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Early cancer detection possible during GERD and hiatal hernia repair

Dr. Robert C. Wright to present break-through research at international conference

PUYALLUP, Wash. — While surgery for *Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)* and hiatal hernia is fairly common, it's less common to discover cancer during the operation.

Meridian Surgery Center's Dr. Robert C. Wright will soon unveil independent research that could change that—and help save lives.

Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumors (GIST) are most often found in the upper stomach. *GERD* and hiatal hernia patients can have these tumors, but Wright's research shows they can be missed up to 3.8 percent of the time during laparoscopic anti-reflux surgery for Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) and para-esophageal (hiatal) hernia repair.

"This is the first time these tumors have been described in association with a GERD or hiatal hernia repair," said Wright. "This breakthrough in early cancer detection is possible if an experienced surgeon knows what to look for," he said.

Discovering this potentially malignant tumor during these fairly common procedures makes it possible to preserve the long-term safety and well-being of the patient, according to Wright.

Wright will submit his findings for publication in the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons* and present them at an international conference of hernia surgeons in Milan, Italy on April 25.

2010 Bellarmine Preparatory graduate Hallie Wurst, now a pre-med student at the University of Arizona, had a role in the research. She reviewed and compiled all surgical data from 184 surgeries performed from 2011 to 2013. She secured permission from MultiCare Health System's Institutional Review Board ethics committee to participate in the study.

Wright is a specialist in GERD and hiatal hernia repair and is one of the area's top laparoscopic surgeons. He offers surgical solutions for GERD, including Laparoscopic Hill Repair and Laparoscopic Fundoplication to repair the weak LES. In addition, Meridian Surgery Center is the first surgery center in the country to offer the FDA-approved device called LINX® for the treatment of GERD.

Meridian Surgery Center also is home to the Cascade Hernia Institute, which Wright launched in 2011 to bring independent research opportunities to area medical students and offer the latest surgical techniques to patients.

Patients experiencing GERD do not have to suffer without relief. Call (253) 840-1999 or email frontdesk@robertcwrightmd.com. You can also learn more by visiting www.cascadeherniainstitute.com or www.whatsupwithmygerd.com.

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