

PA

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HEALTH

YOUR GUIDE TO FITNESS & WELL-BEING

‘He defied every statistic’

How Chance Sheehe of Bloomsburg beat the odds

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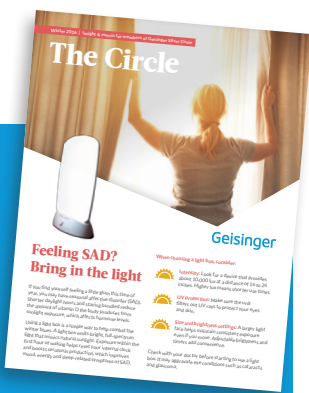
HELPING SICK KIDS MAKE THE GRADE
CLEANING CREWS FIGHT GERMS TO PROTECT PATIENTS
KEEPING HOPE ALIVE THROUGH CLINICAL TRIALS



WELCOME

On the cover:
At birth, 2026 Miracle Kid Chance Sheehe didn't have a heartbeat for 15 minutes. Now he's thriving.

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CONTENTS

- 4 / After a **lifesaving delivery** — for mother and baby — one couple is showing their gratitude by giving back.
- 6 / Learning **why to ask questions** (including the hard ones) helps you live better with diabetes.
- 8 / A strong **doctor-patient bond** made all the difference in one man's recovery from cancer.
- 10 / When ABC's meet EKGs: This teacher helps **hospitalized kids** keep up with their schoolwork.
- 12 / Not all patient protectors are clinical. Our environmental services team fights germs to **keep patients and staff safe**.
- 14 / Clinical trials can bring **tomorrow's medicine today** — right here in even rural parts of PA.

Give life, share hope

You'll become someone's hero by donating a kidney or registering as an organ donor. Ready to support others in need? Just scan the QR code today.



Better Together

We've been part of the region for more than 100 years — celebrating with you at parades, fairs and sports events and supporting happenings that lift up our communities. Here's the latest on how we're connecting with you and your neighbors.

Brrr-aving the cold and warming hearts • In November, Geisinger Medical Center Muncy and Geisinger Jersey Shore Hospital participated in the Susquehanna Valley Special Olympics Polar Plunge. Team members took the plunge to support Special Olympics athletes, raising awareness and critical funds for programs that empower people with intellectual disabilities.



Bringing breast screenings to you • Yearly mammograms are lifesaving — but not always top of mind. That's why Geisinger operates a mobile mammogram unit that visits Selinsgrove, Hazleton, Mountain Top and Pottsville for a week each every month. As long as you have a primary care provider, you can schedule an appointment.

Sparking an interest in healthcare • Eighty Mifflin, Juniata, Snyder and Centre county high school students got hands-on exposure to healthcare at Geisinger's Aspirations in Medicine and Healthcare Initiatives (AiM HI) event at Geisinger School of Nursing in Lewistown. Teaching kids about fields like nursing, ultrasound, behavioral health and interventional radiology builds a pipeline into healthcare careers, inspiring the next generation of caregivers.



Happy, healthy holidays • At the Scranton Santa Parade in November, more than 50 Geisinger employees, family members and volunteers handed out snacks and stress balls to parade-goers in the city's downtown neighborhood. Rather than a sleigh, they marched alongside an ambulance staffed and decorated by the Geisinger emergency medical services team.

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Faith, hope — and a fighting chance

When you're at your lowest moment, having someone there to lift you up — literally, figuratively or both — can make all the difference. Even save a life.

For the Sheehe family of Bloomsburg, teams at Geisinger stepped in when they faced not one but two devastating crises. More than 2 months before her due date, Trish Sheehe awoke in the middle of the night in extreme pain. Her husband Ben rushed her to Geisinger Medical Center, where she was hurried into surgery and their son, Chance, was delivered.

But the challenges were just beginning. "When I got the first update, it was all bad news," Mr. Sheehe says. "I think I actually fell on the ground."

His wife was "fighting for her life" with massive hemorrhaging after her placenta began to separate from her uterus. And his newborn son had gone more than 15 minutes without a heartbeat. The doctor needed to know if they should stop resuscitation on the baby.

"I had to make a decision no one's equipped to make," Mr. Sheehe says. "Then a nurse came running in and said they had a heartbeat. And so a little bit of hope began, right at that moment."

Expert care and unrelenting faith

In the operating room, Ms. Sheehe was treated by an obstetrics team whose "calm but urgent presence was a lifeline," Mr. Sheehe says. "Trish's surgery lasted several hours, but thankfully the team was able to save her life due to their incredible efforts."

Meanwhile, Chance was barely clinging to life in the NICU. "There was an incredible scene revolving around our son," Mr. Sheehe recalls. "At least 5 sweat-soaked people in scrubs frantically worked to make adjustments every time one of the machines alarmed. We gathered around Chance's bed and received the first of hundreds of daily updates."

Although NICU doctors are no stranger to emergencies, Chance's case stands out to neonatologist Maura Gable, DO, who stood by the family throughout their ordeal, which would stretch on for months.

"Chance Sheehe is a patient who will stick with me forever," Dr. Gable says. "He has defied every statistic. In the early fragile moments of his life, when every breath



Watch Chance Sheehe's story:
[geisinger.org/chancesheehe](https://www.geisinger.org/chancesheehe)



felt borrowed, I witnessed a strength that defied science, not just in the baby, but in the family who stood steadfastly by his side."

Ms. Sheehe says Dr. Gable provided not just outstanding care, but powerful emotional support.

"We were deep in the trenches," she remembers. "The days were very dark. Chance was not responding, and we heard bad news after bad news."

Then Dr. Gable stepped in.

"I was sitting by Chance's crib, and this doctor could see I was having a rough morning," Ms. Sheehe recalls. "She stopped doing rounds, held me and said, 'I will walk with you. I believe in this child. I will never take away your hope.'"

Continued on next page.

Top: 2026 Miracle Kid Chance Sheehe with his parents and sister.

Left: Chance was born 2 months premature.

Next page: Neonatologist Graciela Rabri-Stack, MD, delivered Chance via emergency C-section.

Because of you

Inspired by the Sheehes' story, an anonymous donor worked with the family to set up a fund to recognize outstanding Geisinger providers.

Explore how giving supports Geisinger:

[geisinger.org/becauseofyou](https://www.geisinger.org/becauseofyou)



Continued from previous page.

Waiting — and a breakthrough

While Ms. Sheehe recovered, Chance's initial lack of a heartbeat and oxygen deprivation had caused severe brain injury. After 6 weeks with no significant improvement in spite of the care team's efforts, the family braced for the worst.

"Dr. Bob Tamburro in palliative care spent countless hours guiding us through decisions no parent should ever have to make," Mr. Sheehe says.

Then Chance cried for the first time.

"To see a whole different child in the NICU was incredible," Mr. Sheehe says. "I'll never forget walking in. I can tell you where people were sitting, what everyone said. It was an amazing moment — and the beginning of our new life, which has been spectacular."

Ms. Sheehe adds, "We're lucky both Chance and I survived. But most of our luck comes from being treated by the doctors inside an incredible institution full of incredible people. Geisinger Medical Center is a place where hope, skill and compassion intersect. Our family is living proof of the miracles they can make happen."

As Chance grows and thrives, Dr. Gable finds herself changed by caring for him.

"That experience taught me to listen more deeply, to honor the family's voice and to see resilience not only in the patient but in the love that surrounds them," she says. "It shaped the way I practice medicine — grounded in empathy, collaboration and the belief that even in uncertainty, there is always room for hope."

Let's talk: Diabetes

“A mentor of mine said to think of diabetes as driving a car — you always have to keep your hands on the wheel.”

– Vishaal Gupta, MD



You've just received a tough diagnosis: diabetes mellitus. You probably have tough — maybe embarrassing — questions, too. Geisinger endocrinologist Vishaal Gupta, MD, answers some of them here to help you get a conversation started with your doctor. Keep in mind they may answer differently, depending on your situation.

1 Is this my fault? Did I cause this?

This is a common — and complicated — question. Your diet might contribute to your diagnosis. But it's probably not the only cause. Other things can play a role, like genetics, environmental factors, autoimmune processes and even other medical conditions.

Don't dwell on blame — focus on what you can control, like eating a healthier diet and following all your doctor's other suggestions.

Why ask? Eases guilt and empowers you to move forward with positive changes.

3 My family loves to eat. How do I get them on board with my new lifestyle without judgment?

It can be scary for friends and family to watch a loved one change, even to get healthier. And they might not understand that you have a serious condition — or wonder if your new lifestyle will force changes on them, too. So be clear and honest with your circle: Managing your diabetes means you'll be with them for a long time.

People also like to be helpful. So let your family know what adjustments will help — like lighter meals and exercise — and ask them to encourage you. And if they think things like sugary treats are a way to show love, remind them that helping you stay healthy is the best way to show how much they care.

Benefit of this conversation: Reduces stigma and builds a supportive environment so you can make lasting lifestyle changes.

2 Can I get healthy again? Is this going to shorten my life?

Diabetes has no cure. But it can be managed. Make sure you take your medications, eat a healthy diet and exercise. Those are all key to living a long, healthy life.

You've probably heard of someone with diabetes-related blindness or an amputation. Those are worst-case scenarios — but scary prospects. Be vigilant about getting eye exams, doing foot checks and monitoring your blood sugar. Continuous glucose monitors can help you keep tabs on your condition and stay on track. This is time to take firm control of your health.

Why ask? Sets realistic expectations and motivates you to be proactive about taking steps to prevent problems.

4 How do I handle social situations without feeling deprived or embarrassed?

When you're out having fun, it can be hard to resist temptation. Luckily, most restaurants have healthy options. Check menus or use an app to assess nutritional content and choose lighter and lower-carb foods. And don't be embarrassed — millions of Americans have diabetes. If your friends ask why you're not having your usual burger and fries, tell them about your condition if you're comfortable with that. Who knows? Somebody else at the table or the party might decide to make a healthy choice, too.

Benefit of this conversation: Builds confidence in social situations and lets you enjoy life while keeping blood sugar under control.

← Based in Scranton, Dr. Gupta specializes in helping patients manage diabetes and other endocrine disorders.

By Lyndsey Frey and Harlan Spector

Building strength beyond survival

When a patient-doctor connection makes all the difference.

Ken Hull is an adventurous spirit. He enjoys rock climbing, riding his motorcycle and painting scenes from his travels around the globe. But this thrill-seeker never dreamed his biggest adrenaline rush would be getting a cancer diagnosis.

In 2023, Mr. Hull of Boalsburg learned the lump on his neck was cancerous. Thankfully, he found solace in the care he got from his Geisinger doctor.

His ENT provider referred Mr. Hull, then 64, out of network to Thorsen Haugen, MD, a Geisinger otolaryngologist specializing in head and neck surgical oncology. And the two immediately hit it off.

“Having been referred to Dr. Haugen was the single best thing that happened at the start,” Mr. Hull says. “He really knows his stuff. From day 1, I was super impressed with the guy. He was like a maestro, orchestrating my treatments.”

The treatment grind

Though they were coordinated well, the treatments themselves weren't easy. Mr. Hull's cancer was advanced squamous cell carcinoma that began on his right tonsil, caused by human papillomavirus (HPV).

He needed chemotherapy and 33 radiation treatments. The side effects made it hard for him to chew and swallow, so he had to use a feeding tube for 6 weeks.

But his physician knew what he was going through. “Dr. Haugen gave me his personal cell number to reach him in case I had a question or concern,” said Mr. Hull. “He always got back to me right away. He's amazing.”

Stronger than ever

Because Mr. Hull is a fitness buff, he was intent on getting back in shape after treatment — with a goal to be stronger than ever before. Mr. Hull set out to do a pull-up challenge to celebrate his birthday and surviving cancer.

“I wondered if I could do 64 pull-ups in 6 minutes and 4 seconds to mark my 64th birthday. I trained all summer for it,” he says.

Meanwhile, Dr. Haugen, who shares his patient's passion for health and exercise, was also working out on a pull-up bar.

“Ken wanted me to do the competition with him,” Dr. Haugen says. “He would text me his updates and I would text him my updates. By doing the pull-ups with him, I could appreciate how much he had achieved.”



▶ See Ken Hull describe his journey back to an active lifestyle: [geisinger.org/kenhull](https://www.geisinger.org/kenhull)

Top left: Ken Hull works out in his local gym. Top right: Geisinger otolaryngologist Thorsen Haugen, MD, with Mr. Hull.

Bottom: After his cancer diagnosis and treatment, Mr. Hull devoted himself to getting healthy and strong with Dr. Haugen there to support him.

Mr. Hull accomplished his goal at an event at the Climb Nittany climbing gym in October 2024.

And now, he says, he's feeling like his old self again. “What a difference a year makes. I'm very happy where I'm at. I'm back to life and doing the things I've always done — riding motorcycles, rock climbing and hanging out with my wife.”

Knowledge is power

After his cancer diagnosis, Mr. Hull says his wish is that more parents have their kids vaccinated against HPV. The vaccine is recommended for all preteens 11 to 12 years old — and it's the only vaccine that prevents cancer.

Not all HPV infections cause cancer. But the CDC says HPV may be responsible for the majority of cases for many types of cancer, including anal, cervical, vaginal and penile. However, says Dr. Haugen, there are significantly more cases of HPV-caused head and neck cancers than of cervical cancer.

“There's an increasing number of cases of HPV cancers of the head and neck,” he adds. “We're seeing more young people in their 30s. It's increasing very rapidly.”

A new lease on life

The whole experience has given Mr. Hull a renewed perspective. He's mostly lived his life trying to be fit and healthy, but now that he's had a “literal brush with death,” he says, it's all the more important moving forward.

“You never know what cards you might be dealt in life,” he says. “But doing all you can do physically, mentally, emotionally and even with your faith will at least give you an advantage. It's an advantage that I'm grateful for and will continue to pursue as long as I'm blessed to do so.”

By Beth Kaszuba

Providing knowledge — and normalcy



All teachers face challenges, like getting students excited to learn and keeping their attention during lessons.

For teacher Sherry Musser, who works with the Child Life Services team at Geisinger Janet Weis Children's Hospital in Danville, some of those issues are compounded. And she faces unique obstacles to educating her pupils, who are pediatric inpatients.

Ms. Musser works one-on-one with kids to keep them from falling behind in school due to treatment for conditions including serious infections, cancer and behavioral health issues.

Along with adapting to each student's age, grade, circumstances and school curriculum, Ms. Musser's "class" is always in transition. Depending on why a child is hospitalized, she may work with them for just a few days — or off and on over the course of years. The children and families she meets are often under extreme stress. And there may be physical restrictions to learning, ranging from the need to be quiet in the hospital to infection protocols.

But Ms. Musser, who's taught for 24 years in traditional classrooms and with special education, autism support and life skills programs, says her work is also rewarding.

"I really get to build relationships and learn a lot about the students," she says. "And on any day, I can be teaching kindergarten reading and math or helping a student with algebra. I just love that variety."

Teacher and students, adapting together

Any student admitted to the hospital for more than 2 school days is eligible for educational support from Ms. Musser, who's employed by the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, with some funding from the state and Geisinger Health Foundation.

Some students are determined to keep up with their studies. But others need more encouragement and guidance, Ms. Musser says.

"I've had to work really hard to build a relationship with some students before we were able to do any schoolwork," she says. She's even dressed up as kid-lit

characters, like Clifford the Big Red Dog, to encourage reading. "I try my very best to make things as fun as possible, rather than just completing worksheets."

Obviously, just feeling lousy is a big obstacle to learning for many students. In those cases, she modifies her lessons to give them a hand. "Sometimes I'll say, 'You do this part, and I'll do this part.' Or I'll even scribe for them and just note on the paper that I did that."

Gaining trust to reach goals

Helping a student reach a goal — or even set one — makes the job especially gratifying. In one case, Ms. Musser worked hard to encourage a young patient undergoing dialysis for several years to continue her education when she was ready to give up.

The first step: building a rapport based on the girl's love of animals. "I just sat with her and showed her



pictures of my dog," Ms. Musser says. From there, they found more common ground and eventually worked together 3 days a week. Much to the family's delight, the patient went from planning to drop out to graduating high school.

"We really got to be close," Ms. Musser says. "I went to her graduation party."

And when another student was admitted for cancer treatment, Ms. Musser found a place for her to practice her musical

instrument without disturbing other patients. She also got permission for a student facing a long recovery from a fracture to have school sessions outside on the Geisinger Medical Center campus, in the sunshine and fresh air.

"It's a unique program," she says. "It allows me to reduce the kiddos' stress and help them feel a sense of normalcy. Every day is challenging but truly rewarding."

Child Life Services: Beyond great medical care

Even colorful hallways and cheerful providers can't take all the fear out of a hospital stay for a kid. That's where Geisinger's Child Life specialists come in. The team goes above and beyond to put kids at ease by explaining procedures in ways they can understand, letting them "play" with medical equipment so it becomes familiar and even prepping them for release from the hospital.

Glenda Brink, Geisinger's pediatric discharge navigator and a licensed social worker, rounds with physicians. That way, she can prepare families for discharge by anticipating needs, answering questions and making sure appropriate home resources are in place — taking some of the worry out of going home after a serious illness, too.

Because of you

Sherry Musser's work and Child Life Services at Geisinger are supported in part by charitable donations to Geisinger Health Foundation. Learn more or donate: geisinger.org/becauseofyou

By Kimberly Adler-Morelli

When you walk into a hospital, you'll see gleaming floors and spotless rooms. Behind that shine is a Geisinger team of professionals whose work is critical to patient health: environmental services (EVS) technicians. They don't just clean — they protect patients from infections by keeping everything as germ-free as possible.

High-stakes hygiene

In a hospital, health starts from the floor up.

"We're not just housekeepers. We take care of the entire environment of care," says Lura Spriggs, supervisor of environmental services at Geisinger Lewistown Hospital. Her team's responsibilities go far beyond sweeping. They disinfect patient rooms, manage supplies and even handle sensitive materials like patients' personal belongings after discharges — all while maintaining strict infection control protocols.

The stakes are high. Hospitalized patients are more vulnerable to infections, and EVS technicians are the first line of defense. Joan Barnett, a third-shift EVS supervisor at Geisinger Community Medical Center

in Scranton, emphasizes this point: "We're a key part in patients getting better. If there is no clean environment, the patient is susceptible to infection."

Technology meets expertise

At Geisinger, EVS teams now use advanced tools like ultraviolet (UV) disinfection devices, which kill pathogens invisible to the naked eye. The UV light in a germicidal wavelength breaks down the DNA of microorganisms, rendering them harmless. It kills 99.9% of bacteria, mold spores, algae, protozoa, viruses and yeasts. After a 2-step manual cleaning with hospital-grade disinfectants, these devices add an extra layer of protection against dangerous bacteria like *Clostridioides difficile*, or *C. diff*.

"It's a game changer for the department and facility," says Mrs. Spriggs. The process is meticulous — correctly placing sensors, controlling the devices by a tablet and following safety protocols allows thorough disinfection of a patient room without risk to staff or patients.

Training and professionalism

Becoming an EVS technician isn't as simple as knowing how to mop a floor. New hires undergo 4 to 6 weeks of training, including online modules, hands-on practice and competency assessments.

Technicians are instructed to treat each patient room as if they were in the patient's home. They explain what they'll be doing and ask permission. When they finish their tasks, they ask the patient if they need anything. If so, the EVS technician relays that information to a nurse for follow-up.

Many pursue advanced certifications like the CHEST (Certified Healthcare Environmental Services Technician) credential, which focuses on infection prevention and environmental safety. CHEST is a national certification and is recognized everywhere in the United States.

More than cleaning

EVS technicians often work under intense pressure — turning over dozens of rooms in a single shift, responding to emergency spills and supporting surgical teams. During COVID-19, their role became even more critical. "COVID was like a war zone," recalls Ms. Barnett. Enhanced cleaning protocols, personal protective equipment requirements and constant updates became the norm, all while many staff members fell ill themselves.

Despite their essential role, EVS technicians are often overlooked as critical hospital employees. Ms. Barnett advocates for her team: "People take EVS technicians for granted, but it's a very important job." From operating rooms to waiting areas, their work directly impacts patient outcomes.

The heart of hospital safety

Every sanitized surface, every disinfected room, every stocked supply cart represents the dedication of EVS professionals. As Mrs. Spriggs puts it, "If it's in the care environment, we're doing it. An EVS technician is just as important as a nurse."

So the next time you walk through a hospital, remember: The clean, safe environment around you is no accident. It's the result of skilled, committed EVS technicians whose work protects people's lives.



Recognizing excellence in EVS safety

Geisinger's environmental services teams don't just meet industry standards — they set them. Their commitment to patient safety and innovation has earned national recognition:

- **State-of-the-art technology:** Introduced advanced UV disinfection devices systemwide that kill 99.9% of harmful pathogens by breaking down their DNA.
- **National honors:** Geisinger Medical Center (Danville) and Geisinger Bloomsburg Hospital have both earned Certificates of Merit from the Association for the Health Care Environment as part of the prestigious Environmental Services Department of the Year award. This honor celebrates outstanding achievements in infection prevention, sustainability, patient satisfaction and technology use.
- **Innovative training:** Piloted virtual reality training to enhance EVS team skills and competency, making sure staff are prepared for the most rigorous infection control standards.
- **Zero MRSA rate:** Geisinger Lewistown Hospital achieved a zero rate of MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) bloodstream infections, according to data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services — a remarkable milestone in patient safety and infection control.



Example of UV disinfection device being used in a patient room. Photo provided by Steriliz LLC.

Groundbreaking research on familiar ground

By Kimberly Adler-Morelli



You don't need to travel to a big city to be part of cutting-edge medical research.

At Geisinger, clinical trials are happening every day — right here in our communities — offering hope, innovation and personalized care to patients across Pennsylvania.

“We’ve been part of the National Cancer Institute’s clinical trial network for over 30 years,” says Heather Albertson, associate director of oncology research operations. “You don’t have to look elsewhere. It’s here at Geisinger.”

Clinical trials are research studies that test new treatments, devices or approaches to care. They’re essential for advancing medicine. In fact, many of the standard cancer treatment available today started as a clinical trial. Geisinger offers dozens of trials, including Phase II and III studies that test new therapies against the current standard of care.

And clinical trials at Geisinger aren’t just for cancer. Patients with disorders such as heart conditions, high triglycerides, liver disease and even acute kidney injury can participate. For example:

+ **The ATTR-CM trial** is testing a new drug for heart conditions caused by protein buildup.

+ **The Shasta 4 and Muir 3 trials** are exploring RNA-based treatments for high triglycerides (a type of fat found in the blood).

+ **The Shear Wave trial** is evaluating a new ultrasound technology for liver stiffness — and Geisinger was the first in the U.S. to use it on a patient in the trial.

“Patients often think they have to go to Philadelphia or New York for this kind of care,” says Ann Webster, clinical research coordinator. “But we have it here. And we’re opening trials wherever there’s a need across the Geisinger footprint.”

Patients are carefully screened for eligibility, and coordinators like Ms. Webster and Jenifer Olszyk guide them through every step, from consent to follow-up. “We’re not just monitoring treatment,” says Ms. Olszyk. “We’re helping patients navigate the entire journey, sometimes for years after their treatment ends.”

And the impact is real. One uterine cancer trial showed such promising results with immunotherapy that all participants were switched to the new treatment. Another trial for metastatic melanoma helped push a new therapy to become the standard of care — just after Ms. Olszyk’s father died from the disease.

“Every day I meet patients who are brave, hopeful and selfless,” says Ms. Webster. “Their strength inspires me. When someone joins a trial, they’re giving a gift to others they’ll never meet.”

You don’t need to be Geisinger-insured to participate. Costs are often covered by insurance or the trial sponsor, and you can opt out at any time. “It’s always what’s best for the patient,” Ms. Webster emphasizes. “Their health comes first.”

Whether you’re newly diagnosed or simply curious, clinical trials offer more than just treatment — they offer a chance to be part of something bigger. “Our philosophy is to screen all new patients for eligibility,” says Mark Wojtowicz, administrative director of oncology research. “If they qualify, we talk to them about it. It’s about giving patients options.”

Interested in clinical trials happening now? If you’d like to join one, talk to your doctor — you might be eligible. And you don’t have to go far to find hope.

Could a new combo help fight endometrial cancer?

Geisinger joined a major trial testing chemo with pembrolizumab, an immunotherapy drug. The results? Especially promising for patients with a genetic marker called dMMR — nearly twice as many were doing well after a year. Even those without the marker saw some benefit. Side effect were manageable. The upshot: This combo could become a new standard treatment for endometrial cancer.

Photo: Patient Paul Wasavage talks with Ann Webster and Jenifer Olszyk.

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Cancer care built for you

Getting the best treatment shouldn't mean a long drive. Geisinger's expanding cancer care network brings advanced technology, leading specialists and access to national clinical trials right to your community.

With our new center in Dickson City now open, our new center in Lewisburg under construction and our center in Danville being renovated, it's easier than ever to get world-class care. So you can have more good days — without the travel days.

Here. Where it matters.

Find treatment you trust: geisinger.org/gci

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