

# Patient's heart 'repair kit' treats 19 other sufferers

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Nineteen people with potentially lethal heart conditions have now been operated on with a heart repair kit designed by a Gloucestershire engineer, it emerged yesterday.

In 2004 we reported how Tal Golesworthy, 54, who was suffering from a defect in his aorta – the main artery for carrying oxygenated blood – was so unimpressed by conventional techniques treating it that he decided to create his own.

Usually the damaged section of the artery is cut out and replaced with a piece of tubing, but Mr Golesworthy came up with a made-to-measure knitted polyester sleeve, which was wrapped round the aorta to give it extra support.

The result was so good that he has joined forces with his doctors and set up a company to market the device.

Yesterday it emerged that the operation has since been carried out on a further 19 people by a team at London's Royal Brompton hospital, and another three patients are booked in for surgery this month.

## Concerns about old-style surgery

And this month details of the first results are to be described to cardiac surgeons in a medical publication.

Mr Golesworthy has Marfan syndrome, a condition which affects up to 12,000 people in Britain. The genetic defect can cause abnormal growth of bones, including fingers and toes, but most importantly causes weakness of connective tissue.

The consequence is that the neck of the aorta where it leaves the heart gradually stretches under the burden of carrying freshly oxygenated blood round the body. It can reach a diameter of two to four inches, compared with a normal one inch, before splitting.

Mr Golesworthy says he had severe anxieties about the old-style surgery and the fact he would have had to take anticoagulant drugs for the rest of his life to stop clots forming.

"I just thought the operation sounded awful," said Mr Golesworthy, from Tewkesbury.

"The doctors were being asked to do an engineering job when they weren't engineers. I decided there had to be a better way." He

Tal's design so successful, surgeons are putting it to the test



set about devising a means of wrapping the aorta in a sleeve to prevent it expanding, and came up with a solution called Ears – external aortic root support – which is now being marketed through his firm, Exstent. Each sleeve is created using scans of the individual patient's aorta and computer-assisted drawings to produce a bespoke device.

Although the technology could be applied to other heart conditions, news of the surgical break-

through has spread fastest among families affected by Marfan syndrome, many of whom have seen relatives die suddenly from heart attacks in young adulthood.

The youngest to have the surgery so far is Ami Coxill-Moore, whose parents successfully argued for her to receive the treatment at 16, even though an ethics committee initially stipulated the experimental patients had to be at least 18. "To us it was obvious it was less risky and an altogether

better operation," said Ami, who is taking a gap year and hoping to study English and linguistics at York University. "I am just very grateful I've had it done."

The British Heart Foundation is watching the project with interest. "We have to be certain these things are safe in the long as well as the short-term before we can recommend them," said Peter Weissberg, its medical director.

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## Counsellor for cancer steps down

A woman who used her experiences of undergoing a double mastectomy at 27 to set up a support group has retired after 10 years of helping others.



When Rachel Brastock, pictured, had her breasts removed, she was put in contact with a woman in her 60s for support, but the only thing they had in common was having had mastectomies.

She went on to become a counsellor with Breast Cancer Care, helping other women, and it was during the training sessions that she met up with Chris Cranney, who lived near her and had been diagnosed with cancer at 39.

The pair hit upon the idea of forming their own support group, Young Women 4 Young Women, which meets at Bristol's Frenchay Hospital. It is run as a drop-in session where women can ask anything they want about treatment and living with cancer generally.

Mrs Cranney, now 53, of Little Stoke, will continue to run the group in Rachel's absence and the pair will remain firm friends. She said: "Rachel's life has changed and she is moving on, but the support group will continue. I've got no intentions of moving away from it myself."

Visit [www.youngwomen4youngwomen.com](http://www.youngwomen4youngwomen.com).

**Solution:** Engineer and heart patient Tal Golesworthy, of Tewkesbury, who designed a sleeve to wrap around the aorta so patients may not have to have traditional surgery in future

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At the heart of all things local

## Police admit mistake over confiscation of cameras

A top security officer responsible for the safety of the Royal Family has admitted a mistake was made last week when police confiscated cameras from members of the public.

Head of Royal protection in Norfolk, Chief Inspector Stuart Offord, admitted an "error" had been made when visitors had their cameras taken away by of-

ficers. People had gathered to watch the royals make their way to and from the St Mary Magdalene church on the Queen's estate at Sandringham, Norfolk last Sunday when their effects were looked after by police at the gate. They were also body searched with a scanner and officers watched crowds on a path. Sandringham Estate

signs warn visitors that picture taking is not allowed.

However, CI Offord said that it was the first time cameras had been seized at the estate.

He said: "It has not been my policy while I have been here.

"It was an error. I was not here when the decision was made, nor was my

deputy. The officer concerned decided the provision was a way to look at the new measures on photography.

"As soon as I heard about it, it was addressed."

Earlier this year, the Queen's lawyers warned newspapers against publishing paparazzi photos of members of the Royal Family and reminded editors of

privacy obligations made under a press code of practice.

"Since the request the media have been extremely helpful and supportive by observing the house's wishes," added CI Offord.

Yesterday, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh attended a service at the church.