

## HEALTH FAQ

### Lynch syndrome patient is unsure whether to stop colonoscopy

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** I am a 79-year-old female who is currently on biannual infusions for osteoporosis and high cholesterol. In 2018, I was diagnosed with Lynch syndrome with an MSH6 deviation. The genetic testing was done after I had breast cancer, endometrial cancer, and a colectomy for three years in a row. Yearly colonoscopies have been included in my preventive care.

In 2022, during my colonoscopy, I experienced excessive vagal tone and needed atropine to restore my heartbeat. Since this time, I have been given Robinul prior to the procedure, which has prevented another incident of bradycardia. My gastroenterologist isn't recommending any more colonoscopies due to this cardiac issue and my age.

I have always been told that colonoscopies are necessary to prevent cancerous polyps from occurring. Is the risk of a colonoscopy under these circumstances greater than the risk of my getting colon cancer due to Lynch syndrome? — F.M.

**ANSWER:** People with Lynch syndrome are at an increased risk for a variety of cancers, especially of the colon but also other parts of the gastrointestinal tract (stomach, small intestine, pancreas and bile duct). People with Lynch syndrome are also at an increased risk for endometrial and ovarian cancer (in women), prostate cancer (in men), and other cancers including skin and brain cancer. Gastroenterologists know that cancer of the colon can arise without a polyp.

For people with Lynch syndrome, a genetic analysis is recommended. The exact gene may help determine the optimal beginning time and frequency of a colonoscopy. The decision of when to discontinue screening via a colonoscopy is not agreed upon by experts, but clearly when the risk of performing a colonoscopy is greater than the expected benefit, it's time to stop. This is less about reaching a certain age than it is about underlying medical conditions.

You have a slow heart rate during sedation for the colonoscopy, and it sounds as though your doctors have found a way to do the colonoscopy safely. Your lifetime risk of colon cancer, given your MSH carrier status, is estimated to be 20%, but at age 79, you have outlived much of your risk. Most cases of colon cancer in Lynch syndrome occur before age 80.

In my opinion, both the risks of a colonoscopy and the risk of developing colon cancer are low, which means that it is difficult to make a recommendation as to which way you should go. Stopping is reasonable, but if you feel strongly that you want to continue, this is also reasonable.

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** I am an 80-year-old female who had shingles 30 years ago for six weeks. It subsequently came back permanently (herpetic neuralgia). I take 2,500 mg of gabapentin daily, which mostly controls the pain but does not help the tingling and numbness in the soles of my feet. Do you have any suggestions? — P.S.V.

**ANSWER:** I am sorry that you had this complication, which is one of the most known painful conditions. Gabapentin is an effective treatment for many people with painful neuropathies of any kind. A dose of 2,500 mg is very high but is often needed to get control of the pain; however, many people cannot tolerate this dose due to the fatigue and sleepiness that it often causes.

In my experience, some people can get pain relief from gabapentin without getting relief from the numbness and tingling. It is possible that even higher doses might help (the maximum dose is 3,600 mg), but before trying this, your doctor might consider a second type of treatment for neuropathy, such as a tricyclic agent or an SNRI.

These drugs were developed for depression but can be used for neuropathy symptoms. Sometimes, multiple medicines allow for better symptom relief with less side effects than very high doses of just one medicine.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).

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## UNC Health Southeastern Foundation announces a first look at THE MED GALA: The Art of Health

**Heather Walters**  
For The Robesonian

LUMBERTON — Art, fashion, and philanthropy are coming together in a bold new way as the UNC Health Southeastern Foundation officially launches THE MED GALA: The Art of Health, taking place Friday, Feb. 27, 2026, at the Southeastern NC Agricultural Center.

This year's event will shine a spotlight on the Foundation's Delivering for Women campaign, an initiative that is transforming women's services across UNC Health Southeastern. Support from THE MED GALA will continue to strengthen care throughout Women's Health Services, including Labor and Delivery, Obstetrics and Gynecology by enhancing patient spaces, updating equipment, expanding comfort amenities and creating an environment where mothers, babies, and families feel supported at every step.

THE MED GALA is presented by Smith's Refrigeration-A PremiStar Company, whose support helps make this signature evening possible and advances the continued investment in women's health across the community.

Christy and Jason Bryant, along with Amy and Allan Campbell, will serve as co-chairs for this year's gala. The Bryants and the Campbells are longtime members of the gala committee, and their leadership reflects both experience and a deep personal connection to the mission. Christy Bryant and Amy Campbell have both previously worked as nurses in Labor and Delivery at UNC Health Southeastern, where they witnessed the importance of warm, welcoming spaces and thoughtful care for mothers and newborns. Their clinical experience continues to inspire their commitment to advancing women's health in the region.

Christy and Amy recently toured the renewed Women's Health Services unit and shared their excitement for the improvements that have taken shape.

"Seeing the updated unit and reconnecting with longtime friends and teammates brought back so many memories, and it was incredible to imagine the families who will experience this beautiful space," said Christy Bryant. "Everything feels welcoming, calming and centered on



Photo courtesy of UNC Health Southeastern Foundation

**UNC Health Southeastern Foundation's Gala Chairs and committee members gathered recently at the kickoff for THE MED GALA: The Art of Health, which will strengthen care throughout UNC Health Southeastern's Women's Health Services by enhancing patient spaces, updating equipment, expanding comfort amenities and creating an environment where mothers, babies and families feel supported at every step.**

thoughtful care. It makes me proud to support an event that invests so deeply in the health of women and families in our community."

Planning for this year's gala began as the committee gathered at the home of Christy and Jason Bryant, where co-chairs and committee members outlined a shared vision for an evening centered on creativity, purpose, and celebration.

Now officially branded as THE MED GALA, the Foundation's signature event embraces a refreshed identity that elevates its profile and reflects an experience that is creative, community driven and focused on advancing healthcare close to home. The new name captures a vision for an evening that is memorable, meaningful and unmistakably the UNC Health Southeastern Foundation.

The 2026 theme, The Art of Health, brings this vision to life through gallery-inspired designs, sculptural

floral arrangements, artistic installations and thoughtful touches that honor both beauty and healing. Throughout the evening, guests will see how art speaks, fashion inspires and health transforms, highlighting the community's commitment to advancing care for women across the region.

"Our community continues to show extraordinary heart for women's health," said Sissy Grantham, executive director of the UNC Health Southeastern Foundation. "Rebranding our signature event as THE MED GALA reflects the level of excellence and creativity our supporters bring to this mission. The Art of Health is a celebration of their generosity and the impact they are making through the Delivering for Women campaign."

The evening will feature live entertainment by PUNCH, sponsored by the Robeson County Board of Commissioners. PUNCH is a high-energy, eight-piece

band that turns every event into an unforgettable experience with their high-octane blend of modern rock, R&B, Motown, soul and current pop hits.

Major sponsorship opportunities are now available. Businesses, community partners, and individuals interested in supporting women's health through THE MED GALA may contact the Foundation at [sefoundation@unchealth.unc.edu](mailto:sefoundation@unchealth.unc.edu) or 910-671-5583. Tickets and sponsorships may also be purchased online at [www.unchealthsoutheastern.org/foundation/events/gala](http://www.unchealthsoutheastern.org/foundation/events/gala).

Make plans now to join us Friday, Feb. 27 at the Southeastern NC Agricultural Center for an evening where art, fashion, and generosity come together to advance the health of women and families close to home.

Heather Walters is the manager of donor experience and engagement for the UNC Health Southeastern Foundation.

## Common challenges caregivers face

Metro Creative Connection

Fans of Hollywood star Bruce Willis were shocked when the actor was diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia several years ago. Dementia adversely affects a person's mind, memory and ability to communicate effectively. Research published in Nature Medicine revealed there are about 500,000 new dementia cases annually in the United States. The caregivers behind the scenes coping with the loss of the person they once knew often go unnoticed, which can make the disease even more tragic.

Many caregivers are thrust into the position suddenly and without any idea of how to navigate conditions that

are plaguing their loved ones. A 2025 report by AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving says there are 63 million Americans who are family caregivers providing care for an adult or child with a complex disability or medical condition. Caregivers are central to the care process. But the responsibility that comes from tending to another person may mean that caregivers' own lives take a backseat. Indeed, caregivers face many challenges when caring for a loved one affected by dementia.

— Financial burden: A caregiver may have to give up a job or work less in order to care for a loved one. A 2007 report titled "Caring for Carers: The Financial Strain of Caring, Family Matters"

noted caregivers experience a 20 percent lower employment participation than those who are non-carers. A decrease in income also may be compounded by the cost of hiring paid caregiving services to offset family caregivers when they need time away.

— Physical health concerns: Caregiving can involve long hours and tasks that require physical strength and endurance. There is a risk of injury when lifting a loved one onto or out of a bed or chair. Lost sleep may result when tending to a loved one in the middle of the night. Fatigue and stress can lead to a weakened immune system that puts caregivers at risk for illness.

— Mental health con-

cerns: Caregivers often face a whirlwind of emotions that can affect their well-being. It is difficult to witness a loved one suffering an illness or disability or face the prospects of mortality day in and day out. Prolonged stress may cause caregivers to turn to alcohol or drugs to cope. They may feel helpless and slip into depression. The National Library of Medicine says clinical research shows assuming a caregiving role can be stressful and burdensome and has all of the features of a chronic stress experience. Research has consistently documented caregivers experience adverse effects on their psychological well-being.



# *Congratulations* on full federal recognition!

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UNC Health Southeastern proudly congratulates the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina on the historic achievement of full federal recognition. This long-awaited milestone reflects generations of perseverance, advocacy, and cultural pride. The Lumbee people have called southeastern North Carolina home for centuries, maintaining a strong identity, traditions, and community presence despite facing prolonged barriers to formal recognition. The passage of the Lumbee Act of 1956 acknowledged the Tribe by name, and decades of continued advocacy since that time ultimately led to this moment of long-overdue affirmation.

This achievement is especially meaningful to UNC Health Southeastern, as many of our teammates, providers, patients, and community members are Lumbee. Federal recognition creates expanded opportunities for access to healthcare services, resources, and partnerships that can support improved health outcomes and strengthen the overall well-being of the Lumbee people and the region we serve, together.

As the benefits of federal recognition take shape in the months and years ahead, we are confident this historic step will yield lasting positive impact for generations to come, advancing health, opportunity, and prosperity not only for the Lumbee community, but for southeastern North Carolina as a whole.

UNC Health Southeastern President & CEO Chris Ellington and the Board of Trustees extend their sincere congratulations to the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina on this remarkable achievement and celebrate alongside you as this historic chapter opens a promising new future!

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