



**The Society
of Thoracic
Surgeons**

Surgeon Criteria for VAD Certification

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Management of Heart Failure with the Use of Ventricular
Assist Devices**

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Disclosures

- Contract Research: HeartWare Inc; Co-PI ENDURANCE Trial
- Contract Research: NHLBI; Co-PI REVIVE-IT Trial



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Surgeon Qualifications

- CMS has set broad requirements for “Surgeon” qualifications

“Implantation of durable long-term ventricular assist devices for destination therapy requires placement of 10 ventricular assist devices in the last 36 months with current activity in the last 12 months and with volume requirement met by including artificial heart placements for no more than 50% of the total volume.”



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Surgeon Qualifications

- Current criteria for certification of “VAD Surgeon” require only a volume criterion
 - Does not require documentation of other aspects of training and experience that are essential to the overall qualifications of a VAD surgeon.
- Although not specifically excluded by CMS criteria, a pathway for VAD Surgeon certification from residency or fellowship experiences is not currently recognized by the Joint Commission.
 - A precedent for recognition of pathways to certification for residency, fellowship and/or defined post-residency clinical experience currently exists for heart transplantation (a procedure of similar complexity to the VAD implant procedure) through UNOS.



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Surgeon Qualifications

- A pathway for VAD Surgeon certification from foreign education and training is currently not recognized by the Joint Commission.
- Interpretation of CMS requirements mandate VAD implantation case volume to include at least 1 implant be performed for destination therapy.
- Very narrow interpretation of what constitutes the “primary surgeon” of record



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Surgeon Qualifications

- STS recommends further clarification of the CMS requirements to include:
 - Documentation of other aspects of training and experience that are essential to the overall qualifications of a VAD surgeon
 - Recognition of residency and fellowship experiences
 - The definition of “Primary Surgeon” be expanded to follow guidelines outlined by the ABTS in teaching settings
 - Recognition of foreign training experiences



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Surgeon Qualifications

- A collaborative effort to include representation from:
 - CMS
 - Joint Commission
 - American Board of Thoracic Surgeons
 - The Society of Thoracic Surgeons