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INFORMATION
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Advanced lung care helps Hamilton patients find answers sooner

DALTON, Ga. (November 2, 2026) – For people facing a possible lung condition, finding the right answers can make all the difference.

At Hamilton Medical Center, a team of board-certified pulmonologists is combining advanced technology, early detection and personalized care to help patients get those answers sooner — and begin treatment when it can make the greatest impact.

That commitment to lung care recently earned Hamilton national recognition. The hospital was named among the top 10 percent in the nation for patient safety in pneumonia care in the 2027 CareChex Awards by Quantros and was also named the market leader for patient safety in treating chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

“These awards highlight the ongoing work at Hamilton to provide the best in care,” said Sumedha Sonde, MD, a pulmonologist. “That includes prioritizing safety while diagnosing problems sooner so our patients can receive treatment that leads to longer, healthier lives.”

Finding lung cancer earlier

One way Hamilton is focusing on early detection is through its Ion robotic-assisted bronchoscopy procedure, developed by Intuitive that allows physicians to biopsy small or hard-to-reach lung nodules. Sonde uses this advanced technology to evaluate suspicious nodules and help diagnose lung cancer earlier. She recently performed Hamilton’s 100th Ion procedure.

The Ion system uses the patient’s natural airways to guide a small, flexible catheter deep into the lungs, allowing physicians to collect tissue samples without making an incision or puncturing the lung.

For patients, that can mean a less invasive way to get answers about a suspicious nodule.

Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States, making early detection especially important. When lung cancer is diagnosed early, patients have significantly better chances of long-term survival.

“When lung cancer is diagnosed early, patients are nearly eight times more likely to survive the next five years,” Sonde said. “Ion gives us a powerful tool in the fight against lung cancer, helping us reach deep into the lungs with greater safety and accuracy so we can start treatment sooner.”

Hamilton launched its Ion program about a year ago at Bandy Endoscopy Center. For eligible high-risk patients, the process begins with a low-dose CT scan, available at Hamilton Diagnostics Center. If a suspicious nodule is identified and a biopsy is appropriate, physicians can use the Ion system to obtain tissue for diagnosis.

Care that goes beyond diagnosis

Advanced procedures are just one part of Hamilton’s approach to lung health.

At Hamilton Physician Group – Specialty Care, pulmonologists, including Sonde, Umama Adil, MD, and Kshama Bhyravabhotla, MD, treat patients with a range of lung conditions, including COPD and other respiratory diseases. The team also brings lung-health resources into the community, including programs designed to help people quit smoking.

Smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For people at higher risk, lung cancer screening can detect the disease before symptoms appear.

Low-dose computed tomography (LDCT), available at Hamilton Diagnostics Center, takes about 10 minutes and is available for people ages 50 to 80 who currently smoke or quit within the past 15 years and have a 20 pack-year smoking history. A pack-year is calculated by multiplying the number of packs smoked per day by the number of years smoked. Many insurance plans cover the cost of screening.

For people who are diagnosed with lung cancer, Peeples Cancer Institute at Hamilton provides comprehensive care, including medical oncology, radiation oncology and surgical care. Services include radiation treatments, personalized treatment plans, genetic testing and counseling, patient navigation and oncology social work.

For those ready to quit smoking, Peeples Cancer Institute also offers an eight-week smoking cessation program developed by the American Lung Association and led by a certified facilitator.

Together, these services give patients access to care across the lung-health journey — from prevention and screening to diagnosis, treatment and support.

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Photo: Drs. Sonde, Bhyravabhotla, Adil

About Hamilton Medical Center
The flagship affiliate for Vitruvian Health's Northwest Georgia region, Hamilton Medical Center (HMC) is a 255-bed regional acute-care hospital that offers major medical, surgical and diagnostic services, including accredited stroke and chest pain centers. Advanced technology and wellness are two significant areas of focus for HMC. Services include the freestanding Hamilton Ambulatory Surgery Center, Hamilton Diagnostics Center, and Bradley Wellness Center, as well as a Level III trauma center, Peeples Cancer Institute, Heart & Vascular program (including open heart surgery), Bandy Endoscopy Center, Hamilton Spine Health and Sport, Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and more. HMC has been designated a Level I Emergency Cardiac Care Center by the Georgia Department of Public Health and has been recognized by the American College of Cardiology as a top hospital in Georgia for quality heart care.

About HMC's Bandy Endoscopy Center
Bandy Endoscopy Center, at Hamilton Medical Center, uses the latest endoscopic instruments with high-definition images and narrow-band image capability for improved detection and diagnosis of GI disorders. The sophisticated digital fluoroscopy and radiology equipment delivers the highest-quality images, with the lowest radiation exposure. New impedance and manometry equipment mean vastly improved diagnosis for patients with reflux and atypical chest pain. The Center provides Ion by Intuitive, a groundbreaking robotic-assisted bronchoscopy system that significantly enhances the early detection of lung cancer. With its advanced navigation and precision, Ion allows physicians to biopsy tiny, hard-to-reach nodules earlier and more safely than traditional methods.

About Hamilton Physician Group – Specialty Care
Hamilton Physician Group – Specialty Care's multidisciplinary team uses advanced diagnostic techniques to treat complex conditions. The practice includes pulmonology, palliative care, rheumatology and sleep medicine.

About Diagnostics Center
Hamilton Diagnostics Center offers state-of-the-art outpatient diagnostics services. Among the services at this location are low-dose CT lung screenings, digital X-ray, PET/CT, 3T open MRI, 64-slice CT scanning with dose reduction radiation, nuclear medicine, neurodiagnostics, ultrasound and laboratory.

About Peeples Cancer Institute
Accredited by the American College of Surgeons - Commission on Cancer, the 46,000-square-foot Peeples Cancer Institute (PCI) at Hamilton Medical Center (HMC) centralizes patient-centered care and outpatient cancer services in one convenient location, allowing for HMC's expert team of medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, surgeons and clinical support staff to work collaboratively to provide state-of-the-art care in a healing, nurturing environment.

PCI includes: board-certified medical oncologists, radiation oncologists and radiologists; state-of-the-art radiation therapies, including the Varian® TrueBeam linear accelerator and 4D CT Simulator; customized treatment plans; genetic testing and counseling; 3D mammography and ultrasound imaging (with expanded evening options for mammography); private and semi-private infusion rooms; medical nutrition by a registered dietician; a bistro with Starbucks coffee, smoothies and light refreshments; and patient navigation and oncology social work services. PCI patients also have the ability to participate in various clinical trials through PCI's relationship with the Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University.

About Vitruvian Health

Vitruvian Health, formerly Hamilton Health Care System, is a not-for-profit, fully integrated health system serving the Northwest Georgia and Southeast Tennessee regions. Vitruvian includes Hamilton Medical Center in Dalton, Ga., and Bradley Medical Center in Cleveland, Tenn., affiliated physician practices, walk-in care centers, retirement and skilled nursing centers, a diagnostic center, a cancer institute, an institute for children with developmental delays, and more. Known for its advanced care and personalized service, Vitruvian Health offers innovative treatment options in state-of-the-art facilities while maintaining a compassionate, friendly and tranquil healing environment.

The Vitruvian name draws from the organization's recognizable da Vinci-inspired Vitruvian Man icon, which has been a prominent part of Hamilton's logo since 1976. Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man represents harmony, balance, and the interconnectedness of all aspects of health, perfectly aligning with Hamilton's integrated system of care.