

NEW HOPE FOR THOSE WITH PANCREATIC CANCER

Saint Agnes surgeons comprise a select group for treatment of this aggressive disease

BY GREGORY J. ALEXANDER

Thanks to groundbreaking refinements made in the performance of the “Whipple procedure” (pancreatoduodenectomy), there is new hope for patients with pancreatic cancer.

Saint Agnes Hospital is fortunate to have three highly skilled pancreatic and hepato-biliary surgeons, making it a tremendous resource for patients on the East Coast.

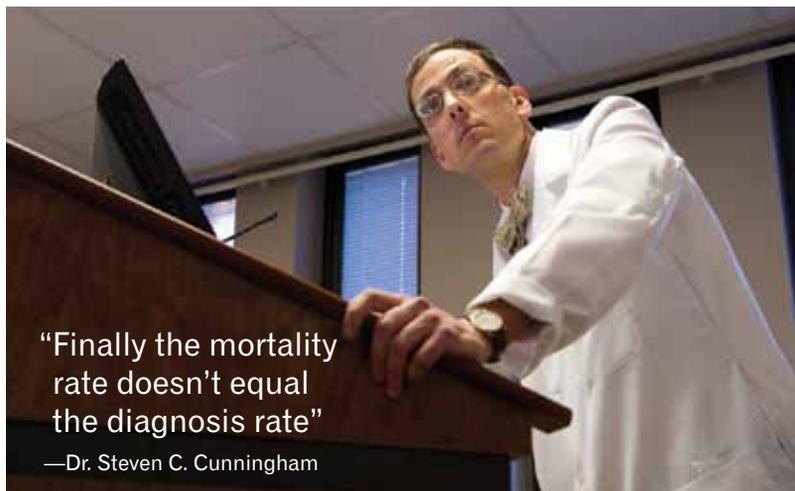
The recent addition of Dr. Steve Cunningham, who completed his pancreatic and hepatobiliary fellowship at Johns Hopkins and who has joined us full-time complements Dr. Richard Mackey who completed his pancreatic and hepatobiliary fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic and serves with Dr. Cunningham as co-directors of Pancreatic and Hepatobiliary Surgery at Saint Agnes, along with Dr. Mark Fraiman, one of the most talented and experienced pancreas and liver surgeons in Maryland.

Long considered universally fatal, pancreatic cancer patients now can have greater hope.

“Finally the mortality rate doesn’t equal the diagnosis rate,” said Steven C. Cunningham, M.D. “Admittedly, pancreatic cancer is aggressive and is often caught too late,” said Dr. Cunningham. “However, with expert treatment, many patients can experience long-term survival.” Moreover, some patients who appear to have pancreatic cancer actually have a less aggressive cancer such as cancer of the distal bile duct or ampulla or duodenum and these have a particularly favorable outlook after a Whipple procedure.

Our three pancreatic and hepatobiliary surgeons emphasize teamwork among themselves and with their colleagues in medical oncology, invasive radiology and GI medicine. An operation that historically had a 20% mortality may now have a mortality which is much lower and which can offer new hope to patients with this aggressive disease.

Saint Agnes Hospital is very pleased to welcome Dr. Cunningham as a full-time surgeon. He is not new to the Baltimore area. After completing a pre-doctoral research fellowship at the National Institutes of Health in Baltimore, he went on to graduate from medical school at nearby George Washington University, and from 2001 to 2009, he did his residency at University of Maryland, Baltimore, while also doing a cancer research fellowship from 2003



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to 2006 at the Johns Hopkins University. He comes to Saint Agnes from Johns Hopkins, where he finished his fellowship with Dr. John Cameron and Dr. Richard Schulick, among others, in surgery of the liver, pancreas and bile ducts.

He’s married to a scientist at the National Institutes of Health and is the father of four children, ages 10, 8, 6 and 3. In addition to numerous book chapters and articles on pancreas, liver and bile-duct cancer, he also has published numerous poems, including a bilingual children’s book of poetry, “Dinosaur Name Poems,” which won the 2009 Moonbeam Award in two categories: Children’s Poetry and Spanish Language Book.

The multi-talented surgeon said he’s excited to be at Saint Agnes. “The beauty of it is that patients benefit from having world-class pancreatic expertise and technology within the comfortable, friendly, warm and nurturing environment of the Saint Agnes community,” he said.

Saint Agnes is delighted to welcome Dr. Cunningham to Saint Agnes Hospital, where he joins Dr. Mackey and Dr. Fraiman in providing this unique and potentially lifesaving procedure. As our Cancer Institute continues to grow, so does our commitment to providing the best treatment and care to patients in our community with liver and pancreatic cancers. 🌿

For more information call [1-866-690-9355](tel:1-866-690-9355).