A Frightening Liver Diagnosis Leads to a Cause for Celebration

While shoveling snow in early March last year, Paul Lamaida became short of breath, and his heart began to race and beat irregularly. Doctors at a local hospital diagnosed atrial fibrillation, a heart rhythm abnormality. However, blood tests showed elevated liver enzymes—sometimes a sign of liver disease. After MRIs and scans of his abdomen were conducted, doctors informed the Kings Park resident he had a large, suspicious mass in his liver and needed surgery “right away.”

A gastroenterologist referred the business owner to Ganesh Gunasekaran, MD, Chief of Hepatobiliary Surgery at the Mount Sinai Health System, who specializes in resections of the liver, biliary tract, and pancreas. Dr. Gunasekaran ran additional tests, including a repeat MRI and a PET/CT scan and diagnosed primary liver cancer that would require surgery.

“Dr. Gunasekaran said he would remove part of my liver,” recalled the grandfather of three, who has no family history of cancer. “And he reassured me that the liver would grow back.”

Mount Sinai South Nassau “Truth in Medicine” Poll:
One-Third of Metro Area Residents Consider Themselves Overweight

Nearly one-third of metro area residents consider themselves overweight and almost one-quarter say they would take a prescription weight-loss drug to shed extra pounds, according to the latest Mount Sinai South Nassau “Truth in Medicine” Poll.

Ten percent of poll respondents are currently taking or know someone who uses the prescription drugs Ozempic, Mounjaro, or Wegovy to lose weight.

While all three drugs can generate weight loss, only Wegovy is Food and Drug Administration approved for weight management in obese or overweight teens and adults with at least one weight-related comorbidity. Ozempic, the most well-known brand name, and Mounjaro are only approved for patients with type 2 diabetes to control blood glucose levels.
Causes for Celebration

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A couple of months later, he underwent removal of the right lobe of his liver at The Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan and drew a sigh of relief after learning that the cancer had not spread to any lymph nodes and organs.

“It was so cool,” said Mr. Lamaida, referring to his cancer-free diagnosis. “And my liver grew back in two months.”

“He had a sizable tumor, measuring more than four inches in length,” Dr. Gunasekaran recalled. “I had to remove a large part of his liver, but he tolerated the procedure well, and he recovered nicely.” Since the surgery, he has been following up with Dr. Gunasekaran in Oceanside every three months and undergoing MRIs and exams. He remains cancer-free.

“Dr. Gunasekaran is the best,” he said. “He is honest and told me what he was going to do. I stayed in the hospital five days, and his team was there five times a day checking in on me. I couldn’t be happier with the treatment and results.”
Diabetes Drugs for Weight Loss?

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Half of respondents admit to binge eating. Sixty percent confirmed they eat two or more fast-food meals per week and 22 percent said they consume four or more fast-food meals per week. Meanwhile, 60 percent of respondents reported that inflation has changed their buying habits at the grocery store.

Off-label use of prescription drugs as an alternative to dieting and exercise to lose weight is contributing to supply shortages in the United States and globally for the people—most of whom have diabetes—that they were created to help.

But exercise and dieting do not seem to be working for many. A majority of respondents who made a New Year’s resolution to lose weight reported as of late February that “it is not going very well.”

“I strongly encourage all adults and parents of children who are struggling with being overweight to talk about it with their health care providers and to develop a short- and long-term program to manage it,” said Adhi Sharma, MD, President of Mount Sinai South Nassau.

According to a study published in Diabetes, Obesity and Metabolism, one year after the withdrawal of a once-weekly 2.4 mg injection of Ozempic, participants regained two-thirds of the weight lost.

Sponsored by Bethpage Federal Credit Union, the poll aims to gather data about attitudes on key public health topics and helps spur education to improve public health. The poll was conducted from February 16–21, 2023, via both landlines and cell phones with 600 Long Island and New York City residents. Poll findings are subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 3.9 percent.

“Obesity is a chronic disease. We should treat it as such with lifestyle interventions, pharmacotherapy, and potentially, surgery,” said Effie Tsomos, MD, Chief of the Division of Endocrinology at Mount Sinai South Nassau. “However, when patients use certain diabetes medications off-label for the purpose of weight loss, it makes it increasingly difficult for patients who rely on these medications for glycemic control to get their prescriptions filled at their local pharmacies.”

Help Us Conquer Chiari Malformation and Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS)

Samantha Demartin, 30, of Warwick, Rhode Island, was diagnosed with Chiari malformation, a brain abnormality at the junction of the skull with the spine, which was causing disabling head and neck pain, dizziness, and balance problems. She also has an underlying connective tissue disorder known as Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS) that predisposes all of her joints, including the spine, to be more lax in movement. In January, she traveled to Oceanside, New York, to undergo treatment with a Mount Sinai South Nassau neurosurgeon and Chiari expert Paolo Bolognese, MD.

Following cranio-cervical revision surgery for spinal instability, a procedure that joins one or more bones of the spine, a grateful Ms. Demartin wrote in a note of thanks to the Mount Sinai South Nassau Chiari EDS Center, “Everyone worked together and advocated for me. They got complex treatments to happen and kept me safe and monitored—the picture of how medicine should be. You all saved my quality of life.”

When you partner with the Chiari EDS Foundation, you can help patients like Ms. Demartin experience quality of life—for the first time in years. To support our mission to help countless lives, please consider a gift in any amount to the Chiari EDS Foundation. Your donation will help fund research, education, awareness, and advocacy of Chiari malformation and neuro-EDS. Thank you for caring for our patients.

For more information, visit chiariedscenter.com

What causes Chiari malformation?

There are two types of Chiari malformation.

Primary Chiari malformation type 1 is often caused by structural defects in the brain and spinal cord that occur during fetal development.

Secondary Chiari malformation type 1 occurs if there is excess leakage of spinal fluid from the lower back or chest area due to traumatic injury, disease, or infection.
One Healthy Way
Oceanside, NY 11572

Please reduce, reuse, and recycle

New Electronic Health Record Is Here
In June, Mount Sinai South Nassau is transitioning to EPIC, a new electronic health record, for its outpatient practices.

Current patients in Mount Sinai South Nassau's ambulatory sites will receive an email to activate their account.

The new patient portal, called MyMountSinai, will allow patients to easily access their health records, schedule appointments, renew medications, and obtain information about their care in the hospital's physician practices.

For more information, visit southnassau.org/sn/patient_portal.

Heart Healthy Recipe

Whip Up a Blue-Banana Smoothie

In this flavorful and refreshing smoothie, blueberries provide antioxidants that help combat inflammation and support the immune system. Bananas are packed with potassium, magnesium, and vitamin C. By adding some of the optional boosts, you can increase the fiber and nutrients while also enhancing its creamy texture. Smoothies make a perfect on-the-go breakfast, anytime snack, or can be enjoyed after a workout.

Ingredients:
- 8 ounces low-fat or fat-free milk (or a nondairy alternative, such as oat, almond, or soy milk)
- ½ cup frozen banana slices
- ½ cup frozen blueberries
- Honey to taste
- Cinnamon to taste

Optional Boosts:
- 1 cup fresh baby spinach
- ½ cup plain low-fat yogurt
- ¼ cup oatmeal
- 1–2 tablespoons ground flaxseeds
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder

Preparation:
In a blender, puree everything until smooth. Serve immediately.

Note: Add extra milk or water if you want a thinner consistency or add more fruit if you want it thicker.

Servings: 1

To find a doctor, visit mountsinai.org/southnassau.

The information provided in this newsletter is for educational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Except where noted, models are used in photos and their appearance here is not reflective of a specific disease profile.

Read Healthy Outlook online at mountsinai.org/southnassau.