...and the beat goes on

DR. HOWARD FELDMAN: 10 YEARS AT MERCY’S SHAW HEART
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spring edition 2017

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Dr. Howard Feldman leans back in his chair and quickly scans the room as if he's trying to find the hiding place where the last 10 years have gone.

He can't believe it's been that long since he arrived in Roseburg to undertake the significant challenge of developing a comprehensive heart services program at Mercy Medical Center.

There aren't many signs of the last decade in Dr. Feldman's small office, but there are plenty just outside the door.

When he arrived in 2007, Mercy's heart team consisted of four cardiologists and one catheterization lab, used primarily for diagnosing blocked blood vessels to the heart. Today The Shaw Heart and Vascular Center team is composed of six cardiologists, a cardiac nurse practitioner and many additional support personnel.

But the growth in staff only tells a small part of the story. It is the expertise they have brought that has earned Shaw Heart Center renown as a regional resource for comprehensive cardiac care and status as one of the nation's highest-performing heart centers.

Under Dr. Feldman's leadership, the center's interventional cardiology program has dramatically changed the lives of hundreds of area patients whose risk of heart attack or limb amputation has been dramatically reduced, or eliminated altogether, by the non-surgical procedure to restore blood flow through blocked vessels. A comprehensive electrophysiology program also has been established to diagnose and treat abnormal heart rhythms.

With the addition of specialists and programs, the patient volume has continued to grow, as more and more Douglas County residents realize they no longer have to leave the area to receive heart care as advanced as they can find in most large cities.

Shaw Heart's status on the national level has grown as well. It was the first program west of Texas to earn national Accreditation for Cardiovascular Excellence certification from the American College of Cardiology. An annual conference hosted by Dr. Feldman and Shaw Heart Center now attracts to its faculty and educational sessions some of the most respected cardiology authorities in the world.

So 10 years may have vanished for Dr. Feldman, but not without leaving an indelible mark on the state of heart care, and the health status of heart patients, in the region for years to come.

Oh, and in his spare time, he opened a winery. When the affable physician says he has "put roots down in this community," he's not kidding.

Shaw Heart and Vascular Center's medical director learns that time passes quickly when you're busy establishing one of the nation's premier heart programs.

"We really like it here," "We like the community, and we like the pace of life."
Through three new digital programs, Mercy is removing barriers that can prevent people from getting help from a therapy professional, quitting smoking and eating well.

Imagine you’d like to talk to a therapist, but you live a long distance from the nearest counseling professional, or it’s the middle of the night and you need help now.

Thanks to a new online resource being made available by Mercy Medical Center, some Douglas County residents who have difficulty using conventional in-office health services now can easily access professional therapy services online as well as programs to help people wanting to quit smoking or manage their weight.

By Erin Wilds

More Health Online Articles are featured on the back page.

With over 1,000 licensed therapists and serving more than 500,000 clients, Talkspace is the nation’s largest online therapy service. Users are matched with a licensed therapist whose specialty area best fits their needs, then have 24/7 access to therapy services from their computer or mobile device.

All communication is completely secure, and clients can text, email, or video chat with their therapist while maintaining complete anonymity.

“Seeking help for mental health issues still makes some people uncomfortable,” says Kathleen Nickel, Mercy’s director of communications. “Having access to a confidential therapy service may lead more people to seek help and support.”

The online model provides an important option for people who may not have been able to establish a relationship with a local therapist either because of the shortage of providers in the area or the length of time it can take to get an appointment.

“In Douglas County we have a mental health provider shortage, so access to a real problem,” says David Price, Mercy’s director of mission services. “We’re trying to eliminate some of the barriers that would normally interfere with therapy in a conventional program.”

Talkspace is currently in a pilot phase, while Mercy assesses its effectiveness. The hospital distributed 50 access vouchers to the Educational Service District (ESD), to help with parenting education and to support at-risk parents and families, and the Up2UsNow violence coalition, to provide another tool to prevent incidents of domestic violence and child abuse.

Mercy will use outcomes data to determine the future direction of the program. “Our best case scenario is that we find out three months into the process that all 50 vouchers have been distributed and used,” Price says. “If that’s the case, we are going to discuss options to expand the program.”

Individuals without the vouchers can still access the service now at talkspace.com. “It’s really pretty affordable,” Nickel says. “Most people can receive a week of therapy service for about the cost of an insurance copay.”

The vouchers are generating interest in the early going of the program, according to Marion Kotowski, violence prevention specialist at Up2UsNow.

The program is generating similar interest at ESD, Price adds. In the future, Mercy hopes to see the Talkspace project expand to reach the community as a whole, and that other local health groups consider providing the resource.

Every three years the hospital completes a community health needs assessment to determine potential underserved health needs in Douglas County. A 2016 assessment showed tobacco use to be particularly problematic. “The tobacco incidence in Douglas County is extremely high when compared to other counties,” says Price.

Also particularly alarming is the 25 percent smoking rate among pregnant women, compared to the state average of 11 percent. These high numbers motivated Mercy officials to establish an initiative to reduce smoking in the area.

That was the genesis of The Become An Ex Program, a free, confidential online support service designed to help smokers quit their habit.

Price hopes the online smoking cessation resource will accomplish some of the same goals as Talkspace — removing barriers to people seeking help, such as inconvenience, transportation and cost.

The Become An Ex Program was started by the Truth Initiative in partnership with Mayo Clinic. Users can set up a “quit plan” tailored to their individual needs, then check in for support-in-the-moment via text messaging and digital coaching. “The Become An Ex Program helps smokers understand how triggers and habitual behavior work in order to help them better understand how the quitting process works,” Price says.

Once users have successfully quit smoking, they continue to receive support to fight cravings and stay smoke free.

Price says Mercy plans to refer hospitalized patients who express a desire to stop smoking to The Become An Ex Program, adding to the smoking-cessation options now being offered to patients. “We’ll do what we can to assist them in their quest to stop using tobacco products.”

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STAY healthy

BecomeAnEx.org

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With an infectious laugh, cardiologist Dr. David Oakes likens his medical specialty to a video game. As an electrophysiologist, the newest member of the Shaw Heart and Vascular Center focuses his practice on the heart’s electrical system. His job is to repair problems that patients encounter when that system isn’t working properly. The fixes range from “gadgets” like pacemakers and defibrillators to three-dimensional electronic mapping to find abnormal electrical circuits of the heart and ablation procedures to correct abnormal heart rhythms.

While the stakes are a lot higher than a video game, Dr. Oakes says, “It’s all very high-tech, and it’s my passion. I find it personally and professionally rewarding. I love coming to work every day.”

Dr. Oakes and his wife, nurse practitioner Hilary Oakes, joined the staff at the Shaw Heart and Vascular Center in October. Last year when Dr. Oakes was exploring new opportunities to pursue upon completion of his contract with Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center in Boise, Roseburg wasn’t originally on his list. That changed after a phone call with Dr. Howard Feldman, founder of the interventional cardiology program at Shaw Heart Center. “Howard is an exceptionally well-trained vascular medicine physician who enjoys a great reputation in the field,” Dr. Oakes says. “He shared his vision of what he is building here – a world-class cardiovascular program.” Dr. Feldman’s vision included a robust electrophysiology program that includes a state-of-the-art lab now under construction. Dr. Oakes liked what he heard.

“Howard’s a very pleasant, funny, enjoyable guy,” Dr. Oakes says. “In one phone call I became very interested in the opportunity, so I came and interviewed. We found this to be a very lovely area and couldn’t be happier.”

In his highly personable style, Dr. Oakes offers a down-to-earth explanation of the difference between the electrophysiology he practices and the vascular medicine expertise of Dr. Feldman.

“He’s sort of the plumber and I’m the electrician,” Dr. Oakes explains, adding that he’s an electrician who uses tools like three-dimensional mapping of the heart to locate and fix problems of the heart’s electrical system. The results are often dramatic.

“I’ve had patients who were in hospice care because of heart failure or who were waiting on the transplant list,” Dr. Oakes says. “We do these procedures, resynchronize the heart and they go from being in really terrible shape to feeling good again. They’re able to go back to work or they’re out chopping wood. It’s one of the most dramatic things we do.”

Dr. Oakes gives high marks to all of the cardiologists and other staff members at the Shaw Heart and Vascular Center. “They’re all well-trained and experienced,” he says. He adds that it is rare that residents of a community the size of Roseburg have access to the breadth and caliber of expertise and technology available at Shaw Heart and Vascular Center. He’s happy to now be part of the team and to help patients with abnormal heart rhythms and other conditions return to their highest possible quality of life.

“If thoroughly enjoy building relationships with my patients,” he says. “I try to make decisions like my patients are my own family. That seems to work out really well.”
A GREAT FIT

Good timing enables cardiac nurse practitioner Hilary Oakes to continue caring for heart patients, and working alongside her husband, at Shaw Heart and Vascular Center.

Written by Mark Adams
Photos by Kellie Trenkle

She was just along for the ride, really.

Hilary Oakes’ husband, Dr. David Oakes, was visiting Roseburg last fall to explore an opportunity to join the team of cardiology specialists at Shaw Heart Center. Given that he held the potential to uproot the couple from their Boise home, she wanted to see what the area had to offer.

As fate would have it, Roseburg had a lot more to offer Oakes than a great lifestyle. It had a job for her too. On the same day her husband was meeting with his future Shaw Heart colleagues, a cardiac nurse practitioner opening was posted on Mercy Medical Center’s job board. It just so happened Oakes was practicing that very specialty at the time back in Boise.

Both she and Dr. Oakes, who met while practicing together at Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, were soon practicing together again at Shaw Heart Center.

“Things aligned,” she says. “We feel really fortunate to work with such kind, nice, smart colleagues. It’s a cohesive group of well-trained cardiologists. This is a great fit for both of us.”

“Hillary’s a smart, capable woman and I trust her completely,” says her husband Dr. Oakes. “She may see a patient more frequently than I do, so she’ll often update me on how he or she is doing. We can then sit down and make sure we’re in agreement on what we want to do next in a shared decision-making process.”

The cardiologist says nurse practitioners help the busy physicians at Shaw by taking some of the strain off their caseloads. “Even in the best of situations, some patients will call back between appointments with questions in easily understandable terms. ‘The stars aligned,’ she says. “We feel really fortunate to work with such kind, nice, smart colleagues. It’s a cohesive group of well-trained cardiologists. This is a great fit for both of us.”

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The cardiologist says nurse practitioners help the busy physicians at Shaw by taking some of the strain off their caseloads. “Even when patients are doing well, they still need to follow up with the nurse practitioners. That also frees doctors up to see new patients,” he says.

Hilary Oakes says helping patients with cardiac issues provides no shortage of personal and professional rewards.

“They’re so appreciative,” she says. “Patients are dealing with chronic problems, and we help them get better by creating positive interactions. We help them modify behaviors by building relationships with them.”

Oakes says her, her husband and their English bulldogs, Jax and Rocco, are looking forward to getting out and exploring the areas great outdoors this spring. The couple likes to hike and bike in the warm weather, and ski in the winter.

“Roseburg has everything we need,” she says.

A new pacemaker gets Glide resident’s heart ticking like a clock again without the need for major surgery.

After undergoing open heart surgery twice in recent years to replace a failing heart valve, Richard Pierce was hoping the solution to his latent heart problem would be significantly less dramatic.

He got his wish, courtesy of the newest member of the Shaw Heart Center team of specialists at Mercy Medical Center: Dr. David Oakes. Pierce had developed an arrhythmia—an irregular heartbeat—and his cardiologist recommended a pacemaker be installed. Enter electrophysiologist Dr. David Oakes. Dr. Oakes informed Pierce a pacemaker could be installed without requiring major surgery, a big selling point for Pierce, who had the procedure performed last December.

Pierce, who says, “I wasn’t sure I was ready for another open-heart surgery,” was surprised at how noninvasive the pacemaker-implantation procedure was, and how much better he feels after it.

“I went from not being able to walk very far without getting short of breath to chopping wood outdoors without a problem,” he says.

The pacemaker procedure involved sending wire leads through a neck incision to the walls of the heart to regulate pumping of the heart muscle. The wires are sent through a small incision in the lower neck near the shoulder, and the pacemaker—which he described as being about the size of a dental floss casing—was then attached to the wires and secured to the shoulder. Pierce says he had an ease in the hole in terms of reducing anxiety prior to the installation. A neighbor who had a pacemaker installed previously at the Shaw Heart Center told him the procedure was both quick and well worth it.

“When I told them the difference was night and day, he felt better immediately,” Pierce says.

Pierce also gave Dr. Oakes high marks for taking much of the trepidation out of the process. The patient and his wife felt like the medical staff at Shaw went out of their way to answer their questions in easily understandable terms. “I didn’t feel like I was just another patient,” Pierce says. “They really care about what they’re doing and keep a real close eye on you after surgery to make sure there’s no infection.”

A couple of months after the pacemaker surgery Dr. Oakes discovered a new arrhythmia in Pierce’s heart. The patient went back to the Shaw Heart Center in March for a successful procedure called cardiac ablation, which is used to destroy parts of an abnormal electrical pathway that is causing the abnormal rhythm and working against the steady beat provided by the pacemaker.

“Mercy is Douglas County’s little pearl,” Pierce says. “And the Shaw Heart Center makes it that much stronger.”

Pierce and his wife Joanne moved to Douglas County about 30 years ago. The retired firefighter says he’s been married for over 50 years, and over the years, always with positive results, including his most recent experiences with Dr. Oakes and his staff.

“I’m the curious type,” Pierce says. “They honestly answered all my questions. They always made me feel like I wasn’t just another patient.”

He has noticed a big difference in his physical performance and mood following installation of the pacemaker.

“Our son told me, ‘He sounds so much better!’” Joanne Pierce said.

Pierce says his energy has improved to the point that he’s now able to drain a full tank of gas in the chainsaw when he’s working on their Glide property.

“I’m starting to enjoy life a lot more,” the 78-year-old says. “I don’t have to feel like people have to stop and wait for me. The feeling of having more energy is wonderful, especially at my age.”

Pierce says he’s become an ambassador for the quality of care available from Mercy, routinely telling friends and family that if they ever have a situation similar to his, the Shaw Heart Center is the place to go.
The Long Road To Roseburg

Dr. Cihan Cevik had always planned to live in Turkey forever and practice cardiology alongside his father. Fortunately for Douglas County residents, plans sometimes change.

By the time Cihan Cevik, M.D., was in high school he already knew the direction in which he wanted to steer his life, and that was down the same path his father had worn.

He never could have predicted that following in his father’s footsteps would lead him to Roseburg, Oregon, USA.

Dr. Cevik grew up in Istanbul, Turkey, where he got an early and intimate preview of his future life as a heart physician. His father was a cardiologist who managed his own practice.

“I got to see him with his patients all the time, and observe first hand how happy they were in his care,” Dr. Cevik remembers.

Fast forward through several years of college, medical school and cardiology training, and the young Dr. Cevik is now living his dream. He’s practicing interventional cardiology alongside his father, assuming he will finish his career in the same place he started it. But two years into his practice, the political climate in Turkey starts taking a turn for the worse.

“Turkey is this beautiful country in the middle of the Mediterranean,” Dr. Cevik says. “It was a wonderful place to live, previously lots of Americans were moving there. But things started changing after the election of 2002. Healthcare changed a lot, and respect for the medical profession decreased. Education changed for the worse. By 2005, things were getting pretty bad.”

Dr. Cevik saw the writing on the wall, and it wasn’t tinfoil shadowing a happy ending. Heeding the advice of his parents, he started exploring other practice opportunities.

The best medical care in the world was in the United States, but that came with a hitch – a big hitch. His Turkish medical credentials weren’t recognized in the U.S., meaning the well-trained cardiologist who had been seeing his own patients for years would have to start over in America, almost from scratch.

“I had to repeat my internship, residency and entire cardiology training,” he says. “But I had done my research, and I knew what the quality of technology and medical education in the U.S. were like. I was ready to do whatever it took. My friends from medical school thought I was crazy, but I was young and knew the situation in Turkey was only going to get worse.”

It took Dr. Cevik almost nine years of additional training to start where he had left off.

Fast forward again and now Dr. Cevik is at Texas Heart Institute, one of the top five heart hospitals in the nation. There were some differences between the U.S. and Turkish training, but not enough to keep Dr. Cevik from enrolling the second time around to such an extent he is named the Most Outstanding Graduating Fellow.

During his job search, he heard about Dr. Howard Feldman and his world-class interventional program at the Shaw Heart & Vascular Center. “Medical representatives were all talking about it,” Dr. Cevik remembers.

He reaches out to Mercy Medical Center and soon he is being hosted by Dr. Feldman and his wife Marya at his picturesque vineyard.

The young physician still had another two years of fellowship training to complete, but the visit made an impression.

“It was late summer, and it was beautiful here,” Dr. Cevik remembers. “I fell in love with the place and I was very impressed with the quality of the interventional cardiology work offered here.”

As interventional cardiologists, Drs. Cevik and Feldman specialize in the use of catheters to diagnose and non-surgically treat blocked arteries and other conditions of the heart. After having Dr. Cevik observe some of his cases, Dr. Feldman talked about the rapid growth of The Shaw Heart Center and the future need to grow his medical team.

“Sure enough, two years later, when I finished training they needed someone,” Dr. Cevik says. “So I didn’t have to go through a job search.”

Fast forward one final time to today; three years after Dr. Cevik started at Shaw Heart, more than a decade after he moved to the U.S. Acclimating to his new country and home has been, for the most part, a breeze, he says.

After growing up in a city of nearly 15 million people, Dr. Cevik wanted to settle down in a place where the pace was slower, and life easier. He and his wife certainly found it in Roseburg. Jenny was one of the first people he met in Texas. She rented an apartment to him. They now have two young children.

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Dr. Cevik especially appreciates that his new hometown offers such easy access to the activities he enjoys, like basketball, running, biking and sailing.

“In Turkey, if you wanted to play basketball, you had to know enough people to form teams, then find a place to play. Here, you have pick up games. You just stand on the sideline watching complete strangers play, and soon you’ll be called in to join them.

“Interventional cardiology is a discipline in which you can make someone’s life significantly better after just one procedure,” he says. “I’ll see people with a valve disorder who have been huffing and puffing, just trying to breathe, for 10 years. I will see them one week after they have undergone a procedure and their symptoms are completely gone. They are very grateful, and that’s really rewarding.”

Following in his father's footsteps may have led Dr. Cevik in a very different direction, but he’s more than happy he took the detour.

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During his job search, he heard about Dr. Howard Feldman and his world-class interventional program at the Shaw Heart & Vascular Center. “Medical representatives were all talking about it,” Dr. Cevik remembers.

He reaches out to Mercy Medical Center and soon he is being hosted by Dr. Feldman and his wife Marya at his picturesque vineyard.

The young physician still had another two years of fellowship training to complete, but the visit made an impression.

“It was late summer, and it was beautiful here,” Dr. Cevik remembers. “I fell in love with the place and I was very impressed with the quality of the interventional cardiology work offered here.”

As interventional cardiologists, Drs. Cevik and Feldman specialize in the use of catheters to diagnose and non-surgically treat blocked arteries and other conditions of the heart. After having Dr. Cevik observe some of his cases, Dr. Feldman talked about the rapid growth of The Shaw Heart Center and the future need to grow his medical team.

“Sure enough, two years later, when I finished training they needed someone,” Dr. Cevik says. “So I didn’t have to go through a job search.”

Fast forward one final time to today; three years after Dr. Cevik started at Shaw Heart, more than a decade after he moved to the U.S. Acclimating to his new country and home has been, for the most part, a breeze, he says.

After growing up in a city of nearly 15 million people, Dr. Cevik wanted to settle down in a place where the pace was slower, and life easier. He and his wife certainly found it in Roseburg. Jenny was one of the first people he met in Texas. She rented an apartment to him. They now have two young children.

“I had to repeat my internship, residency and entire cardiology training.”

Dr. Cevik especially appreciates that his new hometown offers such easy access to the activities he enjoys, like basketball, running, biking and sailing.

“In Turkey, if you wanted to play basketball, you had to know enough people to form teams, then find a place to play. Here, you have pick up games. You just stand on the sideline watching complete strangers play, and soon you’ll be called in to join them.

“Interventional cardiology is a discipline in which you can make someone’s life significantly better after just one procedure,” he says. “I’ll see people with a valve disorder who have been huffing and puffing, just trying to breathe, for 10 years. I will see them one week after they have undergone a procedure and their symptoms are completely gone. They are very grateful, and that’s really rewarding.”

Following in his father's footsteps may have led Dr. Cevik in a very different direction, but he’s more than happy he took the detour.

Story by Dick Baltus
Photos by Jennifer Holland
“Our focus from the start has been continuing to develop this program so that it is a comprehensive resource for our region,” he says. “This is such a great community to live in and a great place to retire, so our senior population is only going to grow. Among seniors’ principle concerns, of course, is having access to high-quality healthcare services. And we’re helping ensure that is available to them.”

Indeed, quality ratings for Shaw Heart and Vascular Center are in the top 10 percent of all centers nationwide, “We rank up there with the Johns Hopkins and Mayo Clinics of the world,” Dr. Feldman says. “Indeed, quality ratings for Shaw Heart and Vascular Center are in the top 10 percent of all centers nationwide. “We rank up there with the Johns Hopkins and Mayo Clinics of the world,” Dr. Feldman says. “We’re helping ensure that is available to them.”

The death rate from amputation after five years is higher than the five-year death rate from cancer,” Dr. Feldman says. “We have been very aggressive in our efforts to save patients from that potential fate. It is extremely gratifying to see people who come to us and are at risk of losing a limb walk out of here shortly after an intervention procedure without assistance.”

It’s that sort of reward that motivated Dr. Feldman to plant his roots, literally and figuratively, in this community, where he can oversee the continued expansion of the heart program, help even more patients, make wine with other doctors, and train the next generation of cardiologists.

“We really like it here,” he says. “We like the community, and we like the pace of life.”

But Dr. Feldman had always loved the challenge of starting new heart programs, or kick starting existing ones, and when Mercy offered the opportunity he landed in Roseburg once again. This time for good.
CHI MERCY HEALTH NAMED TO NATIONAL TOP 20 RURAL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL LIST

The rankings were recently announced by the National Rural Health Association. The Top 20 Rural Community Hospitals, including CHI Mercy Health, scored best among Rural hospitals on iVantage Health Analytics’ Hospital Strength Index™. The Top 20 Rural Community Hospital winners are those hospitals who have achieved success in the overall performance based on a composite rating from eight indices of strength: inpatient market share, outpatient market share, quality, outcomes, patient perspectives, costs, charges and financial stability.

Healthy Eating

Mercy has partnered with Well-Fed Me, an interactive website with tools to provide users with healthy eating and lifestyle information.

Online and accessible to anyone, the website features a variety of healthy new recipes, researched by a dietitian and complete with nutritional information per serving. Instructional videos show how to craft the new recipes, and videos offer tips for keeping a healthy kitchen, such as how to clean out your pantry for spring, or how to read a food label.

A free Well-Fed Me lifestyle guidebook can be downloaded, offering information about healthy living and healthy eating, healthy recipes, sleep tips and other general health information.

Though the website was just launched in January, the section offering fresh new recipes has been very popular.

Mercywellfedme.com provides the tools to help local residents maintain a healthy weight. “Obesity is often the term that’s thrown around, and it is pretty negative,” says Kathleen Nickel, Mercy communications director. “With Mercy.wellfedme we’re trying to reinforce a positive movement toward achieving your healthy weight through making good food choices.”

The ultimate goal of all this is to contribute to Mercy’s mission of creating better health in the communities it services by providing people to the information and resources they need.

Find more information and healthy recipes at Mercy.WellFedMe.com

Italian Artichoke Pasta

Ingredients - Marinade
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp unsalted butter, room temperature
6 cloves garlic, minced
1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice (approximately ½ large lemon)
1 tsp smoked paprika
1 14-oz can low-sodium diced tomatoes, drained
24 raw, large shrimp (about 1 lb), peeled
8 oz whole wheat pasta
2 steamed artichokes*, quartered with choke and tiny inner leaves removed

Method
1. In a large bowl, mix marinade ingredients. Add shrimp and toss well. Let set, up to 10 minutes.

2. Cook pasta according to package.

3. While pasta is cooking, spread shrimp mixture on a cookie sheet in a single layer. Broil in oven for five minutes on second rack from the top. Check to keep from burning.

4. When pasta is done, save ½ cup of pasta water and drain noodles into a colander. Return pasta to pot, add pasta water and shrimp. Mix well.

5. Plate pasta and shrimp. Add artichokes, garnish and serve.