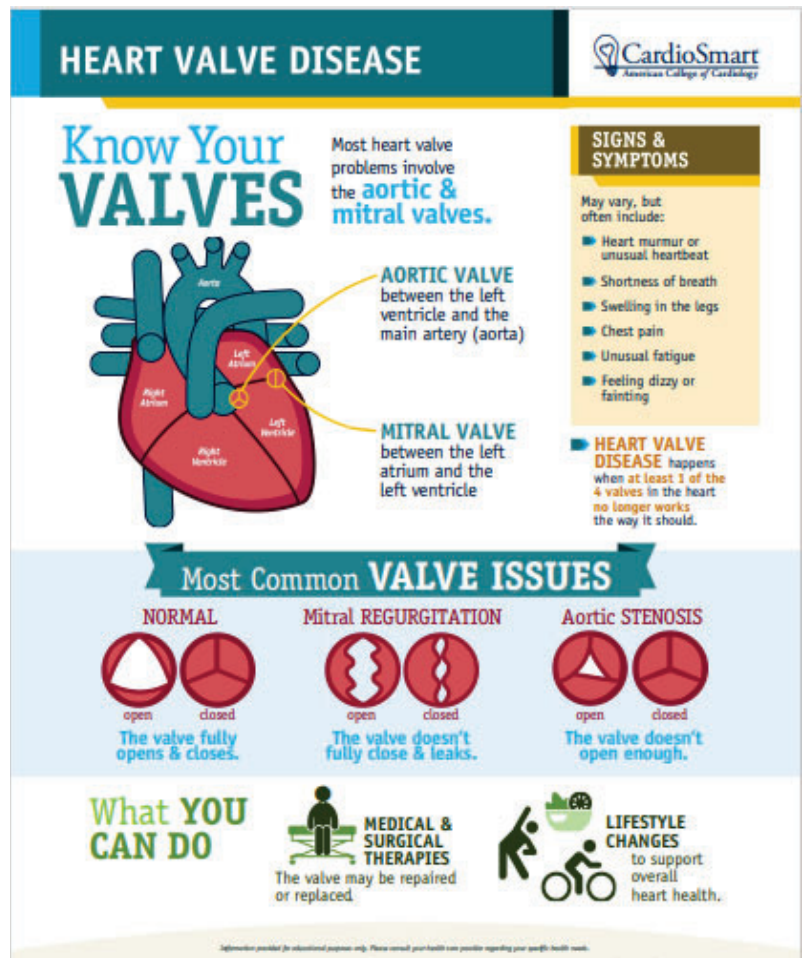


Dear Patients,

I hope this letter finds you well! We have once again come to the end of another season in beautiful Naples. While the town has changed enormously since I first arrived in 2009, the mass migration of our residents out of town prior to the start of the summer heat remains constant. I wanted to take the opportunity to provide an update on some important medical advances, provide perspective on the local healthcare environment, and update you on the practice itself.

Thankfully the march of research continues to help better fight many common diseases. As a cardiologist, the greatest advances in this field continue to take place in correcting structural abnormalities of the heart with catheters rather than surgery. When I began training, it was unimaginable to think of inserting a valve replacement from inside of a catheter for a narrowed (stenotic) aortic valve rather than a conventional open heart surgical procedure. Our recent data is now pointing to the fact that the newer catheter based technique is a BETTER choice than traditional surgery in almost all individuals. Additionally we continue to make progress on treating leaking heart valves with devices rather than surgery. Currently we have FDA approved treatments to reduce the severity of leaking by the precise placement of a clip to greatly reduce the backward flow of blood. This has led to enormous improvement in quality and quantity of life for those with these conditions. And the good news is that this remains an area of intense progress with research and investigation ongoing. The Naples Heart Institute team is participating in several major clinical trials in this space to offer these cutting edge therapies at home.



**HEART VALVE DISEASE**

**Know Your VALVES**

Most heart valve problems involve the **aortic & mitral valves**.

**AORTIC VALVE** between the left ventricle and the main artery (aorta)

**MITRAL VALVE** between the left atrium and the left ventricle




**SIGNS & SYMPTOMS**

May vary, but often include:

- Heart murmur or unusual heartbeat
- Shortness of breath
- Swelling in the legs
- Chest pain
- Unusual fatigue
- Feeling dizzy or fainting

**HEART VALVE DISEASE** happens when at least 1 of the 4 valves in the heart no longer works the way it should.

**Most Common VALVE ISSUES**

NORMAL	Mitral REGURGITATION	Aortic STENOSIS
		
The valve fully opens & closes.	The valve doesn't fully close & leaks.	The valve doesn't open enough.

**What YOU CAN DO**

- MEDICAL & SURGICAL THERAPIES**  
The valve may be repaired or replaced.
- LIFESTYLE CHANGES**  
to support overall heart health.

Information provided for educational purposes only. Please consult your health care provider regarding your specific health needs.

Aside from advances in cardiac procedures, there continues to be major developments in the field of cardiac prevention. Earlier this year, at our American College of Cardiology annual meeting, data was presented on a cholesterol lowering pill called bempedoic acid (Nexletol) and its ability to reduce the likelihood of a cardiac event. While not having as powerful an effect as statins (cholesterol reduction of 15% vs 50% with statins), this drug does not have the troublesome side effect of muscle aches that 5-10% of statin users may experience. Additionally we have a potential novel pill in the pipeline that has statin-like cholesterol lowering ability but works on a different pathway. We already have injectable agents in this drug class that are widely used, known as Repatha, Praluent, or Leqvio, but this new agent can be taken in a pill form. Perhaps the most futuristic treatment awaiting us is a single treatment that can modify a protein and lead to lifelong lower cholesterol without need for maintenance treatment. Preventive cardiology has been a passion of mine since I was in medical school and I believe we are entering into



an exciting era with new treatments to significantly reduce our rates of heart attacks and strokes. I was able to share some of my excitement to a packed audience of primary care providers as one of the moderators/faculty members at the 2nd annual NCH Cardiovascular Summit in February. We partnered this year with amazing faculty from Northwestern Medicine. The conference was very well-received and our work in educating our community should lead to better health care delivery for all. On a similar note, I commonly field many



**NCH Heart Institute** @NCH\_Heart · 39m  
That's a wrap for the 2nd Annual Naples Cardiovascular Summit! 🎉

Thank you to our partner @NMCardioVasc, moderators, panelists, sponsors and attendees for making this a huge success! #NaplesCardioSummit2023



questions from my patients on the plans at NCH to further improve the cardiac care in our region. While the process has met with some challenges, I do believe with continued collaboration from the doctors, the elected officials, and hospital leadership, we will be part of a national center of excellence in cardiac care right here in Naples!

While we have many reasons to be optimistic about the advances we are making, we need to also acknowledge that delivering excellence in healthcare has been extremely challenging as we emerge from the pandemic. I help to chair a committee on physician well-being and we have learned firsthand how hard practicing medicine has been for our doctors, nurses and other health care providers. We have learned that when a provider is feeling symptoms of burnout they are less likely to deliver optimal care. In a survey we conducted, as many as 40% of our doctors are experiencing symptoms of burnout! Our committee is working hard to tackle issues where we can and enlist the help of our administrative leaders at the hospital to tackle larger system-wide issues as well. We just hosted a retreat on May 12th and 13th of nearly 100 local physicians and spouses to help address some of these challenges. I am optimistic we are making progress.



On a practice level, most of you know that my longtime medical assistant, Christian Phillips, had to step aside from the practice for personal reasons. We are hopeful that as his situation is resolved, we can bring him back on to our team. He wanted me to share how much he appreciated being able to help you all and is grateful for so many who took an interest in his situation. In the meantime, I have brought in an outstanding new assistant, Nicole Daudert, from the University of Florida to assist me in clinical matters. Thankfully, I remain lucky to have Suzy Buker helping me manage the administrative duties of our practice. I also wanted to share my appreciation to so many of you have referred friends and loved ones to the practice. Although we are unfortunately at membership capacity presently, I am actively recruiting to bring an outstanding doctor to join our efforts.

As always, we remain steadfast here in the promise to do our best to meet your healthcare needs and we welcome feedback in our continual journey towards clinical excellence. We wish you all a wonderful summer ahead!

**Sajan Rao MD FACC**