

For every  
**stage**  
of **life**

*Spring 2015*  
*Also in this issue*

**Demystifying Nephrology**  
**Treatment for Severe Asthma**  
**Less Stressful Vaccinations**  
**Resources for the Cancer Journey**



## BETTER CARDIAC OUTCOMES THROUGH PREVENTION

Since joining WWMG Cardiology in October, Dr. Jason Talavera has been favorably impressed with his patients.

“When we develop a plan together, they generally execute it, whereas before there was less compliance or adherence to therapy,” he says.

Dr. Talavera is emphatic about the importance of preventative care and early primary care referrals. “With all the excellent drugs currently available in cardiovascular medicine, there really shouldn’t be as many people coming in with massive heart attacks any more.”

Diagnostic procedures have evolved, he explains, and expanded imaging options increase the likelihood of catching cardiovascular disease early.

Along with echocardiograms, which look at heart function, valves, pressures in the heart and side effects of hypertension, nuclear cardiology and cardiovascular CT offer non-invasive alternatives for looking at the arteries of the heart.

Dr. Talavera is particularly interested in building a stronger cardiovascular CT program in our region because of how well suited the technique is for preventative

care. “It’s just like cardiac catheterization, but instead of doing a procedure with wires and catheters, we use contrast.” With much less radiation than nuclear cardiology, the CT scan shows different types of plaque, or if there’s calcium in the arteries, facilitating early intervention.

A demographic group for which prevention and education are increasingly important is postmenopausal women, among whom cardiovascular disease is the most common cause of death. “Menopause removes a layer of protection,” explains Dr. Talavera, “and a higher proportion of women can have atypical symptoms such as shortness of breath, fatigue or exercise-induced nausea or reflux.”

Red flags are a pre-existing diabetic condition or family history of coronary disease (a male relative younger than 55 or a female younger than 65).

“For patients who have a family history of premature coronary artery disease or are asymptomatic with intermediate risk, a coronary calcium score is an advanced marker recommended to reclassify their risk. Too frequently this is not done.”

What advice does he usually give his patients?

*continued on page 2*





continued from page 1



*Dr. Talavera examines a patient*

"It's hard, because 'exercise and eat healthy' is heard so often that most people tune it out. The advice I give my patients needs to connect with them. For instance, food addiction is a real disease. Awareness of addiction—to alcohol, smoking or food—is very important, and making sure it gets treated is part of the cure. Also, change takes time; the first step is making daily modifications."

When asked about initial impressions of Seattle, Dr. Talavera, who moved there from his native San Francisco with his wife and four-year-old son, puts in a good word for our much-maligned weather. "It's actually very similar to San Francisco's. There's been less clearing in the afternoons, but still, the weather is not too bad."

(For any 12s who are wondering, we did not ask him about his football allegiances, if any.)

Dr. Talavera holds a fellowship from California Pacific Medical Center in general cardiology with a focus on cardiovascular imaging, and he received his medical degree from the University of California, Davis. He is board certified in cardiology, echocardiography, cardiovascular CT, nuclear cardiology, vascular imaging and internal medicine.

Appointments with Dr. Talavera can be scheduled at 425-225-2700.

## DEMYSTIFYING NEPHROLOGY

If you've been putting off that yearly physical, the roughly half-million nephrons in your kidneys have a message for you: schedule it.

Nephrons? What? Don't worry; we will come back to them. In the meantime, WWMG Nephrologist Dr. Mark Gunning explains that the kidney panel—

get better or their kidney function lasts long enough," emphasizes Dr. Gunning.

When a patient is referred to a nephrologist, "the basic workup involves no fancy MRIs or CTs. We routinely do an ultrasound and confirmative blood tests, but really it's about establishing yourself in a program of ongoing care and monitoring. And it works."

Of course, "dialysis is there for those patients whose kidneys require it, and it's a great treatment."

Dr. Gunning believes that "the best thing we do for patients is to help them understand their particular condition. Renal dysfunction is staged into levels one through five, with three being a huge window that captures most patients." Serious kidney disease usually arises from diabetes or high blood pressure.

As for those nephrons in your kidneys that are



simple testing of blood and urine—in every regular physical reveals early-stage renal disease, which has no symptoms.

"Identifying weakened kidneys early can lead to treatments that will avoid that weakening becoming severe," he says, refuting the common misconception that if a patient is referred to a nephrologist, it's for dialysis. In fact, "often I see patients only once because their condition is mild, not something they need me to follow."

"Renal failure can take a long time to develop. For most patients, we can avert the course of the disease so that they either

urging you to schedule your routine physical, they are tiny worm-like units. "The head of the 'worm' is a sieve that filters everything, and the rest is a tube that reabsorbs what the body wants back. If the sieve head is damaged, for example, by the pressure from constant high blood sugars, everything starts pouring out, causing scar damage in the interior of the kidneys." Hence, the importance of early detection and early referral.

WWMG Nephrology has offices at 1330 Rockefeller Ave, Everett, WA 98201, (425) 258-6801.



## TREATMENT FOR SEVERE ASTHMA SPRINGS FORWARD

For people with asthma, springtime allergens can be as challenging as the hazards of cold and flu season, particularly for the approximately 10% of patients who have severe, persistent asthma.

This March, WWMG Pulmonologist Dr. Tomasz Ziedalski began treating such patients using a pioneering outpatient procedure called bronchial thermoplasty, which delivers small amounts of radiofrequency energy to the airways.

“People with severe asthma have significant hypertrophy or thickening of the



smooth mass around the bronchi. When they have asthma attacks, or exacerbations, the smooth mass constricts the airways, causing bronchospasms,” explains Dr. Ziedalski. “The radiofrequency, which is heat, reduces the smooth mass and thus the amount of obstruction in the airway and the bronchospasms.”

Dr. Ziedalski explains that bronchial thermoplasty is done over a period of six weeks in three stages separated by three-week intervals. “During each treatment we target different sections of the lungs. First, the right lower lobe, then the left lower lobe and finally the upper lobes in the third treatment.” Patients are sedated for the procedure, which takes approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

It’s a one-time treatment. “There’s no data proving that repeating it further down the line is of any benefit. The studies done to date show over 70 percent reduction in exacerbations extending over a five-year period.”

Dr. Ziedalski feels encouraged that bronchial thermoplasty can help patients with severe, persistent asthma who over time have exhausted standard treatment options—inhaled corticosteroids, bronchodilators, anti-allergy medications or immunotherapy—without experiencing relief from their symptoms.

“For example, one of the medications that patients with severe persistent asthma get a lot is prednisone, for which side effects include increased infections, osteoporosis, weight gain, hair loss and skin changes. It makes people feel pretty lousy. A patient with two or more exacerbations per year with need for prednisone would be a good candidate for bronchial thermoplasty,” he says.

The procedure, FDA approved for adults only, is recommended in the asthma guidelines of major groups including NIH National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, American Thoracic Society, American College of Chest Physicians and Global Initiative for Asthma.

More information on bronchial thermoplasty is available from WWMG Department of Pulmonary/Asthma Medicine in Everett (425-252-1116) and Edmonds (425-791-3084).

## ADVICE FOR LESS STRESSFUL VACCINATION



In conjunction with Infant Immunization Week April 24<sup>th</sup> through May 1st, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer parents several useful tips.

First, the CDC recommends doing advance research at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines) and writing down any questions or issues you might want to ask the doctor about.

On the day of the appointment, it’s a good idea to bring along a favorite comfort item. With older children, it’s best to be honest about the fact that shots can pinch or sting while reminding them that the discomfort will pass and the vaccines will help keep them healthy for a long time.

Before the shot is administered, parents should try to calmly distract the child with a toy, a story, a song, or something interesting in the room. It’s important to make eye contact and smile, talking or singing softly. If possible, it’s often helpful for a parent to hold the child tightly on her/his lap, and with an older child, to take deep breaths to help “blow out” the pain.

After the shot, it’s time for hugs, cuddles and praise! For babies, swaddling, breastfeeding or a bottle may offer quick relief. If older children cry, they should be comforted and reassured.

Redness, soreness or swelling from the shot can be alleviated with a clean, cool washcloth on the area. These reactions are usually mild and resolve on their own without treatment. If the child runs a fever, a cool sponge bath may help, or with the doctor’s approval, a non-aspirin pain reliever can be used. All children should get plenty to drink; some will eat less, sleep more or act fussy for a day or two. Parents should contact the doctor with any concerns.



## RESOURCES FOR THE CANCER JOURNEY

The American Cancer Society (ACS) offers patients three free programs through its Cancer Resource Center at Everett's Cancer Partnership, of which Western Washington Medical Group was a founding member in 2007.

The wig program provides free wigs and fittings, while the Look Good Feel Better program offers free cosmetics kits and classes by a certified cosmetologist.

Through the Road To Recovery program, free transportation is arranged for patients with some 30 local volunteer drivers, many of them cancer survivors.

ACS Patient Navigator Kathy Reiff explains that the Center provides cancer literature and information about free in-house support groups and special classes like gentle yoga, nutrition and art.

"The weekly art class is one of our most popular; you don't have to be an artist, and in fact some people just go for the companionship."

The Center's free hats are also popular. "Sometimes people come in every day

to get a hat, not because they want that many (hats), but because they want the socialization."

Reiff, who also serves as a link to community resources, works closely with Cancer Resource Center volunteers. They themselves wear many hats, clocking hundreds of hours while assisting with all sorts of projects in addition to supporting caregivers and patients.

"Probably two-thirds of our volunteers are cancer survivors. Talking with someone who's already been through the journey inspires hope," says Reiff.

"We know people can feel overwhelmed with information. We tell them that they don't have to remember everything; just us, and we'll point them in the right direction."

"And we are a very fun group. People come in here often with tears in their eyes and leave laughing."

The Cancer Resource Center is on the ground floor of the Cancer Partnership building at 1717 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Everett WA 98201 (425) 297-5507.



## Our Specialties

*Audiology & Hearing Aids, Cardiology, Clinical Laboratory, Clinical Research, Critical Care, Diabetes & Nutrition Education Center, Ear, Nose & Throat/Allergy/Audiology, Endocrinology & Metabolism, Endoscopy, Facial Plastic & Aesthetic Services/Lumina, Family Practice, Gastroenterology, Gateway Surgery Center, Nephrology, Orthopedic Sports, Spine & Hand Center, Pathology, Podiatry, Psychology, Pulmonary/Sleep Medicine, Rheumatology, Urology, Walk-In, North Puget Sound Center for Sleep Disorders*

## We're experts in our field.

Western Washington Medical Group has over 90 providers in 17 specialties with 22 locations in Snohomish, Skagit and Island counties. We strive to provide the highest quality, comprehensive medical care for our patients, which is why we require all of our physicians to be board certified/eligible in their specialty.

## *In Brief*

**The Diabetes and Nutrition Education Center** is offering a comprehensive Pre-Diabetes class. We know that Type 2 Diabetes can be prevented or delayed nearly 60% of the time with the right education.

Insurance plans do not yet cover the prevention of diabetes. Therefore, we offer a class to all WWMG patients with a low out of pocket fee of \$30. Class does not require a physician referral. Contact us to enroll. Each attendee may also bring one support person at no additional charge. Contact our office to schedule a class 425-791-3087

**WWMG Orthopedic, Sports, Spine and Hand Center** is excited to welcome Dr. Ali Anissipour.

Dr. Anissipour is a Fellowship trained, Board Eligible Orthopedic and Spine Surgeon practicing in Everett beginning August 2015 at the Orthopedic, Sports, Spine and Hand Center.

The training he received from Harborview Medical Center in Seattle enhanced his skills, talent and trauma training, taking it from simple to very complex spine care. This will enable him to deliver the latest technology in comprehensive spine care in a local hospital and facility.

## Patient Portal – paybills online!

Western Washington Medical Group has launched a patient portal on the Internet. Through the portal patients can access their statements, opt to receive statements via email, view current balances and make payments online. Just go to <https://secure.ww-medgroup.com> to get started! You will need a copy of your current statement in order to register. Please contact your provider's office for more details.