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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**92-year-old Whalley man benefits from specialised cardiac surgery**



A 92-year-old Whalley man has praised staff at the Lancashire Cardiac Centre in Blackpool after becoming one of the oldest people in the county to have pioneering surgery.

Norman Thorpe, a former chemistry teacher at Clitheroe Royal Grammar School, underwent keyhole mitral valve surgery at the centre and is looking forward to getting back to walking the hills and fells of the county.

Norman, who climbed the Three Peaks only last year, said: "I have always been fit and towards the end of last year I was looking to go caravanning but felt out of breath which wasn't like me.

"I went for a check-up at the Royal Blackburn Hospital and met my consultant Dr Balachandaran who referred me through to Mr Zacharias who put me forward for this operation in Blackpool.

"The treatment I have had has been absolutely marvellous. I couldn't fault it and I

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can't wait to get out and about again."

Mr Joe Zacharias, Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgeon, said: "We are delighted that Mr Thorpe is recovering so well and so quickly and was ready for home on the fourth day after major heart surgery.

"The least invasive way to replace the Mitral valve is through this technique known as minimally invasive mitral surgery (keyhole mitral surgery) which is performed through a two inch opening next to the right nipple.

"In the past, the only way to replace the mitral valve was by cutting the breastbone down the middle to gain access to the heart, an invasive procedure which weakens the chest, and it has a long recovery time of up to three months.

"This new procedure has many benefits for patients. It reduces trauma compared with splitting open the breastbone, so patients recover quicker. With the conventional method they are in hospital for about six to seven days but with keyhole, it is less.

"Being keyhole surgery, it is technically more demanding and can take half an hour longer than traditional open-heart surgery because it requires more intense concentration.

"However, the keyhole procedure has a lower risk of blood loss and infection because you don't open the breast bone up."

He added: "We are very proud to say that the Lancashire Cardiac Centre is one of only three centres in the north of England to provide this operation.

"The centre is recognised as one of the most innovative in the country and this type of pioneering operation from its dedicated staff can only help to enhance that reputation.

"We have previously introduced endoscopic vein harvesting to reduce trauma to the leg during coronary artery bypass grafting. We also offer the anterior right thoracotomy approach to the Aortic valve.

"We have the largest experience with minimally invasive mitral valve surgery in the UK and have trained teams from all over Europe to get started."

**CAPTION: Mr Norman Thorpe**

**Ends**