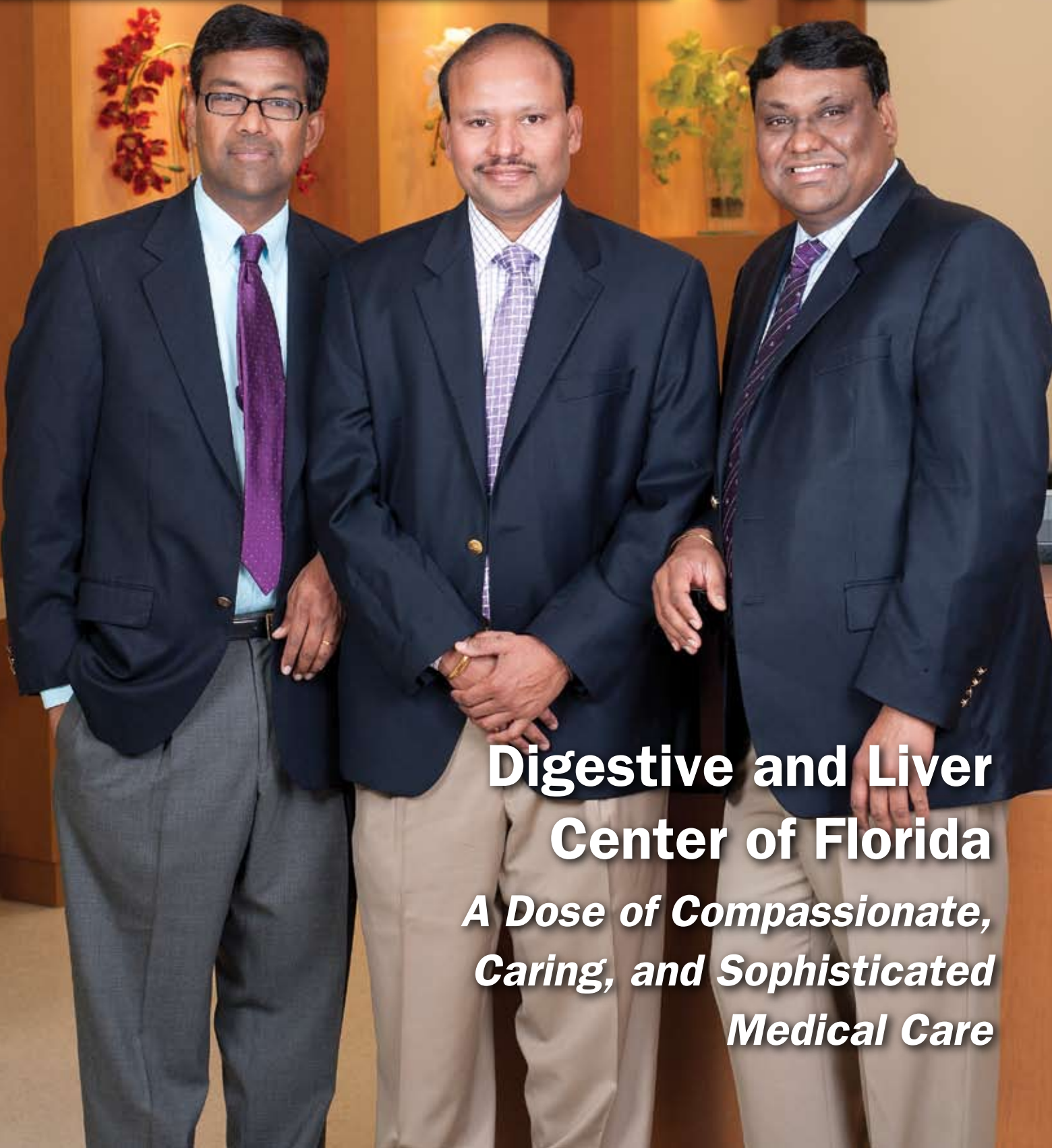


FloridaMD

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**Digestive and Liver
Center of Florida**
*A Dose of Compassionate,
Caring, and Sophisticated
Medical Care*

Digestive and Liver Center of Florida

A Dose of Compassionate, Caring, and Sophisticated Medical Care

By Nancy DeVault, Staff Writer

Food...we all need it to survive. However, according to 2009 statistical data gathered by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), approximately 60 to 70 million people are affected by digestive diseases, often making this simple survival task of nourishment somewhat challenging, frequently painful, and continually frustrating. Frankly, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) can leave sufferers of the disorder down-right irritable themselves. Treating patients since 2005, the Digestive and Liver Center of Florida (DLCFL) is poised to manage and treat the many forms of acute and chronic digestive and liver disorders. Such conditions include inflammatory bowel disease, diverticulitis, esophageal motility, heartburn (GERD), ulcers, hepatitis C and B, as well as other gastroenterological conditions and pancreatobiliary disorders.

In addition, DLCFL provides colon cancer and gastrointestinal cancer screenings, advanced diagnostic and therapeutic endoscopy, endoscopic ultrasound, capsule endoscopy, and manometric and pH studies. Digestive and Liver Center of Florida also specializes in pre and post liver transplant and follow-up.

“Our goal is to provide compassionate, caring, and sophisticated medical care to our patients,” stated Dr. Harinath Sheela, one of the founding members of the practice.

Realizing the growing medical demand in the field of digestive health, three brothers, Dr. Srinivas Seela, Dr. Harinath Sheela

and Dr. Seela Ramesh, each focused their medical expertise toward becoming dually board certified in Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology.

“We wanted to affect change, strive for improvements in diseases debilitating so many people,” explained Dr. Sheela.

That change began with exceptional education, clinical research, and practical implementation. Dr. Sheela and Dr. Seela, both Yale-trained, contributed to research studies and published articles in gastroenterology literature prior to launching their practice. Dr. Ramesh, who attended the Medical College of Virginia’s Gastroenterology and Hepatology programs, inspired countless medical students serving as a teaching physician at Florida Hospital and continues to mentor. Collectively, they encompass a wide range of specialty interests including diverse disease diagnosis and management of numerous gastroenterology conditions.

COMPASSIONATE: THE HEART OF HEALING

According to the American Cancer Society, colorectal cancer, a disease often diagnosed at DLCFL, is one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths in the United States. In fact, more lives are lost each year to colorectal cancer than to breast cancer and AIDS combined. Understanding the causes, risk factors, and prevention methods are key to impacting the survival rates of this deadly disease. Yet a barrier could still remain for some – cost of care.

“We wanted to be sure that patients who do not have insurance could gain access to regular screenings for early detection and treatments,” said Dr. Sheela. DLCFL aligned with the Orange County Health Department who prescreens potential patients. These individuals are then referred to DLCFL for further evaluation and receive the same quality of care as an insured patient.

Reports reveal that annual total costs for digestive disease exceed \$85.5 billion annually in this country and are among leading causes of disability; consequently causing approximately 200,000 absences from work each day. As a result, DLCFL’s concern to accommodate patients scheduling needs helps present a compassionate remedy and a welcoming atmosphere. Three

Digestive and Liver Center of Florida’s new surgical center offers patients the opportunity to have quality, cost effective diagnostic procedures in a convenient location.



PHOTO: DONALD RAUHOFFER / FLORIDA MD

convenient locations are accessible throughout Central Florida in East Orlando, Downtown, and North of Orlando (Altamonte Springs), and include Saturday hours. Additionally, bilingual service is available. In early 2012, DLCFL will expand their diagnostic center to include a state-of-the-art surgical facility allowing patients to experience a convenient 'one-stop shop' with centralized access to full service care including office visits and consultations, screenings, education, same day outpatient procedures such as endoscopies, colonoscopies, biopsies and further complex procedures formally conducted off-site. The well-suited upgrade will eliminate an extra trip to a hospital facility for such surgical procedures.

CARING: BEDSIDE MANNER COMES WITHOUT A HOSPITAL BED

Though medicine has continued to evolve offering lifesaving improvements, an aspect to the field that has suffered is the doctor-patient experience. For the most part, the old days of house calls and close relationships with one's healthcare provider have diminished. In a recent survey of adult Americans, the American Heart Association found that 70 percent of respondents said a health professional had told them they had a risk factor and/or needed to make a lifestyle change. With the health of Americans on the decline, the influx of patients is on the rise, therefore impacting the amount of time doctors can devote to each patient. The NY Times recently published that doctors spend approximately seven minutes with a patient. DLCFL acknowledges that the new medical 'norm' may not provide enough time for patients and healthcare providers to work together in describing and evaluating symptoms, brainstorming possible explanations, and devise a treatment action plan. Their expertise and advance technologies and latest electronic medical records combined with passionate providers offers a new experience for the patients.

"In the last 20 years or so, we've seen a decline in patient care. Our goal at the Digestive and Liver Center of Florida is to take time to talk to our patients. We know this approach will impact care by gaining patient trust through accurate diagnosis," said Dr. Sheela. This simple and caring concept is out of respect for the patient, explaining that 'care is offered through a team approach starting from the front desk experience through interaction with the medical staff.'

Care is also provided through a group setting. Already involved with colitis support groups in the Central Florida area, DLCFL has launched a new hepatitis support group. Participants can achieve increased knowledge from professionals as well as other patients, gain an understanding of coping skills, and learn ways to maintain their liver disease, according to Dr. Seela. Hepatitis support group sessions are held every other month (see side bar).

SOPHISTICATED: ADVANCED EDUCATION AND TREATMENTS

Large-screen TVs are now being used in exam rooms to allow physicians to share test results, utilize helpful visual aids to demonstrate procedure techniques, and display photos and videos for patients' understanding.

"This technology further informs patients. Sometimes it even



Dr. Srinivas Seela goes over colonoscopy results with his patient.

PHOTO: DONALD RAUHOEFER / FLORIDA MD

helps them identify questions that should be addressed," stated Dr. Sheela. An onsite patient resource area is also available for additional information. These tools are helping patients comprehend two advanced procedures conducted at DLCFL - Endoscopic Ultrasound (EUS) and Endoscopic Retrograde CholangioPancreatography (ERCP) - both effective for therapeutic interventions of the bile ducts, tubes carrying digestive fluid from the liver to the gallbladder and small intestine.

Compared to a traditional ultrasound, EUS provides higher quality images of the upper and lower digestive tract and thus provides a more accurate reading of abnormalities, according to Dr. Ramesh. This form of examination can be used to diagnose diseases of the pancreas, bile duct and gallbladder or to investigate the extent of cancers.

"An ERCP evaluates the drainage system of the liver and pancreas by utilizing contrast dye and x-rays. High quality images are captured by a tube funnel to the stomach to identify causes of jaundice, upper abdominal pain, and unexplained weight loss," stated Dr. Ramesh.

EASY TO DIGEST CREDENTIALS

In 2008, the National Center for Health Statistics reported 5.5 million digestive health related diagnostic and therapeutic inpatient procedures — that equates to twelve percent of all inpatient procedures in the United States. DLCFL says that many of their current patients sought such services as a result of "word-of-mouth" referrals by existing patients. Many others were referred through their primary care physician; while some were identified through personal encounters stemming from DLCFL's own outreach including educational seminars at local churches and community health fairs.

Of course, if patients are conducting their own research to find an Orlando-based gastroenterologist and/or hepatologist, the physicians of DLCFL might just land on the top of the list anyway thanks to their recent awards and honors. Dr. Srinivas Seela was recently named one of the Top 125 gastroenterologists in the U.S. by Becker's ASC Review. Dr. Harinath Sheela and Dr. Srinivas Seela each received Most Compassionate Doctor and Patient's Choice awards from the American Registry in 2010, Consumer Research Division. All three professionals were selected among

America's Top Gastroenterologists in the 2010 edition of the Guide to America's Top Gastroenterologists from Consumers Research Council of America.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT – CHEW ON THIS!

With New Year's Resolutions in full swing, the physicians at the Digestive and Liver Center of Florida know they'll have an influx of questions on diet and exercise from their patients. The practice is prepared to offer expert advice with the guidance of the team's registered dietitian, Nataly Fishberg, offering over ten years of professional experience. Her nutritional direction is implemented through individual teachings, online education and a nutrition blog, as well as group sessions. DLCFL hopes that these specialized dietary services will not only aid in disease management by monitoring appropriate foods, but also help combat a larger underlying issue affecting digestive and liver conditions – obesity, stated Dr. Seela.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), obesity has surpassed smoking as the number one risk factor for preventable diseases, impacting quality of life and the length of lifespan. Dr. Seela explained that the U.S. obesity epidemic has specifically had a great impact on the growing number of digestive health issues, in addition to most diseases, including significant risk of developing gallstones, pancreatitis, and gastroesophageal reflux disease or GERD, in part because disruptions to normal digestion will affect other body functions.

"Fat hormones produce cells that negatively impact the liver, stomach and pancreas," added Dr. Sheela. Several obesity-related studies published by The American Journal of Gastroenterology have examined the correlation of obesity on cancers of the colon, stomach, and liver; in addition to the risk of gastroesophageal reflux disease. Dr. Sheela acknowledged that there have been several contributing factors to the connections such as consumption of 'cheap' fast food, lack of knowledge of portion control, quality of products such as chemically grown foods, and physical inactivity.

Obesity is certainly a contributing risk factor to over 230,000 deaths annually caused by digestive diseases, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases,

Dr. Seela Ramesh goes over his patient's questions before a procedure.



PHOTO: DONALD RAUHOFFER/FLORIDA MD



PHOTO: DONALD RAUHOFFER/FLORIDA MD

Dr. Harinath Sheela reviews his patient's progress and future treatment plans.

including cancers of the digestive system, cirrhosis and other liver diseases, gallbladder disease, pancreatitis, and ulcers. Additionally, digestive diseases tend to complicate treatments of other life-threatening conditions, such as cardiovascular disease.

For a full dose of compassionate, caring, and sophisticated medical care, visit www.dlcfl.com. ■

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Website: dlcfl.com

Social sites: <http://facebook.com/dlcfl>

<http://twitter.com/digestive1>

<http://youtube.com/dlcfl1>

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Hepatitis Support Group Meetings

Date: February 27, 2012

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: 100 N. Dean Road, Suite 101,
Orlando, FL 32825
RSVP to 407-384-7388

Patient Appreciation Breakfast

Date: February 14, 2012

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Location: 100 N. Dean Road, Suite 101,
Orlando, FL 32825
RSVP to 407-384-7388