



Vitruvian Health

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INFORMATION

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Heart patient: ‘I wouldn’t be here today if I hadn’t gone to these doctors’

DALTON, Ga. (February 24, 2026) – Linda Jackson, 83, is spending National Heart Health Awareness Month thankful to be alive.

Arterial blockages like the ones she experienced late last year are common in cardiac care. What made her case extraordinary, however, was the challenging location and the highly specialized procedures required to clear them.

“I wouldn’t be here today if I hadn’t gone to these doctors,” said Jackson, a Dalton resident.

When Jackson’s ankles began swelling abnormally, she told her primary care physician who sent her to Vitruvian Health – Heart & Vascular at Hamilton. There, she saw Vineet Dua, MD, a non-invasive cardiologist. Jackson had difficulty breathing when exerting herself, which led to a diagnosis of congestive heart failure. Dua ordered an echocardiogram and a cardiac CT. The echocardiogram showed normal heart function, but the cardiac CT showed significant heart blockages.

Dua referred Jackson to David Fishman, MD, an interventional cardiologist who performs interventional cardiac procedures. Fishman performed a heart catheterization procedure at Hamilton Medical Center that confirmed she had multiple arterial blockages, and at least one of them was located at a place in her heart that greatly increases risk of negative outcomes.

Nationwide, it is common for patients to have more than one surgery when multiple arteries are involved. The staged approach (more than one surgical procedure) has benefits that are best for certain patients. In Jackson’s case, Fishman and the cardiac team felt that a procedure requiring more skill but a shorter path to recovery was the best option.

With one artery being used with medical equipment for a procedure and the others compromised by blockages, the blood flow to Jackson’s heart would be cut off. To keep blood flowing during the procedure, the team connected a mechanical device on the outside of her body to pump blood while the heart’s normal channels were being repaired.

The procedure, performed by Fishman, was an alternative to open heart surgery, and she experienced it with no complications. At the end of the procedure, the device was removed, and her heart resumed its normal work.

Dua said it's one example of how the Heart & Vascular team exceeds national averages when it comes to best practices for high-risk cardiac interventions.

"We do high-risk interventions for very complicated patients," he said. "Some hospitals transfer these patients to other facilities for specialized care. Not every interventionist can do these kinds of procedures. You must have training. We're able to perform them here because Dr. Fishman has a lot of training in high-risk procedures."

Jackson is undergoing cardiac rehabilitation at Hamilton Medical Center's Cardiac Rehab program, located inside Bradley Wellness Center. There, specialists guide her through monitored exercise to safely increase her strength and stamina. She credits her recovery both to Fishman's unique expertise and the all-around care she receives.

"My condition was very rare and very serious," Jackson said. "God worked this out for me, and all the doctors and nurses have all been wonderful. I need people to know how good our heart unit and our hospital are."

February is National Heart Health Awareness Month.

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Photo: Linda Jackson is undergoing cardiac rehabilitation at Hamilton Medical Center's Cardiac & Pulmonary Rehab program, located inside Bradley Wellness Center.

About Vitruvian Health – Heart & Vascular

Vitruvian Health – Heart & Vascular is a comprehensive and fully integrated system that supports patients at every stage of their heart health journey – from prevention and early diagnosis to intervention, rehabilitation and long-term follow-up.

A key strength of the program is collaboration. Cardiovascular care is never one-size-fits-all, and it works best when specialists work together. Multiple teams including interventional cardiology, structural heart, advanced imaging, vascular care, electrophysiology, cardiac surgery, and cardiac rehabilitation collaborate closely to ensure each patient receives coordinated, personalized care. The program also invests in leading-edge technology, including advanced imaging capabilities such as one-beat electron beam CT (EBCT), and the most modern ablation therapies and clinical trials, which allow for precise and efficient cardiac assessment.

About Hamilton Medical Center

The flagship affiliate for Vitruvian Health's Northwest Georgia region, Hamilton Medical Center (HMC) is a 255-bed regional acute-care hospital that offers major medical, surgical and diagnostic services, including accredited stroke and chest pain centers. Advanced technology and wellness are two significant areas of focus for HMC. Services include the freestanding Hamilton Ambulatory Surgery Center, Hamilton Diagnostics Center, and Bradley Wellness Center, as well as a Level II trauma center, Peoples Cancer Institute, Heart & Vascular program (including open heart surgery), Hamilton Spine Health and Sport, Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and more.

About Hamilton Cardiac Rehab Program

Over the course of 12 weeks, Hamilton Cardiac Rehab participants engage in monitored exercise, heart health education, nutritional counseling and behavioral coaching to promote lasting lifestyle changes. Patients who have experienced heart attacks, bypass surgery, stent placement, congestive heart failure or other cardiovascular conditions are ideal candidates and can participate through a physician's referral. The program's goal is to equip individuals with tools to increase their physical, mental and emotional well-being, empowering them to lead fuller, healthier lives. Most insurance plans cover the program's cost.

Each participant undergoes an initial assessment with a cardiac rehabilitation specialist to tailor an individualized program. Throughout the program, patients take part in supervised exercise sessions, educational classes and safe home exercise planning — all while receiving continuous support from a dedicated team of physicians, a registered nurse, exercise physiologists and a registered dietitian. Upon completing the program, patients are encouraged to continue their progress through the Progressive Rehabilitation Exercise Program (PREP).

About Bradley Wellness Center

Bradley Wellness Center (BWC) is a comprehensive fitness and wellness facility designed to support every level of fitness – from beginners to advanced athletes. BWC offers a wide range of exercise options and wellness amenities – all under one roof – including extensive cardio equipment, strength-training machines, Free weights, power racks, and functional training areas. BWC's Group Fitness Studio offers cardio classes, such as HITT, Zumba, Power, and Step. The Cycle Studio offers several levels of cycling classes. The Mind and Body Studio is designed for Yoga and Barre enthusiasts, with many different class options available. Other fitness options include an indoor arena for full court basketball, indoor and outdoor walking and jogging tracks, racquetball courts, tennis courts, and indoor and outdoor pickleball courts. BWC's 25-meter indoor pool offers lanes open for swimming during all operation hours along with aquatics classes. Sauna and steam rooms are available for member use in each locker room. Childcare is included for children ages 6 months to 11 years for members. Other BWC offerings include nutrition and personal training. Acupuncture and massage therapy are available for purchase by members and non-members.

About Vitruvian Health

Vitruvian Health, formerly Hamilton Health Care System, is a not-for-profit, fully integrated health system serving the Northwest Georgia and Southeast Tennessee regions. Vitruvian includes Hamilton Medical Center in Dalton, Ga., and Bradley Medical Center in Cleveland, Tenn., affiliated physician

practices, walk-in care centers, retirement and skilled nursing centers, a diagnostic center, a cancer institute, an institute for children with developmental delays, and more. Known for its advanced care and personalized service, Vitruvian Health offers innovative treatment options in state-of-the-art facilities while maintaining a compassionate, friendly and tranquil healing environment.

The Vitruvian name draws from the organization's recognizable da Vinci-inspired Vitruvian Man icon, which has been a prominent part of Hamilton's logo since 1976. Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man represents harmony, balance, and the interconnectedness of all aspects of health, perfectly aligning with Hamilton's integrated system of care.