

THE GOOD LIVING MAGAZINE FROM MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER

# MONMOUTH

## health & life

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# HOME STYLE

- » DREAMY DUPLEX » HUES TO USE
- » GARDEN ENTERTAINING

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this one takes the cake.

Illustration: Estner, W.

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## WELCOME LETTER

# THE COMFORTS OF HOME

THE ACHE FOR HOME LIVES IN ALL OF US, NOTED the poet Maya Angelou.

"Home" is the theme for this issue of *Monmouth Health & Life*, and it also is the theme of two related stories spotlighting The Unterberg Children's Hospital at Monmouth Medical Center.

The Michael Fux Foundation was founded in 2006 with the mission of enriching the lives of underprivileged children with serious illnesses, and today it is funding the establishment of The Michael Fux Family Center at The Unterberg Children's Hospital. This center will be modeled after the Michael Fux Family Center at Miami Children's Hospital and is designed to offer peace and respite and provide dedicated space for parents, patients and siblings to interact with each other as a family at home.

In addition to such homelike features as a family room, the Michael Fux Family Center will include a movie theater that will be named The Mya Lin Terry Cinema. This naming is in recognition of a generous donation honoring the memory of a 10-year-old Ocean Township girl who passed away after a more than five-year battle with cancer, and it is the mission of the Mya Lin Terry Foundation to help ensure that all children are able to enjoy their childhood, despite health battles they may be facing.

We are so grateful for the generous support of the Michael Fux and Mya Lin Terry foundations, which will provide our young patients, their parents, siblings and friends with an opportunity to take their minds off their family's challenges and escape for a few hours to the comforts of home.

Also in our health pages are the stories of patients whose debilitating pain left them unable to complete some of the simplest daily tasks and one area resident whose rare digestive disorder prevented him from swallowing food. These patients had the quality of their daily life restored by the cutting-edge care offered by Monmouth Medical Center physicians, who helped them resume golfing and surfing and restore precious family time spent sledding. It is the quality of life that speaks to the quality of the place we call home, and it is so gratifying to know the part we played in restoring it.

Wishing you all the achingly beautiful comforts of home.

Sincerely,

**FRANK J. VOZOS, M.D., FACS**  
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER AND  
THE UNTERBERG CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



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# IN GOOD HEALTH

MEDICINE + TECHNOLOGY + PATIENT CARE AT MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER

Dennis DiBenedetto  
and Stephen A.  
Gorcey, M.D.



## THE TASTE OF SWEET RELIEF

THANKS TO A PIONEERING PROCEDURE AT MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER, A NEW JERSEYAN ONCE AGAIN ENJOYS SOLID FOOD.

**FOR YEARS, DENNIS DIBENEDETTO** experienced bouts of choking when trying to swallow food and had difficulty getting a good night's sleep due to aspiration (breathing food contents into the lungs). Fortunately, he is now able to eat solid food once again without choking after undergoing a unique procedure called peroral endoscopic myotomy—also known as POEM—at Monmouth Medical Center.

### LIQUID DIET

It was 2010 when Dennis, an avid surfer, was forced to give up all solid food. He started subsisting on nutritional drinks because he couldn't keep solid foods down.

"It was an extremely difficult and uncomfortable way to live," says the 62-year-old Manchester Township resident. "I started

losing a lot of weight and was malnourished."

After searching for answers and ending up in the office of a gastroenterologist, Dennis was diagnosed with esophageal achalasia, a rare disorder that affects the ability of the esophagus to move food and liquids into the stomach. Normally, the ring of muscle where the esophagus and stomach meet relaxes when one swallows food. But in people with achalasia, it fails to relax.

"The doctor performed an endoscopy and saw that the muscle that lets food into the stomach was constantly tightened," he says. "It wasn't opening to let food through."

Because the muscle connecting Dennis's stomach and esophagus hadn't been working properly for some time, the doctor

also saw damage to the muscle fibers of the esophagus, which was resulting in food particles getting into his lungs.

### LIFE-CHANGING PROCEDURE —A FIRST IN NEW JERSEY

After years of research and attempts to find doctors familiar with achalasia, Dennis's fate changed when he was referred to Steven Gorcey, M.D., a board-certified gastroenterologist and chief of gastrointestinal endoscopy at Monmouth Medical Center, to discuss treatment options. Dr. Gorcey is one of a handful of endoscopic surgeons in the U.S. with the training necessary to perform highly effective procedures including combined endoscopic laparoscopic surgery.

Following further testing and consultations, Dr. Gorcey recommended that Dennis undergo POEM—a relatively new minimally invasive procedure performed by endoscopy and developed by a physician in Japan—to treat his achalasia. He thought about it and decided to move ahead, making Dr. Gorcey the first physician in New Jersey to perform the groundbreaking procedure.

"I'm confident that POEM will become the treatment of choice," Dr. Gorcey says. "It's a well-recognized form of 'natural orifice transluminal endoscopic surgery'—a technique known by the acronym NOTES—and it's accepted by surgical boards. With POEM, no surgical incisions are performed, complication rates are low and there are no eating restrictions following the procedure."

With traditional surgery, patients would require incisions. They would need to stay on clear liquids for weeks and start solids four to six weeks later. And there would be a significant chance that symptoms would return.

Today, Dennis is reacquainting himself with solid food. "I feel lucky to be the first person in New Jersey to undergo this procedure," he says. "This is better than winning the lottery. The POEM procedure is absolutely amazing. I feel energized."



# ‘BACK’ IN ACTION

AFTER TREATMENT BY A MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER PAIN SPECIALIST, THREE PATIENTS HAVE SAID GOODBYE TO DEBILITATING BACK PAIN.

**SAM FROMKIN, A 73-YEAR-OLD AVID GOLFER,** had been experiencing chronic back pain due to arthritis and degenerative damage for decades. During flare-ups, the recurring problem left him unable to complete some of the simplest daily tasks and kept him far away from the links.

He visited a number of doctors in both Florida and New Jersey (he divides his time between the two states) and underwent many diagnostic tests and procedures—including the removal of part of a herniated disc—but the pain continued. Then, after a difficult bout three years ago, a neurologist suggested he schedule an appointment with Anil K. Sharma, M.D., section chief of pain management at Monmouth Medical Center and a leader in utilizing minimally invasive techniques to treat back, neck and other chronic pain conditions.

Dr. Sharma started with a test injection to confirm the source of Fromkin’s pain. After only his second visit, he began feeling relief.

“Sam had had a number of injections over the years that for whatever reason had not worked,” says Dr. Sharma. “These minimally invasive procedures for chronic back pain, completed through a small needle using an X-ray for guidance, are very safe but it is an art. The patient must be thoroughly listened to and a correct diagnosis must be made based on the history, the physical exam, a personal review of the MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] films and sometimes diagnostic injections. A difference in just a few millimeters in the injection site can make a huge difference in the relief the patient experiences.”

Recently Dr. Sharma performed a precise nerve block on Sam. During the outpatient procedure, he injected his spine as a test to see if his back pain improved. If the injection helped, Dr. Sharma would complete a second block for longer-term relief by performing a radiofrequency ablation to cauterize the nerves.

“During my appointment with Dr. Sharma following the injections, he asked me how I was feeling and I said, ‘I feel great, I’m sensational,’” Sam recalls. “And he said, ‘OK, we don’t need to do

anything else.’ He could have gone forward with more treatments but we didn’t need to.”

Today, Sam is feeling great and is back to playing golf up to four times a week without any problems.

“While Sam’s chronic condition is the same, his pain is gone and he has been able to avoid major spinal fusion surgery,” says Dr. Sharma.

“Dr. Sharma worked very hard at determining and narrowing down the possible causes of my back pain,” Sam says. “He was able to diagnose the problem and provide the correct treatment.”

As a result of Sam’s successful treatment, his wife Ivey also began seeing Dr. Sharma for her chronic back problems when she required pain management, and her treatment was as successful as her husband’s.

“Dr. Sharma is the full package,” he says. “He provides education on the causes of pain and treatment options with a good bedside manner. He’s comforting, he takes the time with patients, and he’s the only doctor who has been able to give me complete relief.”



Samuel Fromkin was so pleased with the way Monmouth Medical Center pain specialist Anil K. Sharma, M.D., banished his back pain that he sent his wife Ivey to see him—and she found relief too.



“On a scale of 1 to 10, my pain was a 9,” says Trudy Gallagher. But she feels much better after treatment by Anil K. Sharma, M.D., section chief of pain management at Monmouth Medical Center.



Epidural injections weren't enough for patient Gina Slagmolen, so Dr. Sharma used a radiofrequency ablation technique that left her feeling “100 percent.”

## SCIATICA PAIN, BEGONE!

As an X-ray technician at Monmouth Medical Center, Trudy Gallagher spends much of her day moving and lifting patients into the correct position for imaging. In the latter half of 2013, the 38-year-old mother of two began to have pain radiating down her leg, known as sciatica. Believed to affect 15 percent to 40 percent of people sometime during their lives, sciatica is pain, weakness, numbness or tingling in the leg that occurs when there is pressure or damage to the sciatic nerve, which runs from the lower back through the hips and down the back of both legs.

“On a scale of 1 to 10, my pain was a 9,” Trudy says. “I was taking a lot of anti-inflammatories and was very uncomfortable.”

Diagnosed with a herniated disc, a common cause of sciatica, Trudy first tried physical therapy to help ease the pain. But when her pain continued to worsen and began making her job difficult, Trudy sought out Dr. Sharma. Together they reviewed her MRI scans and diagnosis, and he began treating her with epidural steroid injections in the lower back to relieve the inflammation and swelling around the nerve next to her herniated disc.

“The steroid part of the medication helps with the pain by reducing the inflammation around the nerve,” he explains.

Following the 10-minute procedure, patients typically walk out of the Cranmer Ambulatory Surgical Center at Monmouth Medical Center, where Dr. Sharma performs his procedures, with minimal pain.

“The goal with the injections is to enable patients to work and function with minimal discomfort—and without needing pain medications,” says Dr. Sharma. Trudy reports that this is exactly what she experiences from the injections.

“I was glad to be able to avoid surgery and give my back time to heal,” she says. “The injections give me the relief I need to function comfortably.”

Trudy now sees Dr. Sharma every four to five months for an injection that typically provides her with three to four months' relief. She credits him with giving her functionality back. “I was recently able to go sledding with my kids,” she says. “That would have been completely out of the question before.”

## A WORKING MOM FINDS RELIEF

Gina Slagmolen, 47, had had back pain for much of her life. Diagnosed with scoliosis as a young girl, she saw a chiropractor regularly as a teen to find relief. As time went on and she celebrated major life milestones—marriage, childbirth, career advances—her back pain grew worse.

“Like many women, after having children I slowly put on weight,” she says. “At work, I’m on my feet a good portion of the day and spend a lot of time lifting and bending—both of which added to the pain.”

More recently diagnosed with degenerative disc disease—the most common cause of neck and back pain—Gina had herniated and bulging discs in her lower lumbar spine. They began causing bouts of debilitating pain. One day her pain was so severe she had to leave work in a wheelchair.

“Every day I would come home and have to lie down—I could get through the work day but afterwards, Tylenol and rest just weren’t cutting it,” she says.

She saw an orthopedist who recommended physical therapy, but it did not provide the hoped-for relief. After a few months, he suggested she see a pain management specialist, so she turned to Dr. Sharma. He gave her epidural injections that provided some temporary relief, but after a few weeks it was clear that she needed more. As a next step, Dr. Sharma performed a radiofrequency ablation, a procedure in which he used X-ray guidance to insert a special needle into the spine and cauterize the nerves responsible for the pain.

“This procedure destroys the functionality of the nerve and interrupts the pain signals sent to the brain, eliminating the pain,” Dr. Sharma says. “Patients do not lose any function, are not relying on pain medications and can be pain-free for up to a year.”

As soon as the anesthesia from the procedure wore off, Gina felt good.

“With the radiofrequency procedure, the relief lasted close to a year,” she says. “I felt 100 percent. Thirteen months later, I saw Dr. Sharma again to have the procedure done a second time. Everything he did was right on target.”

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PAIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AT MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER, CALL 732.759.8920.

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Gathering with Michael Fux, third from left, and his spouse, Gloria Rubin, second from left, are, from left, Ann Unterberg, chair of the Monmouth Medical Center Foundation Board of Trustees and vice chair of Monmouth Medical Center's Board of Trustees; Bill Arnold, chief operating officer at Monmouth; Frank J. Vozos, M.D., FACS, president and chief executive officer at Monmouth; and Tara Kelly, vice president of the Monmouth Medical Center Foundation.

# GIFTS FOR THE CARE OF CHILDREN

TWO RECENT DONATIONS HELP THE UNTERBERG CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL SERVE PATIENTS AND FAMILIES MORE EFFECTIVELY THAN EVER.

## DONORS SAY IT'S A PRIVILEGE

to give to a medical center, because they know their donations will give people vitally needed help. That's especially true for a children's hospital, because with many decades ahead of them, kids have the most to gain from being returned to good health.

So it is with special pleasure that The Unterberg Children's Hospital at Monmouth Medical Center reports two recent donations that will make a big difference.

One was a \$1 million donation from Florida businessman and philanthropist Michael Fux and the Michael Fux Foundation to establish the Michael Fux Family Center.

Rising from humble beginnings in Cuba to become CEO of Comfort Revolution, a distributor and marketer of comfort sleep products with a location in West

Long Branch, Fux created two charitable foundations to benefit people in need. He established the Michael Fux Foundation in 2006 with the mission of enriching the lives of underprivileged children with serious illnesses.

The Michael Fux Family Center at The Unterberg Children's Hospital will be modeled after the Michael Fux Family Center at Miami Children's Hospital (MCH) and will provide a safe, nonclinical environment for the families of children receiving care that offers peace and respite. It will provide dedicated space for parents, patients and siblings to interact with each other as a family, despite the medical challenges faced by their child. Features of the Michael Fux Family Center will include a full kitchen and dining area, a family room, a private breast-feeding room, showers, laundry facili-

ties, a movie theater, a children's library, computer rooms, a performance arts center, a gym and a massage therapy room. Construction is set to begin this year.

"I am thrilled to embark on this project and partner with Monmouth Medical Center to create the Michael Fux Family Center at The Unterberg's Children Hospital," Fux said recently. "I look forward to enriching the lives of the children being treated here as well as their families. I know from my experience that this is a wonderful service and opportunity."

"We are extremely thankful to Mr. Fux and the Michael Fux Foundation for this generous and transformative gift," said Frank J. Vozos, M.D., FACS, president and chief executive officer of Monmouth Medical Center. "It will help to ensure that The Unterberg Children's Hospital continues

to fulfill its mission of providing family-centered, comprehensive care to all of our young patients while providing a supportive environment for families.”

“This gift will truly have a tremendous impact on the children being treated at the Unterberg Children’s Hospital and their families,” said Tara F. Kelly, vice president, Monmouth Medical Center Foundation. “Children and parents will have the opportunity to catch up on the details of normal life while finding the comfort and solace they need during a difficult time.”

### IN A YOUNG GIRL’S MEMORY

Sometimes, despite medicine’s best efforts, a young life ends too soon. That was the case with 10-year-old Mya Lin Terry of Ocean Township, who passed away in 2013 after battling cancer for more than five years. But now, in her memory, hundreds of kids and their families will benefit from a donation made in her name.

The hospital has received a \$300,000 donation from The Mya Lin Terry Foundation in support of the Michael Fux Family Center. In recognition of this generous donation, the movie facility will be named The Mya Lin Terry Cinema.

The Mya Lin Terry Foundation is a charitable, nonprofit organization created to honor the memory of Mya Lin by enriching the lives of pediatric cancer patients with hope, love and joy while raising awareness of pediatric cancers and supporting new treatments aimed at a cure.

“I am humbled by the generosity and support of so many friends, family and community members that have made this gift, in Mya’s name, possible,” says Kelly L. Terry, Mya’s mother, who serves as president of the foundation. “Having spent half of Mya’s life in the hospital, we wanted to give back not only to Monmouth Medical Center for their kindness and care of Mya, but to all the children and their families who will enter these doors. It is our hope that we help en-

## “THIS GIFT WILL TRULY HAVE A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON THE CHILDREN BEING TREATED AT THE UNTERBERG CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL AND THEIR FAMILIES,”

—TARA F. KELLY, VICE PRESIDENT, MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER FOUNDATION

sure that all children are able to enjoy their childhood, despite health battles they may be facing.”

Constructed to look like a traditional public movie theater and equipped with state-of-the-art technology, acoustics and a popcorn machine, The Mya Lin Terry Cinema will have an intimate setting with approximately 20 plush movie theater-style seats and will be wheelchair-accessible. It will provide families, siblings and their friends with an opportunity to replicate going to the movies, where they can relax, take their mind off their family’s challenges and escape for a few hours.

“We are so appreciative of this generous donation from The Mya Lin Terry Foundation that enables us to keep Mya’s memory alive while helping patients and their families find joy as they face their own challenges,” said Dr. Vozos. “As with every aspect of the Mi-

chael Fux Family Center, The Mya Lin Terry Cinema will relax and refresh children and families and promote healing—all part of our commitment to support and empower those we serve.”

“I am ecstatic that The Mya Lin Terry Foundation has chosen to support the Michael Fux Family Center at The Unterberg Children’s Hospital with this donation,” said Fux. “The Mya Lin Terry Cinema will bring a little bit of the outside world, a little bit of normalcy and a lot of smiles into the walls of the hospital.”

The Unterberg Children’s Hospital offers the highest level of pediatric services for newborns through adolescents, including cutting-edge treatment, specialized expertise and an unsurpassed dedication to medical excellence in 26 pediatric subspecialty areas. Every aspect of care benefits from a child-friendly, family-centered approach.



Monmouth Medical Center’s Chief Operating Officer Bill Arnold; Kelly Terry holding a picture of Mya Lin Terry; Noelle Mains; Michael Terry; Patricia and Bevin Irvin (sitting); Kasey Pickett; Tara Kelly, Vice President, Monmouth Medical Center Foundation; and Meg Fisher, M.D., Medical Director, The Unterberg Children’s Hospital at Monmouth Medical Center.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE UNTERBERG CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL AT MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER, VISIT [BARNABASHEALTH.ORG/UCH](http://BARNABASHEALTH.ORG/UCH). TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MYA LIN TERRY FOUNDATION, VISIT [THEMYALINTERRYFOUNDATION.ORG](http://THEMYALINTERRYFOUNDATION.ORG).

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