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**CUTLINE: Little Shop officers Susanne Lynch (left) and Barb Fitzmaurice, and shop manager Paula Sowinski (far right) join GI tech Karen Rubino and gastroenterologist C. Rao Pudukollu, MD, to learn more about a specialty scope used at Latrobe Hospital. A \$40,000 gift from The Little Shop Board paid to replace an older model. With this gift, channeled through the Latrobe Area Hospital Charitable Foundation, The Little Shop has contributed in excess of \$1.47 million to hospital improvements.**

**NEW SCOPE FACILITATES GI PROCEDURES AT LATROBE HOSPITAL**

**LATROBE, PA, April 16, 2010 ...** Excelsa Health Latrobe Hospital is the recipient of a new state-of-art ERCP (Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography) scope. This specialized piece of equipment was purchased as a replacement unit for gastroenterology procedures through the fund-raising efforts of Latrobe's Little Shop Volunteers.

According to Sarfraz Ahmad, MD., of Westmoreland Gastroenterology Associates, ERCP is a diagnostic /therapeutic test that enables specially trained gastroenterologists to diagnose problems in the liver, gallbladder, bile ducts and pancreas. "It is primarily used to examine the biliary and pancreatic ductal systems in order to diagnose and treat conditions of the bile duct, including gallstones, inflammatory strictures (scars), leaks (from trauma and surgery) and cancer," he explained.

ERCP combines the use of x-rays and an endoscope, which is a long, lighted tube. It involves passage of the scope through the mouth and esophagus. This allows the physician to see the inside of the stomach and duodenum (common opening for bile and pancreatic ducts), in order to inject a radioactive opaque dye into these areas so they can be seen on x-rays. Tiny tubes and instruments may be inserted through the scope to further evaluate the ducts or to remove stones, a tumor or other obstruction if necessary.

Depending on a patient's condition, the procedure can be performed on an outpatient as well as inpatient basis. It usually takes about 30 to 90 minutes. Most patients requiring an ERCP have experienced symptoms of abdominal pain, fever, chills, jaundice, weight loss and/or pancreatitis.

"An ERCP scope is different from other scopes which are designed for front or forward viewing in that it provides for a side view which is essential for viewing the side wall of the small bowel. This is a more complex procedure," commented Dr. Ahmad.

Using an ERCP scope, a plastic tube or stent can be inserted in the event of infection thus aiding in drainage. Biopsies also can be performed if a tumor is discovered. "The new generation high definition scope that was purchased allows for more enhanced capabilities due to wider channels and improved quality of imaging for enhanced visibility," noted Dr. Ahmad. "It is definitely, more user-friendly for the physician."

He added, "The gastroenterology department is very grateful to the Little Shop volunteers for their efforts in making this new scope available for the benefit of area patients needing these specialized types of procedures."

Dr. Ahmad performs ERCP's at both Latrobe and Frick Hospitals. Frick Hospital is also in the process of upgrading its ERCP scopes. "Previously, more complicated ERCP cases had to be referred into Pittsburgh," said Dr. Ahmad. "Now that, we have the technology and experience available locally at all of our Excelsa Hospitals, area patients can have these procedures performed close to home without the inconvenience of traveling into the city."