
SEACOAST GASTROENTEROLOGY AND EXETER HOSPITAL

SEACOAST GASTROENTEROLOGY AND EXETER HOSPITAL TO ADD ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY TO TREAT BARRETT'S ESOPHAGUS

First in the Area to Offer New, Highly Effective Treatment Option for Precancerous Condition Affecting Millions

EXETER, N.H. — August 15, 2007 — People suffering from the potentially precancerous esophageal condition known as Barrett's esophagus will have access to a technologically advanced form of treatment through Seacoast Gastroenterology, which is based at Exeter Hospital. The hospital's new BARRX HALO system allows for the safe and minimally invasive treatment of Barrett's esophagus. The procedure is performed in under an hour on an outpatient basis. Seacoast Gastroenterology will be the first gastrointestinal practice north of Boston to offer this procedure.

Barrett's esophagus is caused by prolonged exposure to stomach acids, usually as a result of gastroesophageal reflux disease—or GERD. With such continued exposure, the normal cells in the lining of the esophagus can change and eventually lead to cancer. In the U.S., up to 7 million adults over the age of 40 may be affected by Barrett's esophagus. It's estimated that those who have Barrett's esophagus are over 100 times more likely to develop esophageal cancer than those who do not.

“Traditionally, patients with Barrett's esophagus have had few options for management. Either a long-term wait-and-see approach, or (in patients with more advanced changes of Barrett's) a seemingly drastic approach, such as having the esophagus removed altogether,” said John Dowd, D.O., one of four board-certified gastroenterologists at Seacoast Gastroenterology. “We're excited to have a technology that allows us to safely and precisely destroy the affected tissue, and pave the way for healthy tissue to grow in its place—without any incisions.” He continued, “This is another example of our commitment to bring the best in gastroenterological care to our patients throughout the Seacoast and beyond.”

The BARRX HALO system uses an endoscope to insert a catheter into the esophagus. The catheter contains a balloon at the tip, which is surrounded by a series of electrodes. Once the device is in place, the system generates a short burst of energy that destroys or “ablates” the Barrett's cells. According to clinical studies, with the appropriate aftercare, healthy tissue begins to regenerate approximately one month after treatment.

The new technology will be available to Seacoast Gastroenterology patients in September. In addition to Dr. Dowd, the Barrett's esophagus ablation procedure will be performed by Alain Ades, M.D.; Francis P. Colizzo, M.D., F.A.C.P.; and Marylyn V. Grondin, M.D.—all of whom are board-certified gastroenterologists at Seacoast Gastroenterology.