

# Health



da Vinci 5: The  
Cutting-Edge Robot  
Revolutionizing Surgery

**Surviving a  
Dangerous  
Stroke:**

Jerry's  
Inspiring  
Journey

How to Prevent  
Common Sports Injuries

Tackling  
Arthritis:  
Managing Pain  
and Improving  
Mobility



# Letter from the president.

Dear Neighbor,

The start of a new year brings about a promise of what is to come. We are given a clean slate to fill with achievement, purpose, and hope. At MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, we are excited about what 2025 holds as we continue enhancing clinical services and delivering exceptional care.

This issue of *Health* magazine features the expertise of our cardiology specialists. From heart failure and interventional cardiology to general cardiology, our specialists share tips for a heart-healthy lifestyle and highlight how the hospital is committed to bridging gaps in cardiovascular care throughout the region. Stroke awareness also remains a top priority and our patient story showcases how our comprehensive stroke protocols and system-wide collaboration proved lifesaving.

We are also thrilled about some exciting advancements, including an update to the ZAP-X radiosurgery technology for precise brain tumor treatment, the addition of a second state-of-the-art surgical robot (the most advanced da Vinci 5 robotic

surgical system), and accreditation for our Laboratory for Sleep Disorders. These investments in the most advanced technology and programs reflect our commitment to delivering the highest level of care to our community.

Throughout this issue, you'll see how our dedicated teams improve lives, from managing arthritis and gastrointestinal conditions to treating orthopedic injuries and gynecologic issues. Supporting the health of our community remains our top priority.

Thank you for reading *Health* magazine. Here's to a healthy and fulfilling year!

In good health,



**Stephen T. Michaels, MD, FAAOS, FACHE**  
President, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center  
Senior Vice President, MedStar Health



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## Tidbits

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### MedStar Southern Maryland Benefits from "Books from Birth"

MedStar Southern Maryland's Women and Newborns Center was gifted 40 early literacy "baby bundles" in December 2024 from the Prince George's County Memorial Library System's (PGCMLS) Books from Birth program, an initiative of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. The "baby bundles" were delivered to the hospital and distributed to families as part of the library system's celebration of a special milestone—sending one million free books to children across the county.



Labor & Delivery department staff help new parents register for the program which mails free books every month to children in Prince George's County from birth to their fifth birthday to promote early literacy and learning.



To learn more and register for PGCMLS's Books from Birth program, visit [pgcmls.info/freebooks](https://pgcmls.info/freebooks).

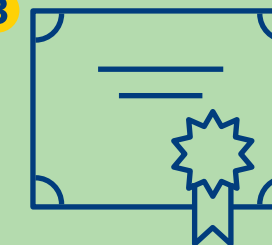
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### Top Doctors Named to Annual List

Eight physicians at MedStar Southern Maryland were named to *Washingtonian* magazine's prestigious 2024 Top Doctor's List. See who was recognized in this annual listing on page 16.

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### Sleep Center Achieves Accreditation

MedStar Southern Maryland's Laboratory for Sleep Disorders received accreditation from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, a first for the program. Read more about this important recognition on page 16.

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### Brain Tumor Treatment Gets an Upgrade

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's ZAP-X Gyroscopic Radiosurgery™ system was recently updated to provide an even higher level of safety and comfort for patients receiving this novel brain tumor treatment. Learn more on page 15.





Pictured left to right: Diane Proctor, Jerry Proctor, Monica Harley



## Surviving a Massive Stroke, Jerry Proctor is Grateful for a Second Chance

Jerry Proctor, 77, survived a stroke that many people do not. When the CPAP machine he used for sleep apnea began to make a strange noise, Mr. Proctor's wife, Diane, and grandson Devin Harley, took immediate notice. Devin tried to wake his grandfather, but he would not respond. And so set in motion a series of lifesaving events that began with an ambulance ride to MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's emergency department (ED) and ended with a helicopter transport to MedStar Georgetown University Hospital for further intervention for a major ischemic stroke.

### Time is Brain

Emergency medicine physician Matthew Cooper, MD, was on duty to meet the ambulance on July 27, 2024, quickly implementing the hospital's stroke protocols along with ED charge nurse Sarah Hutchinson, and ICU Rapid Response Nurse Patricia Roberts. Mr. Proctor was swiftly escorted to radiology for a CT scan, which confirmed the massive clot causing his stroke. The scan and diagnosis took just eight minutes, and the stroke team immediately initiated the infusion of Tenecteplase, or TNK, a lifesaving clot-busting drug. This thrombolytic drug can begin

to dissolve a clot in the brain and carotid artery in minutes.

"The time between a stroke patient entering the ED and receiving TNK is critical for survival, restoring blood flow to the brain, and minimizing brain damage," said Dr. Cooper. "Time is brain, we like to say."

Mr. Proctor received the clot-busting drug within 34 minutes of arriving in the ED and having his CT scan, well under the 60-minute standard for treatment.

Soon after receiving TNK, MedStar Health tele-neurologist Mary Carter Denny, MD, helped the team arrange for Mr. Proctor to be airlifted to

MedStar Georgetown University Hospital for a procedure called mechanical thrombectomy to retrieve and remove the clot fully.

### The Clock Is Ticking

Within minutes, Mr. Proctor arrived at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital by helicopter where he was immediately intubated in the ED because of labored breathing before being swiftly transported to the neuro angiography suite. Here, Director of Stroke Neurology Andrew Stemer, MD, who had talked to Mr. Proctor's family while he was in transit to expedite his care, explaining the procedure and obtaining consent, wasted no time in performing the thrombectomy to remove the clot less than one hour upon arrival.

The delicate procedure involved the insertion of a catheter into the femoral artery in the hip area which was carefully threaded up into the neck and then into the brain guided by imaging. Once in place, special instruments on the end of the catheter removed the clot. Because of the quick administration of TNK at MedStar Southern Maryland's ED, a portion of the clot had already been dissolved. The mechanical thrombectomy removed what was left.

"Between the ED team at MedStar Southern Maryland and the doctors at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, my family and I were kept informed and updated every step of the way," recalled Monica Harley, Mr. Proctor's daughter. She noted that her dad became ill at 1:05 PM and by 5:30 PM had been treated in the ED at MedStar Southern Maryland, undergone the clot removal procedure at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, and was in recovery.

"While a stroke like this is life-threatening, with the treatments we have available,

more patients are surviving and doing well," Dr. Stemer added.

He credited the action of the entire team in procuring a positive outcome for Mr. Proctor. "Providing care like this requires an entire system. From the stroke team in the ED at MedStar Southern Maryland initiating the stroke protocols and administering the TNK, to the quick removal of the clot at MedStar Georgetown, we have built an entire ecosystem that allows care like this to be delivered to patients."

Remarkably, Mr. Proctor was able to return home just three days after his stroke, with no deficits or functional impairments, highlighting an exceptional recovery and the success of timely, comprehensive care.

"Everything happened in a matter of minutes," Ms. Harley said. "The entire experience was unbelievable and we are all very grateful for the quick action that saved my dad's life."

### A Return to Health

Today, Mr. Proctor has completed his stroke rehabilitation and is grateful for his restored health.

Mr. Proctor's nephew, Gregory "Steve" Proctor, president and CEO of G.S. Proctor & Associates, Inc., expressed gratitude for the exceptional care provided to the community and his family during their time of need. "We are incredibly fortunate to have such a dedicated and skilled team of providers at the ready to care for patients throughout our community," he said. "My uncle is alive today because of the quick action of the stroke teams at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center and MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. This experience demonstrates the significance of coordinated care among MedStar Health hospitals."



“ We are incredibly fortunate to have such a dedicated and skilled team of providers at the ready to care for patients throughout our community. My uncle is alive today because of the quick action of the stroke teams at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center and MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. This experience demonstrates the significance of coordinated care among MedStar Health hospitals. ”

—Gregory "Steve" Proctor, President and CEO of G.S. Proctor & Associates, Inc.



# Preventing Common Sports Injuries as You Age



## What You Should Know

Remember when you could run a 5K or play basketball without aching muscles and joints? Or when your elbow didn't throb after an intense round of pickleball, and you didn't need more rest days in between workouts at the gym?

As we age, our bodies change.

Orthopedic sports specialist Daniel Hampton, MD, sees patients of all ages with overuse injuries but explained that with time comes more wear and tear on the body. "It's hard to accept that we can't always do what we used to," he said. "To stay active and avoid injuries, we must treat our bodies differently as we grow older."

### Tips for avoiding overuse injuries

Dr. Hampton offered several tips for remaining active while protecting your body from potential injuries:

1. Warm up. Spend at least 15 minutes warming up the muscles and joints to prepare for activity.
2. Focus on flexibility. As the body ages, flexibility

decreases. Include stretching and mobility exercises in your daily activities to maintain range of motion in key joints like the shoulders, knees, and hips.

3. Be mindful of an activity's intensity level. Maintaining the same high-intensity workouts you did when you were younger can lead to injury. Increase the duration and intensity of a workout or activity gradually and stop if you experience pain or strain on joints and muscles.
4. Prioritize recovery and rest after playing a sport or engaging in more intense workouts or sports.

### Common sports injuries and treatments

While overuse injuries including tendonitis (inflammation) in the knee, elbow, and shoulder can happen to anyone, older adults and seniors are more prone to these types of injuries due to normal tendon degeneration which can weaken bones, muscles, and joints. Acute or sudden

injuries such as a meniscus or ACL tendon tear in the knee, rotator cuff tears and shoulder dislocations can also occur.

While some of these injuries may require surgery, Dr. Hampton explained that the goal of treatment is to focus on non-operative therapies first including rest, physical therapy to build strength and improve mobility, and medications such as anti-inflammatories and corticosteroids to relieve pain and reduce inflammation. These treatments allow the body to heal naturally before considering surgical options.

### When is surgery needed?

The decision to have surgery depends on a careful evaluation of the injury, the patient's age, as well as their goals and lifestyle. In certain cases, surgery is the best treatment option to repair torn tendons and ligaments and, along with physical therapy, to restore function and mobility.

Surgery is typically recommended when:

- First line, non-surgical therapies such as physical



therapy and medications are not effective

- Certain injuries such as acute ACL or rotator cuff tears do not improve with time
- Athletes or younger patients want to return to their sport and previous level of activity

Minimally invasive and robotic surgical approaches offer patients targeted surgical repair that can minimize complications, hasten recovery, and improve post-surgical function. Surgical recovery includes ongoing physical therapy and rehabilitation to ensure the best outcomes and return to activity.

### Listen to your body

Dr. Hampton added that remaining strong and active throughout one's life is important for overall health and to prevent injuries. He stressed, "Be mindful of how you treat your body. No one knows your body and its limits better than you."



Need to find a sports medicine specialist or orthopedic surgeon near you? Visit [MedStarHealth.org/FindADoc](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/FindADoc) to find a provider near you.



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Hampton, please call **301-856-1682**.

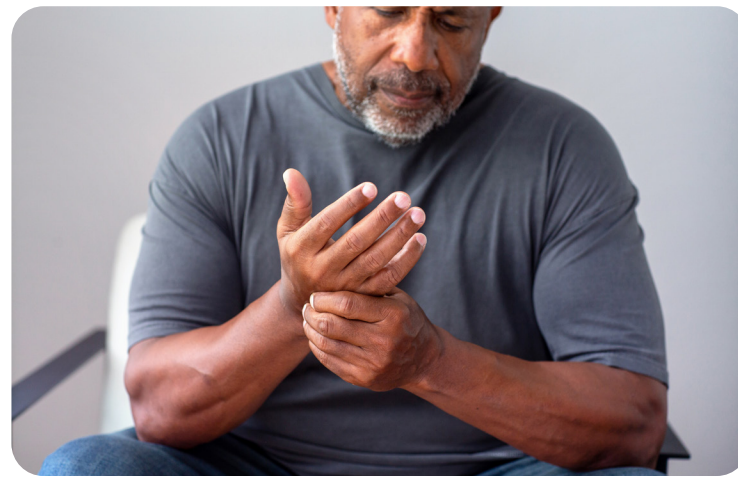


**Dr. Hampton sees patients at:**  
13950 Brandywine Road, Suite 225  
Brandywine, MD, 20613



**Daniel Hampton, MD**  
Orthopedic Sports Specialist

# Tackling the Number One Cause of Disability: Arthritis



According to the American Arthritis Foundation, arthritis is the number one cause of disability, affecting nearly 60 million adults.

There are hundreds of different types of arthritis, a condition that encompasses joint pain and inflammation. According to Family Medicine Nurse Practitioner Randall Wiley, CRNP, the two main types of arthritis are osteoarthritis and inflammatory arthritis.

- Osteoarthritis is the most common type of the condition typically caused by wear and tear on the joints during daily activity or injury.
- Inflammatory arthritis, an autoimmune disorder, occurs when the immune system becomes overactive and attacks the joints. Rheumatoid arthritis is the most common form of this condition. Other forms include psoriatic arthritis and metabolic arthritis (gout), where deposits of uric acid crystals in the joints cause intense pain and swelling.

While anyone can get osteoarthritis, the inflammatory form of the condition is less common and often influenced by genetics, environmental factors, as well as a weakened immune system.

“Pain and stiffness are often the most common initial symptoms for most types of arthritis. A doctor should be consulted whenever pain is severe or accompanied by loss of function, fever, loss of weight, generally feeling sick, or sudden muscle weakness,” said Randall.

## How to Control Pain and Inflammation

Arthritis pain and swelling can be effectively managed long-term and advances in treatments provide sustained relief for patients.

Managing osteoarthritis pain includes:

- Using over-the-counter medications such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) that reduce inflammation or acetaminophen for pain.
- The RICE method - Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation
- Engaging in low-impact endurance exercises such as walking, biking, swimming, yoga, or resistance training.

Randall noted, “Exercises including stretching and balance training, strengthening programs, and endurance training are some of the best things people can do to alleviate

the pain of osteoarthritis and slow the effects over time.”

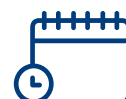
Inflammatory arthritis may require special medications and oversight by a rheumatologist. For conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, for example, treatment may include prescribed disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs), biologics, and corticosteroids.

“Arthritis, no matter the type, can be managed long term,” added Randall. “While occasional flare-ups are to be expected, we have effective methods to slow and control most types of arthritis from exercise, daily activities, and diet, to medications and specialized treatments from a healthcare provider.”



**Randall Wiley, CRNP**

Family Medicine Nurse Practitioner



To schedule an appointment, please call **301-997-0611**.



# Feeling the Burn: Getting GERD Under Control

That burning or irritated feeling in your chest after you eat is more common than you think. Experiencing occasional heartburn after eating spicy foods or drinking several cups of coffee, for example, is not uncommon. But when you feel the burn regularly, it's time to get checked.



## What is GERD?

When you swallow food, it travels down the esophagus (the tube that carries fluid and food from the mouth to the

stomach). The lower esophageal sphincter is the muscle that opens to allow food and fluids to enter the stomach and then closes to keep the contents in the stomach.

Acid reflux is caused by stomach acid that flows back up to the esophagus, causing irritation and a burning sensation in the chest area (also called heartburn). Acid reflux that happens repeatedly is called GERD, or gastroesophageal reflux disease. People with GERD typically have a weakened esophageal sphincter.

GERD causes symptoms such as:

- Heartburn, or a burning sensation in the chest
- A sour taste in the back of the throat

- Difficulty swallowing
- Chronic cough
- Laryngitis

## Causes and Treatments

According to gastroenterologist Paolo Peghini, MD, GERD is often triggered by certain foods or medications. Some patients can control GERD by modifying their diet and avoiding overeating or lying down right after a big meal.

Treatment begins by eliminating common trigger foods including:

- Spicy, fatty, or fried foods
- Citrus fruits
- Tomato-based and acidic foods
- Caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate)

If diet changes alone don't do the trick, reflux can be treated with medications such as antacids or acid secretion inhibitors. Antacids neutralize the acid in the stomach and are used to manage symptoms as needed. Acid secretion inhibitors block gastric acid secretions and are typically used in patients who have frequent symptoms. Because GERD is often a chronic condition, these therapies need to be taken long-term. In severe cases of GERD that do not respond to

other therapies, surgery to tighten the lower esophageal sphincter muscle may be explored.

Dr. Peghini explained that patients with a long history of GERD should consider getting an endoscopy. “Chronic acid exposure of the esophageal lining can cause changes in the tissue called Barrett's esophagus, which has the risk of progressing to esophageal cancer.”



**Paolo Peghini, MD**  
Gastroenterologist



**Dr. Peghini sees patients at:**  
7501 Surratts Road, Suite 206  
Clinton, MD, 20735



To schedule an appointment, please call **301-877-4599**.



To learn more about GERD and find a gastroenterologist near you, please visit **MedStarHealth.org/Gastroenterology**.



# Heart Health in Southern Maryland:

## Bridging the Gaps in Cardiovascular Care



Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States for most races and ethnicities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one person dies every 33 seconds from cardiovascular disease and coronary artery disease killed more than 370,000 people in 2022.

Locally, heart disease is also the leading cause of death for men and women, with 1 in 4 deaths due to cardiovascular disease, according to the Prince George's County Health Department, which also noted that many county residents have major risk factors for heart disease.

Factors such as hypertension (high blood pressure), coronary artery disease (CAD), high cholesterol, obesity, diabetes, and smoking contribute to rising rates of

cardiovascular disease in Southern Maryland.

Brian C. Case, MD, director of interventional cardiology at MedStar Southern Maryland stated, "We know that the disparities in cardiovascular care in our community are multifactorial, stemming from several factors including socioeconomic disparities, being un- or underinsured, and lack of access to healthcare."

### Barriers to Care

Access to primary and specialty care is a leading hurdle for individuals, delaying screening, early detection, and the management of cardiovascular risk factors and disease. For those uninsured or underinsured, seeking medical care can be a major financial burden.

Additionally, being unaware of the symptoms of cardiovascular conditions or the importance of routine screenings for hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes, for example, allows undiagnosed conditions to progress silently.

### MedStar Southern Maryland's Approach to Bridging the Gap

Over the past several years, MedStar Southern Maryland has implemented initiatives to promote cardiovascular health throughout the region, emphasizing education, community engagement, and improved access to cardiac care and clinical research.

### Expanding Health Education

Educational initiatives are central to the hospital's mission of reducing incidences of heart disease in the community. Over the

past year, MedStar Southern Maryland has partnered with community organizations like Arch of Knowledge, Inc. and Centerpoint Baptist Church to host virtual "Ask the Doctor" webinars. These interactive, free sessions educate attendees about the risk factors for heart disease, how to recognize signs of heart attack, and provide practical advice on maintaining a heart-healthy lifestyle through diet, exercise, and good sleep habits.

"Early recognition and diagnosis are critical for better cardiac outcomes," said Dr. Case. "These community webinars raise awareness and let people know we're in their neighborhood, available and ready to care for their heart health."

### Caring for the Region's Heart Failure Patients

The advanced heart failure program, led by leading heart failure specialist, Rania Kaoukis, MD, is another way the hospital is delivering specialized care in the region.

Before the program's inception in 2022, patients often had to travel to Washington, D.C. or other areas for advanced therapies, creating significant transportation and financial barriers. Reducing travel burdens and providing timely interventions has resulted in significantly enhanced patient outcomes and expanded reach in Prince George's County.

"By having an advanced heart failure program in the community, we can identify patients earlier who benefit from comprehensive management and treatments like medications, surgical interventions, or even clinical trials," said Dr. Kaoukis. The program collaborates with MedStar Washington Hospital Center to provide advanced therapies such

as heart transplants and left ventricular assist devices (LVADs).

### Inclusivity in Clinical Research

According to Dr. Case, minority populations have been historically underrepresented in clinical research, comprising only about 10% of participants in landmark cardiovascular disease trials despite carrying higher disease burdens.

To address this gap, expanded partnerships with local organizations and healthcare providers are helping to educate and recruit more minority participants for clinical trials. The hospital is now involved in seven interventional cardiovascular trials, including several focused on heart failure and electrophysiology. Dr. Case stressed that expanding research opportunities to minority communities allows for improved therapies tailored to the needs of all patients.

### A Path Forward

Collaboration and action are essential to overcoming disparities in care. Heart health is a public issue and MedStar Southern Maryland remains committed to providing education, engagement, improved access to specialized cardiac care, and fostering strong ties within Prince George's County's underserved communities to bridge the gaps in cardiac care.



**Brian Case, MD**  
Interventional Cardiology  
301-877-5677



**Rania Kaoukis, MD**  
Heart Failure Specialist, Cardiology  
301-877-5677



### Commitment to Equitable Access

In 2024, MedStar Southern Maryland was the only hospital in Prince George's County and the Southern Maryland region to be named among the country's "Best Regional Hospitals for Equitable Access" by U.S. News & World Report for providing high-quality care to patients in underserved communities.

Stephen Michaels, MD, president of MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, stated, "Healthcare disparities in traditionally underserved communities is a real-world issue that we are committed to solving."

# Save the Date!

Community Baby Shower and Resource Fair

Saturday, April 12th 2025  
10 am - 2 pm

Clinton Baptist Church • 8701 Woodyard Rd,  
Clinton, MD 20735



## Endometriosis Explained:

### A Guide to Symptoms, Treatment, and Support

One woman presented to her OB/GYN with debilitating pain during her menstrual cycle. Another patient experienced painful intercourse. Another woman struggled with infertility. All of these patients had one thing in common - endometriosis.

"Endometriosis, which occurs when the uterine lining is found outside of the uterus, can affect up to 1 in 10 women in their reproductive years," noted Obstetrician-Gynecologist (OB/GYN) Inara Omuso, MD. The condition causes inflammation, irritation, chronic pelvic pain, and potential scarring of surrounding pelvic tissue.

#### Symptoms Can Range in Severity

The most common symptom of endometriosis is pain during menstruation which ranges from moderate and manageable to severe and debilitating.

Other symptoms can include:

- Pain with intercourse
- Painful bladder symptoms

- Pain with bowel movements
- Chronic lower back and pelvic pain not associated with menstruation
- Infertility. According to Dr. Omuso, up to 4 in 10 women with infertility are found to have endometriosis. This can be related to inflammation or scarring of the fallopian tubes.

#### Treating Endometriosis

Endometriosis has no known cause or cure and is primarily treated based on a woman's symptoms. Treatment is often effective at managing pain and improving a woman's quality of life.

Mild to moderate symptoms of endometriosis are often treated with:

- Over-the-counter anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving medications
- Hormonal therapy such as birth control pills (with or without estrogen) can reduce or eliminate menstrual bleeding

- Non-birth control hormonal options via an injection or a pill

A provider may recommend certain minimally invasive procedures to confirm the diagnosis and address and remove scar tissue to provide varying degrees of relief for patients with more severe symptoms of endometriosis.

Hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) with or without the removal of the ovaries may also be an option for some patients. Dr. Omuso cautions, however, that surgical treatment is not typically a first choice as most women will still experience symptoms after surgery.

To manage symptoms, patients are also encouraged to make lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, reducing alcohol consumption, remaining physically active, implementing healthy dietary changes, and incorporating physical and behavioral therapy.

#### When to See Your Provider

Anyone experiencing the symptoms of endometriosis should visit a women's health provider to discuss the options for diagnosis, treatment, and management. Ultimately, the goal of treatment is to improve and restore a woman's overall quality of life.



**Inara Omuso, MD**  
Obstetrician-Gynecologist (OB/GYN)

Need help managing the symptoms of endometriosis?

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Omuso, please call **301-877-7200**.



If you are a nonprofit looking to provide services or resources, please reach out to Jessica Gamero for more information at [jessica.a.gamero@medstar.net](mailto:jessica.a.gamero@medstar.net)



# 2025: The Year of the da Vinci 5 Robot at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center has added the newest generation of the Intuitive robotic surgical system—the da Vinci 5 (DV5)—to its operating



room technology. The da Vinci 5 robotic system enhances the hospital's existing robotic surgery program with more than 10,000 times the computing power of previous da Vinci robotic systems. The new robot offers advanced capabilities for minimally invasive procedures including hysterectomies and gynecologic surgery; urological procedures of the prostate, kidney, and bladder; and gastrointestinal procedures like bowel surgery, gallbladder removal, and colon cancer surgery.

Nahid Mazarei, MD, OB/GYN and a leader of MedStar Southern Maryland's robotic surgery program, performed the hospital's first gynecological surgery utilizing the new da Vinci 5 system in December 2024 noting, "The new DV5 robot is the most advanced robotic surgical system on the market today. In addition to its precision, it streamlines many processes that previously required multiple people to perform, allowing for more OR efficiency and ultimately benefiting our patients."

More than 150 new enhancements in the DV5 system provide even greater surgical outcomes for patients and enhanced capabilities for surgeons including:

- Enhanced surgical senses via Force Feedback technology allow surgeons not only to see more of the surgical area but also feel it through the movements of the robotic arms. This enhances surgical precision, especially in delicate procedures.
- Enhanced high-definition, 3D visualization provides an even



clearer, more magnified view of the surgical site.

- Greater surgeon autonomy allows the surgeon to perform more functions to streamline care team workflow in the operating room, resulting in shorter surgeries in many cases.

## Robotic Surgery Benefits for Patients

The da Vinci 5 complements MedStar Southern Maryland's existing da Vinci robotic technology. Minimally invasive robotic surgery offers patients multiple benefits including less overall trauma to the body due to small and fewer incisions, reduced blood loss, shorter hospital stays, less scarring and post-operative pain, and a quicker return to their lives.

"The addition of the da Vinci 5 robotic surgical system to our existing da Vinci robot provides the capability to have two dedicated operating rooms to perform robotic surgery simultaneously," added Dr. Mazarei. "This allows MedStar Southern Maryland to offer advanced robotic procedures to even more patients. We are proud to offer our community the most advanced technology close to home."

To learn more about robotic surgery, please visit [MedStarHealth.org/Robotics](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Robotics).



**Nahid Mazarei, MD**  
OB/GYN  
301-877-7200

## Tidbit



# Innovative Brain Tumor Treatment Gets an Upgrade

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's ZAP-X® Gyroscopic Radiosurgery™ system was recently updated to provide an even higher level of safety and comfort for patients receiving this novel brain tumor treatment. The upgrade increased the number of radiation beam angles used to treat brain tumors to greatly improve dose delivery while the couch where patients lie during the treatment was expanded to enhance comfort.

The ZAP-X technology delivers precise radiation inside the skull to treat brain tumors while sparing surrounding healthy tissue and structures from the effects of radiation. This highly targeted treatment offers patients an alternative to invasive brain surgery, effectively eliminating brain tumors and preventing them from returning. MedStar Southern Maryland was one of the first three centers in the entire world, and the first provider on the East Coast region, to offer ZAP-X.

Radiation oncologist Matthew Witek, MD, noted, "These improvements demonstrate our continued leadership in providing the highest quality stereotactic radiosurgery to patients with brain tumors in the Southern Maryland region."



**Matthew Witek, MD**  
Radiation Oncologist



To learn more about ZAP-X or to schedule an appointment, please visit [MedStarHealth.org/ZAP-X](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/ZAP-X).







## Eight Medstar Southern Maryland Physicians Named to *Washingtonian* Magazine's 2024 Top Doctors List

Congratulations to the eight physicians who were named to the *Washingtonian* magazine Top Doctors list in 2024. These providers see patients both at MedStar Southern Maryland and other MedStar Health locations, offering exceptional care across various specialties:

- Peter Ahn, MD - Radiation Oncology
- Amjad Anaizi, MD - Neurosurgery
- Walid Chalhoub, MD - Gastroenterology
- Charlotte Gamble, MD - Gynecologic Oncology
- Faheem Sandhu, MD - Neurosurgery
- Keith Unger, MD - Radiation Oncology
- Jean-Marc Voyadzis, MD - Neurosurgery
- Patricia Wehner, MD - Breast Surgery

Nearly 13,000 doctors in DC, Maryland, and Virginia were surveyed to find out who they would recommend in a variety of specialties for the annual Top Doctors list. These eight MedStar Health physicians exemplify a commitment to compassionate, exceptional patient care.

## Laboratory for Sleep Disorders Receives Accreditation



process to achieve the five-year accreditation including on-site visitation and inspection yielding zero deficiencies and staff meetings. The center met or exceeded

The Laboratory for Sleep Disorders at MedStar Southern Maryland recently received accreditation from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), marking a first for the program and demonstrating its high quality of care and services to patients with sleep disorders.

The Laboratory for Sleep Disorders underwent a rigorous

the high standards of care set forth by AASM in areas such as the overall facility and equipment, personnel, policies and procedures, and quality assurance.

"Achieving AASM accreditation is the gold standard for sleep medicine facilities," said Maria Wooldridge, MA, MHA, RRT,

director of pulmonary services. "This was the first year we applied for accreditation and the achievement exemplifies the team's dedication to our vision in sleep medicine."

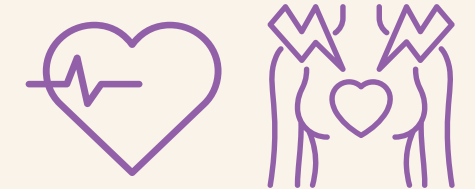
The Laboratory for Sleep Disorders, staffed by a multidisciplinary team of specialists, provides comprehensive sleep evaluations for patients experiencing a variety of sleep disturbances that impact quality of life and overall health and well-being.

To schedule a sleep study or for more information, call **301-877-4600**.

# Heart & Soul

Helping you get to the heart of the matter.

## Understanding Chest Pain in Women



The most common symptom of a heart attack is chest pain, but women often experience it differently than men. The classic left-sided chest pain radiating to the neck or jaw isn't always present in women.

Cardiologist Alex Ryzhikov, MD, explained that women may have symptoms such as right-sided chest pressure, upper abdominal pain, acid reflux (heartburn), muscle ache, nausea, or shortness of breath—often without the "typical" chest pain.

### Estrogen's role in women's heart health

According to Dr. Ryzhikov, estrogen has a protective effect on the heart. After menopause, estrogen production declines significantly, leading to an increase in heart disease in women especially after the age of 60.

"On average, women present about 10 years later than men with symptoms of heart disease, including heart attacks, because they've lost that estrogen buffer," he noted.

### Could it be CMD?

Nearly half of women with heart attack symptoms have no detectable blockages in major arteries but may suffer from a lesser-known and often difficult to diagnose condition called coronary microvascular dysfunction (CMD). CMD affects the smallest heart arteries, preventing proper relaxation and reducing oxygen-rich blood flow. Symptoms of CMD often mimic those of a heart attack, including chest pain.

Traditional diagnostic imaging tests such as angiograms (an x-ray of the heart that identifies blockages in major arteries) often fail to visualize the very small coronary arteries involved with CMD. MedStar Southern Maryland, however, is the only hospital in Southern Maryland and Prince George's County to use advanced technology called the Coroventis CoroFlow Cardiovascular System to measure the efficiency of the heart's tiniest vessels and assess for adequate blood flow. Thanks to this advanced software-based platform, CMD can be effectively diagnosed and managed with

medication, providing relief from chest pain and other symptoms.

### Don't ignore warning signs

Dr. Ryzhikov stressed that women should not downplay any new or unexplained cardiac symptoms regardless of whether they fit the "classic" heart attack presentation.

"Pay attention to the intensity, severity, and duration of these potential warning signs," he advised, noting that women are more likely to experience subtle or gradually worsening symptoms than men. "Don't delay in seeking medical care for any cardiac issues."

**Anyone experiencing a sudden onset of heart attack symptoms should call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency room.**



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accompanied by other symptoms," Dr. LeBude said.

A cardiac evaluation begins with a thorough medical history and a review of the frequency and trigger of palpitation occurrences.

A test called an electrocardiogram (EKG), which examines the heart rhythm, may also be performed, along with blood work. In some patients, a heart monitor may be used to measure the heart's rhythm when palpitations arise.

Treatment involves addressing underlying conditions and triggers, such as stress or lifestyle factors. If the palpitations are caused by an abnormal rhythm known as premature atrial contractions (PACs) or premature ventricular contractions (PVCs), medications such as beta-blockers or calcium channel blockers may be prescribed.

The takeaway on heart palpitations is this: know your body and when something is not right. Get any abnormal cardiac symptoms checked out by a specialist.



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## Why Does Your Heart Skip a Beat?

### Heart palpitations explained

Just like butterflies in your stomach, your heart can also feel a flutter. This skipping of a beat is called a heart palpitation. While this sensation may seem like a serious problem, according to cardiologist Bryan LeBude, MD, "Heart palpitations are common and are typically not harmful or an indication of a serious heart condition."

#### What does a heart palpitation feel like?

Heart palpitations are the sensation of an abnormal heartbeat caused by changes in the normal electrical rhythm of the heart. They can be felt in your chest, throat, neck, and ear, and feel like your heart is:

- Beating sooner or later than it normally does (skipping a beat)
- Fluttering
- Pounding or racing
- Beating too hard or too fast

In most cases, heart palpitations

are the body's response to something triggering the heart to beat differently than normal. Common triggers include:

- Stress and anxiety
- Stimulants like caffeine, nicotine, or certain medications
- Hormonal changes
- Dehydration and electrolyte imbalances
- Sleep disorders including sleep apnea and insomnia

Dr. LeBude stressed, however, that less commonly, palpitations can indicate an underlying heart rhythm disorder or condition of the thyroid, anemia, abnormal blood counts, or low oxygen levels.

#### When is it time for a heart evaluation?

"Anyone experiencing ongoing heart palpitations should be evaluated by a doctor, especially if they are persistent or



## 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.



Need to find a cardiologist? Visit [MedStarHealth.org/FindADoc](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/FindADoc).





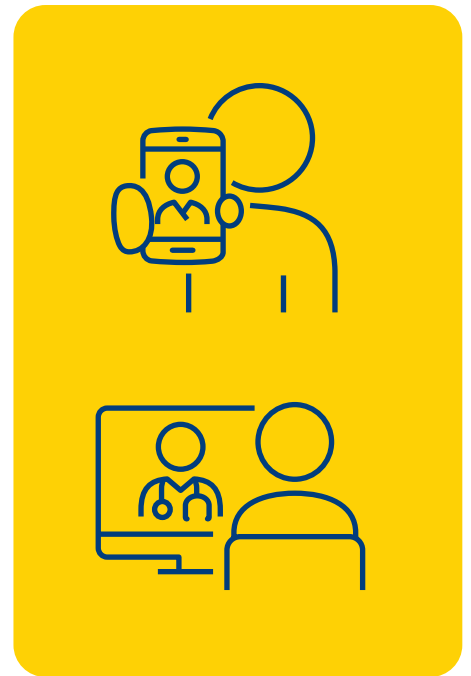
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