



Dr. Mary T. Donofrio

MCV Hospitals' Pediatric Echocardiography Lab Is Singled Out for Excellence

Babies with congenital heart problems get a head start on advanced care at MCV Hospitals—even before they're born. A special ultrasound test called a fetal echocardiogram helps MCVH doctors diagnose heart disease in the womb.

MCVH's Pediatric Echocardiography Laboratory is the only such lab in the Eastern United States to be recognized for excellence in three areas: pediatric transthoracic, transesophageal, and fetal echocardiography. In fact, MCVH's Pediatric Echocardiography Lab is one of only five in the country to earn the distinction.

The honor originates from a prestigious three-year accreditation by the

Intersocietal Commission for the Accreditation of Echocardiography Laboratories, which recognizes commitment to high-quality patient care and excellent diagnostic testing in all three areas.

Specifically, echocardiography is a complex imaging technique using high-frequency sound waves to produce ultrasound images of the heart, so physicians may assess its structure and blood flow.

"A fetal echo offers many advantages for the family and our medical team," explains Dr. Mary T. Donofrio, Director of MCVH's Noninvasive Laboratory and Perinatal Cardiology. "If a heart defect is present, we can counsel the family so they're informed to make important decisions for their baby. In some cases, essential medications for the fetus can be given to the mother prior to delivery.

"As physicians, we can make plans before the baby's birth to ensure the best care possible—thanks to a diagnosis via fetal echocardiography," she adds. "This can be lifesaving."

Armed with the knowledge of a baby's need for advanced care, doctors and parents can make arrangements to deliver babies with heart defects in a high-level, specialized care facility—like MCVH. MCVH currently claims Virginia's largest Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and a

new Pediatric Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (PCICU).

The nucleus of MCVH's Children's Heart Center, the PCICU is the only one of its kind in the state. The seven-bed state-of-the-art facility is a cardiology-only environment reserved exclusively for children with congestive heart problems. The PCICU combines the expertise of physicians with staff who are specially trained in pediatric cardiac care. The team includes pediatric cardiologists, a pediatric cardiovascular surgeon, pediatric intensive care specialists, neonatologists, a pediatric anesthesiologist, nurses, and respiratory therapists.

A member of the Children's Heart Center family, Donofrio partners with Dr. Richard Schieken, Medical Director; Dr. Scott Gullquist, Director of Cardiac Intensive Care, and Pacing and Arrhythmia; Dr. Inder Mehta, Director of Pediatric Cardiovascular Surgery; Dr. William Moskowitz, Director of the Pediatric Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory and Pediatric Cardiac Transplant Services; Dr. Louise Robertson, Director of Education; and Dr. Jay Shapiro, Director of Pediatric Anesthesiology.

"For a patient, or parent of a patient, accreditation guarantees that your physicians are at the top of technique and education," says Donofrio. "We are committed to excellence—and it shows."