



Mike McCollum

Doctor Stanley Wong is on call at the new Watsonville cardiac-care center on Pennsylvania Drive.

Cardiac-care center opens

Institute designed to improve access to treatment

By CHELA ZABIN
STAFF WRITER

For years, local doctors have sent their patients out of the area for cardiac care, but in many cases it hasn't been necessary, said Dr. Jerry Ginsburg.

According to Ginsburg, a cardiologist who has just opened a practice on Pennsylvania Drive, 90 percent of all cardiac care the community needs can be taken care of here in Watsonville, and it's his intention to bring that to light. One of Ginsburg's goals in opening the Watsonville-Santa Cruz Heart Institute is to bolster awareness of heart disease and improve access to treatment and detection.

There are five board-certified cardiologists and one internist employed between the original office, the Salinas-Monterey Heart Institute, and the new institute in Watsonville. One car-

diologist, Stanley Wong, has been hired specifically to be available 24 hours a day for the Watsonville office. Wong and nearly all of the other doctors, as well as the office staff, speak Spanish.

The doctors hope to improve heart care by making many of the common diagnostic tests — treadmill stress tests, stress echocardiograms, EKGs and holer monitors — available in the office and by referring patients to Watsonville Community Hospital for angiograms, cardiac catheterizations and other heart care.

Because of the expense of the equipment, most cardiologists have to send patients to the hospital for routine tests, which can cause delays in diagnosis, Ginsburg said. Other doctors had been sending patients out of the area for tests and work that

can be done in the county, he said.

"That's where things had broken down," Ginsburg said, calling Watsonville's cath lab "one of the top in the area."

"One of our focuses was to try to support the cath lab and keep it going," he said.

Cory Allen, a spokeswoman for Watsonville Community Hospital, said the Heart Institute was "a welcome addition" to health-care services in the area. She said the hospital was glad the doctors intend to refer clients to the hospital for heart problems and diagnostic tests, saying "we don't believe that (sending patients out of the area) is necessary."

Allen said the doctors will be available for emergency room consultation and emergency room backup at the hospital.

One of the reasons the doc-

tors think there's a need for their services in Watsonville is because of the large senior population. Heart disease is still the No. 1 killer in the United States, with women over 50 and men over 45 being at the highest risk. Four out of 10 deaths in Monterey County last year were from heart disease, according to Becky Lipscomb, the marketing and public relations director for the institute.

Many of those deaths, however, could be avoided, Lipscomb said, and other plans for the Watsonville area include community education and outreach through workplace presentations, free lectures to community groups and screenings at various sites. Free screenings will also be available at the office on Fridays.

For more information, call 763-2222.