Historic Pancreatic Surgery Performed On Bloodless Patient at Hahnemann University Hospital

On October 30, 2013, pancreatic surgeon Dr. Wilbur Bowne, chief of Gastrointestinal Surgery, and his colleagues successfully performed a pancreaticoduodenectomy, otherwise known as the Whipple Procedure, on the oldest recorded patient ever to undergo this major operation at Hahnemann University Hospital. The patient was 88 years old with pancreatic cancer, a Jehovah’s Witness and was referred to the Center for Bloodless Medicine and Surgery at Hahnemann University Hospital.

During a Whipple procedure, the surgeon removes the head of the pancreas, the gallbladder, the duodenum, which is the uppermost portion of the small intestine, a small portion of the stomach called the pylorus, and lymph nodes near the head of the pancreas. The surgeon then reconnects the remaining pancreas and digestive organs so that pancreatic digestive enzymes, bile, and stomach contents will flow into the small intestine during digestion. In another type of Whipple procedure known as the pylorus preserving Whipple, the bottom portion of the stomach, or pylorus, is not removed. In both cases, the surgery usually lasts five to eight hours.

“The surgery was a great success. All of the cancer was removed, and the patient was able to return home the following week,” said Dr. Bowne.

Administrative director of the Center for Bloodless Medicine and Surgery, Randall Thomas, commented on the surgery by saying, “It is a major milestone for complex gastrointestinal cancer surgery in bloodless patients in our city and throughout the region. We are a large tertiary care referral center and very pleased that we can offer this level of care to our community. Our surgeons, anesthesiologists, and nurse specialists use a number of bloodless techniques that provide the utmost safety to our patients.”

Dr. Bowne further emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary care for pancreatic cancer patients before, during, and after surgery and noted, “At Hahnemann, together we treat the most complex patient situations, no matter the circumstances or nature of the condition.”