



Contact: Will Sansom, UT Health Science Center, (210) 567.2570 – Cell: (210) 275-2160
Carolyn Cox, CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Health Care, (210) 704-2902 – Cell: (210) 857-6332

Frequently Asked Questions

Why titanium?

Titanium is a metal that is biocompatible, which means that it is well accepted by surrounding tissues upon surgical implantation. Titanium also is lightweight and, importantly, it does not interfere with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Is there an optimal age to do the surgery?

Yes, by the age of 2. The lungs develop more in the first two years of life than at any time afterward.

How many children have had the surgery?

About 300, including 210 at CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Children's Hospital since we began doing the surgery in 1989. The eight hospitals in our U.S. clinical trial are in San Antonio, Pittsburgh, Boston, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, Seattle and Philadelphia. Two Philadelphia have performed this operation.

Was anyone else in the world working on it?

Not to our knowledge. We visited the surgeons at the other world centers to bring them our insights into this new form of surgery. The clinical trial took 13 years.

What happens to the titanium rib as a child grows?

As children develop and need more lung capacity, the titanium rib must accommodate. The surgeons perform follow-up surgery every six months to expand the rib using holes that are part of its design.

What is thoracic insufficiency syndrome?

This is our name for a set of conditions, congenital and developing, during childhood, that would keep the lungs from full breathing potential. These conditions include scoliosis and fused ribs.

Who makes the Verticle Expandable Prosthetic Titanium Rib (VEPTR)?

The technology is licensed to Synthes Spine Co. in Westchester, Pa. The titanium rib runs about \$6,000 per unit. The basic design is still the same, but this is the fourth generation of the device.