

Leading Female Neurosurgeon Focuses on Need for Critical Trauma Care

Urges Georgians to Become Aware of Brain Injury Risks & Take Action

Like many medical professionals, neurosurgeon Florence Barnett, M.D. grew up with a physician in the family: her father, who was also a neurosurgeon. That, however, is where the similarities end between Dr. Barnett and her colleagues. Most future brain surgeons begin training with an undergraduate science degree; Dr. Barnett began in Italy studying art history.

It wasn't until many years later, after she'd married, had two children and divorced, that Dr. Barnett decided to pursue a degree in medicine. "I knew it was going to be tough because I was starting over from scratch. I got one credit for my art history degree," Dr. Barnett remembers. "I had to work two jobs and it took me six years to earn my science degree."

Undeterred by the hard work that still lay ahead, Dr. Barnett immediately enrolled at the Medical College of Georgia. Four years later, she'd not only earned her medical degree, but she'd also been recognized with both the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society's award and an award for excellence in neurosurgery.



Statewide, only 15 of our 152 hospitals are set up to handle traumatic brain care and patients who are taken to nontrauma hospitals have a 33% higher risk of death.

And her journey wasn't over yet — she still had to navigate an extremely competitive residency program. It took three tries for her application to be accepted into the Medical College of Georgia's neurosurgery program. In the interim, she spent two years in general and trauma surgery at Carraway Methodist Medical Center in Birmingham and one additional year in general surgery at the Medical College of Georgia.

Finally, after being accepted and making it through the grueling 15-16 hour days of her residency program, Dr. Barnett achieved her goal. But if you think that after all that hard work, she was ready to be just your average, everyday brain surgeon, think again. Her latest seemingly insurmountable project? Improving trauma care across the entire state of Georgia.

"No one is immune to a traumatic brain injury," Dr. Barnett says. "It's not just something that happens to athletes or people involved with risky behaviors. You can have a car accident, an accident around the house, you could trip and fall just walking down the sidewalk — anything can happen and, when it does, seconds matter.

"In Georgia, though, our mortality rate from traumatic brain injury is 20% higher than the national average. Statewide, only 15 of our 152 hospitals are set up to handle traumatic brain care and patients who are taken to non-trauma hospitals have a 33% higher risk of death," Dr. Barnett continues. "Hundreds of lives are lost each year because of this and we have got to do something."



Florence Barnett, M.D. — photo by Victoria Friend

Take Action for Trauma Care

One person can make a difference. Right now, in fact, Georgia legislators are debating the Georgia Trauma Trust Fund, which would provide much needed financial resources for trauma centers around the state. Call or write your state representatives today and tell them you support the Georgia Trauma Trust Fund. It's quick, it's easy and it could save a life.

To find your state representatives and senators, visit the Georgia General Assembly online now at www.legis.state.ga.us or call 404-656-2881.

To learn more about Dr. Barnett, visit her practice website at www.barnettneurosurgery.com or call 678-474-9490.