

# At the heart of the matter



Brad Zweerink/Daily Republic

Col. Chris Thompson, right, the chief of cardiothoracic surgery at David Grant Medical Center, along with nurse Cornel Babauta, performs a stent procedure in the cath lab at UC Davis Medical Center and David Grant have been working together for three years to help establish a cardiothoracic program at Travis Air Force Base.

## Travis surgeons gain experience at Sacramento hospital

By IAN THOMPSON  
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TRAVIS AFB — Heart surgery for veterans and military members could soon be a possibility at David Grant Medical Center.

David Grant has worked with UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento for three years to help create a cardiothoracic surgery program that will allow Travis Air Force Base to provide such care.

"The goal is to perform our first open-heart surgery next spring," said Col. Chris Thompson, David Grant's chief of cardiothoracic surgery.

As it is now, patients in need of heart surgery are trans-

ferred to area hospitals such as Queen of the Valley in Napa.

David Grant worked out an agreement last year to allow Air Force surgeons to operate at UC Davis Medical Center as the program and its support services are being established at David Grant.

Since July 2008, four Air Force doctors have commuted to Sacramento, said Maj. Daren Danielson, a cardiothoracic surgeon at David Grant. He called the relationship "seamless."

"It is a way for them to get some experience and maintain their skills in preparation for the program at David Grant," said Dr. David Wisner, interim

chief of surgery at UC Davis Medical Center.

The transformation has begun at David Grant to create an operating room and cardiology suite, which Danielson said will be "one of the best in the country."

The staff is being assembled in preparation for handling military and veteran patients who currently go to UC Davis Medical Center for surgery.

"UC Davis has been a wonderful place to work," Thompson said. "They accepted us as one of their own."

Wisner said the Air Force contingent has become a welcomed part of the team at UC Davis Medical Center and that



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the surgeons are "well-trained and easy to work with."

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See *Surgeons*, Page A11

# DAILY REPUBLIC

Date 28 Apr 09 Page A1/A11

## Surgeons: Joint program is in its third year

*From Page One*

our facility as well," Wisner said.

"They take care of non-Air Force patients and take part in teaching programs. This is a good example of a program that is mutually beneficial."

David Grant's cardiotho-

racic care center will have 71 military and civilian physicians, nurses and medical personnel, something few other military medical facilities have, Danielson said.

Lt. Col. Lewis Martin, David Grant's associate administrator, called the work to develop a cardiothoracic

program "incredibly exciting." Martin said it is important for patients needing such care to know they can receive it at Travis.

Thompson agreed. "Patients may have gotten a mixed message before. Travis wants them back," he said. "We need them for our wartime mission."

The program will allow Air Force doctors and medical personnel to train at Travis and then be deployed anywhere in the world. The possibilities are endless.

"You can feel the spirit," Danielson said.

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