

Regional GI Welcomes Kaci E. Christian, MD



Dr. Kaci Christian

by Susan C. Beam

Lancaster's Regional GI is delighted to welcome Dr. Kaci Christian to their staff of experienced and compassionate doctors. With the long-term goal of providing patients with comprehensive care using innovative technology and techniques, Dr. Christian is looking forward to serving the Lancaster County community.

Growing up, Dr. Christian said she was deeply influenced by family role models active in the medical field.

"I became interested in medicine at a very young age. My grandfather was a general practitioner in my hometown in the Pocono Mountains, and early on I could see the positive influence he had on people's lives. My mother is a nurse and my father a dentist, so my role models have always been those who have cared for others as a profession," she explained.

"In medical school, I was drawn to gastroenterology for so many reasons. Gastroenterologists get to treat the greatest number of different organs in the body, and take care of chronic diseases in the office and very acute conditions in the hospital," she continued. "For example, I can help a patient with a lifelong autoimmune condition like Crohn's Disease, navigate treatment options one day, and use my endoscopic skills to stop a life-threatening GI bleed the next. Each day is different and dynamic, and I love that challenge. Digestive issues can make patients feel very vulnerable and can be difficult

to talk about. I always strive to provide a safe, welcoming space for patients to open up and discuss their concerns so that we can come up with a treatment plan together—that relationship with my patients is the most rewarding part of my profession."

Dr. Christian earned her MD at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, then completed her Internal Medicine Residency and Gastroenterology/Hepatology Fellowship at the University of Maryland Medical Center, where she served as Chief Fellow in her final year. During her education, she developed two specific focuses: inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and women's health concerns.

"First, I focused my fellowship training on the care of patients with Crohn's Disease and ulcerative colitis, two forms of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). These are chronic autoimmune conditions that are often diagnosed at a young age and sometimes require long-term medication and surgery. The diagnosis of IBD can be overwhelming at first, and my goal is to help my patients determine the best treatment

options for them through shared decision making," Dr. Christian explained.

"Second, I recognize the unique challenges women face in terms of their digestive health—women are two to six times more likely to experience symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome and, during pregnancy and childbirth, can experience damage to the muscles that coordinate moving one's bowels. Only roughly 15 percent of gastroenterologists are women, so sometimes for female patients, the first step is finding a physician they feel comfortable opening up to about sensitive issues," she said.

Dr. Christian said she is delighted to be joining the Regional GI team.

"The Regional GI family has been so welcoming! I am truly impressed, on a daily basis, how everyone works together as a team to take care of our patients. The field of gastroenterology often requires a lot of coordination - obtaining lab work, advanced imaging, scheduling procedures, etc. - and we try to make this as seamless as possible for patients. The new MidAtlantic Endoscopy Center offers the people of

Lancaster County a state-of-the-art endoscopy center, while remaining focused on patient experience. The check-in and check-out processes are efficient, and we focus on maintaining patient safety and comfort during the procedure," she commented.

According to Dr. Christian, treating patients like family and encouraging healthy habits play key roles in her own patient philosophy.

"I treat all my patients the way I would want my own family members to be treated. I aim to not only focus my care on the disease at hand, but also how symptoms affect patients on a daily basis—for example, while at work or when going out to dinner with friends. Quality of life is a big focus for me during an office visit. I also make every effort to educate my patients about their condition so they can better participate in their care," she explained, adding she also encourages patients to practice a healthy lifestyle, including choosing healthy foods and encouraging daily activity.

Dr. Christian encourages a proactive approach to patient care.


"Although I have an interest in IBD, colon cancer prevention is a pillar of practice for any gastroenterologist. Colon cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosed in men and women, and I would hope each and every member of our community is up to date on colon cancer screening," commented Dr. Christian, noting that she is also invested in Regional GI's goal to continue researching innovative quality-of-care initiatives for the community.

"Lastly, it may seem simple but, like my grandfather, my goal is to have a positive influence on people's lives. As a busy mom of two young kids myself, I know juggling tasks and getting to the doctor can sometimes be a challenge. I appreciate patients entrusting their care to me, and I hope when they walk out of my office, they've learned something and feel confident we are on track to addressing their digestive concerns," she said.

For more information about your digestive health, colon cancer screening or to schedule an appointment or screening colonoscopy, please call our office at **717-869-4600** or visit www.regionalgi.com.

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