

GREAT LAKES CANCER MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS

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EFRAIN R. CASAS, M.D., F.A.C.P.

Living the American Dream

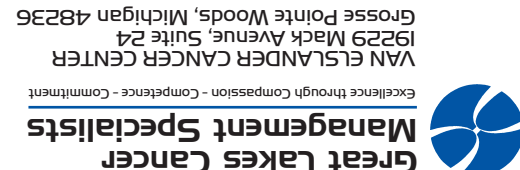
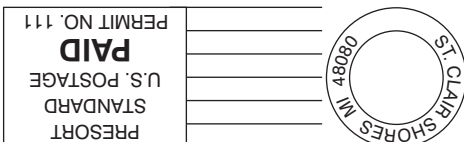
Mention Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War and most people would respond negatively with unpleasant memories of that period of American history. For Dr. Efrain Casas, this time offered a unique opportunity to live the American Dream. Dr. Casas was born and raised in Columbia. Later he attended medical school there, as well as married his wife Maria. After graduation from medical school, he was looking for opportunities for postgraduate training. Based on a previous positive experience with another Columbian medical school graduate, a contingent of St. John physicians from Detroit, Michigan traveled to Bogota, Columbia in search of other gifted young physicians for their Internal Medicine residency. Efrain was intrigued by the opportunity, but was hesitant because of his then limited command of the English language. The program at St. John Hospital offered a crash course in English at St. Louis University in Missouri. With that offer, in the summer of 1970, Dr. Casas left his homeland with his young wife to embark on the journey of their lives.

At the time, Dr. Casas had a limited visa which extended for the five year period of his training. He fully expected that at the completion of his training he would have to return to Columbia, but as fate would have it, historical events intervened. In the early 1970's the war in Vietnam continued. President Nixon was pressed for more troops in a war that was becoming more unpopular with each passing week. With war comes casualties and the need for more medical personnel. In order to entice and make available more candidates for military service, Nixon made a unique offer that Dr. Casas could not refuse. In exchange for a permanent visa that did not require his return to Columbia, Efrain had to submit to the military draft. He may have been required to risk his life for his newfound land, even though he was not yet its citizen. He accepted the President's offer hoping that his luck would continue and his services would not be "requested" through the draft. As luck would have it, President Nixon had other distractions and the war continued to wind down and the military draft was suspended shortly after he obtained his permanent visa. Maria Casas immediately took advantage of this opportunity and became an American citizen in order to petition the Immigration Department on behalf of several remaining family members in Columbia. They since have also immigrated to this country. Several years later Dr. Casas followed his wife's good example and became an American citizen himself.

Dr. Casas successfully completed his internship and residency at St. John Hospital and Medical Center, so well in fact, that he became the Chief Resident. He then went on to become the first Medical Oncology fellow at the hospital and later joined the medical staff. For years he provided cancer care through the clinic associated with the hospital. He later relocated his practice to Clinton Township joining the staff of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital. His reputation grew such that in 1993 he was awarded the prestigious Medallion Award by the hospital. This award is given annually to a single physician nominated and voted on by his peers.

Approximately 8 years ago, Dr. Casas joined Great Lakes Cancer Management Specialists paving the way for the practice's expansion into Macomb County. His reputation, both personally and professionally, offered instant recognition both in the community at large and within the medical field. It also provided him with more time to spend with his family, to travel and to enjoy life. The office at Nineteen Mile Rd. and Garfield quickly became too small for the expanded practice. In January 2002, the practice relocated to its current location in Utica on Hall Rd. The expansion and growth, particularly at this Macomb County office, is greatly linked to our partnership with Dr. Efrain Casas. Our new office really should be known as "The House That Efrain Built" as a testimony to his great contribution!

As Dr. Casas embarks on a new journey in his life along with his lifelong partner Maria in this international adventure, we wish them well. His warm, gentle manner will be greatly missed. His compassionate, knowledgeable care will be difficult to replace. Our warm memories of him and his family will remain forever in our hearts. His experience embodies everything that is good about America and the opportunities that it offers and how this opportunity given is repaid a thousand times over by the many talents and gifts that he and his family have given back to make our country a richer and better place.



IMPORTANT BILLING CHANGES FOR 2005

On behalf of everyone from the Billing department we wish everyone a most Happy Holiday season and wonderful New Year.

This coming year will be full of many changes and challenges for the staff at Great Lakes Cancer Management Specialists. The staff would like all our patients to be acquainted with the dramatic billing changes we face in 2005. Because of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 oncologists will no longer be reimbursed above our acquisition costs for many of the drugs we provide our patients. While we expect no major changes in the services we provide our patients, there may be situations which arise that prevent Great Lakes Cancer Management Specialists from providing certain drug therapies in our office because we cannot purchase them for less

than what the payer will pay. In those [hopefully] rare situations we will find an alternative setting in which your plan of care may proceed without interruption. While this new system of reimbursement for Oncologists affects primarily Medicare patients, more and more payers are following Medicare's lead in over hauling the reimbursement model for outpatient chemotherapy. We would like to thank everyone for your understanding and cooperation during this time of uncertainty.

Lastly, many of you may note from time to time small amounts of chemotherapy drugs being billed to your account weeks or even months after your drugs have been administered. These claims represent the amount of wasted drug when mixing your medications. These amounts are not known until

the end of each week and final clarification of how to bill this drug wastage has only been recently been detailed. Over the years the amounts of drug wastage was quite small. However, with the recent Medicare changes in drug reimbursement these small amounts of wasted drug have taken on added importance since the vast majority of drugs we will administer in 2005 will have little to no profits associated with their reimbursement. As a result we must watch every 'nickel and dime' of wasted drug on your behalf. Again, on behalf of the entire staff at Great Lakes Cancer Management Specialists we thank you for your patience and understanding in this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us directly at 313-884-1059.

The Billing Department

ANEMIA

by Julie Hilton, MT(ASCP), Laboratory Supervisor

Anemia is a condition in which the concentration of hemoglobin in the circulating blood is below normal. Such a condition is caused by a deficient number of erythrocytes (red blood cells), an abnormally low level of hemoglobin in the individual cells, or both these conditions simultaneously.

Regardless of the cause, all types of anemia cause similar signs and symptoms because of the blood's reduced capacity to carry oxygen. Approximately 15-20% of people over the age of 70 are anemic. As a result, people with anemia often feel weak, tired, dizzy, or irritable. If not treated, it can force the heart to work harder, leading to more serious consequences.

In elderly people, anemia can often be caused by an underlying disease such as cancer, kidney failure or by

treatments for these diseases. An anemic condition in an oncology patient undergoing treatment is known as chemotherapy induced anemia. Poor nutrition is a less common cause of anemia in the elderly.

The diagnosis of anemia among elderly patients was never a priority in the past because there were no effective treatments for the condition. That has dramatically changed, however, with the introduction of Epoetin Alfa, the first drug approved for the treatment of anemia, which is marketed under a few brand names. There are laboratory tests that can be performed to help a physician diagnose anemia. Your healthcare providers at GLCMS will routinely test your blood to determine your body's level of red blood cells to see if you are anemic. There are several ways to monitor this level, however, the

hemoglobin, which is part of a CBC, is the most common. This test measures the amount of the oxygen-carrying component in your blood.

The chronic tiredness that is caused by anemia can affect a person's quality of life. Anemia can strain your heart as it overworks to deliver oxygen and it can make you think unclearly. When your brain does not get enough oxygen it can make it difficult to read, write and function on a daily basis. Your doctor or nurse at GLCMS will evaluate your lab results as well as review your symptoms with you to help evaluate and monitor your blood counts when you are in the office.



Julie Hilton, MT(ASCP)
Laboratory Supervisor

GLCMS PHYSICIANS RECEIVE "TOP DOCS" RECOGNITION

Two members of GLCMS physician staff, Robert J. Leonard, M.D., F.A.C.P., and Efrain R. Casas, M.D., F.A.C.P., have been recognized as "Top Docs" in the October 2004 issue of Hour Detroit magazine. This recognition is especially significant because recipients are chosen by their colleagues throughout metro Detroit as the physicians they would seek in their respective medical specialties.

For Dr. Casas, this recognition serves as one more testimony to his exemplary medical career as he retires at the end of 2004.

On behalf of all of us at GLCMS, we wish to thank our colleagues for this prestigious recognition.



Efrain R. Casas, M.D., F.A.C.P.



Robert J. Leonard, M.D., F.A.C.P.

Next Issue:

- Myelodysplasia and it's Treatment
- Clinical Trials Update



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As our practice continues to grow, so does the need to accommodate our patients by expanding the number of hospitals which we actively attend. Great Lakes Cancer Management Specialists is pleased to announce that our physicians have extended their hospital coverage to include staff privileges at the following hospitals:

St. John Hospital and Medical Center, St. John Macomb Hospital, Bon Secours and Cottage Hospitals, St. Joseph's Mercy of Macomb Hospital, and Troy Beaumont Hospital