

# For Life!

Continuity of Care  
Benefits Cancer Patients

Facing Cancer Treatment –  
Patients Share Their Stories



**MEADOWS**

REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

**New Sports Medicine Specialist  
and Locations Enhance Local  
Orthopedic Care**



# Orthopedic Practice Expands, Adds Sports Medicine Specialist

## **OFFICES**

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VIDALIA DUBLIN SWAINSBORO

“I tend to favor non-operative therapies, especially for my young athletes, which a lot of parents think is a plus. I make sure every option has been exhausted before we go down the path of surgery.” **Brian Brislin, MD**



Brian Brislin, MD

In order to meet the needs of a growing region, the orthopedic practice at Meadows Regional Medical Center is growing as well, recently adding Dr. Brian Brislin, an orthopedic surgeon and sports medicine specialist who comes to Vidalia by way of Philadelphia. Dr. Brislin joins Dr. Charles Catron and Dr. Cullen Scott, both surgeons and Dr. Ravi Patel, an experienced physician.

“Brian is a fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeon, the only one in the area,” says Dr. Catron. “He can provide state-of-the-art reconstructive care for people who have sports-related injuries. He’s excited to hit the ground running. He’s busy already.”

“I like to say that I specialize in sports medicine and arthroscopy,” Dr. Brislin says. “I have an additional year of fellowship training where I basically studied different techniques related to arthroscopy. For instance, I know several different ways to do an ACL. I also know how to perform some of the more complex shoulder surgeries.”

Although the specialty is generally referred to as sports medicine, Dr. Brislin points out that you don’t have to be a world-class athlete to benefit from his services.

“I take care of everyone from the adolescent soccer player to the mature weekend warrior and have lectured on how they’re different,” he says. “Basically I work with athletes of all ages. So if you’re 60 and still running 15 or 20 miles a

week and you hurt your knee, you may not need to see a total joint surgeon. Just come and see me.”

Dr. Brislin is an accomplished surgeon, but doesn’t always believe surgery is the best option. “I tend to favor non-operative therapies, especially for my young athletes, which a lot of parents think is a plus. I make sure every option has been exhausted before we go down the path of surgery. I am going to give you the appropriate treatment and provide the steps to maintain your health and prevent injuries.”

Dr. Brislin’s expertise provides the perfect complement to the capabilities already in place in the orthopedic practice, which now includes offices in Vidalia, Dublin and Swainsboro. All four physicians provide care at the Vidalia location, Dr. Brislin and Dr. Scott also see patients in the Dublin office, and Dr. Catron and Dr. Patel see patients in Swainsboro. This expansion is evidence of Meadows’ commitment to serve the community and provide the best orthopedic care possible.

“The practice provides a great level of service for the community,” according to Dr. Patel. “Most orthopedic services can be provided here. The hospital has tremendous operating rooms and great surgeons.”

Dr. Catron agrees. “It’s simply easier for patients any time you have medical care close for both the provider and the patient. Hopefully we are making it more convenient in the area to come and get orthopedic care. That was our goal and our vision. We felt like there was a greater need here. No one else is here on a basis like we are in Swainsboro and the surrounding area, over toward Metter and the I-16 corridor.”

Dr. Scott adds, “We live in this community; we work in this community; and we serve this community. We’re easily accessible without having to travel. What we do best is take care of people and offer options – if a surgical option is necessary, then it’s offered and we do it well.”

“One of the major draws for physicians,” according to Dr. Catron, “is the new hospital and the aggressive, forward-thinking nature of the people who built it and continue to equip it with everything we need to provide state-of-the-art care to our patients. We are really excited about the growth in the hospital, in our area and in our practice going forward.”



L to R: Bradley Young, FNP-BC, Cullen Scott, MD, Brian Brislin, MD, Ravi Patel, MD, Charles Catron, MD and Bart Davis, PA-C



Dr. Cline consults with a patient before radiation treatment with one of the newest linear accelerators in Georgia.

## THE NEW MEADOWS REGIONAL CANCER CENTER

### A Marriage of Expertise and Convenience

As cancer care has evolved, it has become both more effective and, in many regards, more complex. A continuum of care is essential, which is one of the primary reasons that Meadows Regional Cancer Center is proving a tremendous asset for the people of Vidalia as well as the entire region.

Before the new cancer center opened in May 2013, patients had to travel hours to other cities such as Macon or Savannah for radiation treatment. Now, radiation therapy and chemotherapy services are offered on the Meadows Regional campus. Meadows cancer specialists feel that cooperative care in a central location is better, not only for the patients, but for the cancer team as well.

Dr. Henry Cline, a radiation oncologist, says "Approximately 65 percent of all

cancer patients will receive radiation as part of their treatment. A significant number of those patients will receive both radiation and chemotherapy. So coordination of care is very important."

Dr. Cline is grateful to be working closely with the medical oncologists at Meadows. "Usually Dr. Byrne or Dr. Tiley and myself typically discuss a multidisciplinary plan of care for each patient," he says.

Dr. Stephen Tiley, a medical oncologist, explains that cancer care is changing for the better. "Cancer care takes a more

multidisciplinary approach, and that's what a comprehensive cancer center provides. For oncology patients, it means a true comprehensive approach. We have all the specialties for oncology care in one place. For us, the Cancer Center means that medical oncology, radiation oncology, surgeons and all medical subspecialties are able to coordinate, communicate and treat cancer patients more effectively."

It's becoming increasingly apparent that cancer care is not related just to one physician or one service. It includes multiple physician specialties as well as multiple specialties including nursing care, physical therapy and social services — all part of the continuum of care.

"Cancer care is not just going into your doctor's office and getting a treatment," says Dr. Cline. "It takes place over a series of months or years. There are also

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**65%**  
of cancer patients  
RECEIVE RADIATION TREATMENT

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Dr. Byrne and Dr. Tiley, medical oncologists, consult on treatment options and outcomes.

the psychological effects of the diagnosis of cancer to consider. Those problems are managed in both the short term and long term, so it's an ongoing process."

Still, convenience can play a critical role in the patient's cancer treatment and recovery.

"The thing that strikes me is it's so much more convenient and safer for patients to be treated close to home," says medical oncologist Dr. Patrick Byrne.

Dr. Cline agrees. "It's great for patients. Before we opened the radiation oncology department, they might see Dr. Byrne, but then they would have to go out of town for radiation treatment. It just made it more difficult on patients. Also, you can communicate effectively over a distance but certainly it makes it more conducive for better care when the doctors are seeing each other on a daily basis. It can make a huge difference."

Dr. Byrne adds that the collaboration between doctors is something his patients notice. "Patients are amazed that their doctors are talking and agreeing. The worst thing is to have different cancer doctors with differences

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## comprehensive cancer care

MEDICAL AND RADIATION  
ONCOLOGY, NURSING CARE,  
PHYSICAL THERAPY &  
SOCIAL SERVICES

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of opinion. That can be upsetting for a patient and cause a lot of concern — we can resolve those things here."

The comprehensive nature of the Cancer Center and the continuum of care are already gaining acclaim. Meadows' doctors are proud to be a part of such a high standard of care close to home.

"One of the things I see a lot is that we're starting to get quite a few referrals from regional cancer centers — Georgia Regents University, formerly the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta, Emory in Atlanta and the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville. Once they find out there's a good team close to these folks' homes, they send them here because it's more convenient for patients," says Dr. Byrne.

"I think it's an exciting time in Vidalia with all the community support for the Cancer Center. I've just been so impressed. I came here from a 1,000-bed hospital outside of D.C. They would have loved a million dollar donor up there. This small community has been amazing. The donations and support are very special. I feel very comfortable practicing here. I think the care we provide is superb."

Dr. Cline puts what is happening at the Cancer Center in perspective. "Since we opened in May, we now have a facility that is comparable to anything else in the region. You really would have to go to the major referral centers for more specialized care than what we provide. That means we can provide 95 percent of patient needs right here in town."

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**Learn more about our services at [meadowsregionalcancercenter.com](http://meadowsregionalcancercenter.com).**



## Tumor Board Encourages Greater Collaboration

The Tumor Board is a meeting of doctors from different specialties designed to encourage a greater level of collaboration.

According to Dr. Byrne, "We're putting everyone in the same room and discussing cases real-time before treatment so all the specialists can be on one page. It's nice to get a perspective from other specialists and very helpful in the care of patients."

Dr. Cline explains that particularly interesting cases or cases that are being considered for multidisciplinary treatment are discussed by the Tumor Board. "That way there's a consensus of opinion on which is the best way to go forward," he says.

"We can prioritize patients with combined modalities or complex cases," Dr. Byrne adds. "We're trying to bring the entire community in: primary care physicians, surgeons in the surrounding area — not just Meadows doctors, but dermatologists, renal specialists, general surgeons — and we always try to get the patients' doctors involved when their case is being presented."

The Tumor Board is an integral part of Meadows' plan to provide a continuum of care. According to Meadows President and CEO Alan Kent, "You get a much more holistic treatment and set of treatment options because all of your providers are communicating."

# CANCER PATIENTS SHARE THEIR STORIES

## Mary McIntyre's Story

After Mary McIntyre completed surgery and chemotherapy for breast cancer in Statesboro, the Vidalia resident faced a follow-up treatment plan including 32 daily radiation sessions. That was back when Meadows Regional Cancer Center was still preparing for its grand opening. So, with her doctors' support, Mary actually delayed the beginning of her radiation treatments for a short time.

She's so glad she did.

"I wouldn't hesitate to tell people to come here over Macon or Atlanta," she says. "Vidalia is so blessed to have this cancer center here."

With access to advanced equipment and highly experienced staff, Mary was in and out of each appointment and on with her day in about 15 minutes. No more expensive, time-consuming trips to and from Statesboro. No big disruptions to her daily life. Instead, Mary enjoyed the support of her husband, who could easily be by her side for every session without disturbing his work day.

When the center opened its doors in the spring of 2013, it brought cutting-edge cancer treatment to patients in Vidalia

and the surrounding areas. Mary was among the first to benefit from a new innovative treatment tool – the Elekta Linear Accelerator, which focuses radiation beams specifically on the size, shape and depth of a tumor, minimizing damage to surrounding healthy tissue.

"You don't even know you're getting the radiation," Mary said of her experience. "You can't feel anything or see anything."



Mary McIntyre after completing radiation treatment

But it wasn't the tools, innovative as they are, that really got Mary through her treatments with a smile. After all, she notes, they're just machines without the care and compassion of the staff using them.

"I just love the whole team. Everybody is super supportive and nice, and Dr. Cline takes the time to talk to you and answer your questions. There's no way I could find enough adjectives to say how I feel about this cancer center. I recommend it to everyone."

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## Cancer Center Staff "Like a New Family."

Donna Bruns has fibrocystic breast disease, which means she often experiences discomfort and benign lumps in her breasts. But there was one particular area that she had been watching for some time. A number of tests had come back negative, but still something didn't seem right. One large lump was troubling to Donna.

Dr. Hofmann, a surgeon at Meadows Regional Medical Center, performed a needle biopsy and the results were atypical. A lumpectomy was then performed to determine the specific nature of the lump. Unfortunately the news for Donna was bad. The lump was diagnosed between a Stage I and Stage II breast tumor.

The news was difficult, and it couldn't have come at a worse time for Donna. She had no family in the area, was working full time at night and had a car that was less than reliable.

"Honestly, the hardest part of treatment was going back and forth. If it weren't for the Cancer Center being here in Vidalia,

I don't know how I would have done it," she says, adding that she probably would have had to move home with her parents.

Ultimately she would undergo 33 radiation treatments. She still sees the oncologist once a month, but her prognosis is good. Donna is more than happy with the care she received at the Cancer Center. She says the staff became like a new family during a very difficult time in her life.

"I don't have any family in the area; they all live out-of-state. So it was just me and I had no support other than the staff at the Cancer Center and the people who became my new family. They were there for me the whole time as a group. One of the first things they told me was that I was part of their family now. They let me know if my car broke down they would help get me there and get me back home.

"I'm very proud of the Cancer Center," says Donna. "I'm pretty sure I was among the first group of patients they were treating and I'm proud of everything that Meadows has accomplished."

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## You Can Help

*Meadows Healthcare Foundation offers a number of ways to ensure our community's healthcare needs are met now and in the future. Please consider making a tax deductible gift to the Foundation.*

## New Physicians Join the Staff

### **Orthopedic Surgeon Brian Thomas Brislin, MD**

Meadows Regional Medical Center welcomes Dr. Brian Brislin to Vidalia Orthopedic Center and the hospital's medical staff. Board certified by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery, Dr. Brislin comes to Meadows from Holy Redeemer Hospital and Medical Center in Meadowbrook, Pennsylvania. A Fellow in sports medicine and arthroscopy, Dr. Brislin describes himself as a physician who specializes in athletes of all ages.

Dr. Brislin holds a medical doctorate from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and did his surgical internship and residency in



**Brian Thomas Brislin, MD**

orthopedic surgery at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was director of Orthopaedic Sports Medicine at La Salle University and the team physician for the Philadelphia Revolution Junior Hockey Team. He is an active member in the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports

Medicine which, among other things, works to ensure health and safety at all levels of sports. Dr. Brislin has been personally involved in sports activities in rowing and running, as well as serving as a coach for soccer and rowing teams. He has published numerous articles in peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed publications, co-authored books, and presented on many diverse sports medicine and medical topics.

### **Pulmonologist Mark Hoerman, MD**

Meadows Regional Medical Center welcomes Dr. Mark Hoerman, a critical care doctor specializing in critical care medicine and pulmonary disease. He comes to Meadows Regional from Respiratory Health & Critical Care Associates in Midland Park, New Jersey.



**Mark Hoerman, MD**

Dr. Hoerman earned his medical doctorate from State University of New York at Brooklyn, New York, and did his residency in internal medicine at Staten Island University Hospital in Staten Island, New York. He is board certified in internal medicine, pulmonary and critical care medicine. He is a Fellow in pulmonary and critical care medicine and is a published author of a number of research articles.

### **Interventional Cardiologist Chris Higgins, MD, FACC**

Dr. Chris Higgins recently joined Meadows Regional Medical Center as an interventional cardiologist. He is board certified in internal medicine, nuclear cardiology, cardiovascular diseases and interventional cardiology, and is a Fellow in the American College of Cardiology. Previously he served on the



**John Christian Higgins, MD, FACC**

Board of Governors Steering Committee for the American College of Cardiology and as Governor for the state of Vermont college of cardiology. Dr. Higgins comes from Rutland Heart Center in Rutland, Vermont, where he was the medical director. In addition to his medical positions, he has taught part time for 13 years as an assistant professor of medicine with the University of Vermont College of Medicine/Fletcher Allen Health Care, in Burlington, Vermont. Dr. Higgins earned his medical doctorate from University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in Camden, New Jersey, and performed his residency and internship in internal medicine at the University of Vermont Medical Center Hospital of Vermont, in Burlington, Vermont.

### **Surgeon Gregory Norkus, MD, FACS**

Dr. Gregory Norkus recently joined Meadows Regional Medical Center as a general surgeon. Most recently



**Gregory Norkus, MD, FACS**

he was an attending surgeon at Providence Kodiak Island Medical Center in Kodiak, Alaska. Dr. Norkus is no stranger to Georgia. Previously, he was an attending surgeon at East Georgia Medical Center in Statesboro. Dr. Norkus received his doctor of medicine degree from The University of Virginia Health System in Charlottesville, Virginia, and did his internship and residency in general surgery at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, Pennsylvania. He is board certified by the American Board of Surgery and is a Fellow in the American College of Surgeons.

For Life!  
Winter 2014 Edition  
For Life! is published as a community service by Meadows Regional Medical Center. Meadows Regional Medical Center is located at One Meadows Parkway in Vidalia, GA, online at [www.meadowsregional.com](http://www.meadowsregional.com) and by phone at 912.535.5555.

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REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

For Life!

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# A Friendly Face IN THE BATTLE AGAINST CANCER

A cancer diagnosis is always difficult and can be overwhelming for any patient. Naturally, there is fear of the unknown. The diagnosis usually comes with different opinions and treatment options to consider as well as practical concerns such as missed work and finances.

Meadows Regional Cancer Center's Patient Navigator Samantha Barr is a trained oncology nurse who is there to serve as an expert and adviser, and often – a friend. She helps patients from diagnosis throughout treatment, and through the implementation of a survivorship plan when a patient is in remission.

"The navigator is going to be that person who understands cancer care, who is a registered nurse who will sit down with family members and explain to them how the process works," says Meadows President and CEO Alan Kent. "Her role is among the most important in the continuum of care."

"A patient navigator is a very supportive role," says Samantha Barr. "I provide a great deal of education. When a patient is given a diagnosis, what does that mean? Do they understand treatment options? What questions do they have? I am with them from a positive pathology report, through treatment, through a



Patient Navigator Samantha Barr, RN, consults with patient Opal Fowler.

survivorship plan and when they're in remission. What my role means depends on the patient. I can help find financial resources. I can help find transportation.

"And," Samantha adds, "I am there to hold their hand throughout their entire journey."

In addition to serving as an advocate and navigator for patients, Samantha has also been described as a sort of conduit between physicians. She has been instrumental in organizing the new Tumor Board.

"We have a great opportunity here because we have so many different experts who work closely with the oncology team. This is a team effort," she says. "If it's out of the scope of one physician, he or she will talk with the other in a spirit of collaboration."

**Meadows Regional Cancer Center's patient navigator is a trained oncology nurse who is there to serve as an expert and adviser, and often – a friend.**