



MedStar Georgetown MD

Seeing clearly thanks to laser eye surgery.

By Jennifer Davis

For the first time in more than 20 years, Theodore Smith, a 44-year-old physical education teacher and golf caddy from Washington, D.C., is seeing clearly thanks to photorefractive keratectomy (PRK) laser eye surgery. "It's been totally life changing because I had been legally blind. So now my quality of life is just amazing," Theodore says.

Theodore was used to seeing the world as rather blurry. At the age of 22, he was diagnosed with keratoconus, a degenerative

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After her doctor gave up, Katie Silva-Mendez found new hope at MedStar Georgetown Transplant Institute. She now feels better than she has in decades. Photo courtesy of Generation Media LLC

After years of Crohn's disease and near death, a new life.

By Susan Walker

Katie Silva-Mendez had been sick for a very long time. Now 36, the Las Vegas resident was diagnosed with Crohn's disease when she was 21. Crohn's, a type of inflammatory bowel disease, causes inflammation in the digestive tract. It most often affects the small intestine and colon and can cause stomach pain, severe ongoing diarrhea, weight loss, malnutrition, and fatigue. Although there are medications that can help decrease the inflammation the disease causes, Katie and her hometown doctors were

never able to get her Crohn's disease under control.

Over the years, Katie had 29 surgeries to manage the damage Crohn's was causing to her digestive system. "I couldn't eat. I was in pain. It was hard to live a normal life and be a mom," Katie says.

Three years ago, Katie became even sicker and her kidneys stopped

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Theodore, with his daughter, no longer sees the world as blurry after photorefractive keratectomy (PRK) laser eye surgery.

Photo by Keith Weller

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Stroke Collaborative saves lives.

By Susan Lahout



Harun Addrey (center) with several members of the MedStar Georgetown University Hospital stroke team. A quick response by D.C. Fire and EMS along with the expert care delivered by the MedStar Georgetown stroke team made all the difference.

The morning of Feb. 5, 2021, started like any other day for Harun Addrey. He began his rounds as a parking lot guard at a local grocery store. However, when he tried to talk to one of his colleagues, his speech was garbled and unintelligible. Harun also experienced other telltale stroke symptoms. Unfortunately, he did not recognize what was happening until it was almost too late. When he collapsed, good Samaritans came to his rescue by calling 911.

Luckily, D.C. Fire and EMS paramedic Kenneth Lyons and EMT Yvette Reid quickly recognized that Harun could be having a large vessel occlusion (LVO) stroke that results from a blockage in one of the major arteries of the brain. This type of stroke tends to be more severe and can lead to dramatic long-term disability. They called MedStar Georgetown University Hospital en route so that their expert stroke team could be ready to provide the best care.

For nearly 10 years, the District of Columbia Stroke Collaborative, including MedStar Georgetown, MedStar Washington Hospital Center, the American Heart Association,

the District of Columbia Fire Department, and emergency medical service personnel have worked together to advance the level of stroke care for patients. All EMS responders are specially trained in pre-hospital stroke screening.

“Like many people, I did not recognize the signs of a stroke, so I am truly thankful for the timely, expert care that made it possible for me to be here today.”

—Harun Addrey

“Time is brain when someone is experiencing a stroke, so by providing stroke education and training to first responders, they were able to recognize quickly that Mr. Addrey was having a stroke,” says Andrew Stemer, MD, director, Comprehensive Stroke Center, and regional director of TeleStroke, MedStar Georgetown.

When Harun arrived at MedStar Georgetown, the stroke team immediately confirmed the diagnosis with a CAT scan, contacted Dr. Stemer, and prepared for surgery. Dr. Stemer performed a mechanical thrombectomy procedure to remove the clot. Minimally invasive, the procedure involves placing a thin catheter into the brain to remove the clot.

“Like many people, I did not recognize the signs of a stroke, so I am truly thankful for the timely, expert care that made it possible for me to be here today,” says Harun.

Stroke patients treated through the District of Columbia Stroke Collaborative receive rapid diagnosis and the latest treatments as well as advanced stroke-specific rehabilitation.

This exemplary kind of treatment has earned MedStar Georgetown the Comprehensive Stroke Center designation by The Joint Commission and the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association’s Get With The Guidelines® Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite Plus Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award.

Dr. Stemer credits the success of their program to the work of the Collaborative and the highly skilled and experienced interdisciplinary stroke care team at MedStar Georgetown.

“I am forever grateful to the people who called 911 and to the exceptionally trained D.C. first responders and stroke team at MedStar Georgetown for saving my life,” Harun says. “I know that doctors and nurses abide by their Hippocratic oath, but I can only conclude that what really drove all these professionals to save my life could also be attributed to the force of compassion. I want people to know that there are still good and compassionate people in this country.”

Visit [MedStarGeorgetown.org/BeFast](https://www.MedStarGeorgetown.org/BeFast) to learn more about the Stroke Center at MedStar Georgetown. To make an appointment with one of our stroke specialists, call **202-295-0540**.

Stress-induced illness is on the rise. Tips to tame your stress.

By Kerri Layman, MD, Chief of Service, Emergency Department, MedStar Georgetown University Hospital

Stress has been a hot topic this past year thanks to the pandemic. Isolation, worrying about our health and our family's health, balancing work and remote schooling, concerns about finances—it is no wonder many people report feeling stressed out and anxious.



When you feel stressed or anxious, relaxation techniques like yoga can help you regain a sense of calm and control.

Even without a pandemic, most of us have experienced periods of stress and anxiety at some point in our lives, whether they're caused by our relationships, our jobs, our housing, or an underlying anxiety disorder. What you may not realize is that ongoing stress can make you feel sick and increase your risk of developing health issues such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and sleep problems. Many people come to their doctor's office or the emergency department with stomach pain, headaches, fatigue, and other symptoms but don't realize that stress is the cause of their symptoms.

These strategies can help you tame stress and feel better physically and emotionally:

- **Get moving.** Taking part in some type of exercise for at least 30 minutes most days of the week can help you manage stress and anxiety. Not only does exercise lower the amount of stress hormones your body produces, it can also give you more energy during the day and help you sleep better. The key is to find an activity you enjoy so you'll stick with it. Find an exercise buddy so you can inspire and motivate each other.
- **Make healthy eating a priority.** When we're stressed, we tend to reach for comfort foods, which are often less healthy choices like sweets and chips. Choosing healthy foods can boost your energy levels and help you overcome the fatigue that stress can cause. An added plus—eating healthier foods can help lower your risk

of heart disease and diabetes and help you manage your weight.

- **Try relaxation and mindfulness techniques.** When you feel stressed or anxious, relaxation techniques such as meditation, breathing exercises, and yoga can help you regain a sense of calm and control. The techniques are simple and there are many videos and apps to help guide you. Search on YouTube as a starting point.
- **Know when to connect and when to disconnect.** Talking to friends or family about your feelings can help you feel less stressed and lower the amount of stress hormones your body is producing. It's also helpful to figure out when you need time alone to de-stress and unplug from social media and the news.
- **Spend some time in nature.** Take a walk in the park, do a little gardening, or just sit outside and enjoy the nature around you. Studies have found that spending just 20 minutes in nature helps lower your stress hormone levels.



Kerri Layman, MD

If these strategies don't help, or stress and anxiety are interfering with your ability to do the things you need to do each day, talk with your primary care physician or a mental health professional.



Research finds that exercising for at least 30 minutes most days of the week can help you manage stress and anxiety.

To find a mental health specialist at MedStar Georgetown, call **202-944-5400**. Visit **MedStarGeorgetown.org/Psych** to learn more about our locations and range of services.

When others gave up, MedStar Georgetown doctors saved her life.

By Susan Walker

When June Shepherd spiked a fever and felt extremely weak, she thought she might have the flu. Her symptoms quickly worsened, so her family took her to a hospital near her home, but doctors couldn't find the cause of her symptoms. As she got sicker, they told her family there was nothing they could do, and she would most likely die. June was 68 years old.

"I chose MedStar Georgetown because I knew I'd get the best care."

—June Shepherd

In a final effort to save her life, her family transferred her to MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. Christopher Attinger, MD, a board-certified plastic surgeon and director of the Center for Wound Healing, and his colleagues diagnosed June with necrotizing fasciitis, an infection that began in an ulcer on the back of her leg. This type of infection destroys the soft tissue and spreads through the body very quickly. Her MedStar Georgetown doctors also determined she had a methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infection. MRSA, a contagious staph infection, is very difficult to treat and can be life-threatening.

Most physicians would have amputated June's leg to save her life. Dr. Attinger took a different approach. He carefully removed the damaged tissue, sparing the healthy tissue, so she would be able to walk normally.

"Our goal is to save limbs whenever possible," Dr. Attinger explains.

After returning home, June was back to her normal routine. Unfortunately, soon after her surgery, she was diagnosed with stage 4 ovarian cancer and started chemotherapy. Partway through treatment, she noticed a blister on her foot and went to see Dr. Attinger. He discovered that

chemotherapy had damaged the bones in her ankle. Now, she would need that amputation after all.

"I chose MedStar Georgetown because I knew I'd get the best care," she says.

Her instincts were spot on.

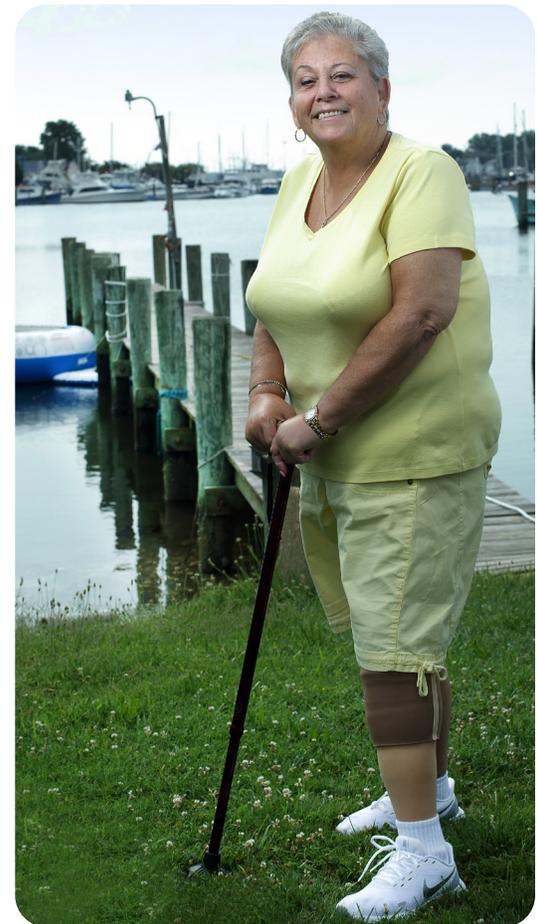
Dr. Attinger and his team's current data on survival and ambulation for patients with chronic disease are among the best in the world. "Our patients do better because they are able to walk after their amputation," he explains. "Currently 92% are ambulatory at three months."

The reason the majority of these patients are walking is not just the careful approach to surgically creating a leg that works well with a prosthetic and reattaching leg muscles so they remain strong. It's also the work of Dr. Attinger's colleague Grant Kleiber, MD, a board-certified plastic surgeon and chair of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at MedStar Washington Hospital Center.

As Dr. Kleiber performed June's amputation, he used a procedure called targeted muscle reinnervation (TMR). The nerves that delivered sensation to the amputated limb were transferred to nerves that control muscles that formerly moved June's foot and toes. Dr. Kleiber's surgical technique gives the nerves a pathway for growth and helps prevent pain and phantom sensations.

"MedStar Georgetown is one of only a few centers in the U.S. that uses this approach," says Dr. Kleiber. "We perform over 100 TMR cases per year. Our patients have less pain, are better able to walk with a prosthetic, and use less opioid medication. They're walking about eight weeks after surgery."

Although June lives about two hours from MedStar Georgetown, she told her brother, "Don't take me to any other hospital. Dr. Attinger saved my life. Thanks to him and his team, I'm independent and able to clean my house and do yard work without help."



June is happy that her amputation has not slowed her down. Thanks to targeted muscle reinnervation (TMR), she is walking and enjoying an active life again. Photo by Keith Weller

Visit [MedStarGeorgetown.org/WoundCenter](https://www.MedStarGeorgetown.org/WoundCenter) to learn more about our Functional Amputee program. To make an appointment with one of our specialists, call **202-444-9686**.

Local philanthropists help advance state-of-the-art health care and higher education.

By Leslie A. Whitlinger

Thanks to a leadership philanthropic investment, a couple with close ties to both MedStar Georgetown University Hospital and Georgetown University have moved the institutions closer toward their goal of advancing health care and higher education for our area.

Specifically, a generous \$5 million gift from Claire and Tom Joyce will support the Hospital's new Medical/Surgical Pavilion campaign as well as the Georgetown Scholars Program (GSP) and its Necessity Fund Endowment.

"We are deeply grateful for this generous commitment from the Joyces to support the Medical/Surgical Pavilion at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital and the Georgetown Scholars Program at Georgetown University," says Kenneth A. Samet, president and CEO of MedStar Health. "Claire and Tom have always cared deeply about the community in which they live. Their support and philanthropic leadership will make a significant difference in the lives of our patients and first-generation Georgetown students."

"Just as our extraordinary MedStar Georgetown team works to transform health care, our exceptional Georgetown Scholars Program team provides our first-generation students the transformational opportunity to thrive in their academic endeavors."

—Tom Joyce

Tom has been a member of the MedStar Health Board of Directors since 2018. He was CEO of Danaher Corporation, a Fortune 500 company specializing in global science and technology innovation, before his retirement in 2020. Claire has served on Georgetown University's Board of Regents since 2017 and was the founding director of the GSP Alumni Mentor Program.

"We are happy to support MedStar Georgetown's Medical/Surgical Pavilion and the Georgetown Scholars Program," says Tom. "Just as our extraordinary MedStar Georgetown team works to transform health care, our exceptional GSP team provides our first-generation students the transformational opportunity to thrive in their academic endeavors."

At more than 475,000 square feet, the new Medical/Surgical Pavilion is currently the largest healthcare construction project in the District. Upon completion in 2023, the pavilion will become the centerpiece at MedStar Georgetown, featuring all private patient rooms, state-of-the-art operating rooms, and an updated emergency department, along with a rooftop helipad.

Beyond patient care, the pavilion will also support the other two essential elements of a world-class academic medical center: research and education.



Tom and Claire Joyce know from personal experience the value of the Georgetown Scholars Program. Their commitment to enhancing healthcare research and delivery is profound.

The Joyces' gift will enhance the Hospital's strong focus on training the next generation of medical professionals in the specialty services it is well known for—oncology, gastroenterology, neurology and neurosurgery, orthopaedics, and transplant—as well as promoting innovative research in medical understanding and new technology.

Longtime champions of education, the Joyces are also giving the Georgetown Scholars Program and its Necessity Fund Endowment a big boost. Founded in 2004, GSP's mission is to work toward a more equitable college experience for first-generation college students, with the resources and programs necessary to support their academic success. The program offers mentorships, professional development training, and assistance with unexpected out-of-pocket expenses. When fully funded, the endowment will provide a robust, permanent source of microgrants for undergraduates with the greatest financial need—enabling them to concentrate on academic achievement.

"Both the Medical/Surgical Pavilion at MedStar Georgetown and our Georgetown Scholars Program are vital expressions of the university's most deeply held values: to advance research and care that contributes to the common good and to support every member of our community in their work of formation," says Georgetown University President John J. DeGioia. "We are profoundly grateful to have Claire and Tom's generous support for these endeavors and their commitment to our entire university community."

To learn more about the Medical/Surgical Pavilion and how your support can make a significant impact, please visit [MedStarGeorgetown.org/MedSurg](https://www.MedStarGeorgetown.org/MedSurg) or call **202-444-0721**.

After years of Crohn's disease and near death, a new life.

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The bowel transplant performed by MedStar Georgetown Transplant Institute physicians was life-changing for Katie Silva-Mendez. For the first time in years, she can eat without pain and feels like a new person. Photo courtesy of Generation Media LLC

working. She was admitted to a hospital in Las Vegas where her doctors told her there was nothing they could do for her. They recommended hospice care to make her more comfortable during what the doctors believed would be her final days.

"Dr. Subramanian and Dr. Matsumoto gave me the hope I hadn't had in a long time."

—Katie Silva-Mendez

But Katie didn't give up. Inspired by a note her daughter wrote asking her to please hold on, she redoubled her commitment to fight. A friend recommended she reach out to MedStar Georgetown Transplant

Institute. She did and was excited to hear that small bowel specialists Sukanya Subramanian, MD, and Cal Matsumoto, MD, believed they could offer an option the Las Vegas doctors hadn't even mentioned—an intestinal transplant.

"Dr. Subramanian and Dr. Matsumoto gave me the hope I hadn't had in a long time," Katie says. "Before I talked to them, I didn't even know transplant was an option."

Dr. Subramanian worked to help Katie get healthy enough to have the transplant. "When we evaluated Katie for transplant, we found she had just six feet of healthy bowel remaining out of a potential 22 feet. Our first step was to optimize her immune suppression with medication to reduce the inflammation in her digestive system and preserve as much of her bowel as possible," Dr. Subramanian explains. "Because

she was malnourished due to her disease, we also provided total parenteral nutrition (a way of providing nutrition by infusion, bypassing the gastrointestinal tract)."

Over time, Katie became stronger and healthier and was listed for transplant. Late last year, she got the call. An organ was available, and she'd finally receive her transplant.

Dr. Matsumoto and his team performed the surgery, replacing Katie's large and small intestines and colon. "Our care team has been together for more than 20 years," he says. "As the largest intestinal transplant program in the country performing the most transplants, our care protocols are well established and our outcomes are excellent."

Small bowel specialists Sukanya Subramanian, MD, and Cal Matsumoto, MD, believed they could offer an option the Las Vegas doctors hadn't even mentioned—an intestinal transplant.

Katie is living proof of those excellent outcomes. She's doing well and feeling better than she has in decades. "It's a whole new lease on life. Without the transplant, I wouldn't have been able to see my kids grow up and become the great young adults they are. Dr. Subramanian and Dr. Matsumoto saved my life."

Visit [MedStarGeorgetown.org/BowelTransplant](https://www.MedStarGeorgetown.org/BowelTransplant) to learn more about small-bowel transplants. To schedule an appointment with one of our small bowel transplant specialists, call **202-444-3700**.

Seeing clearly thanks to laser eye surgery. continued from page 1

eye disease that causes the cornea to thin over time. Hard contact lenses helped for about 13 years, but his eyes continued to worsen. He eventually required two cornea transplants, but as often happens after a cornea transplant, he was left with astigmatism and nearsightedness.

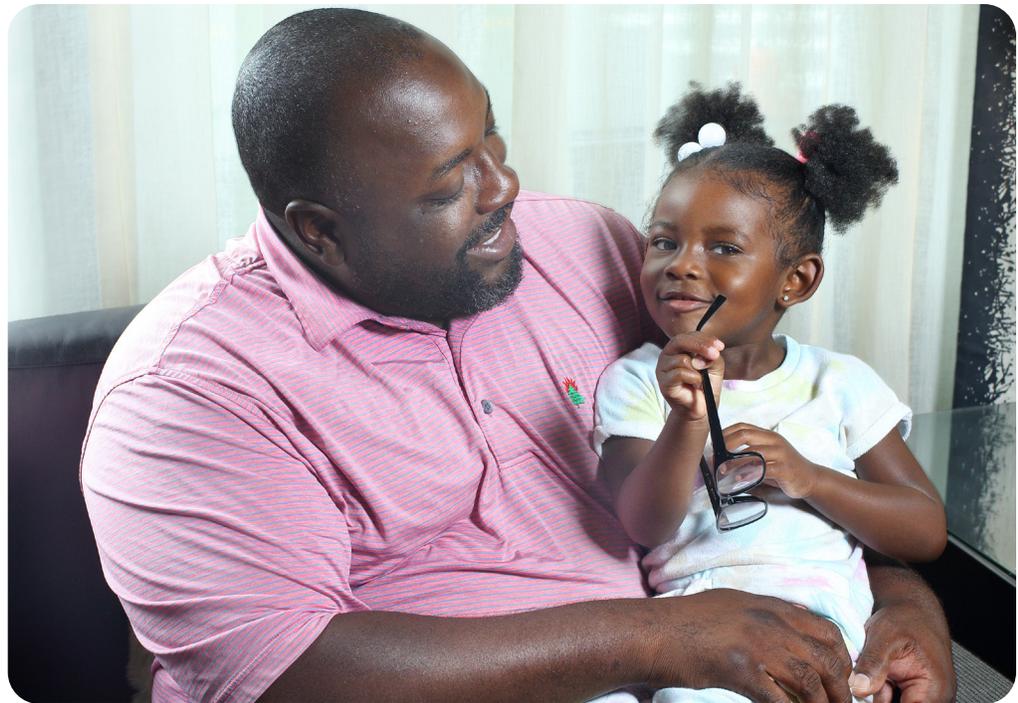
While these conditions can be corrected with glasses or contacts, Theodore didn't want either given his active jobs. His doctor, Jay Lustbader, MD, chair of the Department of Ophthalmology at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital and MedStar Washington Hospital Center and physician executive director, MedStar Health Ophthalmology, recommended PRK.

"This technology is incredible, and the things I can see now are just amazing. I can see my 2-year-old daughter and all her smiles and facial expressions."

—Theodore Smith

"Some patients are good candidates for laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis (LASIK) and others for PRK. It depends on what's happening with their eyes. Both are vision-correction procedures that use the same laser—just in slightly different ways," Dr. Lustbader explains. "Both procedures are safe, effective options for patients who don't want to wear glasses and contacts anymore and even for those who have other eye issues and diseases. It's a painless procedure that's very quick—it takes 10 to 12 minutes to do both eyes."

Dr. Lustbader has performed about 40,000 LASIK and PRK procedures throughout his career, including surgeries on patients with serious eye issues and degenerative diseases such as retinitis pigmentosa,

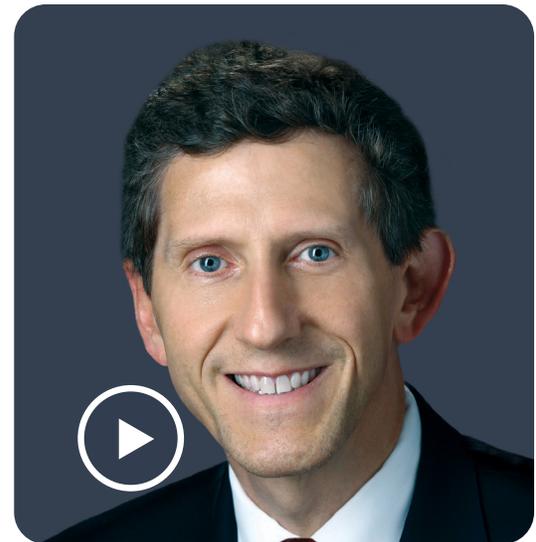


Following his laser eye surgery, Theodore can now see his 2-year-old daughter's smile clearly for the first time. Photo by Keith Weller

dystrophies, and congenital corneal abnormalities. He says patients heal in one or two days for LASIK and five to seven days with PRK. For most people the changes are permanent, with just 5% of patients needing a touch-up in the long term.

Theodore acknowledges he's been a challenging case. He needs one slight refinement to his right eye but says he's thrilled that his long journey to clearer eyesight is nearly complete.

"I now see 20/20 in my left eye, and my right eye just needs a small touch-up that should be easy after all I've done," Theodore says. "This technology is incredible, and the things I can see now are just amazing. I can see my 2-year-old daughter and all her smiles and facial expressions. When I caddy, I can see the ball 200 yards away. This procedure is so worth it. Everything changes for the better when the world isn't blurry, and I'm so grateful."



Meet Jay Lustbader, MD

Visit [MedStarGeorgetown.org/Lustbader](https://www.MedStarGeorgetown.org/Lustbader) to watch Dr. Lustbader discuss basic eye care and complex microsurgeries for cataracts and other eye disorders.

To make an appointment with one of our specialists, call **202-295-0540**.

MedStar GeorgetownMD

A MedStar Georgetown University Hospital publication

MedStar Georgetown University Hospital is rated as high performing in six adult specialties and five procedures and conditions by U.S. News and World Report.

Adult specialties



Procedures and conditions



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