

A smiling man with white hair, wearing a green ribbed sweater, is holding a large bouquet of autumn leaves in shades of orange, red, and yellow. The background is a soft-focus forest with similar foliage.

# A Smoother Recovery

A Bassett program helps patients bounce back quickly and with less discomfort after colorectal surgery

Only 12 hours after having part of his colon removed at Bassett Medical Center, Martin Bosworth enjoyed a sandwich. The Norwich resident is among a number of patients who have benefited from Bassett's postsurgical early recovery process, a state-of-the-art healing practice for colorectal surgery. It reduces the body's response to surgical stress, leading to fewer complications and shorter hospital stays.

Bosworth entered the recovery program after the discovery of a growth required surgery to remove 10 inches of his colon. "When I woke up after surgery, I didn't feel sick at all," says Bosworth. "In fact, I was able to catch the NCAA basketball finals in my hospital room that evening."



Members of Bassett Medical Center's colorectal surgical team, from left: Jose Raul Monzon, MD; Sherrie Yerdon, RN; Heather Barreto, dietitian; Robin Lopez, RN, anesthesia manager; Sandy Gothard, RN, network director perioperative services and anesthesia; Linda Gable, RN; Luis Ocegüera, MD.

## EXPLORE YOUR SURGERY OPTIONS

If you have questions about colorectal surgery at Bassett Medical Center or would like to schedule a consultation, call **607-547-3400**.



Bassett colorectal surgeons Jose Raul Monzon, MD, and Luis Ocegüera, MD

"Bassett's adopted recovery method rejects traditional healing practices like fasting, heavy intravenous fluids, potent pain medicine and extended bed rest," says Jose Raul Monzon, MD, division chief of general surgery and attending surgeon at Bassett Medical Center. "Hunger and thirst from preoperative fasting can add to patient discomfort and anxiety, as well as nausea. Side effects from narcotics, fluid retention and immobility can prevent bodily functions from returning to normal, leading to longer recoveries."

At Bassett, patients can eat and walk the day after colorectal surgery because recovery focuses on hydration and nourishment before and after surgery and on mild physical activity. Patients experience more gentle recoveries that do not severely disrupt their digestive systems.

"It is truly an exceptional program," says Dr. Monzon. "The average length of stay in the hospital after colorectal surgery at Bassett has dropped from nine to 11 days to two to three days."

### Staying Hydrated and Nourished

Patients undergo colorectal surgery for different reasons. Common causes include cancer, bowel obstruction, injury and complications from chronic conditions such as Crohn's disease.

"Over 70 percent of our immune system is in our gut," says Dr. Monzon. "Vital bacteria live in the gastrointestinal

tract that aid digestion. If this process is disturbed, a patient's overall health will be affected, causing great discomfort."

Bowel surgery is on the rise in the United States, due in part to colorectal cancer being the third most common cancer diagnosis nationwide. "In the past, colorectal surgery was notorious for being highly invasive with a lengthy recovery," says Luis Ocegüera, MD, attending surgeon at Bassett Medical Center. "But it is not so anymore. These recovery techniques are increasing patient comfort and shortening hospital stays significantly."

Bosworth enjoyed Easter with his family the afternoon before surgery. "I was surprised that I did not have to fast," he says. "Two nurses actually called me days before the procedure to make sure I was drinking enough fluids."

The morning of surgery, Bosworth was allowed to drink Gatorade until up to two hours before the procedure. "It made such a difference to be able to hydrate myself," he says. "Each time I've had surgery in the past, I woke up and suffered from nausea and vomiting. But not this time."

Bassett's colorectal team collaborates with dietitians to provide nourishment to patients after surgery. "Soon after they wake up, patients begin to drink Ensure Muscle Health, a nutrition supplement to help with healing," says Dr. Monzon. "We also encourage them to eat regular food as soon as they feel up to it."

Bosworth not only ate a solid dinner that night; he took a walk. "The team at Bassett was so kind and supportive," he says. "I felt great."

### Back to Normal

Patients are required to walk the day after surgery. By day two, they may take a shower and are discouraged from staying in bed. Expected length of stay in the hospital is two to three days. "I had my surgery on a Monday morning," Bosworth says. "I was discharged on Wednesday afternoon."

"When they leave the hospital, patients can resume their usual diet," says Dr. Ocegüera. "We prescribe pain medication, but many people find that they don't need it."

Bosworth switched to ibuprofen soon after arriving home. A few days later, he did light yard work. "I was able to go out in my backyard and rake leaves," he says. "I was absolutely amazed."

Bosworth, like many other patients at Bassett, was pleasantly surprised by a smooth recovery. "I'd like to thank the colorectal team, especially the nurses on the inpatient unit, at Bassett for their profound expertise and compassion," he says. "I have a lot to live for. Thank you for getting my life back on track." •