent foramen ovale or PFO. PFO is a term used to describe a small hole in the section of the atrial septum that is called the Foramen Ovale, according to the AGA Medical Corporation's website. They are the makers of the AMPLATZER® Devices the physicians use to close heart defects.

The foramen ovale is a small hole located in the atrial septum that is used during fetal circulation to speed up the travel of blood through the heart, according to the Cleveland Clinic Heart Center website. In the womb, a baby relies on the mother to provide oxygen rich blood from the placenta through the umbilical cord to the fetus.

This opening – the foramen ovale - usually closes at birth. When it does not close properly, it is called a patent foramen ovale, the website said.

“By repairing the hole in the heart, people who have had strokes related to the presence of this defect will be at decreased risk for recurrent stroke – especially in the under 50-age group,” Wisenbaugh said. It also allows otherwise health young Active Duty Service Members an opportunity to fully perform their military duties.

Most of the cases have been Active Duty Military. “It was nice to do something that should be effective and enable them to stop taking coumadin which they cannot take in a deployment situation,” he said.

“All the successful closures are outpatient procedures that go home the next day, so that means less recovery than after surgery which was the former method of closure,” he said.

Wisenbaugh has used closure devices in six cases since December 2003, including three Active Duty Service Members with somewhat similar congenital heart defects in collaboration with Tripler's new Pediatric Interventional Cardiologist Maj. Christopher Becket Mahnke, M.D.



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Comments or suggestions to the [Public Affairs Officer](#)

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