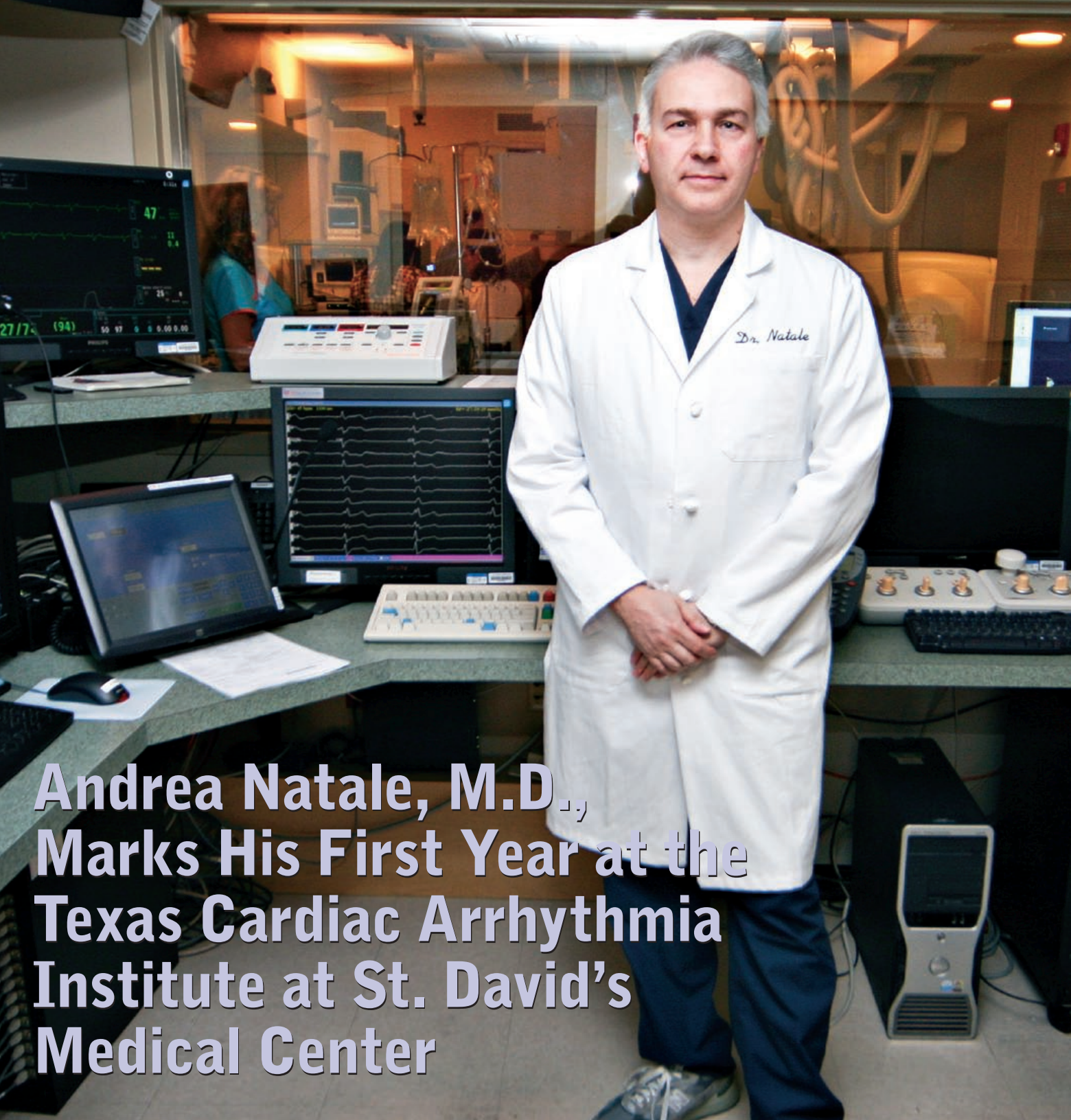


M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS



**Andrea Natale, M.D.,
Marks His First Year at the
Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia
Institute at St. David's
Medical Center**

Andrea Natale, M.D., Marks His First Year at the Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia Institute at St. David's Medical Center

By Paul J. Watkins

Atrial fibrillation is the most common form of cardiac arrhythmia and according to the American Heart Association, about 2.2 million adults in the United States have this condition, which is characterized by a rapid and irregular heartbeat. Left untreated, atrial fibrillation can lead to serious complications and even death.

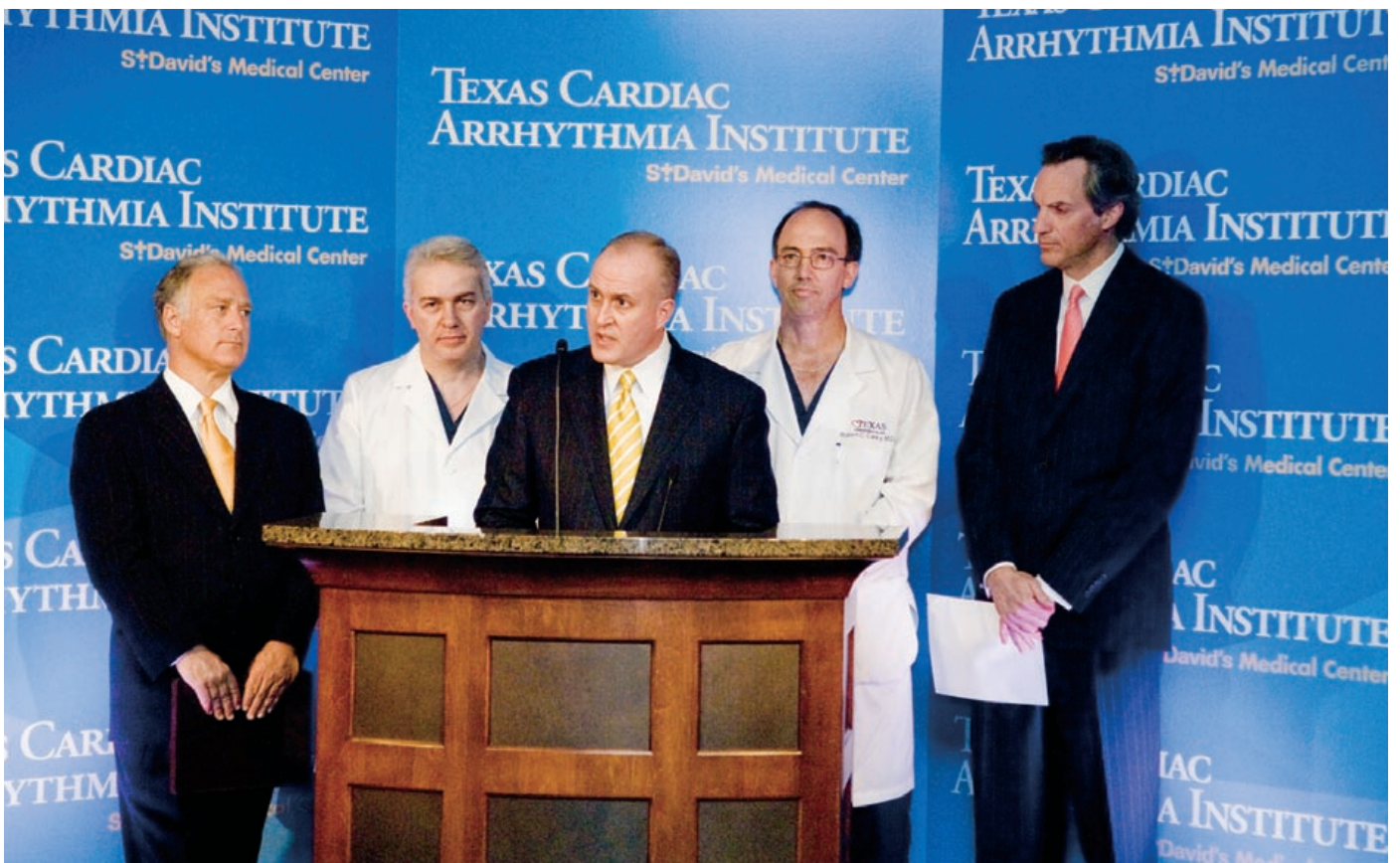
One year ago, St. David's Medical Center and Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia, in a very innovative form of collaboration, recruited Dr. Andrea Natale, an electrophysiologist and international leader in the treatment of cardiac arrhythmias from the Cleveland Clinic. They offered him the opportunity to come to Austin to create a partnership between St. David's Medical Center, the flagship hospital of St.

David's HealthCare and Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia, an Austin-based cardiac physician group that is the largest private electrophysiology practice in the U.S.

The result of that partnership is the Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia Institute, and it provides specialized care for heart rhythm disorders with an unmatched level of experience and technology. The institute treats more patients than most practices in the U.S., with a consistently superior success rate.

Dr. Natale, the institute's Executive Medical Director, pioneered the use of ablation to treat atrial fibrillation. He says he accepted the opportunity extended to him by St. David's Medical Center and Texas





One year ago, St. David's Medical Center and Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia recruited Dr. Andrea Natale, an electrophysiologist and international leader in the treatment of cardiac arrhythmias, from the Cleveland Clinic. (Left to right): Texas Sen. Kirk Watson; Andrea Natale, M.D., electrophysiologist, Executive Medical Director, Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia Institute at St. David's Medical Center; Jon M. Foster, Chief Executive Officer, St. David's HealthCare; Robert C. Canby, M.D., electrophysiologist, Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia; David Huffstutler, Chief Executive Officer, St. David's Medical Center

Cardiac Arrhythmia because it would allow him to teach his innovative techniques for treating atrial fibrillation to a greater number of physicians and to create a larger network of centers that work together to do research and to treat patients.

"St. David's/Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia was a good match for me because of the very solid group of people already working here," says Dr. Natale. "They had already a very large volume, were doing state-of-the-art therapy, and were actually using my technique already. They had all of the technology that I had obtained at the [Cleveland] Clinic during my tenure there and they were open to supporting what I care about, which is to continue the research and the education of others. And obviously, Austin is such a nice place for a family to live. All of that together convinced me to move here."

INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE

Dr. Natale says his decision to choose cardiology as his specialty was prompted by his interest in the advancing field of

interventional cardiology. "It was really the beginning of thrombolytic therapy for acute MI, and the device-based therapy had

Dr. Natale feels very fortunate to be supported by both nurses and physicians who had worked with him at the Cleveland Clinic and decided to join him in Austin, including Barbara Thomas, Director of Electrophysiology Services for Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia Institute at St. David's Medical Center.





PHOTO BY DAWN HUNT

Cardiologists from around the world receive training at the institute on the latest electrophysiology procedures and protocols. The institute's cardiac training lab allows physicians to observe procedures both on site and remotely, in real time, interacting with surgeons and researchers to learn how to address even the most challenging arrhythmias.

just started to become popular, so it really was a field that was exploding,” he recalls. “Right at that time, I finished medical school and I had to decide where to go, so that’s what drew me to cardiology — just the innovation that was present in the field at that time.”

He adds that he was attracted to the subspecialty of electrophysiology by the intellectual challenge it offers. “It’s not as simple as looking at a blockage, blowing up a balloon, and that’s the end of the story. It’s something that goes beyond that, where you really have to put a lot of work into trying to understand the mechanism of the arrhythmias, so that’s why I got involved with electrophysiology.”

BUILDING THE TEAM

An essential part of building the institute was the physicians who joined the staff, and Dr. Natale knew immediately that he had found what he wanted in his partners at Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia, who hold themselves to a very high standard in their ability to provide therapy. He also believes in people who are compassionate, and the medical team there embodies all these qualities.

“We deal with something that requires very intensive treatment and we’re not just operators; it’s important to me that all the people on the team participate in the treatment of the patient as if they’re treating their own family. So, those are the criteria: high-quality skilled professionals who are also compassionate on a personal level.

“I was also very fortunate to be supported by a pivotal group of professionals, both nurses and physicians, who had worked with me

at the Cleveland Clinic and decided to join me here in Austin. They all felt welcomed by the existing team, and we were able to transition smoothly and find that level of synergy necessary to get to work without skipping a beat!”

LEADING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY

Cardiologists from around the world receive training at the institute on the latest electrophysiology procedures and protocols. The institute’s cardiac training lab allows physicians to observe procedures both on site and remotely, in real time, interacting with surgeons and researchers to learn how to address even the most challenging arrhythmias.

Among the leading-edge technologies used to treat atrial fibrillation at the Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia Institute are the Hansen Robotic Surgery System and a Stereotaxis system. Dr. Natale says each technology has different characteristics, but both are designed to address the same fundamental problem: the significant technical challenges physicians face when doing a catheter ablation procedure.

The Hansen Robotic Surgery System allows a physician to use a mapping catheter to create an “electric road map” of the patient’s heart, which is an essential precursor to performing catheter ablation successfully. This map allows the physician to guide the placement of the ablation catheter. Once the patient’s heart is mapped, the physician uses the robot’s mechanically articulated arm to guide the ablation catheter with millimeter precision to the exact location where the chaotic electrical signals that cause atrial fibrillation originate.





**Andrea Natale, M.D., FACC, FHRS,
Executive Medical Director of the
Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia Institute
at St. David's Medical Center,
Austin, TX**

Andrea Natale, M.D., born in Italy, graduated *summa cum laude* from the Medical School of the University of Firenze, Italy, and *summa cum laude* from the Catholic University School of Cardiology in Rome, Italy. He received his clinical training in cardiology at Methodist Hospital, Baylor College in Houston and at the University of Western Ontario in London, ON, Canada. After completing a clinical fellowship in cardiology (electrophysiology) at the University of

Western Ontario in 1991, he further trained in cardiology (electrophysiology) at the University of Wisconsin Sinai Samaritan Medical Center in Milwaukee.

Dr. Natale was head of the cardiovascular physiopathology section at the Italian Air Force's Aerospace Research Centre. He has served as director of the electrophysiology laboratory at Duke University and director of the electrophysiology program at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. He also headed the cardiac electrophysiology section of the cardiology department at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation in Cleveland, OH.

Dr. Natale has served as a professor at a variety of prestigious universities, including Duke University and Stanford University. He has been an invited lecturer at more than 200 symposiums and conferences around the world, and is the author or co-author of hundreds of published articles on pacing and electrophysiology. In addition to serving on the editorial boards of numerous medical journals, he is editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Atrial Fibrillation*.

In 2005, Dr. Natale received the Bakken Heart-Brain Institute Research award for his project "Cardiac Consequences of Subarachnoid Hemorrhage" from the Cleveland Clinic Bakken Heart-Brain Institute. He also received the Cleveland Clinic Innovator Award for Innovation in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

He is board certified in internal medicine, cardiovascular disease and clinical cardiac electrophysiology by the American Board of Internal Medicine. He is an editorial board member of several prestigious journals in the field. He is also a member of the FDA Task Force on Atrial Fibrillation and the Heart Rhythm Society.

Andrea Natale, M.D., FACC, FHRS
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Consulting professor, Division of Cardiology, Stanford University, California
Clinical associate professor of medicine, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH
Senior Clinical Director, EP Services, California Pacific Medical Center, San Francisco, CA

The Stereotaxis Lab at the Institute combines state-of-the-art imaging and precise instrument control using remote magnetic navigation. A catheter with a magnetic distal tip is used to deliver radiofrequency ablation inside the heart. The physician uses touch screens and a joystick to manipulate the magnetic field around the patient, maneuvering the catheter with unprecedented accuracy. This improves safety and enhances patient outcomes.

"One of the things we recently used for the first time in the U.S., after FDA approval, was an open irrigated catheter for the Stereotaxis system," says Dr. Natale, "and there are other types of technological improvements that, before they come to the States, we actually tried in other countries, in either South America or Europe, so that we are involved in this technology at a very early stage."

C. David Huffstutler, CEO of St. David's Medical Center, says the institute, guided by Dr. Natale's vision, has made a profound improvement in patients' lives. "In just one year, the supremely talented physician team at the Texas Cardiac Arrhythmia Institute at St. David's Medical Center, coupled with our unmatched level of technology, has drawn thousands of patients — many from outside of the region — for the advanced treatment of heart rhythm disorders, a level of treatment they cannot get anywhere else in the country.

"Under Dr. Natale's leadership, the institute has made extraordinary strides in physician training and clinical research related to heart rhythm disorders. We are pleased to partner with Dr. Natale in his mission to advance the field of electrophysiology and share his techniques with physicians from across the United States and beyond."

MESSAGE TO PHYSICIANS

Dr. Natale wants fellow physicians to know that he shares their goals to provide their arrhythmia patients with the best therapy possible and the best skill available in this field. "The quality of the work we do makes me feel confident that we can perform complex procedures with minimal negative impact on patients."

"At this point, since this procedure is highly operator dependent, it cannot be done with the same results everywhere," concludes Dr. Natale. "I'm proud that we can provide this high-quality care here for the patients of Texas and for those who come here from across the nation and the rest of the world." ■

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