

# news release



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## **Saint Mary's Celebrates Gold and Silver Awards from American Heart Association with Olympic Gold Medalist Jim Craig**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WATERBURY, Conn. (June 30, 2009) – Saint Mary's Hospital was honored June 25 by the American Heart Association as Connecticut's first and only Gold Award winner for cardiac care.

The hospital celebrated its winning moment by inviting cardiac patients, physicians and staff to the awards ceremony, which featured Olympic Gold Medalist Jim Craig, the goalie for the 1980 U.S. "Miracle on Ice" Hockey Team, as the guest speaker.

Craig, who has a family history of cardiovascular disease, said that like his Olympic hockey team, Saint Mary's was able to achieve its goal within a fairly short period of time, and as the result of great teamwork. "We were underdogs. Nobody thought that we could do that," he told the crowd of about 200 people gathered in the Saint Mary's Hospital auditorium. "This is your Gold Medal stand and you should be so proud."

Saint Mary's is the first hospital in Connecticut to receive a Gold Award under the American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines program for its treatment of patients with coronary artery disease. It is also the first hospital in the state to receive a Silver Award for its treatment of patients with heart failure, said Amanda McCulley, RD, MPH, Director of Quality Improvement Initiatives for the American Heart Association.



“Saint Mary’s is definitely a leader in the state of Connecticut, as well as the country. They’ve done an excellent job,” said McCulley, who presented the awards.

To be recognized by the American Heart Association, hospitals must provide “defect-free” treatment to at least 85 percent of patients in accordance with a series of prescribed quality measures. In fact, Saint Mary’s exceeded that goal, providing “defect-free” treatment to more than 95 percent of patients with coronary artery disease over a period of two years, and more than 92 percent of patients with heart failure over a one-year period.

“This is an ongoing effort and we’re going to keep working,” said Dr. Paul Kelly, a cardiologist with Cardiology Associates of Waterbury, who pioneered the Get With the Guidelines Program at Saint Mary’s in 2006.

Dr. Kelly works closely with a cardiac care team that includes Anne Szumigala, RN, MS, Clinical Specialist in Cardiology, and Louise Carvalho, RN, Senior Systems and Process Improvement Coordinator, Cardiology, to ensure that Saint Mary’s is consistently meeting the national quality goals of the Get With The Guidelines program.

Saint Mary’s is one of approximately 1,500 hospitals across the U.S. that participate in the American Heart Association’s web-based, quality-improvement program, which is designed to ensure that healthcare providers are consistently caring for cardiac and stroke patients in accordance with the most up-to-date guidelines and recommendations. Those guidelines include the administration of medications, such as cholesterol-lowering drugs, and other therapies that can improve patient outcomes, reduce the risk of recurrent heart attacks, and ultimately save lives.

“This really is a team effort, and we are so pleased to share our achievement with our patients and with Jim Craig, who continues to serve as an inspiration and whose story proves that you can bring home the gold with persistence and hard work,” said Chad W. Wable, FACHE, President and Chief Executive Officer of Saint Mary’s Health System.

“We are also honored to receive these awards from the American Heart Association, a national leader in the fight against heart disease, as a testament to our ability to provide high quality cardiac care for our community,” Wable said.

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