

A New Frontier in Lung Cancer Care

WellStar Health System Cancer Program

Lung cancer. You would be hard pressed to find two words in the English language more frightening than those. For decades, patients diagnosed with lung cancer have faced dismal odds, with survival rates lower than 15 percent. And while cure rates for other forms of cancer have risen steadily, lung cancer continues to be the number one cause of cancer-related deaths.

What makes the lung cancer mortality rate so disturbing is that the disease is not the most common form of cancer; it occurs less often, but kills more frequently. Like other types of cancer, lung cancer can be highly curable when found early, but it is notoriously difficult to detect. The experts at WellStar Health System are working hard to change that.

“New advances in sophisticated imaging procedures may lead to the creation of early screening tests for lung cancer,” says WellStar Health System thoracic surgeon William Mayfield, M.D. “We are now actively participating in a large clinical trial group called the International Lung Cancer Early Action Project, or I-ELCAP.



Mark McLaughlin, M.D., and Kenneth Haile, JR, M.D. with a CyberKnife Patient.

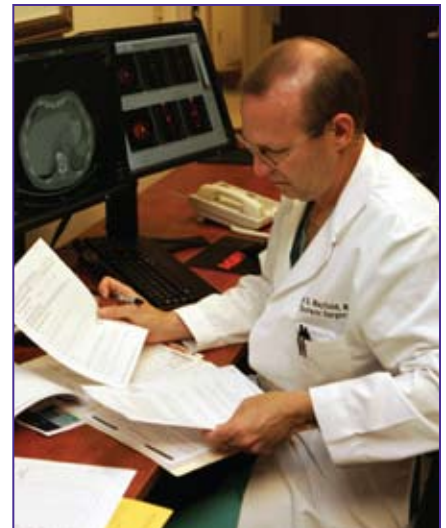
“By providing lung cancer screening for smokers and former smokers, this research study is anticipated to answer the question as to whether or not low-dose CT scans will join other screening tests such as mammography for breast cancer and colonoscopy for colon cancer. What we learn could revolutionize the way lung cancer is treated and finally give us the ability to save more lives.”

The first institution in the region to participate in I-ELCAP and the study’s only multi-site institution in the country, WellStar Health System has a firm commitment to advancing lung cancer care through breakthrough clinical research and innovative treatment options, including minimally invasive surgery and stereotactic radiosurgery for inoperable tumors.

“If surgery is required for lung cancer, we can perform a minimally invasive video-assisted procedure, which results in much less pain than traditional surgery, a shorter length of stay, faster return to normal function and lower mortality rates,” says Dr. Mayfield.

“Not every patient is a candidate for surgery, however,” adds WellStar Health System radiation oncologist Mark McLaughlin, M.D. “Which is why we are excited to provide CyberKnife, a nonsurgical therapy that delivers extremely high dose radiation directly to the tumor while sparing the surrounding healthy tissues from exposure.

Traditionally, radiation treatment can take up to eight weeks and can injure healthy lung tissue in addition to the target area. CyberKnife takes only three-to-four days and with its accuracy, the risk of injury to healthy lung tissue is much less. What’s more, the cure rate for CyberKnife over traditional radiation therapy is 2 to 3 times greater.



Thoracic Surgeon, William Mayfield, M.D.

“It’s a significant step forward for patient care,” Dr. McLaughlin continues. “It’s one more way we can ensure the best care and the best outcomes possible for every patient we serve.”

WellStar Health System provides complete, comprehensive lung cancer care in a convenient, patient-centered environment. To learn more, or to schedule an appointment, please call 770-793-7517. Visit the website at www.cancer.wellstar.org.



The vision of WellStar Health System is to deliver world-class healthcare through our hospitals, physicians and services. WellStar Health System includes Cobb, Douglas, Kennestone, Paulding and Windy Hill hospitals; WellStar Physicians Group; Urgent Care Centers; Health Place; Homecare; Hospice; Atherton Place; Paulding Nursing Center; and WellStar Foundation. For more information, call 770-956-STAR or visit www.wellstar.org.