

Diagnosing Anal Cancer

Rectal bleeding may be from something much more serious than hemorrhoids. See a colorectal specialist to determine the cause.



THE COLORECTAL INSTITUTE

VALERIE R. DYKE, MD
 JANETTE U. GAW, MD
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“In June 2006, I thought I had hemorrhoids,” recalls Mariruth “Kay” Carie. “I went to my regular internist at the time, and she gave me some medication for it.”

By that September, however, Kay still had the problem.

“I said to the internist, *My hemorrhoids are still not clearing up*. A couple weeks went by and I thought, *This isn’t normal*.”

Fearing that her concern was not being taken seriously enough, Kay decided to seek a second opinion. She consulted Janette U. Gaw, MD, a board-certified colorectal surgeon with The Colorectal Institute.

“The day I walked into Dr. Gaw’s office, I thought she would give me some other medication for hemorrhoids,” says Kay. “She took one look at it and scheduled a biopsy.”

Importance of evaluation

Dr. Gaw and her colleagues, Valerie R. Dyke, MD, and Cesar A. Santiago, MD, are the only fellowship-trained and board-certified colorectal surgeons operating in Lee County, and they treat a wide range of disorders, from colon cancer to hemorrhoids. They always use the latest technologies and a multidisciplinary approach to evaluate and treat their patients.

“We caution people to refrain from self-diagnosing,” says Dr. Gaw, “especially those who may presume that rectal bleeding is just a symptom of hemorrhoids. Everyone who comes to my office says that they have a hemorrhoid. It is essential that such patients be evaluated by a physician specializing in this area in order to rule out a more serious condition.”

“In Kay’s case, her concern was well-founded: what she thought was a hemorrhoid turned out to be squamous cell carcinoma.”

Dr. Gaw emphasizes that treatment for this type of cancer has come a long way indeed.

“In the past, everyone with this kind of cancer got a permanent stoma,” she recalls. “Nowadays, however, ninety percent of anal squamous cell carcinomas are cured. A combination of chemotherapy and radiation is the main treatment for squamous cell carcinoma, and most patients will not require surgery. Such was the case for Kay.”

Dr. Gaw also notes that there is a close relationship among all of the doctors on the treatment team.

“We take a multidisciplinary approach,” she reminds, “working very closely with our patients’ medical and radiation oncologists. Our community is geared towards that, and it works out really well.”



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“Dr. Gaw is terrific,” says Kay.

“She’s terrific”

The team effort did indeed work out well for Kay: she has been cancer free since March 2007.

“I had chemotherapy and radiation,” she confirms, “and every six months, I have a new PET scan that covers the entire area from my knees to my jaw. Dr. Gaw reviews the PET scan and she gives me a physical exam each time.”

“I also have a new internist,” she adds with a chuckle.

Kay truly appreciates Dr. Gaw and the entire staff of The Colorectal Institute.

“Dr. Gaw is just a terrific doctor and a wonderful woman,” says Kay. “She’s very compassionate. Her office staff are all great, too, and very professional.”

“It’s just a terrific office.” **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 and the American Board of Colon and Rectal 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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