

PRESS RELEASE
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World's second artificial heart patient leaves hospital
Tom Christerson transitions to nearby hotel

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – During a March 12 news conference at Jewish Hospital, AbioCor™ patient Tom Christerson explained, “The hardest part of my recovery has been being confined to bed for so long. I’m used to getting up and doing things.”

Christerson’s physicians, University of Louisville surgeons Laman Gray, M.D. and Rob Dowling, M.D., announced today that their patient’s recovery got a bit easier this week. Christerson was discharged on Wednesday, March 20 from Jewish Hospital, where he has been recovering since his landmark surgery September 13. He is now residing at The Inn at Jewish Hospital, a hotel one block from the hospital. He is functioning normally with minimal help from his family.

“The rest of Mr. Christerson’s routine, such as twice daily rehab and occasional lab tests, will remain the same,” Gray explained. “However, he should feel less like a patient now that he’s able to sleep and relax outside of the hospital.”

The move to The Inn at Jewish Hospital is the first of many steps that physicians hope will allow Christerson to return to his home in Central City, Ky.

“We’ll use the time at The Inn to assess how Mr. Christerson and his family feel about managing and maintaining the device on their own,” Dowling said. “Once everyone is proficient and comfortable with the equipment, we hope to plan some short visits to Central City, ultimately allowing him to return home for good.”

During the transition from hospital to home, preparations for Christerson’s release include training hospital and emergency staff in and near Central City on the type of care a patient with this device might need.

StatCare staff will be flying to Muhlenberg County near the Christerson's Central City home to participate in a training March 27, said John Blumenstock, Executive Director. "We want to cooperate in every way we can to address any care needs Mr. Christerson might have once he leaves Jewish Hospital."

Christerson was the second patient in the world to receive the AbioCor Implantable Replacement Heart, manufactured by ABIOMED, Inc., of Danvers, Mass.

The Christerson family will be inviting members of the press to accompany him on an outing in the next seven to 10 days. Until then, family members ask that members of the news media respect their privacy as they work toward this transition.

Jewish Hospital is among the top ten cardiac centers in the United States and, along with the University of Louisville, is dedicated to excellence, research and education. University of Louisville surgeons at Jewish Hospital have performed many heart care "firsts," including Kentucky's first heart transplant, the world's first heart transplant following the use of a Thoratec bi-ventricular assist device, the world's first endoscopic saphenous vein harvest and the first ventricular remodeling in the region.