



INOVA FAIRFAX  
HOSPITAL

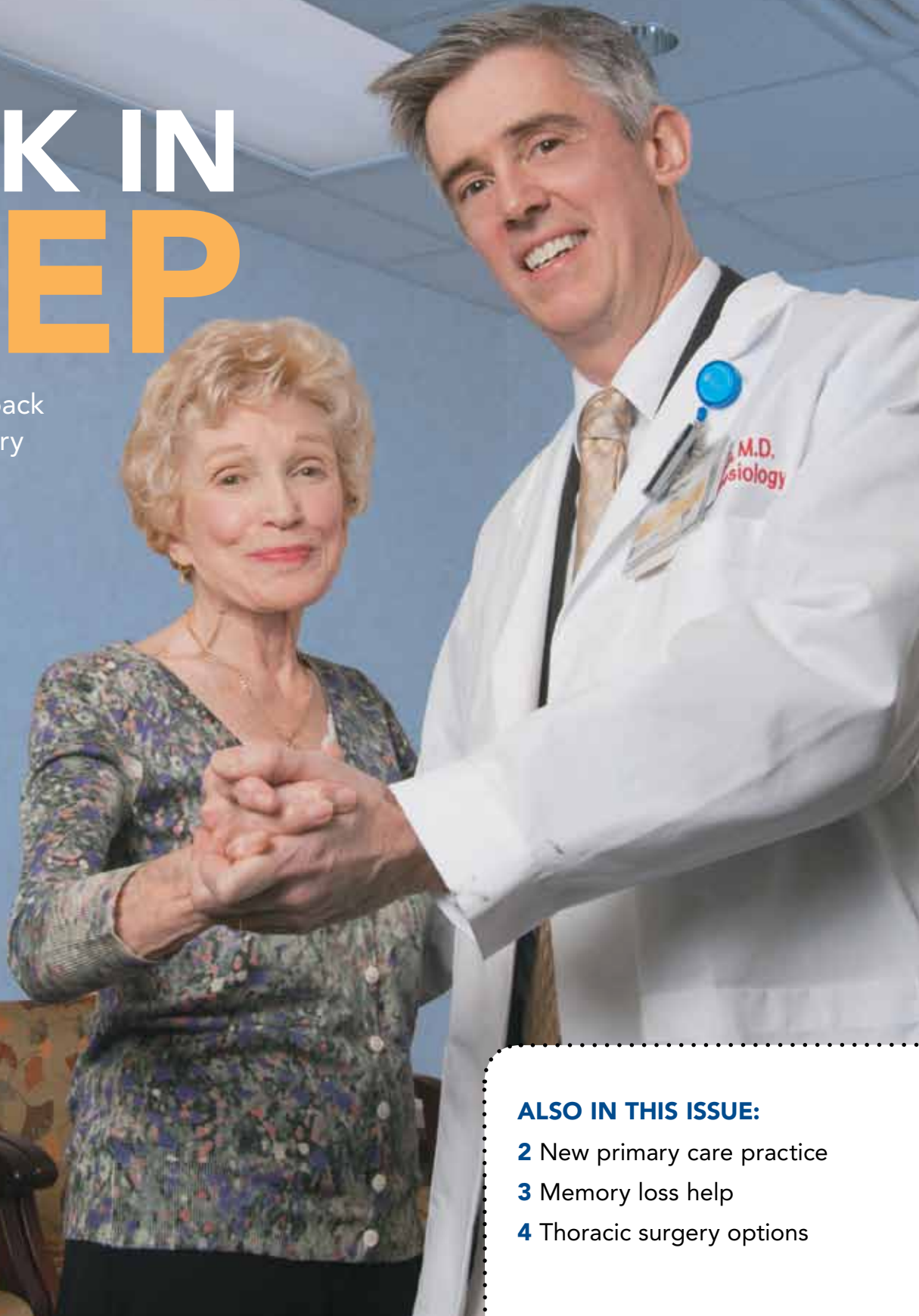
# INhealth

HEALTH AND WELLNESS MADE PERSONAL | SPRING 2011

## BACK IN STEP

Relieving chronic back  
pain without surgery

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**FOLLOW THE LEADER**

**Signature Service**

At Inova, signature service is our byword. In this issue of *InHealth*, you'll see how our award-winning Neurosciences Services deliver efficient, effective and personalized care for patients suffering from back or neck pain and other spinal disorders.

Through a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach, the Inova Spine Institute provides a network of nonsurgical and surgical board-certified specialists. Specially trained nurses help coordinate office visits, diagnostic tests, procedures and communications between you and your doctors.

We offer four convenient Back Assessment Centers located throughout Northern Virginia and provide services at all five Inova hospitals. Inova Fairfax Hospital opened a new 16-bed spine unit in January. See more at [inospine.org](http://inospine.org).

In the fall of 2010, we opened the Inova Memory Center, comprised of health professionals who are experts in diagnosing and treating memory loss and dementia. You can learn more at [inova.org/memorycenter](http://inova.org/memorycenter).

This year, we'll be opening the Brain Tumor Institute, which will provide patients with resources to identify the best treatment for brain and pituitary tumors.

Please peruse this issue of *InHealth* to find out how our services can benefit you.



**ROBERT THEIS, JR.**  
Executive Director, Neurosciences  
Inova Health System

# Defensive Strategy

We've got you covered

When you're dealing with gynecologic cancer or a high-risk pregnancy, you need the right ammunition on your side. At Inova Health System, you can rest assured that your doctor is armed with pioneering research.

Working with the U.S. Department of Defense, Inova opened the Women's Health Integrated Research Center (WHIRC) in the fall of 2010. The center will use the newest, world-class gene sequencers to pinpoint cancerous changes in the body. Your doctor can use that new information to detect cancer earlier and diagnose it more exactly. That

means treatment better tailored to your special needs.

If you're facing a high-risk pregnancy, the same research promises inroads to earlier and better diagnosis of maternal-fetal disease as well. With the largest population of gynecologic cancer patients in the region, and one of the largest high-risk perinatal units in the country, Inova is fighting for the best possible outcomes for women and their developing babies.



**Tom Conrads, PhD**, is Chief Scientific Officer at the WHIRC at Inova Health System.

## PARTICIPATE

Check out [inova.org/open-clinical-trials](http://inova.org/open-clinical-trials) to view all clinical trials that Inova is offering and where your participation could be vital.

## IT'S PRIMARY

*Inova Internal Medicine – McLean now open*

Looking for a primary care physician? Quick and convenient access to an experienced internist is now at your fingertips. Inova Internal Medicine – McLean is now open and accepting new patients. The practice is the newest addition to Inova's primary care program and offers quality healthcare services for patients from adolescence to adulthood.

Inova Internal Medicine – McLean is staffed by Roma Edoe-Sowah, MD (see photo below), an experienced physician who is committed to playing a pertinent role in her patients' wellness and healing. As with all Inova visits, when you see Dr. Edoe-Sowah you get more than a doctor; you get access to more than 3,000 physician specialists who work in concert to keep you well. The practice offers convenient appointment times and short wait times.

## SCHEDULE

Inova Internal Medicine – McLean is located at 6845 Elm St., Suite 710, McLean, VA 22101. To schedule an appointment, call **703-848-8500**. For more information about the practice, visit [inovamedicalgroup.org/internalmedicinemclean](http://inovamedicalgroup.org/internalmedicinemclean).



Roma Edoe-Sowah, MD



## ALLERGY SEASON

### *Battling springtime allergies*

Along with warmer weather and green grass, spring means allergy season for many adults and children. Allergic rhinitis, or hay fever, is a common problem this time of year. The most common symptoms include a stuffy or runny nose with clear drainage, sneezing, itchy eyes and nose, sore throat, throat clearing and a cough that may be worse at night and in the morning.

The best treatment for allergic rhinitis is to avoid what is causing the allergic reaction. This means following prevention and environmental controls. For seasonal allergies, this includes keeping windows closed in the car and at home to avoid exposure to pollens, and limiting outdoor activities when pollen counts are highest (early morning for tree pollen in the spring, and afternoon and early evening for grasses in the summer).

Medications used to control the symptoms of allergic rhinitis include decongestants, antihistamines and steroids. If symptoms are mild, you can use over-the-counter medications as needed. For additional relief for your allergies, find an allergist at [inova.org/doctor](http://inova.org/doctor).

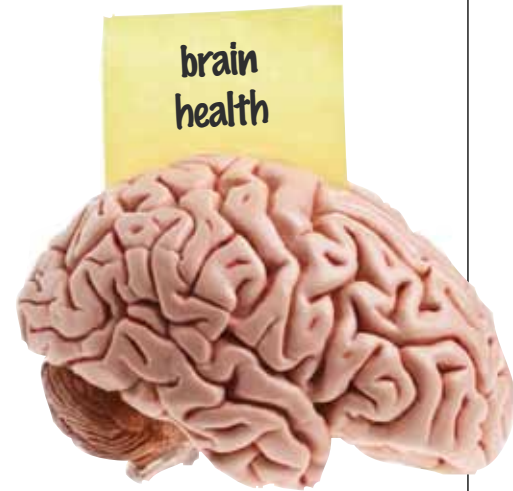
# Can't Remember?

When forgetfulness turns into memory loss

Where are those car keys? Did I turn off the coffee pot? These are all questions we ask ourselves from time to time. But as we age, these normal lapses in memory can cause concern for some who worry about developing dementia, Alzheimer's or a related disease.

If you or a loved one experiences any of the following, you should consult your physician who can help determine the cause of the memory problems and prescribe a treatment plan:

- asking the same questions over and over again
- getting lost in places you know well
- not being able to follow directions
- becoming more confused about time, people and places
- not taking care of yourself — eating poorly, not bathing or being unsafe



Do not assume that memory loss is a natural part of aging. There are several potential causes of memory loss that can be treated. These include a reaction to medication, depression, poor eating habits, consuming too much alcohol and thyroid problems. Working with your doctor, you can determine the cause of your memory problems and begin treatment.



## KNOW WHERE AND WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Inova Health System has a dedicated Memory Center comprised of a group of health professionals who evaluate and treat memory problems. Our team includes experts from neurology, psychiatry, geriatric medicine and psychiatry, neuropsychology, radiology, nursing, social work and cognitive rehab who provide comprehensive and compassionate care. To learn more about the Inova Memory Center, visit [inova.org/memorycenter](http://inova.org/memorycenter) or call 703-289-7566.

# OPERATING SYSTEMS

*Inova's Thoracic Surgery Program offers leading-edge surgical options*



“The important part about technology is using it in a rational way — so the patient experiences the best possible results.”

**SANDEEP KHANDHAR, MD**

**Except for the stray rain poncho in your hall closet**, one size really doesn't fit all.

That's how Inova Fairfax Hospital and Inova Heart and Vascular Institute feel about every patient, every diagnosis, every treatment plan and every surgical procedure. And it's why our team of thoracic surgeons turns to three distinct tools and skill sets to achieve optimal results.

Thoracic surgery treats diseases and conditions affecting the lungs and esophagus. These often involve lung cancer, chest and esophageal cancer, esophageal disorders and mediastinal tumors.

“To treat a thoracic problem, we perform minimally invasive surgeries, which include robotic procedures, as well as traditional open surgeries. There's a place for each,” says Sandeep Khandhar, MD, thoracic surgeon and Surgical Director, Inova Thoracic Oncology Program. “The patient's condition and disease process determines how we approach the problem and which tools we use.”

## **SURGICAL OPTIONS**

**Traditional thoracic surgery**, also called open surgery, typically requires one long incision. When the chest is involved, the surgeon must cut through chest muscles and spread the ribs. Because of trauma to the tissue, open surgery generally necessitates a longer hospital stay and recovery time.

**Minimally invasive thoracic surgery** requires two or three significantly smaller incisions, each usually less than 2 inches long. With Video Assisted Thoracic Surgery (VATS) — a type of minimally invasive surgery — the surgeon inserts long, thin surgical instruments and a miniature video camera into the patient's body. The doctor

Paul Kiernan, MD



Daniel Fortes, MD



then views the procedure on a video monitor placed beside the patient. Because of the instruments' thinness, the surgeon can access the lungs or esophagus without having to spread or cut the patient's ribs.

Another state-of-the-art addition to the minimally invasive surgical armamentarium is a robotic surgical system, known as the da Vinci Surgical System. Used for complex, delicate procedures, the robotic platform gives surgeons extraordinary dexterity as well as a greatly magnified, 3-D, high-definition image.

"The robot allows an extremely high level of precision inside the patient's body," according to Daniel Fortes, MD, thoracic surgeon. "So for certain surgical treatments, the robot is definitely a superior technological advancement that helps us give patients the best and most individualized care."

#### MINIMALLY INVASIVE ADVANTAGES

"It's important to remember that minimally invasive and traditional open surgeries themselves are the same, in that nothing we do beneath the skin changes," says Paul Kiernan, MD, thoracic surgeon. "However, a minimally invasive procedure does change how we approach the tissue — how we enter the chest cavity."

And it's this advanced approach that produces significant patient benefits. Topping the list is a quicker recovery after surgery, which allows patients to return to their normal activities and lifestyle sooner than with traditional surgery.

In addition, the small incisions usually result in less pain. "That helps our patients get out of bed and walk around sooner," says Dr. Kiernan. "We've learned that patients recover quicker when they're more active."

Decreased pain also helps avoid certain complications directly associated with thoracic surgery. Following lung operations, for example, patients are told to walk, breathe deeply and cough — all essential steps to reduce the risk of pneumonia. Being able to do this with minimal or no pain helps decrease complications and gets patients back to their normal lives sooner.

"The important part about technology is using it in a rational way — so the patient experiences the best possible results," Dr. Khandhar stresses. "That's why Inova continues to offer patients a full spectrum of state-of-the-art, proven surgical advancements to treat thoracic cancers and conditions."

## STRENGTH FOR SURVIVAL

Emerging data strongly suggests a direct link between improved survival rates and minimally invasive surgery.

"There's less disruption to the patient's overall body functions because the incisions are so much smaller. As a consequence, the body recovers faster from surgery," says Daniel Fortes, MD, thoracic surgeon. And Dr. Fortes adds, evidence tells us that a quicker recovery promotes two results directly tied to survival.

- The body's natural defense system is back up and running sooner, which helps the body fight disease better.
- Post-surgery treatment options often begin sooner. This is particularly pertinent to cancer patients who must fully recover from surgery before they can begin chemotherapy.

## PATIENT CARE NAVIGATOR

One of the special features of the Inova Thoracic Oncology Program is our patient care navigator, Carrie Friedman, RN, BS. Friedman is a registered oncology nurse who expedites patient visits and diagnostic studies. She ensures a timely and accurate exchange of information among the referring physician and the program team members throughout a patient's diagnosis, treatment and recovery.

To speak with Friedman or make an appointment, call **703-776-3777** or e-mail her at [carrie.friedman@inova.org](mailto:carrie.friedman@inova.org). For more information, visit [inova.org/thoracic](http://inova.org/thoracic).

# Back *in* Step

Relieving chronic back pain without surgery


**Anne Reins comes across as much younger than her 77 years.** She's not one to let chronic back pain stop her active lifestyle. But more than 10 years ago, it almost did. Reins was diagnosed with a severe spinal curvature (scoliosis) and a narrowing of the spine in her lower back (spinal stenosis). Doctors told her that her spine was collapsing. The resulting pain was affecting her ability to exercise and get out with family and friends. "It got so bad I almost couldn't walk," says Reins.

As a retired OB/GYN nurse, Reins is a believer in doing research to find the right medical care. So she went to physical therapy, tried to stay fit and searched tirelessly for a medical solution to her problem. Surgery was not a good option. "I went from doctor to doctor," she says.

Reins was frustrated. "Finally I said, 'This is ridiculous,' and I found a neurologist who referred me to Inova Fairfax Hospital for pain management."

**"You've got to be a partner with your doctor. It's your body!"**

**ANNE REINS**



Anne Reins is feeling good, thanks to Greg Fischer, MD, and a treatment that uses electricity to heal her back.

# Ask the Experts

## OPTIONS FOR TREATING BACK AND NECK PAIN

Don't suffer any longer. Join Christopher Silveri, MD; John Hamilton, MD; Ali Ganjei, MD; Gregory Fischer, MD; Mary Deeb, RN, CNRN; and Beena Nair, PT, DPT, for a panel discussion, "Options for Treating Back and Neck Pain." The event will take place May 17 at 7 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Reston. Call **855-My-Inova (694-6682)** or visit [inova.org/asktheexpert](http://inova.org/asktheexpert) to register.



Christopher Silveri, MD



John Hamilton, MD



Ali Ganjei, MD



Gregory Fischer, MD



Mary Deeb, RN, CNRN



Beena Nair, PT, DPT

Pain control turned out to be the answer for Reins. At Inova Fairfax she found Greg Fischer, MD, an anesthesiologist and pain management specialist. Dr. Fischer believed Reins could benefit from lumbar facet radio-frequency denervation. It's a technique that uses electricity to melt away or "zap" the nerves that create the pain signal.

The outpatient radiofrequency procedure is done under local anesthetic so that the patient can be awake and able to communicate with the doctor. A needle is inserted into the anesthetized area and the physician uses a fluoroscope to guide the equipment. Reins says she experiences a small amount of discomfort during the procedure and for about a week afterward. "Dr. Fischer is very careful, so it can take awhile, but it's not too unpleasant compared to the relief I get," she says.

While the results vary for each patient, Reins finds that her pain is significantly

reduced after each treatment and that the relief lasts anywhere from one to three years after treatment. She is back to her active routine with the occasional help of over-the-counter pain relievers. That means she's able to drive, see family, lunch with friends and even take her new greyhound, Lucky, to puppy training courses. It's been a year since her last treatment and she's still feeling well, she says. "I'm looking forward to spring, I can't wait to get out and around the swimming pool with Lucky."

Reins is especially pleased with the ongoing care she receives from Dr. Fischer

and his Inova team. "Dr. Fischer is very knowledgeable and the staff know how to be patient with older people," she says. "Dr. Fischer probably doesn't realize how much he's done for me. To be my age and be as independent and active as I'm able to be — I'm just so thankful. I have referred so many people to this procedure."

If you are experiencing life-altering, chronic pain, don't give up, says Reins. "You've got to be your own advocate, do your own research, get a lot off of the Internet, search it through. You've got to be a partner with your doctor. It's your body!"

## HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

*Here are a few ways*

- 1. Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation** — Ultrasound or massage therapy can help muscles relax. Light exercises and stretching can build core strength and help you maintain flexibility.
  - 2. Pain Medication** — An array of medication options can be extremely helpful in alleviating pain — from mild to severe — and muscle spasms.
  - 3. Pain Injections** — Injecting medications directly into the problem area can give some back pain sufferers great relief.
  - 4. Neurostimulation** — For patients with chronic pain, neurostimulation can be used to mask the pain. Low levels of electricity are delivered directly to the nerves.
  - 5. Psychology** — For some patients, cognitive behavioral therapies can reduce feelings of pain and may be equally or more effective than drugs or surgery.
- To learn more or to reach a spine expert, visit [inovaspine.org](http://inovaspine.org) or call **703-391-3667**.



Suffering from back pain? There are several treatment options and we always start with the least invasive. For many patients, physical therapy and rehabilitation can resolve the problem. For others, we use pain management techniques. Surgery is only required in 5 to 10 percent of patients.

Inova Health System is a not-for-profit healthcare system based in Northern Virginia that consists of hospitals and other health services, including emergency- and urgent-care centers, home care, nursing homes, mental health and blood donor services, and wellness classes. Governed by a voluntary board of community members, Inova's mission is to improve the health of the diverse community it serves through excellence in patient care, education and research. Inova provides a healthy environment for its patients, families, visitors, staff and physicians by prohibiting tobacco use on its campuses.

If you do not wish to receive future mailings from Inova Health System, please contact us at 855-My-Inova (855-694-6682) or [inova.org/unsubscribe](http://inova.org/unsubscribe).



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## INOVA FAIRFAX HOSPITAL CELEBRATES GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

Feb. 6, 2011, marked the 50th anniversary of a 1961 ribbon-cutting ceremony that opened the doors to Fairfax County's first hospital. The Fairfax Hospital — as it was then called — was scheduled to open at 8:30 a.m., but when a woman in labor arrived at 7 a.m., the hospital took on its first patient a bit earlier than expected.

We've been working to stay ahead of the healthcare needs of our community ever since! We've grown from just 96 beds to more than 800. Our campus now includes a dedicated children's hospital, a Level I Trauma Center, and the Inova Heart and Vascular Institute.

We've become a research center and teaching hospital, and the home to a Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) branch campus. Inova Fairfax Hospital was the site of the region's first open-heart surgery in 1977, first heart transplant

in 1986, and first heart and double-lung transplant in 1997.

Each medical advance we've made has marked a milestone not just for our patients and staff, but for the entire Northern Virginia community. With our recently initiated campus expansion project, we'll continue to build on our solid foundation as a community hospital to become a world-class leader in medical research and clinical care.

### WATCH

You can view a video of Fairfax Hospital's milestones of the past 50 years by visiting [inova.org/Fairfax-Turns-50](http://inova.org/Fairfax-Turns-50).



### find a physician

Looking for a doctor? Our physician-referral service can help you find one close to home or work. Call **855-My-Inova (855-694-6682)**.



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### baby and me

Sign up for Inova's free weekly pregnancy and parenting e-newsletter, *Baby and Me*. Visit [inova.org/babyandme](http://inova.org/babyandme) to sign up today!