



When the surgery is over and we can talk to the family to tell them that everything went well, the satisfaction is not only mine, it is of a team of more than 10 people who gave their best to make it happen."



—Dr. Javier Castillo, Director,
Bayamón Heart and Lung Institute's
Cardiovascular Surgery Department

Dr. Javier Castillo: At the Heart of the Matter

BY MARIO BELAVAL DÍAZ

As a young medical student at Universitat Rovira i Virgili, in Tarragona, Spain, Dr. Javier Castillo, the director of the Cardiovascular Surgery Department at the Bayamón Heart and Lung Institute of the Bayamón Medical Center, juggled his days between attending classes in the morning, working as a stretcher-bearer at night and snatching whatever hours were left for sleeping. But it was on one of those shifts that he found his calling.

"There was a surgeon there who became kind of a mentor and he asked me one time if I wanted to go to see him perform surgery involving the heart; an opportunity I could not resist," Dr. Castillo said. "And after witnessing the procedure, I knew I had found what I wanted to do, to work with the heart,

probably the only organ that is moving and that you could say that in a sense is alive while you are working on it."

And that passion has guided Dr. Castillo through a stellar career in renowned institutions such as the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and the Cardiothoracic Surgery Department at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, where he has both honed his practical experience while never ceasing his research into the areas related to cardiovascular conditions and surgical interventions with the goal of treating and performing them as well as possible. It was exactly this knowledge and experience that led to José L. Quirós, CEO of Dorado Health, the parent company of Bayamón Medical Center and its sister institutions, Manatí Medical Center and Manatí Medical Center, to draft Dr. Castillo to lead the Cardiovascular Surgery Department at the Bayamón Heart and Lung Institute.

"Dr. Castillo represents a new class of highly trained young doctors who, due to the changes that medicine is undergoing, decide to go where the opportunities are," Quirós said. "And at the Bayamón Medical Center, we aim to have a world-class cardiovascular surgery department where patients will receive attention, care and services on a par with renowned stateside institutions."

Dr. Castillo explained that Quirós' commitment to technology and a first-rate team will make the Cardiothoracic Surgery Department at the Bayamón Heart and Lung Institute the best of its kind in Puerto Rico.

"The commitment to procure the best and most advanced technology makes a great difference, and our goal is that anyone who needs these services does not have to leave the island, and can stay here, at home with family and friends," said Dr. Castillo, adding that the center would handle myriad cardiovascular conditions.

"We always talk about patients who develop conditions such as high cholesterol, hypertension and diabetes due to the traditional diet in Puerto Rico, but we will also work with many other conditions, often with a genetic component, such as Marfan syndrome, rheumatoid disease, Barlow's disease, fibroelastic disease, patients with chronic kidney failure or simply patients with genetic hypercholesterolemia at a young age."

Dr. Castillo highlighted the Hispanic Valve Center, which is the first subspecialty at the institution, will focus on valve disease and offer complex valve reconstruction.

"Usually, what is done is to replace the valves with an artificial prosthesis, and the evidence is increasingly clear, and it has been seen that when repair is possible, the patient experiences fewer complications and lives longer, while being able to keep their own valves," Castillo pointed out.