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Overcoming Ulcerative Colitis

When medication management fails to stop the problem, a surgical solution gives this patient her life back.

Katherine Thornton's battle with ulcerative colitis ultimately became a battle for her life.

"I tried every medicine conceivable for ulcerative colitis," she says, "and nothing worked. If it started to work, I became allergic to the medicine and they had to stop it, and I was on some really potent medicines."

The results were devastating and nearly fatal.

"I spent two years at home and couldn't go anywhere except the doctor's office. And I would even have to stop to go to the bathroom on the way. It was very debilitating.

"I ended up in the hospital by ambulance four times," reports Katherine. "Apparently, I had gotten to the point where I was probably within two weeks of dying."

In the hospital, she was introduced to Cesar A. Santiago, MD, a board-certified colorectal surgeon with The Colorectal Institute.

"Dr. Santiago told me he could make me better," says Katherine, "but I was still frightened. He really put my mind at ease about everything.

"He said, *I can make you normal again.* And he did!"

Leading-edge procedure

Dr. Santiago and his colleagues, Valerie R. Dyke, MD, and Janette

U. Gaw, MD, are the only fellowship-trained colorectal surgeons operating in Lee County, and they treat a wide range of disorders, from colon cancer to hemorrhoids.

"Many patients try medical management for ulcerative colitis but may have all kinds of side effects from medication," says Dr. Santiago. "For ulcerative colitis that is not responding to steroids or to immunosuppressant or chemotherapeutic agents, there is a surgical option that can free patients from the symptoms of ulcerative colitis.

"Katherine suffered from toxic colitis, so I had to remove her colon and then did staged surgery, where I removed the rest of the rectum and created a neo-rectum in a procedure called *ileal pouch-anal anastomosis*, also known as a *pouch reconstruction* procedure.

"In the past, people would have a stoma bag from this, but now we can reconstruct the patient and literally create a pouch so that he or she can have normal bowel movements without the need of a stoma.

"People used to be referred out to specialized centers in Tampa or Miami for these procedures, but our practice now performs it right here in our community. Katherine was miserable for years, and she has really turned around, thanks to this option."



THE COLORECTAL INSTITUTE

VALERIE R. DYKE, MD
JANETTE U. GAW, MD
CESAR A. SANTIAGO, MD

"He saved my life"

Today, Katherine is doing remarkably well.

"I feel fine," she says simply.

"I still have to watch what I eat, but I don't need a colostomy bag anymore. It's been wonderful. I'm about as close to normal as I've ever been."

She credits Dr. Santiago for her results.

"Dr. Santiago is just an excellent surgeon, and has the best bedside manner I've ever come across. It was difficult to talk about it, but he made it very easy, he explained everything . . . he was just wonderful.

"He literally saved my life and he gave me back a quality life. It's just been a miracle, and I thank God for him every single day." **FHCN**



Valerie R. Dyke, MD, FACS, FASCRS, is board certified by the American Board of Surgery and the American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery. After receiving her medical degree from the University of Maryland, she completed

her general surgical residency at Abington Memorial Hospital in Philadelphia. Dr. Dyke then completed a colorectal surgery fellowship at the Ferguson Colorectal Clinic in Michigan.



Janette U. Gaw, MD, FACS, FASCRS, is board certified by the American Board of Surgery and the American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery. After receiving her medical degree from Yale University, where she also

completed her general surgery residency, Dr. Gaw was awarded a research fellowship with the Division of Colorectal Surgery at the Mayo Clinic. She then completed a colorectal surgery fellowship at the Georgia Colon and Rectal Surgery Clinic in Atlanta.



Cesar A. Santiago, MD, is board certified by the American Board of Surgery. After receiving his medical degree from Ponce School of Medicine, Dr. Santiago completed his general surgery residency at Mt.

Sinai School of Medicine/Cabrini in Manhattan, NY. He then completed a colorectal surgery fellowship at the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami.

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