Health & Medicine

Clinton the Lionhearted

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On September 6, former president Bill Clinton underwent a quadruple cardiac bypass procedure at New York– Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center. Just seven weeks later, he joined Senator John Kerry in Philadelphia for a campaign rally. The 58-year-old Clinton told the cheering crowd, “If this isn’t good for my heart, I don’t know what is!”

Craig R. Smith, Calvin F. Barber Professor of Surgery at Columbia’s College of Physicians & Surgeons (P&S), performed the four-hour operation. He used blood vessels taken from Clinton’s chest wall and leg to bypass the blockages and restore an adequate flow of blood to the heart muscle.

According to Smith, the blockages in some arteries were “well over 90 percent,” which put Clinton at high risk for a major heart attack. Clinton had not experienced any substantial damage to his heart muscle before his surgery.

Allan Schwartz, professor of clinical medicine and chief of cardiology at P&S, was Clinton’s cardiologist during his hospitalization. Clinton was released on September 10.

NYPH/CUMC’s open-heart surgery program performs more than 1,500 open-heart procedures annually.



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