



Red Bank resident Antoinette Macken, 86, loves being near the water and walks year-round on the boardwalk.



We have signed a 10-year strategic partnership with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, extending access to the highest-quality cancer care throughout New Jersey. For additional details, visit HackensackMeridianHealth.org.

Back to Life

Hackensack Meridian Health *After a shocking cancer diagnosis, expert care returns woman to her active lifestyle.*

Antoinette Macken wasn't like most 86-year-olds. She went to gym class three times a week and didn't take any medications. When she felt a pain on her right side that caused her to skip workouts, she made a doctor's appointment. A computed tomography (CT) scan led to a surprising diagnosis: pancreatic cancer.

"It was a horrific shock. I've heard about pancreatic cancer and thought I would be gone in two weeks," says Antoinette. Thankfully, she found expert treatment through **Meridian Cancer Care**.

Antoinette was referred to **Ronald Matteotti, M.D.**, medical director of Hepatobiliary Surgery at Hackensack Meridian Health. After testing and evaluation by diagnostic radiologist **Raven DeVincenzo, M.D.**, and gastroenterologist **Subha Sundararajan, M.D.**, Dr. Matteotti determined Antoinette's cancer had been caught early enough to be treated surgically. He recommended an operation called the Whipple procedure. Without it, Antoinette was expected to live only a few months with increasing pain.

"I trusted Dr. Matteotti. He was incredibly caring, and I knew that I was in the very best hands," says Antoinette, who moved from Long Island to Red Bank to be closer to her family and doctors.

The Whipple procedure involves removing part of the pancreas; the upper part of the small intestine, or duodenum; gallbladder; and a portion of the bile

duct and stomach. The surgeon then reconnects the remaining pancreas, small intestine and bile duct. Research shows a clear link between positive patient outcomes and the number of Whipple procedures a physician has performed. Performing 15 to 20 Whipple surgeries a year is considered a high volume; Dr. Matteotti conducts over 40 annually. "It's important to know that no one has to go to Manhattan to get expert pancreas and liver care," explains Dr. Matteotti.

Dr. Matteotti performed Antoinette's surgery at Jersey Shore University Medical Center. The operation required a partial portal vein — the major vein supplying the liver — resection. This type of resection is done by only a few surgeons in the country and makes a complex surgery even more difficult. "Antoinette had an excellent outcome," says Dr. Matteotti. "Her margins were completely clear of cancer."

After recovering from surgery, Antoinette began six months of chemotherapy with **Denis Fitzgerald, M.D.**, a hematologist/oncologist at Riverview Medical Center. Dr. Fitzgerald collaborated with Antoinette's entire team of doctors on the best course of care. "Every patient's condition is unique," explains Dr. Fitzgerald. "We work together to create a tailored treatment plan for each patient."

Today, Antoinette is finishing chemotherapy and has outpatient physical therapy at Riverview. She is enjoying her newest great-grandchild and spending time with family and friends. "I wouldn't be here now if my cancer wasn't handled the way it was by my physicians and their incredible teams," she says. "Thank you is not enough."



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