

First phase of Heart Center opens

By DON MILLER
Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — The first heart catheterization lab in Santa Cruz County has opened at Community Hospital. The lab is the first phase of the hospital's new \$2.4 million Heart Center, expected to be fully operational by spring.

The lab was unveiled Thursday at a press conference featuring hospital executive director Jean Adams and a team of cardiologists.

Cardiac catheterization is a diagnostic procedure in which a small, thin, highly flexible tube is used to inject dye into a patient's bloodstream. Once injected, the dye can be tracked on a special X-ray monitor. The resulting picture is called an angiogram, and it provides a comprehensive look at a heart.

Catheterization often is the final

Hospitals
diagnostic step before a doctor might recommend for or against heart surgery for a patient. It can reveal a narrowing of heart valves, defects in the wall between heart chambers, coronary artery disease or arterial blockage or the heart's ability to pump blood.

The process also can be used for active intervention in heart problems. A technique called angioplasty uses catheters to open blocked blood vessels or, in a few cases, to interrupt a heart attack in progress.

In its routine, diagnostic use, catheterization is described as relatively painless, using only local anesthesia. The patient normally remains conscious during the process.

The hospital has been doing heart catheterizations for several weeks. One catheterization lab veteran made it sound almost enjoyable.

Dorothy Pfefferle, a hospital volunteer and a recent patient at Community, said she had the procedure done at another hospital five years ago and it was an "awful frightening experience," after she suffered an allergic reaction.

In contrast, she said her catheterization a week ago at Community was "a wonderful experience." And, she added, "I was treated like a baby in my room and I ate a wonderful lunch."

The doctor who will direct open-heart surgeries at Community said the three years of planning for the heart center have been worth the effort. Robert Kass, currently a cardiac surgeon at Cedars Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles, said that the nature of current hospital service demands "that this sort of care be locally available. Specialty care is

being brought closer and closer to home."

The Heart Center had been a controversial project after hospital watchdog Mid-Coast Health Systems Agency had protested its construction, arguing the center was not needed and would be too expensive for patients.

David Wright, Mid-Coast's director, said, "Nothing has changed. There is a high likelihood the center will fail." Wright cited the higher cost of catheterizations at Community over the cost at Santa Clara County hospitals, adding he feels the cost in Santa Clara County also will go up due to reduced volume from Santa Cruz County.

"The consensus in professional literature is that quality is related to volume," Wright said. "We have es-

Please see Page

A-2—Santa Cruz Sentinel — Friday, Oct. 18, 1985

Heart Center's first phase opens

Continued from Page A1

established they (Community's Heart Center) will not have the volume. We expect a higher mortality and morbidity rate."

Wright said statewide trends show a 6-percent downturn in cardiac surgery between 1983 and 1984. In Santa Clara County, there has been a 33 percent decrease — and Santa Cruz County is part of the market surveyed.

Wright said the planned Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital Heart Center will further cut into Community's volume and noted that Watsonville Community Hospital also has applied for a catheterization lab.

In response, the hospital has said there is a higher-than-average number of potential cardiac patients in Santa Cruz County.

Kass has said that 35 percent of all persons who suffer heart attacks die before they reach hospitals. A local heart center will cut this percentage and also lessen the risk from transporting heart patients to Santa Clara Valley, Adams said.

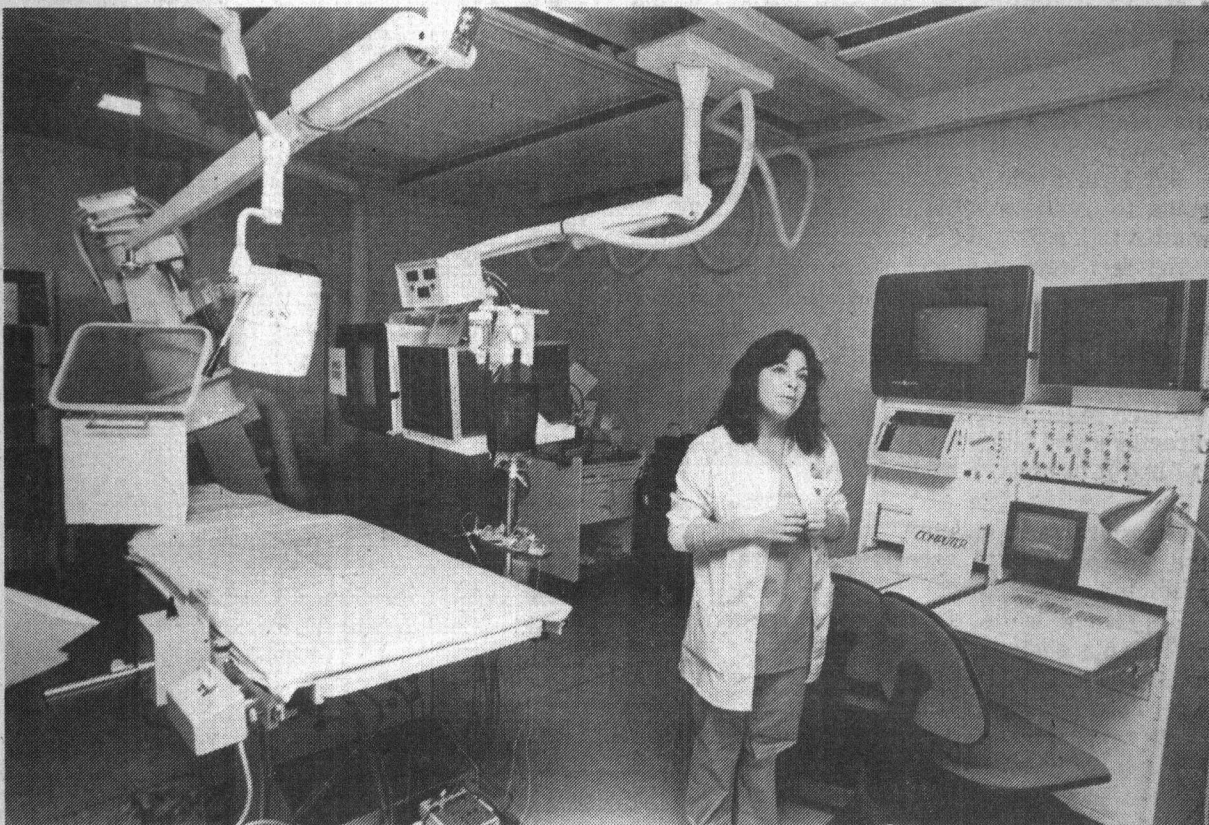
Adams declined to say what a routine catheterization would cost patients. A check of the hospital's application to the state to build the center show it estimating catheterizations alone would cost \$4,152. The price of open-heart surgery was estimated at \$23,647.

Mid-Coast, in an analysis of Community's application, said that catheterizations at Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose had an average cost of \$1,110 during the past year.

The hospital will begin open-heart surgery in six months, Adams said, in accordance with a state-mandated regulation following the opening of a catheterization lab. The hospital also is prevented by state law from performing catheter interventions without the open-heart surgery capability.

Approximately 5 percent of angioplasty operations require surgical back-up, said Dr. Patrick O'Grady, chairman of Community's Cardiac Catheterization Committee. The committee oversees the procedure and decides which patients should use it.

Only one in a thousand patients,



Registered Nurse Lynn Severson in catheterization lab.

Pete Amos/Sentinel

however, suffer fatal heart attacks during a routine catheterization, according to medical sourcebooks. Other dangers of the process include kidney damage from the dye, allergic reaction and circulation problems at the puncture site.

In the catheterization lab, an array of high-tech machines stand ready to monitor patients' hearts. The manager of the lab, Ed Deffenbaugh, said, "Most people are pleasantly surprised when it's done. It's nothing like they thought it would be."

Deffenbaugh demonstrated how the dye is tracked on a monitor through a patient's blood vessels. At one point, the dye traveling through a thick artery narrows like the middle part of an hourglass. "That's what you don't want to see," he said.

A computer prints diagrams of blood vessels leading to and away from the heart. The machines are only simulating the actual procedure, but the dye is cast for extensive heart care in this county.



Ed Deffenbaugh, manager of catheterization X-ray photos

Pete