

ISSUE 1 | 2024

# Choices

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Institute for Patient  
Blood Management and Bloodless  
Medicine and Surgery

## THE RIGHT BLOODLESS SURGEON *at the Right Time*

PAGE 4

OUTSTANDING CARE  
FOR THE TINIEST  
BLOODLESS PATIENTS  
PAGE 2

HEALTH EQUITY  
AT ENGLEWOOD  
PAGE 8





Bill and Jessica Hartwell with their son, Timothy

# FAMILY

– *from the* –

# START

Englewood Health's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit provides expert, individualized care to our youngest patients and their families.

“WE’RE HERE TO PROVIDE THE SAFEST, BEST CARE FOR INFANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES. WE WORK HAND-IN-HAND WITH FAMILIES TO ENSURE THEY HAVE CHILDREN, AND ADULTS, WHO ARE THRIVING AND DOING EVERYTHING THEY’RE SUPPOSED TO DO IN THIS WORLD.”

—Howard Mazin, MD, neonatologist and Chief of Pediatrics and Newborn Medicine at Englewood Health



Howard Mazin, MD

In 1997, Bill and Jessica Hartwell’s son, Timothy, was transferred to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Englewood Health at the recommendation of their local Hospital Liaison Committee for Jehovah’s Witnesses.

“We had never heard about The Bloodless Institute at Englewood Health before,” Bill says. “I’ve heard about Englewood, the city, but we never knew how good the hospital was before Timothy moved to the NICU there.”

### Prematurity and Anemia

Born at 27 weeks gestation and weighing just slightly over two pounds, Timothy had anemia and breathing difficulties and had experienced multiple cardiopulmonary arrests.

Prematurity interferes with the body’s ability to make red blood cells, increasing the risk for anemia, which can interfere with growth and cause respiratory issues.

“The more premature an infant is, the more common anemia is,” says Howard Mazin, MD, neonatologist and Chief of Pediatrics and Newborn Medicine at Englewood Health. “It’s very common in babies born at 28 to 30 weeks.”

For the second year, *Newsweek* has named Englewood Health one of the nation’s best maternity hospitals. The Hartwell family knows this honor reflects a long-standing commitment to quality, safety, and putting families first.

Babies at Englewood Health’s NICU are given medication to boost red blood cells if signs of anemia are detected. This treatment was crucial for Timothy. Still, it was only one part of what made the experience exceptional for Timothy and his family.

### Feeling at Home

Because his mother had complications with her pregnancy, Timothy was born at a well-regarded hospital about an hour and a half from the family’s Milford, Pennsylvania, home. Although Bill and Jessica believe the team there was well-qualified, the couple felt misunderstood and excluded from decisions. Against the family’s wishes, Timothy was given two blood transfusions within his first month of life.

When Timothy transferred to the NICU at The Bloodless Institute, Bill and Jessica knew they had found the right place for their son.

“They made us feel at ease immediately,” Jessica says. “It was like family.”

The NICU team ensured the Hartwells had what they needed emotionally and physically. They were also encouraged to take an active role in Timothy’s care.

After more than three months in the NICU, Timothy was finally able to go home. Today, he’s 26, healthy, and loves his work as a mechanic. He doesn’t remember the NICU, but his parents will never forget.

“From the initial registration to the doctors and everybody in between, they communicated about everything,” Jessica says. “They made sure we understood and were comfortable. It was absolutely exceptional across the board.”

To learn more about maternity and infant care at The Bloodless Institute at Englewood Health, visit [www.EHnoblood.org](http://www.EHnoblood.org).

# A Sparkling Experience

To retired jewelry worker Alice Flakes, the people who cared for her at Englewood Health were true gems.

After spending her career working for jewelry companies, including Tiffany & Co., Alice knows how to recognize exceptional quality. That's why, from the moment the 83-year-old New Jersey resident arrived at Englewood Hospital in October 2023 to receive treatment for a heart problem, she knew she had made the right choice for her care.

"From the very first day, when a gentleman at the front desk got a wheelchair for me, it was a continuously wonderful experience," Alice says. "A young woman walked us from the registration area to the elevator and rode with us upstairs, where we met three nurses. I haven't forgotten them because they were so pleasant."

## Kindness at Every Turn

Going to a hospital that aligned with her belief in bloodless medicine was important to Alice, and it didn't take long for her to feel confident in her decision. On her first day, a representative from The Bloodless Institute at Englewood Health greeted her with a smile and a gift. Everyone Alice met respected her wishes and did whatever was necessary to accommodate them.

"The nurses were wonderful," she says. "They couldn't do enough to make me comfortable. It's difficult to find people like that who genuinely care."

Before Alice's procedure to have stents placed in a clogged artery, the care team asked her what kind of music she wanted to



listen to when she entered the treatment room. Those sorts of small gestures meant the world to her.

"I didn't see a frown anywhere," Alice says. "After the procedure, when I went back to my room, everyone was so concerned about how I felt and asked if I was sure I could do this or that."

## Worth Remembering

Always one to record memorable experiences, Alice wrote about her four-day stay at Englewood Health in a notebook she received during her time there. One memory, in particular, stands out.

"One night, my daughter, who was staying with me, didn't have anything to eat," Alice says. "One of the nurses shared her meal. My daughter wanted to get money from the ATM to reimburse her, but the nurse wouldn't let her. The nurse said, 'I did that because I wanted to.' It was an experience I won't forget."

*Looking for expert bloodless care for your heart? Call The Bloodless Institute at 888-766-2566.*

**"RECEIVING CARE AT ENGLEWOOD HEALTH IS LIKE BEING AT A HEALTH SPA WHERE EVERYONE IS PLEASANT AND GOES OUT OF THEIR WAY TO TREAT YOU KINDLY, MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER, AND RESPECT YOUR FEELINGS."**

*—Alice Flakes, who received care at Englewood Health in 2023*



Lifesaving Surgery  
*in a Flash*

A referral from a physician at Englewood Health's Bloodless Institute helped one patient find the right surgeon just in time.



Nate Lebowitz, MD

Semi-retired at age 69, Rusty Reznik was savoring his life in Connecticut. Although the pandemic had slowed down international travel with his wife, Gail, Rusty was still enjoying dinners with friends, volunteering, and talking with others about his faith.

Then, in the summer of 2023, Rusty took a routine stool test to look for biomarkers of possible colorectal cancer. The results showed that something might be wrong, so he followed up with a colonoscopy.

“I’ve never had abnormal

colonoscopy results and have no family history of colorectal cancer, but the screening found a large mass,” Rusty says. “My gastroenterologist recommended I find a surgeon immediately.”

### The Search for a Surgeon

Rusty met with a local surgeon but felt uncomfortable about moving forward.

“We weren’t sure if he would respect our wishes regarding blood transfusions if something went wrong,” Gail says.

Rusty decided to call his cardiologist with The Bloodless Institute and ask if he had any recommendations.

“I have a lot of bloodless patients, and Rusty’s been a patient for a long time,” says Nate Lebowitz, MD, cardiologist at Englewood Health. “When he told me what was going on, I told him that we have an incredible colorectal surgery program here. Then I called up Dr. Anna Serur, and she said, ‘Give me his number.’”



Anna Serur, MD

In fact, Anna Serur, MD, Chief of Colon and Rectal Surgery at Englewood Health, called Rusty minutes after he got off the phone with Dr. Lebowitz.

“This was on a Wednesday, and she told me she could see me on Friday,” Rusty says. “We went down to New Jersey, and after just a few minutes, we knew she was the way to go.”

### Surgery in September

Rusty’s surgery was scheduled for September 28. Prior to surgery, he needed a few tests.

“I had blood work and an EKG on a Friday,” Rusty says. “Saturday afternoon, Dr. Serur called with my results. What surgeon does that on a weekend? She wanted to reassure me that everything was good to go.”

Fortunately, the surgery went exactly as planned.

“I performed a robotic right hemicolectomy, removing a portion of his large intestinal colon and connecting his small intestine to the large intestine to recreate a normal digestive tract,” Dr. Serur says. “He had an early-stage cancer in a large polyp. All his lymph nodes and everything else were benign, so he was essentially cured just with the surgery.”

Even though Rusty had no symptoms of colorectal cancer, he was glad he had followed his preventive screening schedule.

“If I had waited another year or two, I would have been in real trouble,” Rusty says.

### The Road to Recovery

Because the surgery was minimally invasive, Rusty was home from the hospital in just a few days.

“He was back to his usual activities quickly, his energy level is good, and he’s going to the bathroom normally,” Dr. Serur says. “He’s really back to 100 percent.”

Rusty says the experience was worth the travel.

“I was so pleased that if I have a hangnail, I’ll go down to Englewood before I go someplace else,” Rusty says. “If you ask me what the hospital or Dr. Serur or any of the staff could do better, ***I got nothing!***”

The experience was also positive for his wife, who had to deal with a different set of challenges.

“When you’re under stress, you need that comfort of helpful staff and providers,” Gail says. “Just from the start to the finish, everyone made us feel comfortable and confident that we were going in the right direction.”

The physician network with The Bloodless Institute is just one of the many benefits for patients.

“Almost every physician in every specialty here is as good as anybody I’ve ever worked with in my career at several major hospitals,” Dr. Lebowitz says. “It’s an absolute pleasure that I can call them up for referrals at any time. It makes for seamless communication and advanced patient care.”

*If colon, gastrointestinal or abdominal surgery could be in your future, find out why The Bloodless Institute is a great option. Learn more at [www.EHnoblood.org](http://www.EHnoblood.org).*

## IS IT TIME FOR YOUR COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING?

If you are 45 years old, it’s time to start regular screenings for colorectal cancer. In 2021, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force lowered the age to begin screenings to 45 from 50. People at average risk of colorectal cancer should choose one of these screening options:

- Get a colonoscopy every 10 years.
- Take a highly sensitive stool test every year.
- Take a multi-targeted stool DNA test every three years.

While stool tests may seem easier, only a colonoscopy also allows your doctor the option to remove possibly precancerous polyps during the procedure.

As long as you are in good health, regular screening should continue until age 75. People between ages 76 and 85 should make decisions about continuing screening in consultation with their doctor. People at high risk of colorectal cancer, including those with a family history, may want to start colonoscopies at age 40 or sooner. Your doctor can help you decide what’s best for you.

# Enamored of

# Emergency Medicine

For Erik Chu, MD, caring for a diverse population of patients, including those for whom blood transfusions are not an option, is one of the best parts of emergency medicine.

The son of a nurse, Dr. Chu, Chief of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Englewood Health, credits his mother for nurturing his interest in medicine while he was growing up in Orange County, New York. Participating in a college program at Manhattan's Bellevue Hospital opened his eyes to the dynamic environment and exciting challenges of the emergency department (ED). He was hooked, and he never looked back.

"The patient population we encounter is incredibly varied, ranging from one-day-old infants to individuals who are 105 years old," Dr. Chu says. "Although many patients come in with common complaints, we're also constantly presented with unique and unexpected medical conditions. It's this unpredictability that keeps each shift in the ED both mentally stimulating and demanding."

## Leading and Serving

Dr. Chu joined the Englewood Health team in 2005. In 2022, he was appointed Chief of the Department of Emergency Medicine, a role that allows him to support his colleagues while continuing to care for patients.

"Being part of Englewood Health allows me to contribute to a healthcare environment that prioritizes both the individual needs of the patients and the broader health of the community," he says. "The collaborative and patient-centered approach that defines our institution makes it a rewarding place to work, where I can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve."

## Teaming Up for Bloodless Care

Over the years, Dr. Chu developed a keen interest in bloodless medicine. Caring for bloodless patients is a routine part of his work in the ED, and teamwork is key to providing care in an emergency setting.

"We work closely with bloodless patients to understand their specific needs and preferences," he says. "This may involve exploring alternative treatment options, employing advanced techniques, and collaborating with specialists at Englewood Health who are experienced in bloodless medicine."

Committed to adhering to bloodless medicine principles, Dr. Chu works to "create an environment where bloodless patients feel heard, respected, and well cared for." It's all in a day's work.

*Curious about all the ways we serve the bloodless patient population? To learn about The Bloodless Institute at Englewood Health, visit [www.EHnoblood.org](http://www.EHnoblood.org).*

## GOOD SPORTS

Outside of medicine, Erik Chu, MD, Chief of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Englewood Health, devotes himself to his family—and much of their time together revolves around sports. Dr. Chu's 11-year-old daughter and 14-year-old son are passionate about soccer. This past fall, they played side by side in midfield on a championship-winning team, a special experience for the whole family.

Golf is Dr. Chu's game. He spends his free time driving, chipping, and putting on a simulator he built in his basement.



# Why Is It So Important to Have a PCP?

In the fast-paced world of modern health care, many individuals find themselves turning to urgent care clinics and walk-in providers when health concerns arise. While these options offer immediate assistance for acute issues, there's a cornerstone of health care that often goes overlooked—primary care providers (PCPs).



Catherine V. Laiosa,  
MD, PhD

Establishing a relationship with a primary care provider is not just about routine checkups; it's a crucial step toward being proactive about your health management and overall well-being.

"Your PCP can organize your medical care, provide chronic disease management, and make necessary referrals," says Catherine V. Laiosa, MD, PhD, Section Chief of Internal Medicine at Englewood Health.

"In addition, evidence suggests

that patient access to primary care improves population health, reduces healthcare disparities, and lowers healthcare costs."

## Three Benefits of a PCP

Having a PCP is one of the best investments you can make in your health—and your life. Regular visits with your PCP offer many benefits, including:

**1. Familiarity with your health.** Because you see the same PCP every time, the PCP will be able to develop a comprehensive view of your health and wellness. This familiarity helps the PCP notice trends—and treat those issues—before they become serious health risks. For example, a PCP may notice that your blood pressure levels increase slightly at every visit. He or she can recommend lifestyle changes or medication to address those issues before they become a serious problem.

**2. Medication management.** If you see different walk-in clinic providers or use telemedicine services that aren't affiliated with your PCP's office, it's possible that you have prescriptions that can interact with each other and cause side effects. By seeing one PCP for all your care, they will be able to manage all your medications to reduce the risk of potential issues.

**3. Preventive care.** Your PCP can provide vaccinations, monitor you for issues like diabetes or heart disease, and coordinate any cancer screenings you need, such as mammograms or colonoscopies.

## Finding the Right PCP

If you don't already have a PCP, it's time to start looking.

"I recommend asking friends, family members, and colleagues who their PCP is," Dr. Laiosa says. "From there, you can find out which doctors in the practice are taking new patients and even put your name on a waiting list if needed."

Keep in mind that not all PCPs are physicians. If you need a PCP who will follow your wishes for bloodless care, you can also consider a nurse practitioner or physician assistant.

"In most primary care practices, physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants work together to see patients," Dr. Laiosa notes. "Nurse practitioners can be independent practitioners while physician assistants have collaborating physicians that oversee their work."

## Making the Most of PCP Visits

As you gear up for your upcoming visit with your PCP, a little preparation can go a long way in ensuring a productive appointment. Complete any new patient paperwork in advance or arrive early to update or complete these documents. You'll also want to gather some health information to share with your PCP.

"To make the most out of your visit, I recommend bringing past reports of preventive health screenings, such as mammograms and colonoscopies, as well as lists of medications and immunizations," Dr. Laiosa says. "It's also important to make a list of your top three health concerns so those can be addressed in the first few visits."

*The Bloodless Institute at Englewood Health is home to many PCPs who will respect your wishes for bloodless care. Call The Bloodless Institute at 888-766-2566 to learn more.*



# ENGLEWOOD HEALTH

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By Sherri  
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patient blood  
management  
and bloodless  
medicine and  
surgery to  
Englewood Health

# Embracing Health Equity for All

Recently, healthcare professionals have given a lot of attention to the concept of “health equity” in the delivery of medical services. This term may be unfamiliar to you, but it essentially means that all people should have fair opportunity, along with the assistance they need, to achieve their highest level of health.

Many different populations face unequal opportunities in their attempts to receive the type of care that all patients deserve—care that is clinically safe and effective while respecting patients’ beliefs, preferences, and values.

### Barriers to Health Equity

This lack of access can be due to many different reasons, including geographic location and availability of healthcare facilities, financial challenges, and cultural factors. While it can be very challenging to implement changes to overcome health disparities, it is possible. More than 30 years ago, Englewood Health became proof of this concept when it established its Bloodless Medicine and Surgery Program to help an underserved community.

In the early days of bloodless medicine and surgery programs, initial efforts focused on developing relationships with doctors who were “willing” to care for patients without the use of blood

transfusions. In the decades since, bloodless patients rightfully have demanded care that goes far beyond cooperation and is skilled, compassionate, available, and is the same level of quality that all patients deserve. Our Bloodless Institute stands out as a pioneering model of not only delivering equitable care—and thus improving health equity and saving lives—but also in improving access to such care.

Bloodless medicine stands as an original health equity model that addresses the needs of individuals with specific religious, personal, or health-guided beliefs.

As a direct result of providing care to this underserved population so many years ago, it has come to light that this patient-centered approach to medical care is inclusive, culturally sensitive, and accessible to all—regardless of their socioeconomic status or religious convictions. As a result, bloodless medicine represents a significant step toward the elimination of healthcare disparities and the promotion of health equity in diverse communities.