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**High Prevalence of Psychopathology in Patients with End-Stage Heart Failure Using Mechanical Circulatory Support According to New Article Published in *Psychosomatics***

Bethesda, MD, June 29, 2016 — Psychosomatic Medicine physicians must be prepared to treat the rapidly increasing number of patients with chronic heart conditions who will rely on mechanical devices to maintain their heart function for the rest of their lives. According to the Interagency Registry for Mechanically Assisted Circulatory Support, the number of heart failure patients utilizing left ventricular assist devices (LVAD) has increased 15-fold between 2006 and 2013. A new article published in *Psychosomatics*, the Journal of the Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine, focuses on the unique needs of this population, including basic device function, changes in quality of life, psychiatric co-morbidity and treatment, and end-of-life decision-making.

“Patients with implanted LVADs face a very unique set of challenges, including: restrictions on activities of daily living; issues of body image, sexuality, and reproduction; and existential questions surrounding life as man versus machine,” said Margo C. Funk, M.D., senior author of *What the Psychiatrist Needs to Know About Ventricular Assist Devices: A Comprehensive Review*. “Psychiatrists working with these patients may be faced with complex clinical and ethical scenarios, including end-of-life decision making, suicidality, and provision of acute psychiatric care.”

Psychosomatic Medicine psychiatrists must also remember the importance of a thorough bio-psycho-social evaluation for patients undergoing LVAD implantation, with special emphasis on screening for depression and other psychiatric illnesses. Twenty percent of patients with heart failure meet the diagnostic criteria for major depressive disorder, a condition linked to worse outcomes in this population, such as increased mortality and healthcare utilization, as well as more frequent hospitalizations. Anxiety is also common in heart failure, affecting 18%–45% of patients, and delirium has been reported in 20%–30% of patients undergoing heart surgery. “Our ability to quickly recognize and treat depression and delirium in these patients can help reduce morbidity, mortality, and cost of care,” said Dr. Funk.

Often, psychiatric considerations after implantation include decisions about palliative care and end-of-life-decisions, which Psychosomatic Medicine physicians deal with on a daily basis.

The Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine, a professional society of over 1,200 leading physicians, represents psychiatrists dedicated to the advancement of medical science, education, and health care for persons with co-morbid psychiatric and general medical conditions.

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