

trading places

a doctor finds herself on the other side of a cancer battle—and sees firsthand what it's like to be the patient



spa or cancer treatment facility?

While the fear of a possible breast cancer diagnosis weighs on most women receiving mammograms, GMC and GMC – Duluth have gone the extra mile to provide a relaxing environment for women going through this difficult time. Warm spa-like robes, light snacks, specialty teas and flat-screen TVs are available to all patients to help ease anxiety and promote relaxation.

Two years ago, Kimberly Hutcherson, M.D., discovered something in herself that she has spent her lifetime training to find in others—breast cancer. As a radiologist specializing in mammography, Dr. Hutcherson has diagnosed people with the disease for the past nine years, but that didn't make it any less shocking to find it in her own body.

Dr. Hutcherson diagnosed the cancer in herself on Feb. 23, 2007, after experiencing sharp breast pain off and on for nearly two months. Her previous mammogram, taken nine months before, had been normal. With no history of breast cancer in her family, she says she doubted that any serious abnormalities would show up.

Even when the mass in her breast appeared on the monitor, she says she still doubted its severity, hoping that it was just a cyst.

"I prayed that maybe it wasn't what I thought, even though I prayed every day prior that I could see the problem to help my patients," Dr. Hutcherson says.

* facing the reality

Following her mammogram, Dr. Hutcherson had a breast ultrasound and discovered that the mass was a cyst. Cynthia Robinson, M.D., a fellow radiologist at GMC, performed a biopsy on the cyst and found a cancerous mass inside. Dr. Hutcherson received the diagnosis the next day with her sister by her side. She had stage I breast cancer. continued on page 8

words of wisdom

Kimberly Hutcherson, M.D., says her battle with breast cancer made her not only see things through her patients' eyes, it also gave her a fresh perspective on life. Here's what she says about how her experience changed her:



"[Cancer] made me realize how many people care for me."



"It made me want to stay positive and not take the little things so seriously."



"It reminded me to love my family and friends."



"It taught me to be more spontaneous. If I want something, I'll buy it. I want to travel and see the world."



"It made me cherish my friendships."



"It makes me prayerful every day."



patient

watching the clock

Having to wait for extended periods of time for a diagnosis can increase anxiety for patients. Thankfully, digital mammography equipment, now available at all GMC facilities, allow patients to enjoy shorter exams and receive the diagnosis even faster.

Digital mammography allows technologists to evaluate the quality of the images before removing the patient from the room and presenting the case to the radiologist, which reduces the amount of retakes. In addition, the technologists are specialty-trained in breast health and all GMC's radiologists are board-certified. Some, like Kimberly Hutcherson, M.D., have additional training in women's imaging.



Kimberly Hutcherson, M.D.

Christopher Hagenstad, M.D., an oncologist with Suburban Hematology and Oncology, an affiliate of GMC, performed a double mastectomy on Dr. Hutcherson shortly after her diagnosis. In addition to the surgery, she received chemotherapy, biologic therapy, hormonal therapy and a trial drug for stage I breast cancer.


Not knowing how it would affect her patients, Dr. Hutcherson resolved to keep the diagnosis private at first. But as she surrendered her wig and brought back her signature short hairstyle, she found herself ready to share.

"I have always told my patients to take one step at a time. First let's find out what the breast abnormality is—and if it is cancer, then we'll treat it. I had to take my own advice. I now tell them that my hair is short like this for a reason."

* a plan and a purpose

Dr. Hutcherson says that now, more than ever, she truly knows how her patients feel. She also says she is thankful every day that she is a woman's imaging radiologist.

"It is because of this that I was able to diagnose the cancer early," she says. "I believe even with some of the complications I experienced, I was spared to help others by being able to diagnose this potentially curable disease early and aid my patients in getting through their treatment. There is never a testimony without a test."

Today, Dr. Hutcherson is cancer-free. 



Sport of Giving participants (from left) Tracy Collins, Kim Reed and Chrystal Mansour chat in the lobby of the Center for Screening Mammography at GMC – Duluth. The organization has given more than \$1 million to the GMC Foundation to help fight breast cancer in the community.

the sport of giving

nonprofit group raises \$1 million to fight breast cancer

Thanks to The Sport of Giving, formerly known as VolleyFest Inc., a nonprofit organization whose mission is to raise money to fight breast cancer, GMC provides the highest quality imaging technology at all facilities. In the past seven years, The Sport of Giving has raised over \$1 million for the Gwinnett Medical Center Foundation, specifically for breast imaging equipment and facility expansions. The Sport of Giving has made the following projects a reality through its generous donations:

- Digital mammography at every GMC facility.
- The new Center for Screening Mammography at Gwinnett Medical Center – Duluth.
- The Women's Pavilion Boutique, which offers a variety of breast cancer support products including post-mastectomy garments, wigs and a certified fitter.
- The Care-a-Van mobile mammography unit, which brings screening mammograms to businesses, churches and community organizations.
- Computer Aided Detection (CAD), a cutting-edge technology in mammography.
- Breast cancer treatment handbooks for every patient diagnosed at GMC.

The Sport of Giving's most recent gift to the GMC Foundation of \$200,000 will go toward renovating and expanding the Center for Diagnostic Mammography at GMC – Duluth.

Kimberly Hutcherson, M.D., a radiologist and breast cancer survivor, says her vision for the renovation is "to have a breast center that truly accommodates the growing demands for breast imaging in Gwinnett."

"We truly appreciate all of the time and effort that The Sport of Giving dedicates to breast cancer projects each year," says Carolyn Hill, GMC Foundation board member. "Without their support year after year, we could not expand and enhance our services so quickly. They are truly helping us reach more women and save more lives."