The Surgeon Speaks
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I joined the Department of Surgery in 2008 to create the new Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery Program which offers a range of fully laparoscopic procedures – including gastric bypass and gastric banding – to help morbidly obese individuals begin the journey to healthier lives. The focus of my prior experience at the University of Tennessee was with procedures that are entirely laparoscopic. Thus, the procedures are less invasive, so patients do better and recover more quickly.

Gastric bypass is considered the “gold standard” operation for weight loss. Performed since the 1960s, it is the most common weight-loss procedure in the United States and around the world. The bypass we perform at Jefferson only bypasses approximately one-third of the intestinal tract, leaving the last two-thirds to be the “common limb,” which absorbs food relatively normally. The amount of malabsorption caused by the bypass that we perform is minimal and easily overcome from a nutritional standpoint by taking a few over-the-counter supplements every day. By eating less and not fully absorbing calories in food, most people will lose 60–70 percent of their excess body weight with this procedure.

The support of the hospital and the Department Chair, Charles Yeo, MD, has enabled us to achieve great results in a small amount of time. Since January 2009 my bariatric surgery colleague Bernadette Profeta, MD and I have performed close to 80 procedures, which is an impressive volume for a young program.

This all contributes to being able to make a difference in the lives of patients like Josephine Lacaba. I feel extremely lucky to work in an area of medicine in which we can actually reverse chronic, lifethreatening conditions. It’s very rewarding work—the patients are genuinely grateful for our help.

David Tichansky, MD, FACS Director, Jefferson Bariatric and Metabolic Surgery Program

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For Josephine Luna, struggling with her weight has been a lifelong endeavor. “I've tried everything,” she says. For years, her primary care physician and endocrinologist managed her diabetes and blood pressure medications with few effects. She continued to gain weight, and it became clear that, at the age of 49, it was time for more action.

For Josephine Luna, struggling with her weight has been a lifelong endeavor. “I’ve tried everything,” she says. For years, her primary care physician and endocrinologist managed her diabetes and blood pressure medications with few effects. She continued to gain weight, and it became clear that, at the age of 49, it was time for more action. Dr. Tichansky expressed concern that the alternative was to go on dialysis—a measure that generally cannot be reversed once it begins. She agreed to make the appointment.

She found great relief when Dr. Tichansky explained the details of the gastric bypass procedure and the fast help support the program offered. Coming two to the U.S. from the Philippines in 1988, English was her second language, and she appreciated how clearly and simply Dr. Tichansky explained the details to her. The Jefferson program is entirely laparoscopic, which means rather than a large incision, a series of smaller, safer, less invasive procedures are used to perform the surgery. This method dramatically reduces the portions of food a person can consume.

Ms. Luna described that this was a step she was willing to take, for the sake of her health, and for her husband (of nineteen years) and eight years pre-
she was “amazed,” she says. “I’m really cured. I’m so happy to not have to worry about the chest pains, I’m walking and doing activities I used to have to be afraid to do.”

“During my family’s experience, we realized the value of the Jefferson program.”

The support of the hospital and the Department Chair, Charles Yeo, MD, has enabled us to achieve great results in a small amount of time. Since January 2009, Jefferson Surgical Solutions (JSS) has performed close to 30 procedures, which is an impressive volume for a young program. This collaboration has allowed us to mitigate the disadvantages of a new program, we can actually become active, little by little, through the experience we gain in our daily work—the patients are genuinely grateful for our help.

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