

## TO MEDIA

### CONTACT:

Tom Chakurda  
Chief Marketing and Communications Officer  
thomas.chakurda@independence.health  
412-508-6816 CELL

Melissa Forster  
Marketing & Communications Specialist  
melissa.forster@independence.health  
814-490-6057 CELL

Robin Jennings  
robin.jennings@independence.health  
724-516-4483 CELL

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **INDEPENDENCE HEALTH SYSTEM EXPANDS CAPABILITIES FOR ADDRESSING HEARTBEAT IRREGULARITIES DURING STROKE AWARENESS MONTH**

**GREENSBURG, PA, May 21, 2024 ...** As many as 8 million Americans are affected by atrial fibrillation or A-fib – an irregular heartbeat that can feel like a quivering heart. People with A-fib have a five times greater risk of stroke than those with normal heart rhythms. During May, recognized nationally as Stroke Awareness Month, Independence Health System has expanded its minimally invasive cardiac procedures to help keep harmful blood clots that can form in the heart from entering the blood stream and potentially causing a stroke.

To guard against the likelihood of these occurring, doctors typically prescribe blood thinners, which come with their own risks, such as excessive or uncontrolled bleeding. Cardiologists in The Heart Center at Independence Health System Westmoreland Hospital have been using WATCHMAN™ implants as an alternative to such medications. Earlier this month, the team began using the WATCHMAN FLX Pro device to close off an area of the heart called the left atrial appendage (LAA). The latest technology is enhanced with a non-drug-eluting coating designed to reduce the risk of device-related clots and enable faster, controlled

healing. It is also available in a larger size should the individual patient's heart structure require it.

The WATCHMAN FLX™ Pro device is the latest-generation device designed to reduce stroke risk in patients with non-valvular atrial fibrillation (NVAf) who need an alternative to oral anticoagulation therapy.

The WATCHMAN technology has been implanted to treat more than 300,000 patients worldwide and is done in during a one-time procedure. This permanent device doesn't have to be replaced and can't be seen outside the body. The procedure is done under general anesthesia and takes about an hour. Patients commonly stay in the hospital overnight and leave the next day.

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