

HEALTH NEWS *from*

# gw hospital

FALL 2023

## From Friends to FAMILY

Life-saving donation binds youth sports coaches

### *INSIDE:*

**A Pregnant Patient Beats Colorectal Cancer**

GW saved her life - and her baby's

**Early Detection Can Save Lives**

GW prostate cancer survivor urges men to get screened

*Compliments of*

GW Transplant Institute patients Paul Smith (left) and Jafau Delane (right).



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY **HOSPITAL**

## DEFINING MEDICINE

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1 **HEALTH BRIEFS**  
Pancreas transplants and quality awards.
- 2 **PREGNANT AND FACING CANCER**  
GW patient Claudia Acosta tells her story.
- 4 **A FRIEND'S GREATEST GIFT**  
Paul Smith and Jafau Delane share their kidney donation journey.
- 7 **GW CANCER CENTER'S NEW DIRECTOR**  
Meet Julie E. Bauman, MD, MPH.
- 8 **SURVIVING PROSTATE CANCER**  
Read GW patient Jeffrey Gray's story.

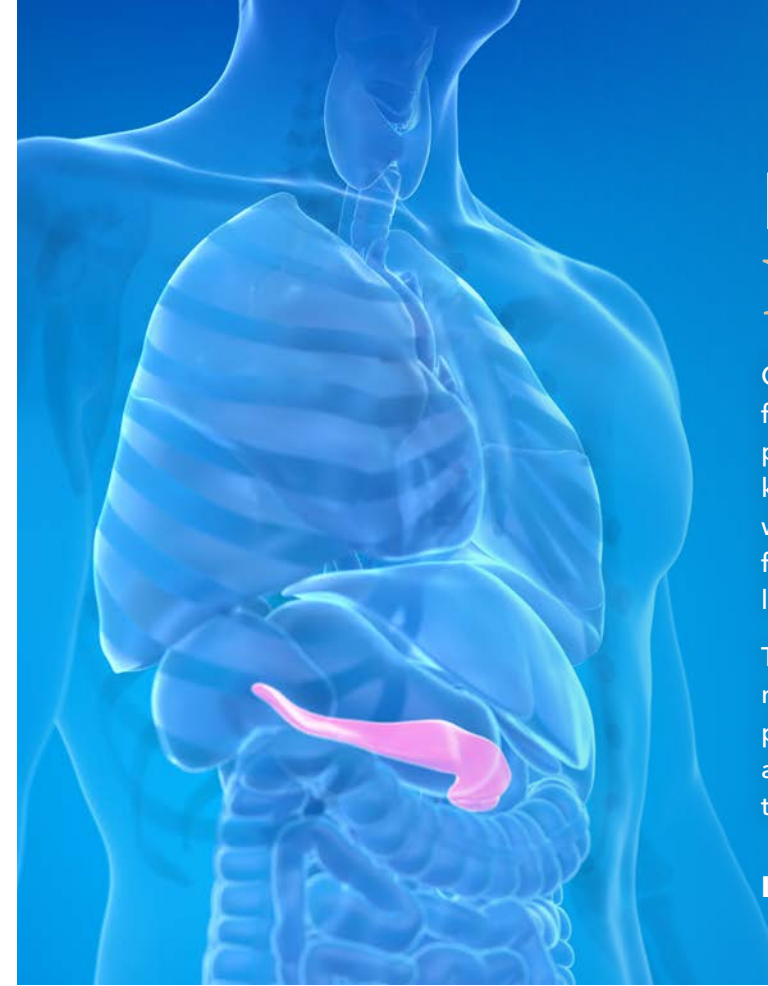


At The George Washington University Hospital (GW Hospital), our patients are our passion. In this issue, you will meet several patients and read the inspiring stories of their unique health journeys. Our patients come from all walks of life and from across the DMV area. I hope you are as moved as I am by their amazing stories of resiliency.

GW Transplant Institute is proud to now offer pancreas transplants. Diabetes and kidney disease are far too common in our region and these conditions can become so severe that patients require organ transplantation. The kidney-pancreas transplant process that we perform allows patients to receive both new organs at the same time, which may boost the longevity of the transplanted organs.

In addition, we are very pleased to be recognized once again by *U.S. News & World Report* as a Best Regional Hospital and a High Performing Hospital in several areas of care. These prestigious national honors reflect our commitment to providing care of the highest-possible quality.

**Kimberly Russo**  
Chief Executive Officer and Group Vice President, D.C. Region



# Pancreas Transplants Now Available

GW Transplant Institute now offers pancreas transplants for patients with diabetes and kidney disease. A kidney-pancreas transplant is a surgical procedure to place both a kidney and a pancreas obtained from the same donor. Now, with the ability to address both pancreas and kidney disease for patients in a single operation, we can address two of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the DMV region.

The National Kidney Foundation reports that based on national averages, 95% of adults who receive a kidney-pancreas transplant will still be functioning well one year after the operation, and 92.5% will still be functioning well three years later.

Learn more at [gwhospital.com/transplant](http://gwhospital.com/transplant)

## Among the Best for Quality Care

GW Hospital is proud to be recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as a **Best Regional Hospital** for 2023-2024 – the highest award a hospital can earn for the publication's Best Hospitals Procedures and Conditions ratings.



The hospital was named High Performing in the adult specialties of Neurology and Neurosurgery, and Urology. In addition, *U.S. News & World Report* recognized GW Hospital as High Performing in the following procedures and conditions: COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), Diabetes, Heart Attack, Heart Failure, Kidney Failure, Leukemia, Lymphoma & Myeloma, Lung Cancer Surgery, Pneumonia, Prostate Cancer Surgery and Stroke.

*U.S. News & World Report* releases its annual High Performing Hospital listings based on services, patient outcomes and experience, staffing and other performance measures. They are designed to help patients make healthcare choices about specific services, along with the support of their doctors.



## Tune In To Our Podcasts

**GW HealthCast** is designed for patients and the general public. Medical professionals at GW Hospital discuss new medical technology and devices, prevention and treatment options for various conditions, and much more.

**GW DocPod** was created for medical professionals and covers the latest research, innovation, clinical trials and techniques.

Access these programs and more at [gwhospital.com/podcasts](http://gwhospital.com/podcasts)



get messages  
Credit: subelizer

FPO



# BEATING CANCER WITH A BABY ON BOARD



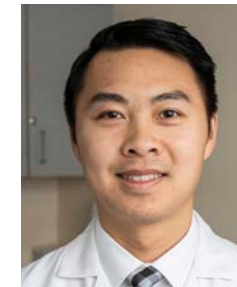
Claudia and her family.

**Claudia Acosta was 20 weeks along in her pregnancy when she experienced abdominal discomfort that was different from her usual morning sickness. After several visits with her OB/GYN and trying treatments without relief, she was sent to GW Hospital. ➤**

Claudia Acosta knew that her abdominal pain wasn't normal but she was surprised when an X-ray revealed a mass. After a CT scan showed that mass was blocking her colon and growing, she turned to with Matthew Ng, MD, a colorectal surgeon at GW Cancer Center.

## A SERIOUS, UNEXPECTED SURGERY

A diagnosis of colorectal cancer and major surgery were the very last things Acosta thought she'd face during her pregnancy. "I remember being just shocked," she says. "I didn't know what that meant for me and my baby."



Matthew Ng, MD

Fortunately, the surgeons at GW were confident that the surgery would be safe for the baby and used virtual reality (VR) technology to plan the procedure around the baby.

Minimally invasive surgical options were not appropriate in Acosta's case, so she underwent successful, open surgery to remove the mass blocking her colon. She remained at GW Hospital for five days to recover.

"I was really impressed by the care I received. The doctors and nurses were very attentive and listened to my concerns," Acosta says. "When I needed to hear my baby's heartbeat to know she was OK, they would send someone down with a heart monitor so I could hear that her heart rate was strong."

Acosta gave birth to her daughter six weeks early in order to begin a strong chemotherapy regimen as soon as possible. Like her first child, Acosta's healthy baby girl was born at GW Hospital under the tender care of its maternity unit.

## 'ONLY BRIGHTER DAYS AHEAD'

Today, Claudia Acosta is cancer-free and loving life. "For the future, I see healthy days ahead," she says. "I'm so grateful for the doctors at GW Hospital for saving my life and my baby's life."

Acosta has a message for others about colorectal cancer. "Early detection is key," she says. "If you feel that something is off, get it checked out right away." ■

**Hear about Claudia Acosta's case from her surgeon, Matthew Ng, MD, on our blog at [gwhospital.com/\[LINK TO COME\]](https://gwhospital.com/[LINK TO COME])**

**Watch her story at [gwhospital.com/acosta](https://gwhospital.com/acosta)**



## INSIDE VIRTUAL REALITY (VR) TECHNOLOGY

This advanced technology creates a 360-degree reconstruction of a patient's anatomy.

Surgeons can plan and virtually walk patients through their procedure before surgery. Patients describe the experience as flying through their own body.

This helps patients like Claudia Acosta better understand their care and enables surgeons to perform precise procedures. It allowed her surgeon to help keep her baby safe while the colorectal cancer was removed.

**Learn more at [gwhospital.com/virtualreality](https://gwhospital.com/virtualreality)**

# KIDNEY DONATION: Redefining What Friends Are For



From Friends to Family: GW Transplant Institute patients Paul Smith (left) and Jafau Delane (right).

**If you're lucky in life, you have at least one close friend you can count on. Someone who is supportive in good times and bad. Someone who has a generous spirit. However, do you have a friend who would give you an organ?**

**P**aul Smith is one of the really lucky ones. When he developed a kidney disease so severe that he needed a transplant, his friend, Jafau Delane, stepped in to give the greatest gift – the gift of life.

## **FACING KIDNEY FAILURE**

For two decades, Paul Smith battled a genetic kidney condition called focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS). FSGS occurs when scar tissue develops on the small parts of the kidney, the glomeruli, that filter waste out of the blood. The condition can lead to kidney failure. Smith would need a kidney transplant to save his life.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Smith, who owns a construction company, relied on dialysis three times a week. "It was painful, it was stressful and it took your whole day away," he recalls.



*Joseph Keith Melancon, MD, FACS*

"Emotionally, FSGS can be very depressing," says Joseph Keith Melancon, MD, FACS, Chief of the GW Transplant Institute and Division of Transplant Surgery and Medical Director of the Ron and Joy Paul Kidney Center. "However, Mr. Smith didn't allow kidney failure to interfere with his very productive life. That attitude was important."

Smith was placed on a kidney transplant waiting list in hope of finding a match, which, according to the National Kidney Foundation, could take between three and five years. He wouldn't have to wait that long.

## **A FRIEND'S ULTIMATE GIFT**

Over the years, Smith and Delane forged a strong bond, first as volunteer youth football coaches when their sons played on the same team. Delane is a father of five and works at an airline company.

Delane learned that Smith was struggling on dialysis and needed a kidney donor. After talking with his wife, Delane decided that if he was a match, he would be his friend's donor.

Delane lost a sister to kidney disease and his aunt donated her kidney to her husband years back. "I do know that dialysis road is not a good one," Delane says. "I just wanted Paul to have a good quality life. I didn't have any hesitation."

In fact, Delane recalls that Smith was the one who needed convincing to receive his friend's kidney. "When somebody gives you a part of their body and you didn't ask for that, that's just unbelievable," Smith says of his friend. "But I'm here to tell you, you can believe it because he did it."

Dr. Melancon was the surgeon in charge of the transplantation and felt moved by Delane's generosity. "The types of people that decide to be donors are very altruistic," he says. "They have a well of goodness inside of them that's a little deeper than the normal human." ➤

### “LET’S DO THIS.”

That’s what Delane said to Smith, and their kidney transplantation journey began. Delane was the match they hoped for and in great physical condition for the procedure. “I’m not a believer in chance,” Smith says. “It was just meant to be.”



The night before surgery, Smith and Delane spent a lot of time in prayer. In the operating room, both patients were placed under anesthesia. Through small incisions, one of Delane’s healthy kidneys was removed first. After removing one of Smith’s kidneys, the healthy kidney was transplanted into Smith’s body and connected to the bladder. The transplant was a success.

“The actual operation usually goes very well because it’s what we call minimally invasive surgery,” Dr. Melancon explains. “Small incisions are done with the laparoscope. You don’t have to cut through a lot of muscle, which means that the pain is minimized.”

Delane was surprised that he recovered so quickly. “That night I might have been walking all night because they were telling me that the one advantage is to start walking,” he says.

Because he was the kidney recipient, Smith’s recovery was longer and more complex, but his gratitude to Delane – and his concern for how his friend was doing – helped carry him through. “The next night after surgery they got me in my room,” Smith recalls. “I said, ‘How’s Jafau?’ and he came down to my room and he was leaving.”

### A NEW START AND A STRONGER BOND

Paul Smith and Jafau Delane feel more like family than friends these days. Delane’s parents called Smith after the surgery. “His mom said, ‘You’re my other son now,’” Smith recalls.

Smith says that he feels better than he has in 10 years. “I will never be able to thank Jafau or GW Hospital enough for my successful kidney transplant,” he says. “GW Hospital is simply amazing. Even today with my continued visits for check-ups – they just treat me like I’m somebody, and that’s important.”

Delane is thriving and grateful as well. “I personally thank GW Hospital for the constant information, the care, the follow through,” he says. “Donating a kidney is a great thing and GW Hospital made it that much easier for me.” ■

## ASK THE DOCTOR

# Welcoming a New Leader *in Cancer Care*



Julie E. Bauman,  
MD, MPH

GW Hospital is proud to introduce **Julie E. Bauman, MD, MPH**, the new director of GW Cancer Center.

Bauman earned a dual MD/MPH degree at Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston. She completed an internal medicine residency at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, and a medical oncology fellowship at the University of Washington/Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle.

Dr. Bauman answers some questions about her new role at GW Cancer Center.

### What is your philosophy of care when it comes to oncology?

I view the doctor-patient relationship as sacred. At the beginning and end of the day, as a physician and a scientist, everything I do is about the patient – from preventing cancer and its attendant suffering, to developing new treatments and offering compassion through the whole journey, especially when science falters.

### How does GW Hospital’s status as a teaching hospital benefit cancer patients?

Breakthroughs in cancer treatment require curiosity, humility and courage – all embedded in the culture of continuous learning represented by schools of medicine and their teaching hospitals. Cancer patients who come to academic medical centers benefit from the multidisciplinary expertise that advances surgical techniques, radiation technologies and medical therapies.

### What are your goals for GW Cancer Center moving forward?

I want to increase the availability of state-of-the-art clinical trials in the operating room, radiation oncology suite and infusion center. As a cancer prevention and wellness center, we can bring evidence-based screening and survivorship activities deep into our communities. As an institute for precision immunotherapy, we can harness our scientific expertise to bring discoveries to the bedside. The GW Cancer Center has never been better poised to realize this vision.

### What is new and exciting in your research?

I’m investigating “green chemoprevention,” using whole plants, like broccoli seed, or their extracts, to protect against environmental carcinogenesis. At GW Cancer Center, I am leading a trial in current smokers, testing whether the effect can be proven against placebo and is sustainable over time. ■

Watch Paul Smith and Jafau Delane tell their stories at [gwhospital.com/kidneydonation](http://gwhospital.com/kidneydonation)  
To learn more about the GW Transplant Institute, visit [gwhospital.com/transplant](http://gwhospital.com/transplant)

To learn more about the GW Cancer Center, visit [gwhospital.com/cancer](http://gwhospital.com/cancer)

# Bouncing Back From **PROSTATE CANCER**

**Jeffrey Gray is a longtime agricultural livelihood specialist and activist devoted to helping communities in Africa. He's now also a prostate cancer survivor, thanks to the robotic-assisted surgery he received from urologic oncologist Michael J. Whalen, MD, at GW Cancer Center.**

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DETECTION**

Gray's primary care provider (PCP) detected a problem with his prostate during his annual exam through a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test. Because his PSA test showed elevated levels, Gray needed a biopsy, which showed that he had prostate cancer. "To be honest, it was scary," he says. "I'd felt no signs of anything being wrong whatsoever."

**PHOTO  
TO  
COME**

Gray's PCP referred him to GW Cancer Center and Dr. Whalen. Getting to know Dr. Whalen was very important to Gray and his wife, Linda. "As far as I'm concerned, Dr. Whalen walks on water and GW is very fortunate to have such a capable urologist performing prostate surgeries," Gray says.

*Michael J.  
Whalen, MD*

## **ONGOING SUPPORT**

Many prostate cancer patients experience some level of difficulty with incontinence. After his surgery, Gray followed Dr. Whalen's advice to meet with a physical therapist to practice Qigong exercises for strengthening the pelvic floor. He now performs the exercises on a weekly basis.

Gray also received support from other prostate cancer survivors. "One of the beautiful things about GW Hospital is that they also put you in touch with support groups," he explains. "I have monthly meetings with a men's prostate cancer support group, and you hear everyone's story and they're all different."

## **A PATIENT'S CALL TO ACTION**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that Black men like Jeffrey Gray are more likely to get prostate cancer and more likely to die from it than white men. Because of this, Gray is adamant about raising awareness in the community and encouraging prostate cancer screenings.

"It's something that I certainly emphasize to my son, my brother and family members because prostate cancer is treatable," he says. "If you catch it early enough, then there's a good chance that you can have the surgery and have many more productive years to be with your loved ones." ■

**Watch Jeffrey Gray tell his story at  
[gwhospital.com/jeffgray](https://gwhospital.com/jeffgray)**

**Learn more about our prostate cancer care  
at [gwhospital.com/prostatecancer](https://gwhospital.com/prostatecancer)**

*Individual results may vary. There are risks associated with any surgical procedure.  
Talk with your doctor to find out if robotic-assisted surgery is right for you.*





THE GEORGE WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

900 23rd Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Marketing Mail  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 322  
PONTIAC, IL

Back cover Ad TO COME

*Connect  
WITH US!*



English: [gwhospital.com](http://gwhospital.com) | Spanish: [gwhospital.com/es](http://gwhospital.com/es)

HEALTH NEWS FROM THE GEORGE WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

**Kimberly Russo**  
Chief Executive Officer and  
Group Vice President, DC Region

**Bruno Petinaux, MD**  
Chief Medical Officer

**Susan LaRosa**  
Market Director, Strategic  
Marketing and Communications

**Courtney Clarke**  
Marketing Manager

Information in *Health News* comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health please contact your healthcare provider. Models may be used in photos or illustrations. Any opinion expressed by an author whose article appears in this publication is solely the opinion of the author and does not necessarily reflect the views of the George Washington University Hospital or Universal Health Services, Inc. Physicians are on the medical staff of the George Washington University Hospital, but, with limited exceptions, are not employees or agents of the George Washington University Hospital. The hospital shall not be liable for actions or treatments provided by physicians. For language assistance, disability accommodations and the nondiscrimination notice, visit our website. ©2023. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

You may have received this mail because your address appears on a purchased mailing list. To remove your name and address from our mailing list, please visit [gwhospital.com/unsubscribe](http://gwhospital.com/unsubscribe). In addition to unsubscribing from the George Washington University Hospital mailing list, you may also contact the Direct Marketing Association, Farmingdale, N.Y. or log on to [dmachoice.org](http://dmachoice.org) to select your mail preferences.