

# Health

Meet our  
Newest  
Specialists

Minimally Invasive,  
Quick Recovery:  
GYN Robotic  
Surgery

**A Survivor's  
Tale of  
Strength  
and Hope:**  
Donna's Story



# Letter from the president.

Dear Neighbor,

Healthcare celebration months bring awareness and provide education to our community about a variety of conditions and diseases. In September, we recognized Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, and in November, we observed Diabetes Awareness and Lung Cancer Awareness Month. Our hospital is committed to the early detection of diseases in our community. Health screenings save lives and play an important part in that commitment. That is why I urge anyone over the age of 50 to take our free lung cancer risk assessment to see if you're eligible for a lung cancer screening. Simply scan the QR code on the back of this issue to get started.

Speaking of prevention and saving lives, some of our urologists discuss the importance of prostate cancer screenings as well as the innovative treatment options available for men who have been diagnosed with prostate cancer. In this issue, we also hear from a primary care provider on managing diabetes and why anyone at risk of this prevalent disease should get checked regularly to prevent complications.

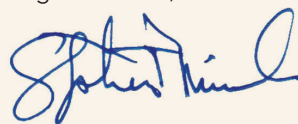
As we approach the winter months, our care teams are poised to provide necessary treatment if there is a COVID/flu/RSV surge, something providers call the tripledemic. Vaccination and boosters are always

key to preventing the most severe disease, and this is also true for shingles. You can read more about these topics in this issue.

Cancer treatment and innovation are also at the forefront of MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's specialty care as you'll read in patient Donna Moore's story. And speaking of innovation, more women in our community are benefitting from robotic gynecologic surgical techniques that have them on the road to recovery and back to living life with great outcomes and minimal downtime thanks to our robotic GYN surgery specialists.

I hope that the information we provide in this issue of Health magazine offers you the education needed to go forth living life in good health. Our specialists in all areas of medicine are dedicated to bringing exceptional medicine and compassionate care to you and your loved ones every day. Wishing you and yours a peaceful and joyful Thanksgiving holiday.

In good health,



**Stephen T. Michaels, MD, FACHE**  
President, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center



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President, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center



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## Blood Drives at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center: Helping Others in Great Need

**Did you know? One blood donation helps three patients.**

Blood drives are important to MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center and the community as they assist in meeting the need for the national blood shortage. Blood drives are held at the hospital once a month in the multipurpose room.

### Who can donate blood?

- Any individual over the age of 18 who is not pregnant or breastfeeding and can pass a preliminary health screening
- Any individual under 18 can donate with parental consent
- All individuals must feel well and weigh at least 110 pounds



Become a blood donor today! Call **301-877-5633** to register.

Or, visit <https://tinyurl.com/bdh3xk6u> to register for a blood drive.



### Summer Youth Experience Program a Success

More than 30 students from Prince George's County earned hands-on experience working in the hospital thanks to MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's participation in the Prince George's County Summer Youth Enrichment Program (SYEP). Learn about the experience on page 15.



### Helping People with Swallowing Disorders

Advanced assessment techniques are used by our speech-language pathology (SLP) team to evaluate patients for swallowing disorders that may hinder recovery. See how technology is helping SLPs to better care for patients on page 16.



### Gold and Silver Awarded for Improving Health Outcomes of Mothers and Babies

Two important hospital initiatives aimed at improving health outcomes for mothers and their newborns recently received Gold and Silver awards from the Maryland Perinatal-Neonatal Quality Collaborative. Learn more on page 16.

# Donna's Journey from Diagnosis to Triumph

A Tale of Resilience, Support, and Medical Excellence at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center



When Donna Moore discovered a lump on her breast in the summer of 2022, she was justifiably concerned. In addition to having an older sister who had breast cancer, she had been using an estrogen-based cream prescribed to her for persistent urinary tract infections for nearly 20 years. Studies have linked higher blood levels of the estrogen called estradiol to an increased risk of breast cancer in postmenopausal women.

On September 23, 2022, she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Donna, who was 78 at the time, was referred to the MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, where she saw Ankit Madan, MD, a hematologist and medical oncologist, and Patricia Wehner, MD, a breast surgeon.

"One of the first things Dr. Madan told me was to stop using the estrogen cream," Donna

says. "He then explained my treatment plan and told me what to expect during treatment."

"The initial ultrasound performed assessed the size of the tumor," Dr. Madan explains. "After a biopsy of the tissue, her cancer was found to be estrogen positive and HER2/neu negative. She was also at a higher risk of cancer recurrence based on a high-risk score on the Oncotype DX test, a genetic test done on breast tissue that determines the risk of distant recurrence, and predicts benefit from chemotherapy. This, combined with her age, indicated to us that additional chemotherapy treatments after surgery would improve her outcomes. She then had a lumpectomy to remove the mass."

She was scheduled for 4 rounds of chemotherapy, which lasted 3 months, during which she also received supportive care. This was followed by 21 radiation therapy treatments.

"Estrogen positive cancer is the

most common type of breast cancer," notes Dr. Madan. "Use of estrogen based oral contraceptives or hormonal therapies can increase a woman's risk of developing it."

Donna, a widow, was supported throughout her cancer journey by her twin sister Nancie, who had moved in with her after her husband died. "I cared for Nancie when she had health problems due to atrial fibrillation a few years back," Donna says. "So, the tables were turned."

She says she sailed through the treatments, a fact she attributes in large part to the doctors, nurses, and other hospital associates who cared for her. In addition to Dr. Madan and Dr. Wehner, her care team included radiation oncologist Andrew Satinsky, MD.

"I can't say enough good things about the hospital's cancer center. From the people at the front desk to the techs in radiology...everybody was wonderful. I even told Dr. Madan

"I can't say enough good things about the hospital's cancer center. From the people at the front desk to the techs in radiology... everybody was wonderful."

—Donna Moore  
Cancer Patient

to tell his wife there is another woman who loves him too!"

On May 1, Donna had the honor of ringing the bell marking the end of her radiation treatment surrounded by all the caregivers she had gotten to know. "It was an uplifting experience," she adds. "It meant the world to me to see how much they cared."

Today, Donna is on endocrine therapy, an estrogen-blocking treatment that helps prevent cancer from coming back and will be for the next 5 years. "Endocrine therapy is one of the reasons women with early stage, estrogen-positive breast cancers have such a good prognosis," Dr. Madan notes.

In the meantime, Donna remains cancer-free and is doing well. She is grateful to have her twin Nancie by her side and she is grateful for all the caregivers at the MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. "If you are going to have cancer, it's a wonderful place to go...they have so much love."



**Ankit Madan, MD**  
Hematology,  
Medical  
Oncology



**Andrew Satinsky, MD**  
Radiation  
Oncology



**Patricia Wehner, MD**  
Breast Surgeon



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Madan or Dr. Satinsky, please call **301-877-4673**.

To make an appointment with Dr. Wehner, please call **301-877-5607**.

# GYN Robotic Surgery Gives Women A New Lease on Life



**W**omen do not need to fear the impact of gynecological surgery on their bodies or their lives.

That's the important message Nahid Mazarei, MD, wants women to understand after they discuss surgical treatment for GYN conditions such as uterine fibroids and endometriosis.

Dr. Mazarei, Chair of the Department of Gynecologic and Robotic Surgery at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, said that many women have apprehension about surgery because of potential post-surgical pain and a long recovery process, causing many patients to put off necessary gynecological procedures for far too long.

"Traditionally, with open surgical procedures, when patients had large uterine fibroids, there would be a large abdominal incision that would take weeks to recover. With robotic GYN surgery, we can remove large masses through a tiny incision, or in some cases, through the vagina without a large incision. Because of this approach, patients go home the same day and women can return to their lives quickly, with much less discomfort and

fewer complications than they ever believed possible."

## How GYN Robotic Surgery Benefits Women

Robotic surgical technology is used to expand and extend the surgeon's reach while performing delicate procedures that would otherwise be too complex for a minimally invasive approach. Robotic technology provides advantages for both surgeons and patients in GYN surgical cases including:

- Enhanced 3D visualization and increased magnification to view small vessels
- Improved dexterity, which enables the surgeon to maneuver surgical instruments with greater precision and less tension and trauma to the patient's body, resulting in less post-surgical pain and bleeding
- Resection and removal of large masses without a large incision
- Reduction in the use of pain medication, especially opioids, because the incisions are so small and pain is minimal
- Same-day surgery with

discharge occurring two hours after the procedure

- A quick recovery

## Returning More Women to a Better Quality of Life

The ability to perform complex procedures through small incisions is what differentiates robotic GYN surgery from traditional open surgery.

"So many women don't know what to expect when it comes to robotic surgery. But I tell them that the outcomes are incredible," added Dr. Mazarei. "I've removed seven- and eight-pound tumors using only small incisions thanks to robotic technology. My patients go home the same day and are back to work and daily activities within a week or less. They cannot believe they just had major surgery because they don't have a big scar and recovery is quick and often with minimal discomfort."

She added, "Our patients feel like they have a new lease on life. They say that if they knew how easy their recovery would be, they would never have waited to do something that would so greatly improve their quality of life. It is a privilege to be able to care for and improve the lives of the women in our community."



To schedule a consultation with Dr. Mazarei at MedStar Medical Group Women's Health at Clinton, please call **301-877-7200**.

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## Things to Know About Shingles

Anyone who has ever had the chickenpox virus as a child should be aware of shingles, the painful rash associated with the herpes zoster virus. Uchechi Wosu, MD, Regional Medical Director, MedStar Medical Group Internal Medicine, explained five things everyone should know about shingles.

1. Shingles is the reactivation of the varicella-zoster virus (VZV). This is the same virus that causes chickenpox. VZV stays in the body and can manifest later in life as shingles (herpes zoster) when initial viral antibodies wane with age.

“For anyone born before 1980, there is a very high chance that they were either exposed to or had chickenpox,” explained Dr. Wosu. “People primarily over the age of 50 are at risk of developing shingles as the antibodies developed, either due to exposure to or contraction of the chickenpox virus, fade over the years.” She added that even individuals who received the chickenpox vaccine in childhood can also be at risk for developing shingles later in life as antibodies decline.

2. Shingles causes a painful, blistering skin rash. Shingles is typically confined to one localized area of the body. The shingles rash appears as fluid-filled vesicles in clusters and is often quite painful, causing an intense burning sensation. The rash may be accompanied by fever, headaches, chills, and

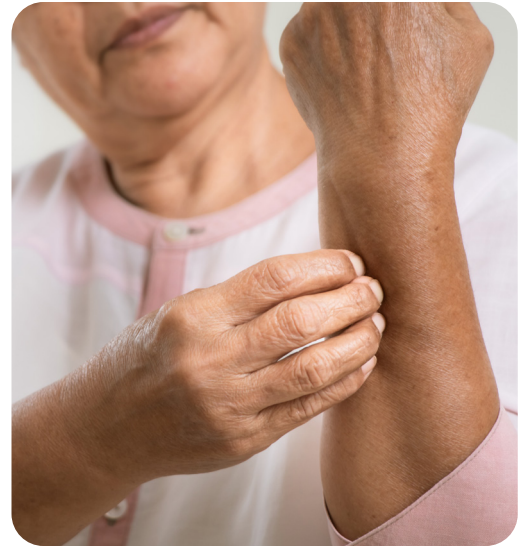
fatigue. The blisters usually crust over in seven to 10 days. Dr. Wosu explained that the virus reactivates within one area of the body where the nerve endings are, which makes it so painful.

3. There is no cure for shingles. Several treatments can alleviate symptoms including antiviral medications that can be used in combination with pain medications, as well as topical creams and corticosteroids in some cases.

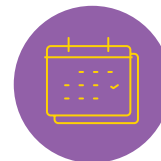
“It’s important to get diagnosed sooner rather than later,” added Dr. Wosu. “With early treatment, patients experience fewer complications and quicker healing of the painful rash.”

4. Get vaccinated. The shingles vaccine SHINGRIX is given in two doses about two to six months apart. “Everyone over the age of 50 should get the shingles vaccine to boost the original antibodies in the body,” emphasized Dr. Wosu. She noted that individuals over the age of 19 who are immunocompromised should also receive the vaccine to prevent shingles.

5. Shingles can be contagious. Anyone who develops shingles should take precautions around individuals who have not previously had chickenpox or who have not been vaccinated against the varicella-zoster virus including infants and pregnant women.



**Uchechi Wosu, MD**  
Internal Medicine  
Physician



To schedule an appointment with a primary care physician at MedStar Health: Primary Care at Camp Springs, please call **301-899-0020**.

Have questions about shingles and getting the vaccine? To find a physician near you, use our Find-A-Doc tool on our website at [MedStarHealth.org/FindADoc](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/FindADoc).





# With Prostate Cancer, a Focus on Vigilance and Advanced Therapies for Long-Term Survival



*"You have prostate cancer."*

Approximately 1 in 8 men in the U.S. will hear these words during their lifetime, with nearly 250,000 men diagnosed with the disease every year.

"The earlier prostate cancer is found, the better the chances for successful treatment and long-term survival," said Patrick Whelan, MD, urologist. "We have more advanced diagnostics and therapies now that are helping us treat this disease effectively and with greater long-term outcomes."

## Screening for Prostate Cancer

Screening includes a blood test called the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test which can detect high levels of PSA, a protein produced by the prostate. A digital rectal exam (DRE), an internal exam that allows a physician to feel the prostate for suspicious lumps or abnormal growths, is also part of

the screening process.

"In the early stages, prostate cancer typically does not present with symptoms, which is why regular screening is so important," said Daniel Wang, MD, urologist. "Talk to your doctor about your

risk for the disease and the recommended age to begin screening, especially if you are in a higher risk group such as being of African American descent or having a family history of prostate cancer."

## Advanced Therapies Provide Added Hope

For localized prostate cancer (cancer that has not spread), surgery and radiation therapy are the most common treatments.

- **Radical prostatectomy** is the surgical removal of the prostate and surrounding structures.

"Advanced surgical techniques such as robotic prostatectomy and nerve-sparing methods provide patients with a minimally invasive approach that also focuses on saving the surrounding nerves that

control erectile and bladder function," said Dr. Whelan. "Robotic prostatectomy results in fewer complications, less blood loss, and a quicker recovery."

- **Radiation therapy** targets cancer cells with high-energy X-rays (external beam radiation) while minimizing damage to surrounding tissue. Brachytherapy is a type of internal radiation therapy that uses radioactive seeds implanted in the prostate to deliver targeted radiation.
- **Active surveillance** may be an option for some men with slow-growing prostate cancer who wish to avoid the side effects of surgery or radiation.
- **High-Intensity Focused Ultrasound (HIFU) and cryoablation** may be options for select patients but are not preferred first-line therapies.

For advanced prostate cancer that has spread, treatment is focused on slowing the disease progression and minimizing symptoms for a better quality of life.

"Playing an active role in decisions around treatment is important for patients. We work closely with patients to develop a treatment plan that is personalized and meets their individual goals and needs," said Dr. Wang.



To schedule an appointment with Patrick Whelan, MD, or Daniel Wang, MD, at 7704 Matapeake Business Dr., Suite 310, Brandywine, MD 20613, please call **301-868-0202**.





# Colon Cancer— Detecting, Preventing, Treating a Disease on the Rise

Over the past several decades, an increase in the number of cases of colon cancer being diagnosed in individuals under the age of 40 has caused gastroenterologists and cancer specialists at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center to encourage individuals to be more vigilant about their health.

According to oncologist/hematologist Kathan Mehta, MD, MPH, colon cancer develops slowly and the earliest stages often do not present with symptoms. Once symptoms appear, colon cancer may be more advanced. See a provider if you experience symptoms such as:

- Blood in the stool or rectal bleeding
- Changes in bowel habits such as recurrent diarrhea, constipation, or other changes
- Abdominal pain, bloating, or

cramps (not associated with a woman’s menstrual cycle)

- Unexplained weight loss, Swollen glands or lymph nodes in the pelvic area
- Fatigue or weakness which may be caused by anemia resulting from blood loss in stool

## Colon Cancer Screening and Early Detection

Early detection is critical for successful treatment, which is why specialists urge people not to wait until they experience symptoms of the disease but rather, be proactive with screening. Colonoscopy is the gold standard screening that allows physicians to find any abnormalities such as polyps or other growths before they become cancer. Colon cancer screening guidelines were updated in 2021 recommending that everyone 45 years and older, regardless of risk, family history, gender, or race, should have a screening colonoscopy.

## Is Colon Cancer Curable?

Surgery is the primary treatment for early stages of colon cancer. According to Dr. Mehta, surgery is used to remove the cancer as well as stage the disease. Colon cancer found to be stage 1 or 2 is typically considered curable with surgery alone.

“Colon cancer that is found at stage three, meaning it has spread outside of the colon, will involve chemotherapy in combination with surgery to reduce the recurrence of disease,” explained Dr. Mehta. “At MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, we often perform this surgery robotically to minimize complications and improve outcomes.”

## Can Colon Cancer Be Prevented?

Dr. Mehta stressed that maintaining a healthy lifestyle and weight, eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and avoiding excessive alcohol consumption and smoking helps reduce a person’s risk for developing colon cancer.

“People should also know their family history of colon cancer, discuss this and any concerning symptoms such as changes in bowel habits with a provider, and follow the guidelines for regular screening colonoscopies,” concluded Dr. Mehta.



**Kathan Mehta, MD**  
Oncologist/  
Hematologist



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Mehta please call **301-877-4673**



# Medical Oncologist/ Hematologist Rumaisa Hameed, MD, Joins Hospital's Cancer Center

**R**umaisa Hameed, MD, is a fellowship-trained oncologist/hematologist who recently joined the MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. Dr. Hameed's focus is on benign and malignant blood disorders and the diagnosis and treatment of all types of cancers including breast, gastrointestinal, liver, lung, genitourinary, and gynecologic cancers as well as melanoma and sarcoma. She provides cancer treatments including chemotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy, and works with patients on survivorship after cancer.

"I am a firm believer in a multi-disciplinary approach to care and evidence-based medicine. I provide comprehensive care to my patients by focusing on their condition and their overall wellbeing, as well as delivering personalized care and collaborating with other referring physicians for the best treatment outcomes," said Dr. Hameed. "As a part of the MedStar Health system, I am dedicated to providing advanced cancer care to the community and to support patients and their families."

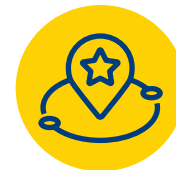
Dr. Hameed received her Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery from Shifa College of Medicine in Islamabad, Pakistan where she later served as Medical

Officer at the Shifa International Hospital Islamabad. She completed an externship at Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center in New York, served as a research associate at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, DC, and successfully completed her internal medicine residency at Advent Health Orlando in Orlando, FL.

After residency, Dr. Hameed began her medical career at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center as a hospitalist and then at Inova Fairfax Hospital Department of Medicine. She then went on to complete her fellowship training in hematology/oncology at MedStar Health – Georgetown/Washington Hospital Center. She also served as an attending physician in oncology/hematology at the University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Medical Center after completion of her fellowship training.

Dr. Hameed is board-certified in hematology and medical oncology and internal medicine.

She is an associate member of the American Society of Hematology, a member of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, member of the International Society of Thrombosis and Hemostasis, the American College of Physicians, and the American Medical Association.



Dr. Hameed sees patients at the MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center.

To make an appointment, call **301-877-4673**.



## Fellowship-Trained Gastroenterologist Joins the MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center Team



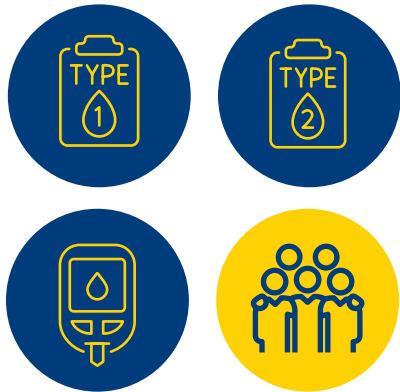
**R**obert J. Schenck, MD, a fellowship-trained gastroenterologist, recently joined MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, caring for patients with a wide range of gastrointestinal conditions including reflux disease, difficulty swallowing, inflammatory bowel disease, irritable bowel syndrome, and liver disease. He also performs colonoscopies and upper endoscopies (EGDs).

Dr. Schenck received his Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Virginia School of Medicine in Charlottesville and completed his internship and residency in internal medicine at the McGaw Medical Center of Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois. He was a hospitalist at Northwestern University, Division of Hospital Medicine in Chicago, IL prior to completing his fellowship training in gastroenterology and hepatology at the University of Virginia.

Dr. Schenck has a strong commitment to delivering the best possible care to every patient. "I have a patient-centered philosophy of care where I use my expertise to help guide patients to make the best decisions for themselves. Every patient is unique, and I believe it is essential to listen to each individual so I can help them reach the goals that are most important to them. I am passionate about improving my patient's digestive health and their quality of life," he said.



Dr. Schenck sees patients in the professional office building located on the MedStar Southern Maryland campus. For an appointment, please call **301-877-4599**.



# Diabetes in Prince George's County— Managing a Chronic Disease is a Team Effort

**D**iabetes, especially type 2 diabetes, is becoming increasingly common throughout the U.S. and in many communities in Prince George's County.

Sloan McCoy, MSN, CRNP, FNP-C, Family Nurse Practitioner and Facility Medical Director of Primary Care at MedStar Health at Brandywine, considers diabetes a lifetime diagnosis, one that begins with awareness, regular screenings, and risk reduction. She recalled a recent encounter with a patient who, at age 30, had been diagnosed as pre-diabetic only a few years earlier but hadn't had follow-up care since. At a recent check-up, Sloan found that the patient's blood glucose level was 300 (normal ranges between 70 to 100 mg/dl) and her A1C (a blood test that measures blood sugar) was 12 (normal is typically below 5.7).

"This patient felt fine," recalled Sloan. "But in reality, she had become a full-blown diabetic who needed to be put on medication right away to get her disease under control. We see this often. People feel fine so they don't see their doctor for regular check-ups until they suddenly do not feel fine and we find out they have diabetes."

## Understanding Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is the most

common form of the disease, affecting millions of people in the U.S. and worldwide. This chronic condition disrupts the way the body processes and utilizes glucose, which is a primary source of energy. Glucose is derived from the foods we eat and is carried into our cells by a hormone called insulin, produced by the pancreas. Diabetes occurs when the body either cannot produce enough insulin or cannot efficiently use the insulin it produces.

## Why People Develop Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is linked to lifestyle factors such as diet and exercise as well as family history and genetics. Some of the risk factors for developing the disease include:

-  **Obesity which can lead to the disruption of the body's insulin response**
-  **A poor diet consisting largely of processed sugar and carbohydrates, as well as unhealthy fats**
-  **Lack of regular exercise**
-  **Family history and genetics**

## Pre-diabetes: Is Type 2 Diabetes Inevitable?

Prediabetes, a condition characterized by elevated blood sugar but not yet in the diabetic range, is one of the first warning signs people must take seriously. However, Sloan noted that by making diet and exercise changes and by losing weight if needed, people can decrease the likelihood of developing diabetes later in life. In some cases, people who are borderline diabetic can get down into the pre-diabetes stage and stay there for many years with positive diet and exercise modifications.

"A healthy diet is the most important thing that I talk to pre-diabetic patients about. I'll typically give them a referral to see a nutritionist or a diabetes educator to get them on the right track," said Sloan.

Family history and genetics do play a role in who develops diabetes. Sloan acknowledged that even people with healthy lifestyles who do everything right can develop diabetes. "Especially for people with a family history of diabetes, I strongly encourage adults of every age to have an annual check-up and make sure they are being screened for the disease regularly," she said.



### Signs of Diabetes

While some people do not have symptoms of diabetes, common signs to discuss with your primary care provider can include:



Excessive or frequent urination, particularly during the night



Excessive thirst



Numbness, especially in the hands and feet that can feel like tingling



Blurry vision



Fatigue



Slow healing wounds



Recurrent infections, particularly yeast or bacterial infections

### Diabetes Help at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital

If the diagnosis is type 2 diabetes, Sloan stressed that lifetime management is critical, as is a partnership with one's primary care team. Oral medications in combination with lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise can help patients control the disease for many years. She explained that insulin is always the last resort for medically managing diabetes, with effective medications such as Metformin as the first line of medication therapy.

### Diabetes Bootcamp

"Typically, when an individual is newly diagnosed with diabetes, one of the programs we offer at the hospital is the Diabetes Bootcamp," added Sloan. In this program, patients work one-on-one with a diabetes educator and nutritionist with follow-up visits scheduled to monitor and help control their A1C. Patients in the program also learn how to use a glucometer to measure their blood sugar levels.

"It can be jarring to receive a diagnosis of diabetes," Sloan said. "Patients who are enrolled in this type of education and monitoring program, who receive personal care, often have the highest levels of compliance with medications and stay motivated when they see progress in their health. With the proper care and regular follow-ups with a primary care provider, diabetes is very manageable."



**Sloan McCoy, CRNP**, Family Nurse Practitioner and Facility Medical Director of Primary Care at MedStar Health at Brandywine

To make an appointment with Sloan McCoy, CRNP, or another primary care provider at MedStar Health at Brandywine, please call **301-782-2220**.



# The Tripledemic:

## Protecting Yourself Against COVID, Flu, and RSV this Winter

Dr. Yu added that this year, close to 97% of the population has some sort of immunity to the virus either through prior infection or vaccination. Healthcare providers can also prescribe antiviral medication to lessen the severity of illness.

### Flu Season is Approaching

Dr. Yu said that the same advice given for COVID vaccines also applies to the annual flu shot. Like COVID, the

flu virus continuously evolves and mutates, leading to new flu infections each year. The flu is also a leading cause of hospitalization, especially in the elderly which is why seeking care is important. Antiviral treatment is effective at minimizing serious symptoms when given 24 to 48 hours of first symptoms.

### What is RSV?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common respiratory virus that can cause pneumonia, especially in the older population or for people who are immunocompromised. People over the age of 65, immunocompromised individuals, and pregnant women in their third trimester should talk to their providers about receiving the RSV vaccine.

"For many people, RSV is just like a common cold, but recently we've seen it progress to pneumonia in these more vulnerable populations," said Dr. Yu. "We used to think RSV was mainly an infection in

children, but it has become more prevalent, particularly in older individuals."

### Tip for Avoiding the Tripledemic

- **Mask.** Wearing a mask is protective, especially for people in high-risk categories.
- **Wash your hands.** This age-old advice never goes out of style in infection prevention.
- **Call your primary care provider first** for any illness unless you are experiencing severe symptoms such as shortness of breath in which case, the emergency room may be your best bet.
- **Get vaccinated.** "The best thing everyone can do is to get boosted to help your immune system handle the latest strains of these viruses," said Dr. Yu.

It's called "the tripledemic"—COVID-19, flu, and RSV—a pattern of these viruses circulating in the community simultaneously. Edwin Yu, MD, infectious disease specialist, shared some important tips for keeping the community healthier this winter.

### COVID—New Boosters Will Be Key

How bad the COVID season will be is always difficult to predict.

"What this year's COVID pattern will look like depends largely on the number of people in the community who get the updated booster shot, which was approved by the FDA in September," said Dr. Yu. "While COVID vaccines don't necessarily protect against acquisition of infection they do reduce the severity of illness."

The new booster vaccine is protective against all Omicron variants that are circulating currently. Even people who have been infected recently can receive the booster shot.



Edwin Yu, MD



Visit your primary care provider to get your COVID booster, RSV shot and/or flu shot! If you do not have a primary care provider, please use our online Find-A-Doc tool to find one conveniently located near you: [MedStarHealth.org/FindADoc](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/FindADoc).

## Tidbit

# MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center Helps Local Students Experience Careers in Healthcare

During the summer of 2023, 33 students from Prince George's County had the opportunity to earn hands-on experience working in a hospital setting thanks to MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's participation in the Prince George's County Summer Youth Enrichment Program (SYEP). The program is designed to offer County youth ages 14 to 22 years with enriching and beneficial summer work experiences. The goals of the program are to provide participants with exposure to a diverse range of careers, get them job-ready, learn new career-related skills, and network with industry leaders while earning pay for meaningful work. This was the second year the hospital participated in the program.

The students worked throughout the hospital in administrative departments including finance, human resources, supply chain, occupational health, and nutrition services as well as clinical departments such as nursing and the lab.

David Lazzari, Director of Human Resources, said that the feedback from the students was very positive. "Many of the individuals were awestruck by the complexities of the business as well as how much goes into taking care of patients. The students were motivated to learn and grateful for the opportunity," he explained. The summer experience was so positive that two of the students were hired for permanent jobs at the hospital following the completion of the program.

"We're building a relationship with the County as well as with



Prince George's County Public Schools to explore programs that get high school-aged students exposure to and experience in careers in the healthcare field," David said. "It's important to serve the community not just from a healthcare perspective, but also as one of the largest employers in the county. Being able to provide career guidance through programs like this one offers many benefits to students as they begin planning for the future."

More information about the Prince George's County Summer Youth Enrichment Program can be found at [www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/4226/About-the-SYEP-Program](http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/4226/About-the-SYEP-Program).





## Speech-Language Pathologists Employ Advanced Technique for Evaluation of Swallowing Disorders

Swallowing foods and liquids is a bodily function that we often take for granted. And we don't usually think of the complexity of the process of swallowing. It involves the coordination of muscles and nerves—allowing food and liquids to travel safely from the mouth to the stomach.

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center know better than anyone that being able to swallow food safely is crucial for a patient's recovery. If the process is compromised due to a swallowing disorder, patients can experience difficulties such as choking, aspiration, malnutrition, dehydration, and respiratory issues.

That's why SLPs perform assessments of swallowing and feeding for patients that are having dysphagia (swallowing disorders). Newer technology allows for evaluation at the bedside. Called a fiber optic endoscopic evaluation (FEES), it's a procedure where the SLP passes a thin flexible tube with a tiny camera and light attached to it through a patient's nose—allowing for a full view of the throat to see how foods and liquids are being managed. The SLP can see on the computer what parts of the throat and mouth might not be working well. It also can show if there are liquids or foods that a patient should avoid, or if a patient is aspirating.



## MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center Earns Gold and Silver for Improving Health Outcomes of Women and Their Newborns

The hospital's continued commitment to quality improvement and ensuring the best care of mothers and their babies was recently recognized by the Maryland Perinatal-Neonatal Quality Collaborative (MDPQC) as both a gold- and silver-level participant for two initiatives to improve health outcomes

for moms and newborns.

The gold-level award was given for the neonatal antibiotic stewardship initiative, which focused on decreasing the use of antibiotics in newborns using the NICU Sepsis Calculator. The interactive calculator produces the probability of early onset sepsis by entering values for specified maternal risk factors along with the newborn's clinical presentation. The goals are to improve how antibiotics are used and prescribed and to help prevent potential harm and future antibiotic resistance. As a result of this initiative, antibiotic usage in newborns decreased since implementing the calculator while regular

newborn assessments and education about neonatal antibiotic stewardship to care providers continue.

The silver-level award recognized the hospital's extensive quality improvement initiative to address hypertensive disorders of pregnancy. The initiative consists of evidence-based interventions to improve the identification, treatment, and follow-up of hypertension in pregnancy and the postpartum period. A robust plan for the management of patients, which includes collaborative efforts within the hospital and with physicians in the community, helps to ensure optimal care for pregnant women.



# Heart & Soul

Helping you get to the heart of the matter.



## Listen To Your Heart—What An Irregular Heartbeat Means

**Q&A** with Sung Lee, MD, Electrophysiologist

**Q** **What is an irregular heartbeat?**

**A** The heart beats in a coordinated pattern, pumping blood efficiently throughout the body. When normal electrical signals are disrupted, an irregular heart rhythm, or arrhythmia, can occur causing either a slow or fast heartbeat.

**Q** **What are common types of arrhythmias?**

- A**
- Atrial fibrillation (AFib) and atrial flutter are the most common types of arrhythmias, typically affecting older adults and characterized by a fast and irregular heartbeat from the upper chambers of the heart.
  - Ventricular arrhythmia originates in the lower chambers of the heart called ventricles.
  - Bradycardia is an abnormally slow heart rate.
  - Tachycardia, a very fast heart rhythm or racing heartbeat.

**Q** **What are the symptoms of arrhythmia?**

**A** Arrhythmias can present with a range of symptoms including:

- Heart palpitations
- Fatigue
- Dizziness or feeling light-headed
- Fainting or syncope
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain

**Q** **How are arrhythmias treated?**

- A** Treatment depends on the type of arrhythmia.
- For a slow heartbeat, a surgically implanted pacemaker, which sends an electrical impulse to the heart, is the most effective treatment. Newer pacemakers are equipped with batteries that can last over a decade. Patients have no restrictions on activities which greatly improves their quality of life.
  - For fast heart rhythms, when medications are not effective, we can perform a procedure called catheter ablation. Wires or catheters are inserted into the femoral vein in the groin and threaded up to the heart where we use cold or heat energy to freeze

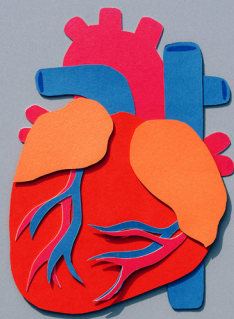
or burn the abnormal heart muscle tissue to prevent this fast heart rhythm. For patients with supraventricular tachycardia (SVT), the ablation procedure is curative.

- For ventricular tachycardia and ventricular fibrillation, which cause life-threatening fast heart rhythms, implantable cardioverter defibrillators (ICD) deliver electrical shocks to the heart to restore a normal heartbeat.

These procedures are minimally invasive and are performed in the hospital's electrophysiology lab where we utilize an advanced 3-dimensional mapping system to localize exactly where we are in the heart as we perform the procedures. For most patients, these are performed on an outpatient basis.



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Lee, please call **301-877-5677**.



## Diagnosing Coronary Artery Disease—A Clinical Mission at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center

By Sonia R. Samtani, MD, FACC, FSCAI, cardiologist

Coronary artery disease, the most common type of heart disease, is caused by plaque buildup in the arteries or blood vessels that supply oxygen and nutrients to the heart muscle. This plaque may cause narrowing of the blood vessels which can inhibit blood flow to the heart muscle.

### Symptoms of coronary artery disease include:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue

Coronary artery disease can present as a heart attack which is why finding coronary artery disease is an important clinical mission.

### How do we diagnose coronary artery disease?

#### Electrocardiogram

Our initial diagnostic test in the clinic is the electrocardiogram (ECG), which measures the electrical activity of the heart. It can show the heart rate and rhythm and if a person is having a heart attack or has had one in the past.

#### Echocardiogram

An echocardiogram (echo) uses

ultrasound waves to show images of the beating heart and the function of the heart valves. When the walls of the heart move weakly, this signals a lack of blood flow, a sign of coronary artery disease.

#### The Stress Test

There are multiple types of stress testing performed including:

- Treadmill stress testing - An initial exercise stress test to see if patients can walk on a treadmill until they reach 85% of their age-predicted maximal heart rate. An ECG is then performed to monitor for signs of coronary artery disease.
- Nuclear stress testing - This test uses imaging aided by a radiotracer to help reveal how blood flows to the heart muscle both at rest and during stress to identify blockages.

#### Coronary CT Angiography (Heart Scan)

A CT scan of the heart with contrast dye shows plaque and calcium deposits in the heart arteries, and can often show narrowing of or blockages in the coronary arteries.

#### Coronary Angiogram

The most definite way to determine if there is coronary artery disease is a coronary angiogram, a procedure in which a catheter (a thin flexible tube) is inserted into an artery in the wrist or leg and navigated up to the heart. An injection of contrast dye and a rapid succession of X-rays (fluoroscopy) visualize blood flow through the arteries. If a blockage is found, cardiologists can perform procedures such as coronary stenting, provide medication therapy, or refer for cardiac surgery depending on the extent of disease.

These important diagnostic tests help cardiologists identify coronary artery disease in patients to develop the most effective treatment plan to restore a patient's health and quality of life.



**Sonia Samtani, MD**



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Samtani, please call **301-705-7870**.



# KEEP YOUR INFO CURRENT.

# KEEP YOURSELF INSURED.

## CHANGES ARE COMING TO MARYLAND MEDICAID.

Medicaid renewals won't be automatic this year. Check in to make sure your contact information is up to date, so that you can receive important notices on any changes to your health insurance.



SCAN THE CODE

To get started, log in to your account at  
[MarylandHealthConnection.gov/Checkin](https://MarylandHealthConnection.gov/Checkin)  
or call 855-642-8572



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connection





# MedStar Health

7503 Surratts Road  
Clinton, MD 20735  
**MedStar Southern Maryland  
Hospital Center**



## It's time for you to breathe easier with lung cancer screening.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the U.S., and often, people with lung cancer don't know they have the disease because symptoms don't appear until advanced stages. It's important to find cancer before it spreads and when it is easier to treat.

### Consider getting screened if:

- You are between the ages of 50 and 80
- You are a current smoker or quit smoking in the last 15 years
- You have or had a heavy smoking history

Take our free lung cancer risk assessment to see if you may be eligible for a low-dose CT lung cancer screening. Early detection is key to beating the disease. It is simple and takes only a few minutes to complete.



If you are 50 years of age or older, scan the QR code with your cell phone camera or visit [MedStarHealth.org/LungHRA](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/LungHRA) online to see if you are eligible for a lung cancer screening.

