

Health



A Look at This Year's
Community Baby
Shower

**From Heart
Attack to Hope:**
Jeffrey's Journey

Clinical Trials
Close to Home

**Hope Starts
Here: Spreading
Awareness for
Organ Donation**

Letter from the president.

Dear Neighbor,

Serving our community through programs, services, and advanced care is at the heart of everything we do at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. This mission to serve patients with the highest quality care can be seen throughout this issue of *Health* magazine.

April was National Donate Life Month, and our very own chief medical officer, Dr. Chile Ahaghotu, has been working with community partners to share important education and information about organ donation and the gift of life. Organ donation, whether living or deceased, is the ultimate gift of life, providing many members of our community with the second chance they so desperately need and deserve. I urge you to read this inspiring article and learn more about how you can become an organ donor.

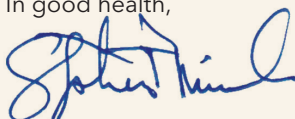
Speaking of second chances, we share the story of Jeffrey Collier, who survived an unexpected heart attack thanks to the rapid response and lifesaving interventions of our STEMI response team. As a designated Maryland STEMI Center, MedStar Southern Maryland continues to exceed national standards for caring for heart attack patients like Mr. Collier. You will also meet some of our community-based cardiologists in this issue who provide vital information on important testing and diagnostics available to help people with heart disease treat their conditions optimally.

Our Second Annual Community Baby Shower was also held in April, exemplifying the hospital's commitment to fostering a healthy start for mothers and babies. It was great to see hundreds of families attend this year's event, and we are grateful for the support of our community partners.

As you read this issue, you will learn more about our Comprehensive MS Center, how strokes are affecting more young people and what to do about this growing concern, tips for effective use of sunscreen as the days grow longer and brighter, and see the incredible transformation of the hospital's pre- and post-operative unit, which re-opened in March with a new design to improve surgical care for our patients.

Healthcare is a team effort. We are as grateful for our incredible providers and staff as we are for the patients, families, and community members who make our mission of service possible. Together, we are building a stronger, healthier community.

In good health,



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



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President, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center



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Tidbits

1

Education, Support, and Encouragement Embody Diabetes Prevention Program

The Diabetes Prevention Program at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center is a lifestyle change program that teaches patients to make healthy modifications that become lifelong habits. Lifestyle coaches counsel individuals about healthier food options and the benefits of daily exercise as well as teach participants how to read and understand a food label to empower them to make better choices. Education is the cornerstone of the program, which also includes one-on-one and group support to encourage participants throughout their diabetes journey.



Learn more about the Diabetes Prevention Program by calling **202-235-6493** or emailing

jessica.a.gamero@medstar.net.

2



Multiple Sclerosis Expertise Close to Home

For the first time in more than a decade, residents of Prince George's County living with multiple sclerosis (MS) have access to specialized care and treatment at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Care Center. Learn how this Center is providing more patients with hope on page 15.

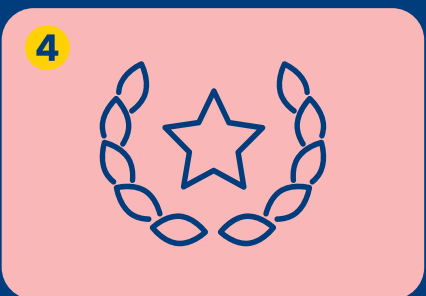
3



Access to Clinical Research

Did you know that clinical trials provide more patients with access to breakthrough treatments before they become mainstream? Check out page 16 for available clinical trials enrolling new patients for a variety of conditions.

4



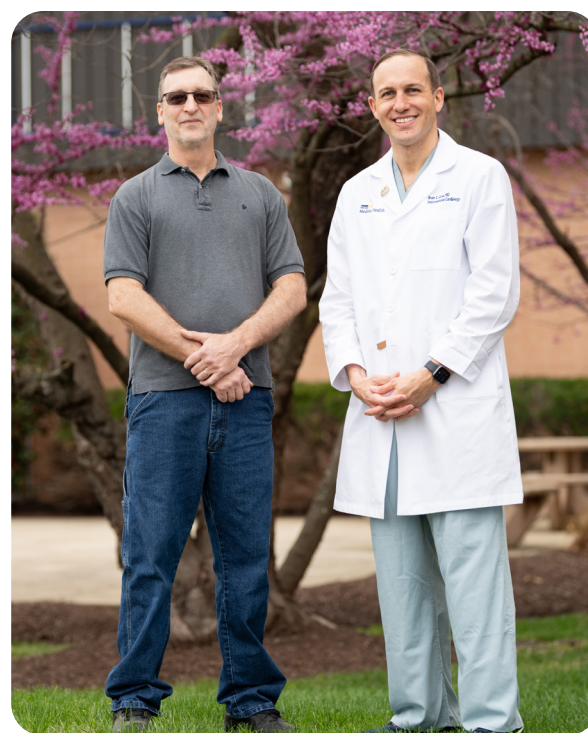
MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center Receives Patient Safety Innovation Award

MedStar Southern Maryland recently received the Minogue Circle of Honor Award 2025 for innovative approaches to reducing hospital-acquired pressure injuries, exemplifying the hospital's ongoing commitment to patient safety. Read more on page 16.



Heart Attack Survivor Gets a Second Chance at Life

"When I thanked Dr. Case, he told me he was just doing his job, but it was so much more than that; he and the team saved my life," Mr. Collier said. "I'm so grateful to be alive."



The day began like any other for Jeffrey Collier. He and his wife were driving to their favorite park on a beautiful Sunday in November when Mr. Collier started feeling strange. What seemed like an air bubble in his chest quickly turned into a pain that radiated through his upper body and down into his arm. He pulled the car over, broke into a cold sweat, and began vomiting. Initially dismissing these symptoms as food poisoning, he soon realized it was something more. His wife took the wheel and the couple drove to a nearby firehouse where Mr. Collier, barely able to walk, pleaded for help. Within minutes, the emergency medical services (EMS) crew arrived, initiated testing, and confirmed Mr. Collier's worst fear—he was experiencing a heart attack.

Lifesaving Rapid Response

The EMS crew monitored Mr. Collier's EKG and radioed ahead to MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, alerting the hospital that a STEMI (ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction, or heart attack) patient was incoming. This advance notice activated the hospital's rapid response team.

As a designated Maryland STEMI Center, MedStar Southern Maryland meets or exceeds all national standards for providing immediate care for heart attack patients. The hospital's STEMI response team was ready and waiting when Mr. Collier arrived at the emergency department. He was immediately transported to the cardiac catheterization lab for lifesaving intervention.

"Time is muscle," noted interventional cardiologist Brian Case, MD, director of cardiac

catheterization. "Every minute an artery remains blocked increases the risk of permanent heart damage and poor clinical outcomes. Care for heart attack patients begins with our EMS partners, so when patients reach us, we are ready to act."

Mr. Collier attested to the swift action of the team, stating, "I opened my eyes in the cath lab to see Dr. Case enter the room. He was like a rock star!" Mr. Collier recalled. "He was comforting, very knowledgeable, and so professional. As soon as he walked in, I knew I was in the best hands."

Critical Intervention

Cardiac imaging revealed three blocked arteries. Mr. Collier's back artery was 100% blocked and the front artery was 80% obstructed. Dr. Case immediately performed a cardiac catheterization procedure, threading a special catheter through Mr. Collier's wrist up to the heart to place two stents that opened the back artery. Mr. Collier experienced immediate relief once blood flow was restored. A temporary balloon pump was inserted to help his heart recover from the trauma, which was removed the following day. In January, Dr. Case placed an additional stent in the front artery.

"Mr. Collier's heart function completely recovered due to the rapid response time," explained Dr. Case. "We call this 'door to balloon time,' an important metric measuring the minutes from hospital arrival to opening the blocked vessel. Mr. Collier's door-to-balloon time was 47 minutes."

The American College of Cardiology and American Heart Association set a standard

of 90 minutes for door-to-balloon time to minimize heart muscle damage. At MedStar Southern Maryland, 100% of patients meet or exceed this metric, with a median door-to-balloon time of 50 minutes compared to the national benchmark of 63 minutes.

"This excellent performance reflects consistent communication with our EMS partners, a well-prepared emergency room, a cohesive catheterization lab team, and community education about chest pain," added Dr. Case.

A Second Chance

Mr. Collier, who never thought a heart attack could happen to him at 54, is embracing his second chance at life. Looking back, he acknowledges that certain behaviors such as smoking and missing regular health screenings for high blood pressure and high cholesterol put him at higher risk for a heart attack. After his experience, he quit smoking immediately, improved his diet, and continued his exercise regimen. He now takes regular medication for his heart and, most importantly, cherishes every moment with his family.

"When I thanked Dr. Case, he told me he was just doing his job, but it was so much more than that; he and the team saved my life," Mr. Collier said. "I'm so grateful to be alive."

If you experience any symptoms of a heart attack including chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, pain that radiates down the left arm, nausea or vomiting, cold sweat, heartburn, upper back pain, and/or pain in the jaw, call 9-1-1 immediately.



To learn more about heart services at MedStar Health, visit [MedStarHealth.org/Heart](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Heart).



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



An Updated and Modern Pre- and Post-Operative Unit is Unveiled

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center celebrated the re-opening of its recently renovated pre-operative surgery and post-anesthesia care unit (PACU) at a special ribbon-cutting and dedication ceremony on March 10, 2025.

The approximately \$3 million renovation of the existing 4,000 sq. ft. space transformed the PACU and pre-operative surgical unit from a segmented and undersized area to a fully integrated, open, modern, and accessible layout. The new space was designed for improved collaboration and efficiency among healthcare providers and enhanced comfort for patients before and after surgery.

Pre-op now occupies one side of the unit and PACU the other. The updated unit features 17 patient bays with the ability to flex as needed, as well as two nurses' stations, a breakroom, a dictation room, a workroom, and three restrooms (two for patients and one for staff). The revamped space greatly enhances patient flow, comfort, and privacy before and after surgery while accommodating state-of-the-art medical equipment and technology to optimize care.

"This updated unit is a game-changer. The improved layout will allow us to be more efficient and streamlined in the way we deliver care," stated spine surgeon David Weiner, MD. "I'm most excited about what this means for our patients. This isn't just about more space; it is about better care, smoother transitions, and a more comfortable experience for those who trust us with their health."

Stephen T. Michaels, MD, president of MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center and senior vice president, MedStar Health, explained that the renovated pre- and post-operative surgical space is part of MedStar Health's ongoing commitment and investment plan for MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center.

"The much-needed renovation of the pre-operative surgical unit and PACU was driven by significant growth in surgical and procedural volumes at MedStar Southern Maryland over the past several years," stated Dr. Michaels. "The updated space is an achievement that reflects our ongoing commitment to enhancing patient care at the hospital and in our community."

MedStar Southern Maryland Welcomes General Surgeon Stacey T. Martindale, MD



Dr. Martindale brings expertise in general and minimally invasive surgeries, including abdominal procedures, hernia repair, and other minimally invasive robotic surgery.

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center is pleased to welcome Stacey T. Martindale, MD, MBA, FACS. Dr. Martindale is a fellowship-trained general surgeon who specializes in general and minimally invasive surgical procedures including abdominal surgery, hernia repair, gallbladder surgery, lipoma, cyst, and skin mass excisions, bowel resection, appendectomy, laparoscopic cholecystectomy, and other minimally invasive and robotic surgery.

Before joining MedStar Southern Maryland, Dr. Martindale served as the trauma ICU director and trauma surgeon at Reston Hospital Center in Reston, VA. She received her medical degree from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ)/New Jersey Medical School in Newark, NJ, where she was also an internal medicine resident. She completed her

general surgery residency at the Brooklyn Hospital Center in Brooklyn, NY, and was a surgical critical care fellow at the Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis, IN. She is certified by the American Board of Surgery and certified in surgical critical care.

Dr. Martindale believes in working closely with her patients to make the best recommendations based on an individual's healthcare needs. "I work in partnership with my patients to create a treatment plan we both feel comfortable with. Medical decisions can be overwhelming, and I provide the guidance and reassurance my patients need to make the best choice for their health," she stated.



Dr. Martindale sees patients at MedStar Health General Surgery at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center:
7501 Surratts Rd., Suite 303, Clinton, MD
To schedule an appointment, please call **301-877-7202**.



Protect Your Skin as Days Grow Longer



With spring in full swing, the longer days mean increased exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. Family medicine physician Sijuwola Ajinwun, MD, emphasizes that sun protection is important for all skin tones, especially in the spring and summer months. She noted, however, that some patients with darker skin express frustration about sunscreens that leave a white cast on the skin, sometimes leading them to skip this safeguard altogether.

Dr. Ajinwun cautions against skipping sunscreen, noting, "Sun damage not only increases skin cancer risk but also prematurely ages the skin. Darker skin tones are more prone to hyperpigmentation, which is also worsened by UV exposure. For this and other reasons, it is important to use the right type of sunscreen, which is a minimum SPF of 30, but 45 or 50 is preferred," she advised.

What about sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 80 or 100? Dr. Ajinwun suggests sticking to SPF 50, explaining that products exceeding this threshold offer minimal or no additional protection while potentially creating a false sense of sun safety.

Proper Application is Key

The effectiveness of sunscreen largely depends on proper application. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, adults should use approximately two tablespoons (equivalent to one shot glass) of sunscreen for exposed areas of the face and body. For the face alone, using a nickel-sized amount of sunscreen is necessary for optimal protection.

Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours, a fact many people often forget. Reapplication is also necessary after swimming or heavy sweating to ensure protection throughout the day.

Spray vs. Cream-Based Sunscreens

While spray sunscreens offer convenience, Dr. Ajinwun advises patients to stick with creams and lotions with a minimum SPF of 30 for the best coverage and protection.

"Most people do not apply enough sunscreen using a spray and achieving an even application on all exposed parts of the skin can be a challenge," she said.

Her recommendation? "Use spray sunscreen in a pinch, but make sure you are using it liberally."

So get outside and enjoy a daily dose of sun-induced vitamin D, but do so safely. Getting in the habit of applying sunscreen every day can help you maintain healthy skin for years to come.



Sijuwola Ajinwun, MD
Family Medicine

Dr. Sijuwola Ajinwun sees patients at MedStar Southern Maryland's Camp Springs location:
5801 Allentown Road, Suite 510
Camp Springs, MD, 20746

To schedule an appointment, please call **301-899-0020**.





Organ Donation Awareness and The Gift of Life

John Bayton's journey with kidney disease began in 2003 when he fell severely ill and was taken to the emergency room. It was discovered he had end-stage kidney disease and would require immediate dialysis to perform the job his failing kidneys could not.



"I didn't know what kidney disease was," John recalled of his shocking diagnosis. He was suddenly thrust into a new life filled with medications and life-sustaining dialysis treatments as he quickly had to come to terms with kidney failure. "It was intimidating and scary," he remembered.

Then his healthcare team asked a question that would change the trajectory of his health, and his life, "Do you want a kidney transplant?"

A Second Chance

The process of being added to the waiting list for a deceased donor kidney and finding a match took years. Dialysis became a regular part of John's life.

John finally received a donor kidney in 2009, and his transplant surgery was performed expertly at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, an experience he recalled as "amazing."

By 2016, however, John's body began rejecting the kidney. He returned to dialysis and joined the waiting list once more. Two years later, he received his second kidney transplant, giving him another chance at life.

Addressing Disparities

Chiledum Ahaghotu, MD, MBA, MHL, FACS, vice president of medical affairs and chief medical officer at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center noted the significant disparities in organ donation that affect patients like John. He explained that while the number of people benefitting

from organ transplantation in the U.S. has grown over the past decade, minority populations continue to face disproportionate access to transplantation and misinformation about becoming organ donors.

"Despite comprising nearly 60% of transplant waiting lists, minorities account for only about 30% of organ donors," cited Dr. Ahaghotu. "There is, however, a clear opportunity to increase the organ donation rates as well as awareness among minorities here in our community."

Breaking Down Barriers

Dr. Ahaghotu acknowledged historical injustices that have fostered mistrust among African Americans toward medical institutions and the fear among minority populations that expressing a willingness to donate organs might lead to substandard care.

To address these concerns, Dr. Ahaghotu and MedStar Southern Maryland have partnered with community organizations like Clinton Baptist Church in Prince George's County for grassroots outreach. These efforts aim to demystify and destigmatize organ donation through culturally sensitive



education and community engagement. Other initiatives, such as the National Minority Organ Tissue Transplant and Education Program (MOTEP), are also increasing nationwide awareness and helping minority populations understand the life-saving benefits of organ donation.

Dr. Ahaghotu emphasized the profound impact of increased organ donation: "As we increase organ donations in minority communities, we will increase the pool of available organs, making it easier for minorities to get the transplants they need."

"It's a virtuous cycle that begins with education, awareness, and trust," said Dr. Ahaghotu.

Advocating for Awareness

Since his second kidney transplant in 2019, John continues to be in excellent health and has become an advocate for organ donation and kidney disease awareness. He regularly gives community education talks and meets with medical professionals and patients about the critical importance of early detection of kidney disease and organ donation awareness and acceptance. He has also met

with legislators on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC to advocate for kidney health. For his work, John was honored in 2023 as a Hero of Hope by the National Kidney Fund.

Together, advocates like John Bayton and healthcare leaders like Dr. Ahaghotu are working to spread this message about organ donation throughout the community: organ donation saves lives and is the ultimate gift of life.

To learn more about organ donation or to register to become a donor, visit the following organizations online:

MedStar Health

[MedStarHealth.org/LivingDonor](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/LivingDonor)

Donate Life Maryland

donatelifemaryland.org/

Infinite Legacy

infinitelegacy.org/



Organ Donation Facts

According to Donate Life America, more than 100,000 people await lifesaving transplants nationwide, with 13 people dying every day while waiting.

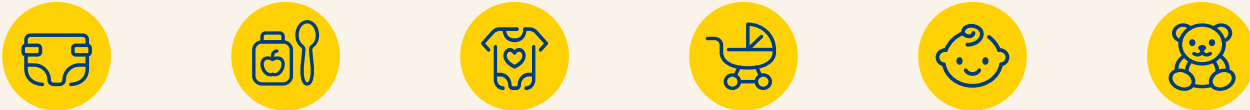
Did you know?

- People of all ages and medical histories can be potential donors
- Registering as an organ donor does not impact the care you receive - your health is always the priority
- Deceased donors can specify how they want their organs to be procured
- Living organ donation is possible for kidneys and portions of other organs like the liver

"At MedStar Health, we work very closely with donor families to ensure the process of organ donation is done with dignity and transparency," Dr. Ahaghotu shared.



Our Second Annual Community Baby Shower Connects New Moms to Vital Maternal/Newborn Resources



New and expecting moms from across Prince George's County gathered at Clinton Baptist Church for MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's Second Annual Community Baby Shower on April 12, 2025. Committed to connecting new moms with the vital resources they need to promote healthier lives for mothers and their babies, the annual event brings together community partners and healthcare specialists to share education and essential resources.

This year's event featured guest speakers covering topics from support for partners and new dads to car seat safety and the importance of proper nutrition throughout the prenatal and postpartum periods. Attendees also benefitted from health and wellness screenings including blood pressure checks, information on how to access programs like WIC,

lactation consultations, and car seat installation demos. "This important event connects MedStar Southern Maryland to the community, helping to ensure that new moms feel seen, heard, and valued," stated Charmaine Ivey, Ed.D., MPH, CHES, director of population and community health.

Healthy Babies Program Gains Momentum

A key focus of this year's Baby Shower was introducing attendees to the Prince George's County Healthy Babies program and helping families access the program's benefits. Launched in 2024 through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Healthy Start Initiative-Enhanced Grant received by MedStar Southern Maryland, the program aims to improve health outcomes and foster healthier futures for moms and babies.

Led by MedStar Southern Maryland's population and

community health team, the Healthy Babies program provides assistance and important pregnancy and postpartum resources throughout the year.

This program was designed to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality rates in Prince George's County. Participants who register for the grant-funded initiative receive critical resources including monthly diapers, car seats, and access to prenatal and postpartum services such as perinatal nurses and lactation consultants for breastfeeding assistance.

"The Healthy Babies program is available year-round," explained Silvia Peñate, MPH, CHES, program coordinator & health educator. "Our goal is to build stronger and healthier relationships with new moms in the community for a healthier pregnancy and postpartum period."



For more information on the Prince George's County Health Start Program, please visit [MedStarHealth.org/HealthyStart](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/HealthyStart)

Stroke Can Strike Young Adults, Too



Stroke is not just something that happens to older people. According to Fahad Khan, DO, vascular neurologist, incidences of stroke have been on the rise in the under-45 population for over a decade.

"Regular check-ups and annual screenings for stroke risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol are essential even when you are young and healthy," said Dr. Khan, who also advised young patients avoid smoking, excessive alcohol use, poor diet, and obesity in their 20s and 30s, and beyond.

"Identifying and managing chronic conditions with proper diet, regular exercise, and medication, if needed, is essential at every age," he added. "You are never too young to focus on a healthy lifestyle and eliminating risky behaviors that can lead to stroke."

Pregnancy: A Lesser Known Risk Factor

In pregnancy, a woman's body may be more prone to forming blood clots, which can put some young women at a higher risk for stroke, particularly individuals with pre-existing conditions such as high blood pressure or

diabetes. OB/GYNs are vigilant in monitoring pregnant patients for any red flags, but women should also be aware of any changes in their health during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

Hormonal contraceptives can also contribute to stroke risk in some women, especially when combined with smoking or unmanaged high blood pressure, so it's important to discuss your options and health history with a healthcare provider.

Recognizing Stroke Signs: BE FAST

"Many young people do not often associate stroke with their age group, leading to delays in seeking medical attention," stated Dr. Khan. "Symptoms of a stroke may be brushed off or mistaken for less serious conditions. Knowing the warning signs of stroke and acting quickly can be lifesaving."

A simple acronym, BE FAST, can help identify stroke symptoms:

- Balance issues or dizziness
- Eyesight changes or vision loss
- Face drooping on one side
- Arm weakness or numbness
- Speech difficulties or slurring
- Time to call 911

"Time is Brain"

The saying "time is brain" means that rapid medical intervention is lifesaving. Stroke treatments delivered in the emergency department, such as clot-busting medications and surgical procedures to remove blood clots, should be administered within hours of symptom onset.

"Administering clot-busting medication is very time-sensitive. The sooner it is given, the better the chances of preventing long-term brain damage or disability," explained Dr. Khan.

Whether you are 25 or 75, knowing your risks, being proactive with regular health and wellness screenings, maintaining a well-balanced diet, getting regular exercise, and recognizing the signs of a stroke are essential. Stroke awareness and early intervention save lives.

If you or a loved one experience any signs of a stroke, call 9-1-1 immediately and get to the nearest emergency department.



MedStar Georgetown Neurology at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center is located at:

**10401 Hospital Drive, Suite 102
Clinton, MD, 20735**



To schedule an appointment, please call **301-877-4540**.

Tidbit

The Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Care Center at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center—Providing New Hope to Patients in Prince George's County

For the first time in over a decade, residents of Prince George's County have access to specialized multiple sclerosis (MS) care right in their community at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Care Center.

Neuroimmunologist **Jemima Akinsanya, DO**, serves as the Center's director, bringing her passion for equitable and cutting-edge MS care to patients living with the neurological condition. Through her extensive training and expertise with the disease, including a fellowship in neuroimmunology and clinical research at the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Akinsanya is not just treating patients with MS, she's supporting them through holistic education.

"I believe that information empowers patients to understand their condition, what is happening in their own bodies, and how to choose the treatments that are best for their overall goals and health," she stated.

The Comprehensive MS Center Difference

Unlike general neurology practices, the Comprehensive MS Center provides specialized management specifically focused on multiple sclerosis and related disorders. Patients receive care from leading experts who are focused on the complexities of their condition. As part of the renowned Multiple Sclerosis and Neuroimmunology Center at



MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, patients at MedStar Southern Maryland have access to world-class MS care and treatments close to home.

Clinical Research Transforms Future MS Treatments

A key highlight of the Center is its commitment to research. By participating in cutting-edge clinical trials, patients not only receive the most advanced treatments but also contribute to future breakthroughs in MS care. Dr. Akinsanya is particularly passionate about educating the community about clinical trials while increasing diversity in medical research, ensuring that treatments benefit patients from all backgrounds.

"Even with new treatments introduced 20 or 30 years ago,

MS patients lived with significant disability," Dr. Akinsanya explained. "Today's advanced treatments are a result of ongoing research enabling patients to live higher quality lives with much less disability and more freedom of movement."

"There has been a long-standing need for excellent MS care in the local community for many years," Dr. Akinsanya added. "We are thrilled to have this Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Care Center here at MedStar Southern Maryland to provide the highest level of care and access to treatments our patients deserve."

To schedule a consultation at the Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Center at MedStar Southern Maryland, call **301-877-4540**.



"Even with new treatments introduced 20 or 30 years ago, MS patients lived with significant disability," Dr. Akinsanya explained. "Today's advanced treatments are a result of ongoing research enabling patients to live higher quality lives with much less disability and more freedom of movement."



B E F A S T
Balance Eyes Face Arms Speech Time



Bringing Clinical Trials to the Southern Maryland Community

Clinical trials offer patients access to cutting-edge, novel therapies before they become widely available. At MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, these carefully designed research studies investigate the effectiveness of specific treatments in areas including cancer, cardiology, neurology, and orthopedics. Clinical trials are how new medications, devices, and therapeutic approaches become FDA-approved for use in the treatment of a range of conditions,

improving outcomes for patients across the region.

Why participate in a clinical research trial?

1. Early access to new treatments not yet available to the public
2. Receive personalized care from our medical experts who closely monitor your health throughout the trial
3. Completely voluntary and patients can withdraw at any time
4. Contribute to medical advances, playing a role in the

development of treatments and technologies that will benefit future patients

Patient safety is always a top priority and multiple safeguards are in place to protect all trial participants. Patients interested in learning more or participating in an open research trial are encouraged to talk to their healthcare provider who will offer detailed guidance about candidacy and enrollment.

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

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center Receives Patient Safety Innovation Award

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center has been honored with the Minogue Circle of Honor Award 2025 by the Maryland Patient Safety Center for its project, "Decreasing Hospital Acquired Pressure Injuries: A Multifaceted Innovative Approaches that Enhance Equitable and Quality Care."

Pressure injuries affect 2.5 million patients annually, making the prevention of hospital-acquired pressure injuries (HAPIs) a top priority. The hospital launched a comprehensive, multi-year quality improvement initiative targeting these injuries, beginning in the emergency

department (ED) with innovative risk assessment strategies.

Key innovations included:

- Early risk assessment: Implementing the Braden Score in the ED to identify at-risk patients before hospital admission, with special attention to vulnerable populations like nursing home residents.
- Replacing foam mattresses with new inpatient beds featuring upgraded support surfaces
- Introducing a "turn clock" in the ICU to ensure patient repositioning every two hours
- Establishing the HAPI Triad Program with a wound

nurse, nursing director, and physician lead to oversee HAPI prevention efforts

- Creating "Wound Wednesday," a dedicated day for comprehensive inpatient skin assessments
- Implementing two-nurse verification for skin assessments

As a result of these efforts, the hospital's overall hospital-acquired pressure injury rate decreased by 62% during the pilot period, and timely screening allowed for early interventions.



Heart & Soul

Helping you get to the heart of the matter.



Cardiac Stress Tests

How a Simple Treadmill Test Can Save Your Life



If you have experienced chest discomfort during physical activity or become unusually short of breath during exercise or general activities, it may be time to check your heart.

According to interventional cardiologist Sonia Samtani, MD, FACC, "If a patient is having symptoms of chest pain, shortness of breath on exertion, or changes in their exercise capacity, oftentimes our first step is to evaluate with a stress test."

What Happens During a Stress Test?

During a treadmill stress test, you are connected to an electrocardiogram (EKG) while walking or jogging. As you gradually pick up the pace, the medical team watches how your heart responds.

"We are looking at your heart's electrical patterns for any concerning changes that might indicate reduced blood flow to

the heart muscle because of a blockage," Dr. Samtani explained.

For some patients with changes in the EKG upon physical exertion, doctors may recommend enhanced imaging during the test, such as a nuclear treadmill test or stress echocardiogram, which provides more detailed information about blood flow to the heart.

What If You "Fail" a Stress Test?

"If the stress test is positive, meaning it has EKG changes that may indicate a blockage or lack of blood flow, our next step is to discuss options for further evaluation or treatment," Dr. Samtani explained.

The follow-up options may include:

- A coronary CT angiogram (CTA), a non-invasive CT scan that provides detailed images of heart arteries. This is usually recommended if the stress test is mildly positive and the symptoms are not severe.
- A coronary angiogram, an invasive procedure performed

in a cardiac catheterization lab to evaluate the coronary arteries for blockages. Often, if a blockage is severe enough, a stent may be placed to open the artery and allow for improved blood flow.

When to Seek Medical Attention

You should contact your doctor if you experience:

- Chest discomfort, especially during physical activity
- Shortness of breath that is new or worsening
- Decreased exercise tolerance
- Any new and concerning cardiac symptoms, especially if you have a strong family history of heart disease

"A treadmill stress test is an important first step if you experience any unusual or new cardiac symptoms. This diagnostic tool can bring patients peace of mind when the test is normal or help us address any cardiac issues before they become serious problems," added Dr. Samtani.



Dr. Samtani sees patients two locations:

10403 Hospital Drive, Suite 102
Clinton, MD, 20735
P: 301-705-7870

10 Saint Patricks Drive, Floor 2
Waldorf, MD, 20603
P: 301-645-8322



4 Commonly Overlooked Signs of Heart Disease

Did you know that heart disease develops over a long period, often with few or no symptoms in the early stages? In fact, blood vessel disease can show up in various parts of the body before ever affecting the heart. Cardiologist Tarana Nekzad, DO, shares four potential signs of heart disease that should not be ignored:

1. Erectile Dysfunction (ED)

ED can be an early indicator of blood vessel disease, the same type that affects the heart muscle. While there are many causes of erectile dysfunction, if you are experiencing issues, speak with a urologist who can run tests to identify any underlying conditions. If blood vessel disease is suspected as a cause of ED, your doctor may refer you to a cardiologist for a complete cardiovascular workup.

2. Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD)

PAD occurs when narrowed arteries reduce blood flow to your limbs, particularly the legs. Early signs include unusual fatigue when walking, where leg muscles might feel tight or heavy prematurely. Even physically fit individuals may suddenly struggle with short distances due to leg fatigue. PAD often occurs along with heart disease in at least one-third of cases.

3. High Cholesterol at a Young Age

Individuals who have had high cholesterol since their 20s or 30s should consult a cardiologist. "Cholesterol issues should not be ignored even when you are young," noted Dr. Nekzad. "Cholesterol builds plaque in the blood vessels around the heart over time. High cholesterol at a young age can put a person at higher risk of developing heart disease sooner than someone who is diagnosed with high cholesterol in their 50s or 60s."

4. Early Onset Hypertension

Similarly, people who develop hypertension (high blood pressure) in their 20s or 30s face an increased risk of cardiovascular disease as they age. Dr. Nekzad points out that conditions most people do not associate with heart disease are closely linked, such as obstructive sleep apnea (OSA).

She explained, "30 to 50 percent of people with hypertension have underlying OSA, and in those with resistant hypertension, the number is closer to 80 percent. Obstructive sleep apnea is an independent risk factor for coronary artery disease, or heart artery plaquing, which can lead to heart attacks."

Being aware of these often-overlooked health conditions can lead to earlier intervention and better heart health outcomes. Any new or unusual health symptoms should always be discussed with your healthcare provider.



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