Patient Samantha Thomaston and Field Willingham, MD, MPH

When Samantha Thomaston’s doctor found a suspicious growth in her throat, he told her to call Emory immediately.

A children's counselor at an elementary school in LaGrange, Georgia, she had been battling Barrett’s esophagus, a precancerous condition caused by acid reflux, for six years.

After Emory physician Field Willingham removed the cancerous growth, Thomaston had two treatment options: the complete removal of her esophagus or a new approach, radio-frequency ablation (RFA).

Disturbed by the idea of a major surgery to remove her esophagus and restructure her stomach, Thomaston was eager to try RFA, which uses pulses of energy to eliminate cancerous and precancerous cells.

“Dr. Willingham is so caring,” she says. “He made me feel comfortable and explained everything so well. He drew pictures to show how he removed the polyp and how RFA would work.”

With a series of endoscopic procedures, Willingham removed the polyp from the lining of the esophagus and the precancerous cells using RFA, leaving her esophagus intact. Thomaston was able to return home after each procedure. “Dr. Willingham was great about showing me pictures of my esophagus after every treatment so I could see how it looked more normal each time.”

Two years later, Thomaston is completely healthy.
Discovery Never Stops

These are only a few examples of emerging technologies and innovative ways we care for our patients.

Be a part of the discovery process by making your gift to the Emory Division of Digestive Diseases.

Your support can:

• Fund research that benefits patients and advances our understanding of digestive disease prevention, diagnosis, and treatment
• Attract the best and brightest physician-scientists in the field
• Equip our facilities with the most advanced technology
• Help us educate the next generation of gastroenterologists

“When we develop new procedures, we ask: did we improve the quality of life for someone?”
—FIELD WILLINGHAM, MD, MPH

If you are interested in supporting our work, please contact:

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Emory physician Qiang Cai has introduced a new minimally invasive procedure at Emory—endoscopic submucosal dissection. Available in only a few centers in the United States, the procedure allows tumors to be removed without open surgery or harming the major organs.

An expert in performing balloon enteroscopy, Emory physician Steve Keilin uses this procedure to examine the small intestines—an area outside the reach of standard endoscopy. Hundreds of patients have benefited from balloon entroscopy, which is offered in only a few locations in Georgia.

Instead of the traditional method of sending biopsies to the pathology lab after a procedure, Emory physicians such as Kevin Woods are using an emerging technology to diagnose patients’ tumors during the examination itself. Known as confocal endomicroscopy, this technique uses lasers to produce microscopic images of suspicious areas. The new technology allows immediate diagnosis, and Emory is the only institution in the Southeast using it.

By pioneering lifesaving procedures, conducting game-changing research, and offering superb clinical care, Emory gastroenterologists are making a difference in people’s lives in the Southeast and beyond.

How You Can Help

Emory’s digestive diseases fellowship program is exemplary, and supporting a fellow is one of several ways you can help.

Fellows are physicians in advanced training programs in specific areas such as digestive diseases.

Fellowships require years of additional preparation and ensure that advanced procedures continue to be practiced and perfected by new generations of doctors, guaranteeing the best clinical care for patients.

By investing in fellowships, you help train the specialists of the future.