



NEWS RELEASE

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‘Don’t Ever Hesitate’: Early Detection and Advanced Technology Leads to Lifesaving Diagnosis for Albany woman

Albany, Ga — A routine checkup that revealed high calcium levels in her blood led Albany native, Darlene Hollis, a Procurement Specialist for Dougherty County, down an unexpected path. Following those initial lab results, Hollis had a CT scan that revealed a concerning spot – measuring just a centimeter – in the lower lobe of her left lung. It was unlikely that the spot was cancerous, but she chose to undergo a biopsy to find out for sure.

“I initially agreed to the biopsy just for peace of mind. I don’t even want to think about what I could be facing if I had waited,” said Hollis.

Phoebe Pulmonologist Dr. Jyotir Mehta performed the biopsy using the Ion Bronchoscopy system, a cutting-edge tool for diagnosing lung conditions that provides precise tissue sampling from an area that would otherwise be difficult to reach.

“Ion Bronchoscopy is a revolutionary technology that enables us to navigate deep into the lungs to biopsy small, hard-to-reach nodules. Traditional methods may not reach these areas as effectively, and this technology gives us the ability to detect cancer earlier, which can significantly improve outcomes,” said Dr. Mehta.

The biopsy confirmed Stage I non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), and that early detection allowed for timely surgical intervention. On June 17, Phoebe Cardiovascular Surgeon Dr. Scott Johnson removed the lower lobe of Hollis’s lung where the cancer was located, and she was fortunate not to need radiation or chemotherapy.

Since completing the region’s first ion bronchoscopy procedure earlier this year, physicians with Phoebe Pulmonology have performed it on more than 50 patients. “Ion Bronchoscopy combines robotic precision with real-time navigation, allowing us to obtain biopsies safely and efficiently. We’ve had great results with patients like Mrs. Hollis. Anytime we can diagnose and treat lung cancer early, we are giving our patients a better chance of recovery,” Dr. Mehta said.

For Hollis, the early diagnosis marked the beginning of a life-changing journey. She credits her support system and her faith for helping her through each step. “My husband, Tim, has been my rock. He’s been with me every step of the way. My daughter, who’s a nurse, has been my source of medical knowledge. She attended appointments with me, asked questions I wouldn’t have thought to ask, and explained things I didn’t understand. And, most importantly, I’ve traveled this journey knowing God has a plan for me,” said Hollis.

Hollis is proud to share her story, and a new perspective on her health, in November which is Lung Cancer Awareness Month. “My health is definitely in the forefront of my thoughts now. I don’t take it for granted anymore,” she said.

She urges others to be proactive when it comes to screenings and early detection. “Don’t ever hesitate!” she said. “Thanks to the Ion Bronchoscopy machine, I had the best possible outcome. I feel incredibly blessed that Phoebe had this technology. Today, I am cancer-free and forever grateful,” said Hollis.

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