

# DESTINATION: GoodHealth

WINTER 2020



MedStar Health

News from MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital and MedStar Union Memorial Hospital

## A Unique Place for Healing

New Inpatient Rehabilitation  
Center Promotes Independence

## On the Forefront of Sports Medicine

Lacrosse Legend Gets Back  
to the Game After Expert Care

## Treating Colorectal Cancer

Multidisciplinary Approach  
Leads to Best Outcomes

## HEALTHY HABITS

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**On the cover:** Gary Thaniel shops at B'More Independent Way in the new Inpatient Rehabilitation Center at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital.



### MedStar Health

MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital, located at the corner of Loch Raven Boulevard and Belvedere Avenue, is minutes from Towson and parking is free. Since 1968, MedStar Good Samaritan has provided compassionate, high-quality care to the community. Recognized as a specialty center for rehabilitation, our services also include geriatrics, diabetes care, cancer care, emergency medicine, orthopaedics, vascular care, wellness, and wound healing.

MedStar Union Memorial Hospital, located in northeast Baltimore City, is a regional specialty and teaching hospital. It is known for The Curtis National Hand Center, MedStar Heart & Vascular Institute, MedStar Orthopaedic Institute, and the development of the first hospital-based sports medicine program in the country.

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



On behalf of your care providers at MedStar Health, I wish you a happy and healthy new year. As the year 2020 begins, we renew our commitment to providing you with outstanding patient experiences. Working in health care is not just a job—it's about making a difference in

our patients' lives through words and actions. It's about taking time for a personal response to patients' needs and providing compassionate care through active listening and teamwork. It's about bringing our best and showing our heart to our patients every day.

In this issue, you can read about the new Inpatient Rehabilitation Center at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital, which features the latest treatments and technology to help patients recovering from strokes, amputations, brain injuries, and more. Our rehab teams have provided excellent care since we opened more than 50 years ago. Now, they are able to enhance that care in this new 60,000-square-foot facility.

At MedStar Union Memorial Hospital, we have built eight new orthopaedic-specific operating rooms, which are larger in size to accommodate complex orthopaedic and spinal cases and feature the most advanced technology. Here, our skilled orthopaedic surgeons—most of whom are fellowship-trained experts—can customize the workspace to better address the unique requirements of each procedure further ensuring the best outcomes for each patient.

As part of MedStar Health, I would like to thank you for choosing us for your healthcare needs. Every day, our focus is to make a difference for our patients and the community we serve. ■

In good health,

### **Bradley S. Chambers**

President, MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital  
President, MedStar Union Memorial Hospital  
Senior Vice President, MedStar Health

## New Orthopaedic Operating Rooms *Now Open*

Eight new orthopaedic operating rooms (ORs) are now open at MedStar Union Memorial Hospital—expanded spaces featuring state-of-the-art technology to improve the surgical experience for both patients and providers.

Designed to accommodate the unique equipment and additional staff necessary for the most complex procedures, the new ORs are more spacious. They have larger post-operative areas offering patients more privacy, too. There is also an expanded post-anesthesia care unit with dedicated space for physical therapy, so patients meeting certain criteria can go directly home instead of going to the patient floor.

Representing a significant investment by MedStar Health, these new ORs are yet another step forward in establishing MedStar Union Memorial as a regional powerhouse in orthopaedic patient care. ■



 To learn more, visit [MedStarOrtho.org](https://www.MedStarOrtho.org) or call **877-34-ORTHO (877-346-7846)**.

## Free Fentanyl Test Kits Available

Fentanyl, which can be added to heroin, cocaine, or pills without a person being able to detect it, has been linked to a dramatic rise in fatal drug overdoses in recent years. Reducing this trend is the purpose of a new initiative recently kicked off by MedStar Health at its three Baltimore City hospitals.

MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital, MedStar Harbor Hospital, and MedStar Union Memorial Hospital are the first hospitals in the state to offer patients who are determined to be high risk for an overdose free test kits to detect the presence of fentanyl.

The program is part of a larger effort by MedStar Health to identify patients at risk of drug overdose using a screening test when they present in the Emergency department and enroll in the hospitals' Opioid Survivor Outreach Program. The test kits are distributed by peer recovery coaches who work one-on-one with high-risk patients to connect them with recovery resources. Studies have proven that individuals experiencing substance use disorder will take steps to reduce the risk of overdose if the presence of fentanyl is known. ■

 To learn more, visit [MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth).



Gary Thaniel and his wife, Vickie (center), praised his medical team for the care he was provided. With them are physician assistant Kate Larkin, PA-C, (left), and Ezihe Nwadi, MD.

# A Unique Place for Healing

## New Inpatient Rehabilitation Center Promotes Independence

**GARY THANIEL HAS BEEN A FAN** of the Inpatient Rehabilitation program at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital since 2012, when he was referred there after having his right hip replaced at another area hospital.

"I was in rehab for about seven days and it was a great experience," he says. "All of the therapists were very patient and caring and I learned a lot that I was able to apply at home to continue to build up my strength."

Two months later, following the replacement of his other hip, he was back. It was also an experience he remembers fondly.

His rehab experience at a different facility after knee replacement surgery last year was much different. "There was no comparison between the care I received at that facility and the program at MedStar Good Samaritan," he notes.

Thaniel's experience is not uncommon. "MedStar Good Samaritan has provided high-quality inpatient rehabilitation care for more than 50 years, which speaks to the depth and breadth of our expertise," says Kritis Dasgupta, MD, MBA, MSc, chair of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation for MedStar Good Samaritan and associate medical director for MedStar National Rehabilitation Network, Baltimore region.

"In fact, the hospital originally opened as a rehabilitation hospital. Since then, it has continued to treat patients recovering from strokes, brain injuries, orthopaedic injuries, amputations, and other disorders with excellent, compassionate rehabilitation care," he adds.

It's because of this expertise that many in the region—patients and providers alike—were delighted to hear about the opening of the hospital's new \$17.5 million Inpatient Rehabilitation Center in August. Thaniel was one of them.

"I needed surgery for a back problem and required time in rehab. I saw on the news that

the new facility had just opened and opted to go there because of the experience I had in 2012," he says.

"The new 60,000-square-foot Inpatient Rehabilitation Center features an innovative design and state-of-the-art technology, allowing patients to gain independence and return to the community with more confidence," Dr. Dasgupta explains. "It better equips us to meet the needs of an increasingly complex patient population. In partnership with MedStar National Rehabilitation Network, our team can provide expert, specialized care for patients with a wide range of physical and cognitive limitations."

At MedStar Good Samaritan, the Inpatient Rehabilitation program has long used a team approach in caring for patients. "Our treatment team focuses on a patient's capabilities rather than disabilities to develop individualized plans of care. This positive approach helps patients return to their highest levels of independence," notes Dr. Dasgupta.

The expanded facility, which takes up the entire fifth floor of the hospital, can care for up to 49 patients, who enjoy a more comfortable, private, and welcoming stay due to advanced technologies and strategic design innovations such as:

- B'More Independent Way, a room which features a modified car for transfer training, grocery store, crosswalk sign, and house with ramps, doors, and a mailbox to help patients transition from the hospital to the community
- Modern Activities of Daily Living Apartment equipped with a washer/dryer, seating area, kitchen, and a bedroom with bathroom where patients and families can practice daily tasks as they prepare to return home
- A training bathroom with an adjustable sink for hair washing, and tub to simulate getting in and out for bathing
- A Therapy Gym featuring multiple devices to help patients regain mobility, including ZeroG™, a dynamic body weight support system to assist patients with walking that has a 210-foot track, the longest in the mid-Atlantic region



**Kritis Dasgupta, MD**



While a patient in the Inpatient Rehabilitation Center, Thaniel was cared for by Brionna Girard, RN, one of several nurses on his team.



Physical therapist Ryan Strelez (left) and certified occupational therapist Patrick McCarthy assist Thaniel with shopping in B'More Independent Way.

- Ceiling lifts to move patients with limited mobility from the bed safely; three with extended ceiling lifts, which allow patients to be taken from the bed to the bathroom
- A Technology Room that features many low- and high-tech devices, such as iPads, a Roomba vacuum, low-vision devices, robotic utensils, and automatic medication dispensers
- A Low-Stimulation Gym enabling patients with brain impairment to have improved focus on therapy with reduced sound and light distractions
- A room for Nash, the rehab facility dog, who helps patients practice everyday activities such as taking on and off a

shirt, improving upper body strength or movement through brushing, and walking in the department

- A multipurpose room offering stunning views of Baltimore for patients participating in leisure activities during therapy, and the location for rehab dining, an occupational and speech therapy-driven lunch group for patients who benefit from assistance during meals

Thaniel, who spent two weeks in the new center as one of its first patients, says it more than exceeded his expectations. "They work you hard, and some days are difficult. But that is what rehab is for," he says. "The facility is amazing, and the care was great. I would recommend it to anybody." ■

## MEET NASH

Nash is the Inpatient Rehabilitation Center's rehab facility dog.



Specially trained by Canine Companions and MedStar Good Samaritan occupational therapist Jaime McGuire, Nash is a six-year-old golden retriever and Labrador mix, who has "worked" in Inpatient Rehab since 2016.

Patients in the inpatient therapy program have daily goals such as walking, range-of-motion exercises, and daily living activities. Nash gets involved in the therapy process by playing tug, fetching a ball, and assisting patients as they take off and put on their shoes and socks. He also loves to be groomed by patients during therapy activities. In addition, Nash helps calm the nerves of patients and family members by visiting them at bedside. "In our new Center, Nash has more space to move around and get exercise," McGuire adds. "Patients make treats for him and even request him by name. He has many fans."



View the Inpatient Rehabilitation Center's virtual tour at [MedStarGoodSam.org/InpatientRehab](https://www.MedStarGoodSam.org/InpatientRehab). For more information, call 443-444-4701.

# Tips for Preventing and Controlling High Cholesterol

Maintaining healthy cholesterol levels is important for preventing heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States. That's why it's good to have a basic understanding of cholesterol and how to manage it. So, what is it and what does it do?

"Cholesterol is one of several types of fats that play an important role in your body. Found in all cells, you need it to make hormones, Vitamin D, and substances that aid in digestion. While it's not inherently bad, too much cholesterol can cause problems," explains Ivan Briones, MD, a physician with MedStar Medical Group Internal Medicine at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital.

"Cholesterol comes from two sources. It's either made by the liver or absorbed from food," he says. "Excess cholesterol in the bloodstream can deposit into the body's arteries, liver, heart, and other organs. These deposits can result in atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries."

There are two types of cholesterol: LDL cholesterol, which is called bad, and HDL, which is called good cholesterol. Too much of the bad kind and not enough of the good kind increases the risk that it will slowly build up in the arteries that feed the heart and brain and cause heart attacks, strokes, and other vascular problems.

The good news is that high cholesterol is one of the major controllable risk factors for heart disease. Here are a few tips for improving your cholesterol levels and keeping them in a healthy range:

- **Know your numbers.** High cholesterol usually has no symptoms. You should have your cholesterol levels tested every four to six years, especially if it runs in your family.
- **Be active every day.** Most adults should get 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity each week and do moderate to high-intensity muscle strengthening exercises two days a week.
- **Make healthy food choices.** Limit foods high in saturated fats such as red meats and full-fat dairy products. Choose foods naturally high in fiber and unsaturated fats.
- **Don't smoke or use tobacco products.** Smoking damages your blood vessels and speeds up hardening of the arteries.
- **Talk with your healthcare provider.** Medications are available that can help bring your levels down.

"Keep in mind, if you have health conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes, you already have an increased chance of developing cardiovascular disease," Dr. Briones adds. "If you don't know your cholesterol levels, get tested. It's a simple blood test that can help you to make more informed decisions about your health." ■



Ivan Briones, MD



For more information or to schedule an appointment with Ivan Briones, MD, visit [MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth](http://MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth) or call 855-212-8202.

# On the Forefront of Sports Medicine

## Lacrosse Legend Gets Back to the Game After Expert Care

THE FIELD OF SPORTS MEDICINE has been growing exponentially since the 1970s, when Americans began to turn on to exercise. MedStar Orthopaedic Institute, which includes the first hospital-based program on the East Coast at MedStar Union Memorial Hospital, was, and continues to be on the forefront of this trend.



James Dreese, MD

says James Dreese, MD, an orthopaedic surgeon who is fellowship-trained in sports medicine.

“What makes us different is our level of experience in treating athletes and our dedication to understanding all aspects of sports injuries, even the most complex,” notes Dr. Dreese,

“Our treatment of athletes has set us apart since 1978, when our sports medicine program was first established,”



Adams, center, has led the women's lacrosse team at Loyola University since 2008.

who is board certified in both orthopaedic surgery and orthopaedic sports medicine.

In fact, more than 40 sports organizations, including the Baltimore Ravens, Baltimore Orioles, and US Lacrosse, as well

as the majority of collegiate, high school, and recreational teams in the region, have specialists from MedStar Sports Medicine on their official medical teams.

Dr. Dreese is one of them, serving as team physician for the



Baltimore Ravens, and head team orthopaedist for Loyola University. Among those benefiting from his expertise in recent years is Jen Adams, head coach for Loyola's women's lacrosse program since 2008 and one of the most highly regarded female lacrosse players of all time.

A native of Brighton, South Australia, Adams has been playing lacrosse since she was a child. Eventually, she began playing for the Australian National Team, first at the junior level and then at the senior level. Recruited by the University of Maryland in 1998, she put together what many call the greatest collegiate women's lacrosse career in the sport's history and was the first recipient of the prestigious Tewaaron Trophy in 2001.

Even with her move to the states, she continued to represent the Australian National Team, including captaining them to victory against the United States in the gold medal game of the 2005 World Cup, which was played in Annapolis. "It was a landmark moment," Adams says.

It was while training for the World Cup in 2013 that she tore her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) at the age of 33. "I was doing a shooting drill that I've done thousands of times. I pivoted and went down. Right away I knew it was serious," she says.



After being treated by Dr. Dreese and his team at MedStar Orthopaedic Institute, Adams was once again able to perform at her best.

An MRI confirmed an ACL tear, which was repaired at a hospital near the team's training facility. But she continued to have pain and swelling in her knee. Over the course of the next year, Adams saw several different doctors and had another surgery with no further improvement.

Adams had gotten to know Dr. Dreese as a result of his work with Loyola's athletes, including several members of her lacrosse squad. "I suspected she was suffering from a lingering meniscus injury," he says. "Another MRI revealed a possible lateral meniscal root injury, which is common with an ACL tear. The meniscus, a piece of cartilage that cushions and stabilizes the joint, protects the bones from wear and tear. When the meniscus root is torn from the tibia, the meniscus is no longer adequately attached, and its function is lost."

In 2014, Dr. Dreese performed surgery and found that her meniscus root was detached from the tibia. After successful repair and recovery, Adams is now back to her old self, leading her team to one successful season after another. "I am very fortunate to have been cared for by Dr. Dreese," says Adams. "He is very committed to what he does."

Dr. Dreese's clinical interests are in the conservative and surgical management of shoulder, hamstring, and elbow injuries in addition to knees. He has extensive experience in the treatment of all types of meniscus tears, ACL knee injuries, complex ligamentous knee injuries, and kneecap instability, and focuses on non-joint replacement solutions for knee and shoulder injuries. He also serves as research director for the Orthopaedic Sports Medicine fellowship and is actively involved in ongoing clinical and biomechanical research. ■



For more information or to make an appointment with a sports medicine specialist at MedStar Orthopaedic Institute, visit [MedStarOrtho.org](http://MedStarOrtho.org) or call 877-34-ORTHO (877-346-7846).



Larkin is now cancer free, thanks to the multidisciplinary care he received through MedStar Health Cancer Network.

# Treating Colorectal Cancer

## Multidisciplinary Approach Leads to Best Outcomes

AS THE OWNER OF A successful construction company, Tom Larkin is a busy guy. Faced with constant deadlines, his work often takes priority. So when things got a little hectic four years ago—right when he was scheduled for his first colonoscopy at the age of 52—he postponed it.

“I had every intention of rescheduling, but never got around to it. Time just goes so fast.” Larkin says. “Plus, I had no reason to think I was at risk for any type of colorectal disease.”

Fast forward four years, and Larkin started noticing signs that something might not be right. He made an appointment with Abhijit Bhatia, MD, chief of Gastroenterology at MedStar Union Memorial Hospital. Dr. Bhatia recommended a colonoscopy and was able to get Larkin onto the schedule the next day. Following the procedure, he was diagnosed with stage III rectosigmoid cancer, a type of colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in the United States and

a leading cause of cancer death for both men and women. But in recent years, advancements in the treatment of the disease have resulted in a more promising future for patients and their families. In fact, the number of deaths from colorectal cancer has been dropping for decades, according to the American Cancer Society, due to new and improved treatments, as well as an increase in early detection.

“The treatment of colorectal cancer has become increasingly customized in recent years,” says Dr. Bhatia. “Because of this, a

## SCREENING GUIDELINES

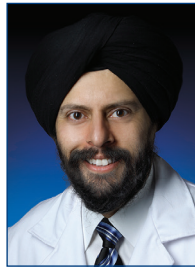
The American Cancer Society recommends that individuals at average risk of colorectal cancer start regular screening at age 45. There are several types of screening tests.

They include:

- A high-sensitivity fecal occult blood test (FOBT) every year
- A flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years
- A colonoscopy every 10 years

Many doctors prefer a colonoscopy for detecting colorectal cancer because it lets them see the entire colon. Plus, if your doctor finds something unusual, polyps or tissue samples can be taken out right away. Most insurance, including Medicare and Medicaid, covers the cost of the screening.

multidisciplinary approach is the best way to care for patients.”



**Abhijit Bhatia, MD**

Research has shown that this improves care coordination, resulting in a better patient experience and higher quality care.

“Each patient’s case is reviewed by a group of colorectal cancer experts—a multidisciplinary team that includes a gastroenterologist, a colorectal surgeon, a medical oncologist, and a radiation oncologist,” he explains. “We work as a team to consider all options and develop an individualized treatment plan that will deliver the best possible outcome.”

The first step in Larkin’s treatment was surgery to remove as much of the cancer as possible. He was scheduled for surgery at MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center, one of the few hospitals in the region with colorectal surgeons certified to perform procedures robotically using the da Vinci® Surgical System. This minimally invasive approach often results in less blood loss, smaller surgical incisions and scars, and less pain, while also reducing risks for infection or the formation of a hernia.

“I was up and walking the next day and released after just three

days in the hospital,” Larkin notes. “The surgery was the easiest part of my treatment and it went so well that I was back at work in no time.”

Because of the nature of his cancer, the next step in Larkin’s treatment plan was 28 straight days of radiation. After a two-week break, he began chemotherapy, which lasted for four months. Today, Larkin is cancer free.

“The fact that we were able to get a diagnosis quickly played a big part in getting him the care he needed as soon as possible,” Dr. Bhatia says. “And doing his surgery robotically enabled him to recover faster so his other treatments could begin.”

“While it was not an experience I’d wish on anyone, the team that provided my care was great,” Larkin notes. “I was also fortunate to have a good support system ... my wife and kids were there for me the entire time. As you might expect, seeing what I went through had an impact on many of my friends, who now realize the importance of getting screened.”

Dr. Bhatia notes that colorectal cancer screening saves lives by enabling doctors to find precancerous polyps—abnormal growths in the colon or rectum—that can be removed before they turn into cancer. Screening also helps find colorectal cancer at an early stage, when treatment works

best. About nine out of every 10 people whose colorectal cancers are found early and treated appropriately are still alive five years later.

If you are age 45 or older, get screened now. If you think you may be at increased risk for colorectal cancer because of your personal or family history, speak with your doctor about when to begin screening, which test is right for you, and how often to get tested. ■



For more information about our cancer services or a physician referral, visit [MedStarCancer.org/Baltimore](https://www.MedStarCancer.org/Baltimore) or call 877-715-HOPE (4673).

## Meal Planning: It's Easier Than You Think

What's for dinner? It's a question most of us hear every day. And when you're juggling a busy family schedule, it's often something you don't think about until it's crunch time. Unfortunately, too many of us turn to fast food as the answer. But there is a better option and it's easier than you think ... it's called meal planning.



Lorraine  
Giangrandi, MS, RD

"Meal planning is a great way to make sure you're eating a balanced diet and meeting your nutritional needs," says Lorraine Giangrandi, MS, RD, a registered dietitian in the Diabetes and Endocrine Center at MedStar Union Memorial Hospital. "You can have a big impact on your health—and your budget—by cooking at home more often. With just a little bit of advance planning, you know what your meals will look like and what you need to buy. That makes grocery shopping more efficient and cuts down on unplanned trips to buy one or two items."

Meal planning doesn't have to be complicated. "Before you do your grocery shopping, plan the coming week's meals. Adjust the meals to fit your schedule.

If soccer practice is on Wednesday night, a quick omelet with a side salad will do fine. Then create a shopping list of the ingredients you'll need," Giangrandi explains.

Like any new habit, meal planning becomes more effortless with practice. Over time, you'll figure out ways to make the process work for you. In the meantime, here are a few tips to get started:

- **Designate theme nights.** Don't start from scratch every week. For example, decide that Monday will be pasta

night and Thursday will be chicken night. Plan to try new recipes on these nights to mix things up.

- **Repurpose leftovers.** Bring them back to life by adding them to soups and casseroles. Pair leftover vegetables with a grain for a filling salad.
- **Be flexible.** Your menu isn't written in stone. Feel free to swap things around. As you get more comfortable in the kitchen and find meals you enjoy, start working on variations.
- **Recycle your meal plans.** Don't throw your plans away at the end of the week. Instead, use them again a few weeks later.
- **Take advantage of digital tools to inspire you.** There are numerous meal planning apps online, many of which include sample menus and shopping lists.

"Meals don't have to be gourmet or perfect every time. Pick recipes you like and are good at making while aiming to include all food groups. Repeat meals are fine—most of us have favorites we rotate over and over," Giangrandi adds. "But be open to new recipe ideas. Creativity can make food planning and cooking easier and more fun." ■



For a free healthy eating guide, visit [MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth) or call 855-212-8202.

## Flu Got You Down? *When to Seek Medical Care*

The peak of flu season is here ... the time of year when you're more likely to get sick. While the symptoms can make you miserable, they are rarely life-threatening. For most people, the best way to recover is to rest and drink plenty of fluids. However, serious problems related to the flu can occur. So it's important to know the warning signs of a severe flu illness.

"The flu is caused by the influenza virus and usually results in symptoms that include sore throat, fever, headache, muscle aches and soreness, congestion, and cough. Most flu symptoms come on quickly but gradually improve over two to five days, though it's not uncommon to feel run down for a week or more," says Chandralekha Banerjee, MD, chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital.

"Despite what many people think, the flu is not treated with antibiotics and rarely requires a trip to the doctor," she adds. "It is also highly contagious, so you should stay home, take it easy, and avoid contact with others."

Anyone can get the flu, but some people are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick. Among those at high risk:

- Individuals over the age of 65
- Pregnant women
- Young children
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, or lung or heart disease
- Individuals with suppressed immune systems, including those on prednisone or chemotherapy, and people with HIV

You should seek medical attention if you or any member of your family experience any of the warning signs of severe flu sickness. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), signs that emergency care is needed include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and a worsening cough

"The most important step you and your family can take to protect yourselves from the flu and its potentially serious complications is to get a flu vaccine annually," Dr. Banerjee notes.

"Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every year before flu activity begins. But if you do get sick and have any of the signs of a severe flu illness, you should seek medical care right away." ■



**Chandralekha Banerjee, MD**



If you haven't gotten a flu shot this year, it's not too late. To find a provider, visit [MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth) or call 855-212-8202.

# Discovery of Aneurysm Calls for Urgent Response

## Collaboration Connects Patient to Needed Vascular Care



Comer and Obermiller are grateful for the responsiveness of the team at MedStar Heart & Vascular Institute.

**WHEN MARY COMER TOOK HER** 83-year-old father, Gail Obermiller, to see an orthopaedic specialist for his recurring upper back pain, she expected the visit to be somewhat routine.

"He has had back problems for most of his life and even had spinal fusion surgery, which helped for a while, but didn't last," Comer says. "Dad didn't want to go to the doctor again, but I finally convinced him to get it

checked out. I'm so glad that we did."

Obermiller's primary care doctor referred him to Bradley Moatz, MD, a fellowship-trained spine surgeon with MedStar Orthopaedic Institute. "I made the appointment, making a point of letting them know that Dad is deaf so that a sign language interpreter could be brought in. While I can sign for him, I wanted to be able to focus on listening to what the doctor had to say," Comer explains. "Once we got there, they took X-rays ... then everything changed."

The X-ray revealed a large mass. Dr. Moatz suspected an aortic aneurysm and recommended that it be checked out by a vascular surgeon. He called Raghuveer Vallabhaneni, MD, FACS, director of Vascular Surgery, Baltimore Region for MedStar Heart & Vascular Institute at MedStar Union Memorial Hospital, for a consult. After reviewing the X-rays, Dr. Vallabhaneni asked to see Obermiller and Comer right away.

"This was just before Memorial Day weekend, yet he cleared his schedule for us to come to the

hospital that afternoon. That's when I realized it was serious," Comer says.

A CT scan confirmed a large abdominal aortic aneurysm, a bulge in a section of the aorta. "Aneurysms do not usually produce clear symptoms, so there is a high rate of sudden rupture," says Dr. Vallabhaneni. "Unfortunately, approximately 90 percent of people with a ruptured aneurysm die, many before reaching the hospital."

Due to the size of Obermiller's aneurysm, it needed to be repaired as soon as possible. Surgery was scheduled for the Tuesday after Memorial Day, and Comer called her father's regular cardiologist (who was not affiliated with MedStar Health) for a pre-operative workup. "Even after I explained the situation, they said they couldn't fit him in due to the upcoming holiday," she says.

Given the urgency of the situation, Dr. Vallabhaneni arranged for him to see George Bittar, MD, a cardiologist and regional director of Ambulatory Cardiology - Baltimore with MedStar Heart & Vascular Institute. "We saw Dr. Bittar the next day and he had already pored through Dad's records. He was wonderful and very thorough," Comer says.



Just one day after surgery, Obermiller was back at home, thanks to the expert care he received.



**Raghuveer Vallabhaneni, MD**

The traditional treatment for repairing an aneurysm used to be an open surgical repair—an invasive surgery involving a large incision and a lengthy recovery time. At MedStar Union Memorial, more than 95 percent of patients are treated using a minimally invasive technique called endovascular repair, a procedure Dr. Vallabhaneni has performed extensively. Because it is minimally invasive, endovascular surgery generally requires a shorter hospital stay, has a high success rate, and results in a quicker recovery.

Obermiller's procedure went well, and he was able to go home after just a day in the hospital. "The whole situation was amazing," Comer says. "Everyone was so responsive, kind, and patient. It really was a team effort on the part of Dad's providers. I truly appreciated the fact that throughout the process they always made sure to have a sign language interpreter on hand. We love MedStar Union Memorial."

"Most aortic aneurysms are undiagnosed and are rarely detected through a physical exam. In fact, because they usually start small and enlarge slowly, they are often found when a doctor is doing a screening for something else, as in Gail's case," Dr. Vallabhaneni explains.

Abdominal aortic aneurysms occur most frequently in people over age 65, and men are four times more likely to have the condition. Smoking is a significant risk factor and people who have a family history of aneurysms are also at higher risk. Other risk factors include atherosclerosis, a history of heart disease, and high blood pressure.

"If you are in a risk category for an abdominal aortic aneurysm, you should talk to your physician about being screened. A painless ultrasound scan can detect an abdominal aortic aneurysm and most found are treatable. That is why screening is crucial," notes Dr. Vallabhaneni. ■

## SCREENING FOR ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSMS

The best way to detect an abdominal aortic aneurysm is to get a simple, 10-minute ultrasound screening test. All men over age 65 who have ever smoked and anyone over 65 who has a first-degree relative who has had an abdominal aortic aneurysm should be tested. Talk to your doctor about your risks and getting screened.

Medicare offers a one-time, free abdominal ultrasound screening to individuals meeting certain criteria as part of its Welcome to Medicare physical. Some private insurers also offer low-cost screenings for those over age 50 with family risk.



**MedStar Heart & Vascular Institute at MedStar Union Memorial Hospital is one of the region's leaders in managing the most complex cases of aortic aneurysm. To make an appointment with one of our specialists, call 410-554-2950.**

## COMMUNITY LECTURES AND CLASS SCHEDULES

At MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital and MedStar Union Memorial Hospital, we care about the health and wellness of our community. One of the ways we try to keep you healthy and active is by offering special classes, events, and screenings. **Join us, and learn how you can stay healthy for life.**

### HEART HEALTH

#### Free Blood Pressure Screenings

Mondays through Fridays  
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital  
Good Health Center

#### Cardiac Rehabilitation Program, Phase II

This is an individualized, carefully monitored combination of exercise therapy and education for those recovering from a heart attack, coronary artery bypass graft, angioplasty or coronary stenting, heart valve replacement/repair, or heart or heart-lung transplant.

Mondays through Fridays  
8 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
MedStar Union Memorial Hospital

Call **410-554-2167** for details.

Three hourly sessions per week, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays  
9 or 11 a.m.

MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital  
Good Health Center

Call **443-444-3874** to register.

### LUNG CARE

#### Pulmonary Rehabilitation

A monitored exercise program to help if you have lung diseases, such as COPD, asthma, and chronic bronchitis.

MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital

For details, call **443-444-3397**.

### EXERCISE AND FITNESS

#### Fitness for 50s

A free exercise class that can be done sitting or standing. Workout includes aerobics, strength training, and stretching.

Tuesdays, 10 to 11 a.m.  
Hampden Family Center  
1104 W. 36th St., Baltimore

#### Yoga

Improve your flexibility and reduce stress. Beginners to advanced participants welcome.

Mondays, Jan. 6 to March 23 and  
April 6 to June 22  
6 to 7:15 p.m.  
MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital  
Parker Center

Call **855-212-8202** to register.

**Fee: \$80 for 11-week session**

#### Gentle Yoga

A gentler yoga class to improve flexibility, strength, and balance. Mostly done in a chair or standing.

Wednesdays, March 25 to May 13  
10:30 to 11:45 a.m.  
MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital  
Good Health Center  
Conference Room

Call **855-212-8202** to register.

**Fee: \$65 for eight-week session**

#### Joy Yoga

Enjoy a fun-flowing class, accessible to all levels. Learn to move the breath and body in sync with yoga postures that help to calm the mind and stretch the body.

Mondays, 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.  
Shepherd's Clinic/  
Joy Wellness Center  
2800 Kirk Ave., Baltimore

Call **410-467-7140, ext. 240** to register.

**Suggested donation: \$3 to \$5**

#### Regular Tai Chi

This ancient form of exercise can help lower blood pressure, ease stress, and improve sleep.

Tuesdays, March 24 to May 12  
5 to 6 p.m.  
MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital  
Parker Center

Call **855-212-8202** to register.

**Fee: \$35 for eight-week session**

#### Gentle Tai Chi

Smooth, gentle movements can help lower blood pressure, ease stress, and improve sleep.

Tuesdays and Fridays,  
March 17 to April 10  
1:30 to 2:30 p.m.  
MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital  
Good Health Center  
Conference Room

Call **855-212-8202** to register.

**Fee: \$35 for two days a week over a four-week session**

#### Chair Yoga

Designed to be practiced in a chair, this yoga class for older adults can help improve flexibility, reduce anxiety and stress, and build strength and balance.

Tuesdays, Feb. 4 to April 7  
11 a.m. to 12 noon  
Hampden Family Center  
1104 W. 36th St., Baltimore

Call **855-218-2435** to register.

**Fee: Free**

Wednesdays, Feb. 5 to April 8  
10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Senior Network of North Baltimore  
5828 York Rd., Baltimore

Call **410-323-7131** to register. Space is limited.

**Fee: \$25**

Fridays, Jan. 3 to Feb. 14,  
Feb. 21 to April 3, April 17 to  
May 29, and June 5 to July 24  
10:10 to 11 a.m.

MedStar Union Memorial Hospital  
Fitness Center

Call **443-794-6107** to register.

**Fee: \$50 per session, \$10 for drop-in class. Try first class for free.**

#### Chair Exercise

A free, full workout ... all in the chair. Class is designed for all fitness levels.

Fridays, 10 to 11 a.m.  
St. Mary's Roland View Towers  
3939 Roland Ave., Baltimore

Call **855-218-2435** to register.



To register, visit [MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth) or call toll-free **855-212-8202**, unless noted otherwise. Many classes are free; however, some have a fee that will be discussed when you call to register.

### Advanced Senior Fitness

Relax with fitness that is good for the body and the mind. It includes low-impact exercise, followed by an "on the mat" yoga session and meditation.

Thursdays, 10 to 11:15 a.m.  
Senior Network of  
North Baltimore  
5828 York Rd., Baltimore

Call **410-323-7131** to register. Space is limited.

**Fee: \$20 for 10 classes**

### Groove and Move Senior Fitness Class

This class includes a lively low-impact cardio session followed by strength training with bands and weights (optional) and stretching.

Wednesdays, 9:15 to 10:30 a.m.  
Senior Network of  
North Baltimore  
5828 York Rd., Baltimore

Call **410-323-7131** to register. Space is limited.

**Fee: \$25 for six months**

### Phase III Exercise Program

This is for patients with arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other chronic illnesses that includes access to an on-site fitness center (physician referral required).

Mondays through Fridays  
7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
MedStar Good  
Samaritan Hospital  
Good Health Center

To register, call  
**443-444-3881**.

**Fee: \$20 per month or \$90 for six months**

### Rock Steady Boxing for Parkinson's

This is a free, non-contact boxing program to enhance the quality of life for people with Parkinson's. It has been scientifically proven to slow the progression of the disease, reduce tremors, and improve functional abilities.

Mondays and Wednesdays,  
2:30 p.m.; Fridays at 11 a.m.  
MedStar Good  
Samaritan Hospital  
Outpatient Rehabilitation

Call **443-444-4822** for more information.

## SUPPORT GROUPS

### Amputee Support Group

Share experiences and resources to live independently.

Fourth Wednesday  
of each month  
1:30 to 3 p.m.  
MedStar Good  
Samaritan Hospital  
Good Health Center,  
Room B

For details, call  
**443-444-5500**.

### Aphasia Support Group

Communication disorders support for those recovering from stroke and other conditions.

Second and fourth  
Mondays of each month  
1 to 2 p.m.  
MedStar Good  
Samaritan Hospital  
Good Health Center,  
Room B

For details, call  
**443-444-4618**.

### Caregiver Support Group

Learn how to thrive while caring for a loved one. You can bring your loved one to socialize in our activity group for people with dementia, which is held at the same time as the caregiver group. Hosted by the Center for Successful Aging.

Second Thursday  
of each month  
3:30 to 5 p.m.  
MedStar Good  
Samaritan Hospital  
Parker Center 1  
(caregiver group)  
Russell Morgan Bldg.,  
Suite 502 (loved ones'  
activity group)

Register online or call  
**443-444-4720**.

### Stroke Support Group

Meet with stroke survivors and caregivers to help one another.

First Thursday of  
each month  
1 to 2:30 p.m.

Call **855-212-8202** for locations and to register.

### Diabetes Support Group

Join guest speakers for topics relating to diabetes.

Third Monday of  
each month  
2:30 to 4 p.m.  
MedStar Good  
Samaritan Hospital  
Good Health Center

### Arm-in-Arm

Open to breast cancer survivors and those newly diagnosed.

MedStar Good  
Samaritan Hospital

Call **443-444-6420**  
for details.

## WELLNESS AND PREVENTION

### Massage Therapy or Integrative Reflexology

Provided by licensed massage therapists at the Good Health Center. Day and evening appointments are available.

Call **443-444-GOOD** (4663) for details.

**Fee: \$30 for 30 minutes, \$60 for 60 minutes, or \$90 for 90 minutes**

### Migraine and Spasticity Clinic

For patients with musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, and spasticity disorders. Offers injections for chronic migraine, joint pain, and other conditions. Ultrasounds and other diagnostic services are available.

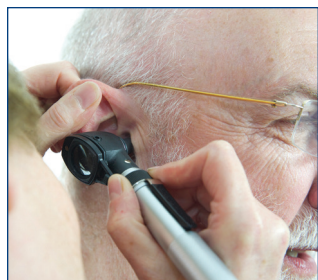
For appointments, call  
**443-444-1817**.

### Hepatitis Clinic

People can have Hepatitis B and C and not know they are infected. New treatment options are available to improve recovery.

For appointments, call  
**443-444-1817**.

To register, visit [MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth](http://MedStarHealth.org/DestinationGoodHealth) or call toll-free **855-212-8202**, unless noted otherwise. Many classes are free; however, some have a fee that will be discussed when you call to register.



### ENT Clinic

If you have conditions of the ears, nose, and throat, such as dizziness, pain due to hearing loss or infections, and sinusitis, we can help.

For details, call **443-444-4848**.

### Freshstart® Smoking Cessation Program

Designed to help smokers plan a successful quit attempt by providing essential information, skills for coping with cravings, and group support.

Tuesdays, Feb. 4 to Feb. 25  
5:15 to 6:30 p.m.

MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital  
Good Health Center

Mondays, Feb. 17 to March 9  
4 to 5:30 p.m.

Hampden Family Center  
1104 W. 36th St., Baltimore

Tuesdays, March 31 to April 21  
5:15 to 6:30 p.m.

MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital  
Parker Center 1

Call **855-218-2435** to register for any of these sessions.

### Diabetes Education

Learn to control your diabetes with support on meal planning, glucose monitoring, medications, exercise, and more. Most insurance companies cover diabetes education.

MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital and MedStar Union Memorial Hospital

For details, call **443-444-4550** or **410-554-2630**.

### Diabetes Management Workshop

A seven-week workshop, co-sponsored with Keswick's Wise and Well Center, that takes a group-focused approach to managing diabetes and its complications. Topics include nutrition, carbohydrate counting, managing blood sugar, foot care, problem solving, and more.

Tuesdays, April 7 to May 19  
10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Keswick's Wise and Well Center  
700 W. 40th St., Baltimore

Call **855-218-2435** to register.

### Living Well With Hypertension

A free workshop for people with high blood pressure who want to learn how to better manage their condition.

Tuesday, April 7  
10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.  
Keswick's Wise and Well Center  
700 W. 40th St., Baltimore

Call **855-218-2435** to register.

### Life Balance/Weight Management

Based on the National Diabetes Prevention Program, this one-year program is designed for those who are overweight and at risk of developing type 2 diabetes and those who have been diagnosed with pre-diabetes. A lifestyle coach helps participants through their journey toward making positive changes related to nutrition, exercise, problem-solving, and coping skills.

Thursdays, Jan. 30 to Dec. 10  
1 to 2 p.m.

Keswick's Wise and Well Center  
700 W. 40th St., Baltimore

Call **855-218-2435** to register.

Fridays, March 6 to Aug. 7  
11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Shepherd's Clinic/  
Joy Wellness Center  
2800 Kirk Ave., Baltimore

Call **410-467-7140**, ext. 240 to register.

## CANCER PREVENTION

### Breast and Cervical Cancer Screenings

Free mammograms, clinical breast exams, and pap tests are available for women who are:

- Ages 40 or older
- Uninsured or underinsured
- Limited income
- Resident of Baltimore City metropolitan area

Call **410-350-2066** to see if you qualify and schedule an appointment.

### Colon Cancer Screening

Colon cancer is one of the most common, yet preventable cancers. To detect colon cancer early, when it is easier to treat, free colonoscopies are available for eligible individuals:

- Women and men ages 50 and older
- Under age 50 with symptoms or a family history of colon cancer
- Uninsured or underinsured
- Limited income
- Resident of Baltimore City, Baltimore County, or Anne Arundel County

Call **410-350-8216** to see if you qualify and schedule an appointment.

## Community Health Spotlight

# Improving Access to Healthy Food

**IN MANY URBAN AREAS, ACCESS TO FRESH** produce and supermarkets is limited. In Baltimore City, MedStar Health is doing its part to change this through a program called Food is Medicine—Harvest RX.

“Food plays a huge role in a person’s overall ability to be healthy,” says Joyce Johnson, a community health advocate at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital. “Our goal is to help fill gaps in nutrition and food access that may impact the overall health of our patients.”

Under the program, patients are identified as being in need of food assistance through a screening conducted during an emergency department or doctor’s visit. They are then connected with a community health advocate who can help them sign up to receive free home delivery of a box of healthy food every other week for eight weeks. The box of food, provided by a group called Hungry Harvest, typically contains fresh vegetables, fruits and grains, and is enough to build four to eight meals.

At MedStar Good Samaritan, 85 patients have been enrolled in the program since it was launched a year ago. One of them is Debra Day, who signed up for the program after an inpatient hospital stay. “I am eating better as a result of receiving the food boxes,” she notes.

“This program is one way we are working to help families and individuals with the resources they need to become healthy and stay healthy,” Johnson explains. “The goal is not just signing people up for



Day is eating healthier meals as a result of signing up for the Food is Medicine—Harvest RX program.

the eight-week program ... it’s for us to be able to work with them on developing better long-term health habits and connecting them to long-term programs to address their food access needs.”

The program at MedStar Good Samaritan was started with funds raised by hospital associates as part of the hospital’s annual giving campaign. The program was recently launched at MedStar Union Memorial Hospital and is also offered at MedStar Harbor Hospital.

In addition to this program, the community health advocates at each hospital can sign up patients in need of food assistance for longer-term healthy food programs such as Meals on Wheels and the government Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The American Heart Association also assists in training community health advocates on nutritional guidelines and eating healthy on a budget so that they may offer advice to patients. ■



To learn more about the Community Health programs offered at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital and MedStar Union Memorial Hospital, call **855-218-2435**.



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