

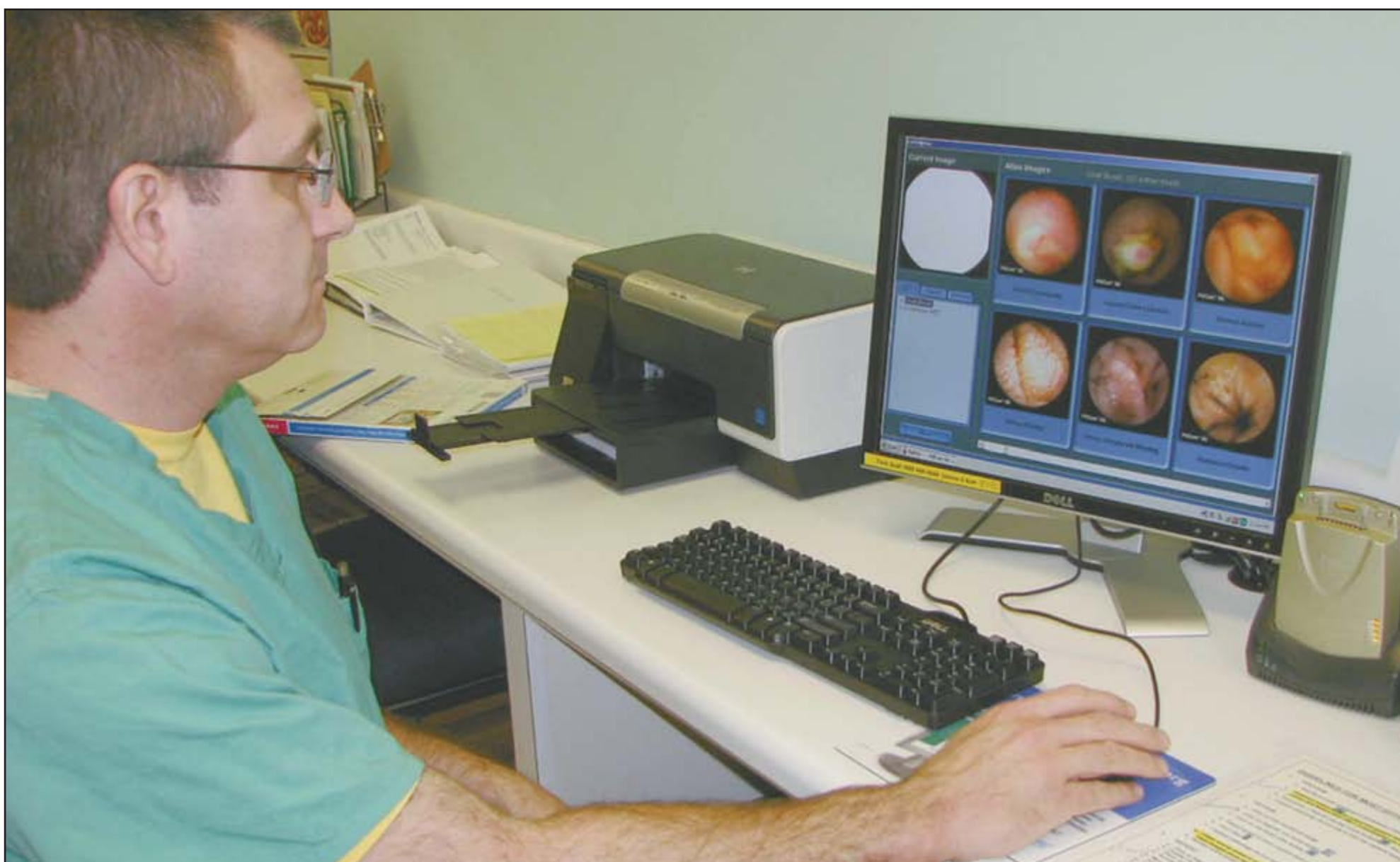
# Lifestyles

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The Pill Cam is the first device capable of providing doctors with images covering the entire 21 feet of the small intestine.

## Need a GI test? Open up and swallow a pill



Dr. Timothy Nelson, a general surgeon at Gaffney Medical Associates, views computer images taken with the Pill Cam. A patient swallows the pill that has a tiny camera inside to help doctors diagnose problems in the small intestine. It takes 24 hours for the pill to travel painlessly through the body.

Ledger photos / SCOTT OWELL

## Small camera enclosed in pill offers painless way for doctors to diagnose gastrointestinal disorders

**A** pill-sized camera swallowed by patients is providing two Gaffney surgeons with a new way of finding problems within the small intestine.

General surgeons Drs. Timothy Nelson and Maureen Burdett started using the Pill Cam with patients last week. Several patients have already swallowed the pill in attempt to help the doctors diagnose small intestine problems.

The pill contains a tiny video camera, light source and transmitter. It radios images from inside the body to a portable recorder strapped to the patient's waist.

The Pill Cam is the first device capable of providing doctors with images covering the entire 21 feet of the small intestine.

A patient fasts for 10 hours before swallowing the pill with a glass of water. About 58,000 images are taken and stored on a recorder on a belt worn by the patient during the day.

"The main advantage is that it is very small and completely painless for patients," Burdett said. "Once they have swallowed the pill, they don't feel it — and they can go home or go to work. The belt and receiver are brought back to our office at the end of the day. It takes about 15 minutes to upload the images from the recorder onto a computer."

About 70 million Americans currently suffer from gastrointestinal disorders. Esophageal cancer is the fastest growing cancer in the U.S.

Doctors can use the Pill Cam to help detect Crohn's disease, GI bleeding, and small bowel tumors. Crohn's disease is a lifelong inflammatory bowel disease usually found in the last part of the small intestine.

Burdett and Nelson are among the first doctors in the area to use the Pill Cam. They are part of Gaffney Medical Associates, the sister physician network operated by Upstate Carolina Medical Center.

In previous years, doctors had to put a long flexible

tube called an endoscope into a patient's mouth and down the GI tract to see inside the small intestine. The surgical procedure required a patient to be sedated in a hospital and spend several hours in recovery.

"It has been very difficult in the past to diagnose problems in the small intestine because it covers such a wide area," Burdett said. "Many people become very frustrated because they have already been through long work-ups only to find the pain is still there. Our patients are very happy there is something else available."

Doctors can now use video images captured on the Pill Cam to diagnose medical problems located in the small intestine.

A similar video capsule is being tested as another option doctors could use to help diagnose colon problems, according to Burdett. If approved by the FDA, patients could one day take a pill instead of undergoing a colonoscopy exam.

STORY BY SCOTT POWELL/LEDGER STAFF WRITER

## Teen fears parents won't like her new boyfriend because she met him online

**Dear Annie:** I'm an 18-year-old girl who is smart, funny, cute and kind. The problem? I've never had a boyfriend or a date until now. I'm the oldest child in my family, so I'm kind of new to the whole thing.

I met "Jacob" and we hit it off right away. We met face-to-face two weeks ago. Jacob is nice, quiet and only a year older than I am. I'd like my parents to meet Jacob, as kind of a reassurance thing, but I don't know how to tell them that we met online. I know they are going to ask and I don't want to lie, but they aren't crazy about the idea of meeting people by computer because of all the horror stories you hear. Is there a way to bring it up without them going completely nuts?

— **Wanting Him**

**Dear Wanting:** Your parents should indeed meet Jacob, and the sooner, the better. Tell them about the new man in your life, and when they ask how you met, show them the site and let them see for themselves what's there. It might be more acceptable



### ANNIE'S MAILBOX

Kathy Mitchell  
and Marcy Sugar

than they expect. (We trust it isn't a chat room for, say, vampires.) Either way, explain that you want them to get to know Jacob and hope they will give him a chance. We're betting they

will. And if they like him, how you met will become irrelevant.

### Respect mom's wishes

**Dear Annie:** My husband is a medic serving in Iraq. I recently got a call from his 69-year-old mother letting me know she had been to the doctor with a bladder infection and a few more minor things. She didn't say whether the doctors thought it was cause for major concern.

She told me not to tell my husband because she doesn't want him to worry. Do I respect her wishes and not say anything? His parents are country folk who don't understand a lot of medical jargon, and my husband is usually able to explain things to them. I think he'd want to know. He's not a worrier, especially about illness. What should I do?

— **Army Wife in the Know**

**Dear Army Wife:** Say nothing to your husband for the moment. Mom needs to know she can trust you. Her problems seem manageable, espe-

cially since she is under the care of a physician. However, please encourage her to tell her son. Explain that he would want to know and that his medical knowledge will be helpful. In the meantime, keep tabs on her health and make it clear that if things worsen, her son will need to be informed.

### 'Do Not Call' registry will be made permanent

**Dear Annie:** Yesterday, I received a recorded phone message from a candidate who wanted my vote. I am on the National Do Not Call Registry. I realize that political candidates are not legally obligated to honor the list, but if this candidate cannot respect the preferences of his or her constituents in such a simple matter, how can that person represent our preferences if elected? I will not vote for this candidate.

— **Mississippi Voter**

**Dear Mississippi:** We hope you

phoned the candidate's campaign headquarters and explained why he or she was not getting your vote. But you might want to reconsider. According to the Federal Trade Commission, calls from political organizations, charities and telephone surveyors are still permitted, as are calls from companies with which you have an existing business relationship — that means any company from which you've purchased something or have called to request information. Political solicitations are not considered telemarketing and are exempt, so we doubt they even bother to look at the lists. In fact, we're surprised you only received calls from one candidate.

By the way, although registration was set to expire after five years, the FTC now plans to make the Registry permanent. Those who want more information, or who want to add their phone numbers, can call 1-888-382-1222 or go online to [donotcall.gov](http://donotcall.gov).