Texas Children's Hospital Explants Heart Assist Device: Sends Teen Home with a Healed Heart

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HOUSTON, Aug. 3, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Texas Children's Hospital is the nation's first pediatric hospital to both surgically implant and later explant a mechanical ventricular assist device (VAD), inside the chest of a teen with chronic heart failure as a bridge to recovery, avoiding heart transplantation. The patient, 15-year-old David Rios, returned to his home in South Texas with a healed heart after spending seven months at Texas Children's Hospital recovering from a life-threatening heart illness. To watch a video of Rio's journey to a healed heart, please see: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vjSZXWhCaI [1]

"This is a giant leap in the care of children with heart failure. David is the first patient with chronic heart failure at any pediatric hospital to have his heart healed by using an intracorporeal mechanical heart assist device," said Dr. David L.S. Morales, pediatric cardiovascular surgeon at Texas Children's Heart Center, who performed both the surgical implant and explant procedures on Rios. "The device has allowed David's heart to return to normal function and we couldn't be happier with the outcome," said Morales, also associate professor of surgery and pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM).

Rios recovered from the surgical removal very quickly. Within two days, he left the cardiac intensive care unit. He resumed his physical therapy and advanced rapidly with an ability to exercise better than he had done with the device. His medical team measured his progress once a month and found that his heart was getting stronger each time. Early on, he was able to walk 700 yards in six minutes. Echocardiograms and other heart tests showed that his heart was restored to normal function.

By early July, doctors felt he could return to his home in the Rio Grande Valley. They recommended that he see a cardiologist there for a baseline follow-up. Then he will return t
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