



# Heartburn Center of California

## Press Kit

First in kind Heartburn Center of California has been established to combat Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) a chronic and often progressive disease affecting 64 million Americans. The visionary and holistic approach of diagnosing and treating the disease at the Heartburn Center of California goes beyond addressing the symptoms of GERD, but looks to diagnose and treat the condition at the source.

365 Lennon Lane, Suite 250  
Walnut Creek, CA 94598



## Table of Contents

<b>About Heartburn Center of California.....</b>	<b>3</b>
The Team .....	3
Hospitals & Surgical Centers .....	3
<b>The Team .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Wilson Tsai, MD, Founder & Director .....	4
Certifications & Education: .....	5
<i>Certifications:</i> .....	5
<i>Education:</i> .....	5
Specialized Physician Assistant & Registered Nurses.....	5
<b>Services &amp; Procedures.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Treatments .....	6
<i>Lifestyle Changes</i> .....	6
<i>Medications</i> .....	6
<i>Minimally Invasive Procedures</i> .....	7
<i>LINX® Reflux Management System</i> .....	7
<i>Minimally Invasive, Laparoscopic Anti-Reflux Procedure</i> .....	8
<b>Press Release .....</b>	<b>9</b>
First in Kind Heartburn Center of California established to combat Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) .....	9
<b>Testimonials.....</b>	<b>13</b>
David P.....	13
Kelli M. ....	14
Marika R.....	15
<b>Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) .....</b>	<b>17</b>
What is the Heartburn Center of California?.....	17
What is heartburn?.....	17
What causes heartburn? .....	17
What is a hiatal herni? .....	17
How do you treat heartburn? .....	18
<i>Lifestyle Changes</i> .....	18
<i>Medications</i> .....	18
<i>Minimally Invasive Procedures</i> .....	19
<i>LINX® Reflux Management System</i> .....	19
<i>Minimally Invasive, Laparoscopic Anti-Reflux Procedure</i> .....	19
What is Barrett's esophagus? .....	19
How do you treat Barrett's esophagus? .....	20
How do I make an appointment at the Heartburn Center of California? .....	20



## **ABOUT HEARTBURN CENTER OF CALIFORNIA**

The Heartburn Center of California was established to provide specialized and focused care to patients suffering from esophageal and digestive disorders resulting in what is commonly known as heartburn. The Center is dedicated to providing very specialized medical professionals with in depth knowledge and focused technics in diagnosing and treating ailments that result in Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), also referred to as heartburn.

The holistic and methodical approach to diagnosis and treatment by the Center contribute to a high success rate in identifying and addressing the root cause of the heartburn as opposed to just treating the symptoms of this increasingly common ailment.

According to the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP), "Up to 60 percent of the population at some time during the year, and 20 to 30 percent weekly, experience symptoms of [GERD], such as heartburn and acid regurgitation."<sup>1</sup> With such a high prevalence and few organizations focused specifically on accurately diagnosing and treating the disease, the healthcare professionals at the Heartburn Center of California are unique in their dedication and focus on esophageal and digestive disorders in particular as they pertain to GERD or heartburn.

### **The Team**

- Director
- Specialized Physician Assistant
- Specialized Registered Nurses

### **Hospitals & Surgical Centers**

Bay Area Surgical Specialists (BASS) – Clinic  
Sutter Eden Medical Center – Surgery  
John Muir Medical Center (Concord / Walnut Creek) – Surgery

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<sup>1</sup> Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project's (HCUP) "Statistical Brief #44"

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## **THE TEAM**

### **Wilson Tsai, MD, Founder & Director**



Dr. Wilson Tsai's visionary and holistic approach to medicine coupled with his desire to assist patients, regardless of the difficulty or complexity of the case has given him a solid reputation amongst his peers and the community. His intense focus and dedication has made him a clear leader in minimally invasive thoracic surgery, in particular in esophageal and digestive ailments in both quality of care and volume of cases. These skills and desires have led Dr. Tsai to establish the Heartburn Center of California, a leading group dedicated in diagnosing and treating the causes of GERD, also referred to as heartburn.

Dr. Tsai has been appointed as the Chair of the Thoracic Division at Sutter Eden Medical Center in Castro Valley. Already, he has established a comprehensive thoracic program for Eden that serves patients from that part of the East Bay and he continues to expand the program by utilizing the latest techniques and technologies to treat GERD and related ailments.

He is the Co-Director of the Thoracic Surgical Program at John Muir Health, is board certified in thoracic surgery and has been a member of American Association for Thoracic Surgery since 1996. Dr. Tsai is committed to providing his patients with the latest advancements and treatment options. Since his appointment to the directorship at John Muir Health, he has established a minimally invasive thoracic program that specializes in all aspects of benign and malignant esophageal and lung diseases. He had been granted a separate wing at John Muir Medical Center in Concord, which boasts an impressive team of specially trained nurses and a physician assistant who has had extensive experience in thoracic surgery at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. The dedicated thoracic floor enables patients to receive more focused care, and have shorter hospital stays. His Muir thoracic program has drawn patients from as far as Nevada and Utah.

Dr. Wilson Tsai graduated from the University of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey in 1999. But his journey started long before that. "Each of us makes life choices in response to events in our lives. I was motivated at an early age to become a doctor because of the feelings of helplessness that I felt when both my



grandparents were battling cancer”. Dr. Tsai knew his path was clear. He prepared himself early to be the best surgeon that he could be. His experiences in medical school confirmed his goal of devoting his life to treating patients with thoracic diseases.

Following medical school Dr. Tsai trained in general surgery at the Robert Wood Johnson Hospital in New Jersey. He then won an appointment to the Fellowship Program at the National Cancer Institute at the prestigious Nation Institute of Health in Bethesda, MD. Following this fellowship, Dr. Tsai completed an additional Cardiothoracic Surgery Fellowship at The University of Pittsburg Medical Center specializing in Thoracic Surgery and remained at the medical center where he was honored to become a clinical instructor in minimally invasive thoracic surgery. Also, he trained at the prestigious Memorial-Sloan Kettering Cancer Center as a thoracic fellow.

### **Certifications & Education:**

#### **Certifications:**

- American Board of Thoracic Surgery
- American Board of Cardio Thoracic Surgery
- American Board of Surgery

#### **Education:**

- Medical School: Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
- Residency: UMDNJ Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
- Fellowship: UMPC Presbyterian - UPMC Montefiore, NIH Cancer Institute and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

### **Specialized Physician Assistant & Registered Nurses**

The Physician Assistant and Registered Nurses that work with the Heartburn Center of California have been specially trained to deal with thoracic patients and their particular needs, especially when it comes to GERD, esophageal and digestive related ailments.

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## SERVICES & PROCEDURES

The Heartburn Center of California was founded to focus on and address the needs of patients suffering from persistent heartburn, reflux or GERD (Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease). Medications have significantly improved over the decades to address the symptoms associated with heartburn however for many the problem is chronic. Left unchecked, reflux or GERD can lead to other complications, as such, the visionary and holistic approach of diagnosing and treating the disease at the Heartburn Center of California goes beyond addressing the symptoms of GERD, but looks to diagnose the cause and treat the condition at the source.

### Treatments

#### Lifestyle Changes

Treatment for heartburn will vary depending on the diagnosis. Thankfully, for many, the treatment only requires a lifestyle change. Examples of what the Heartburn Center of California specialist may recommend include:

- Weight loss
- Quit smoking
- Avoiding meals just before bedtime
- Elevating the head during sleep
- Avoiding certain foods

#### Medications



The doctor may also recommend medications, including:

- Antacids
- H2 blockers / antagonists which help by reducing the amount of acid produced by the stomach
- Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) act similarly to H2 blockers, but tend to be more effective and can assist in healing esophageal tissue.

If symptoms of heartburn persist, then more thorough testing (please see diagnosis) to determine the root cause

of the discomfort.

For many, over the counter and / or prescription medications are enough to resolve the heartburn. However, it is imperative that if the symptoms persist, continuing to

take medications that solely address symptoms and not the cause of the heartburn can have profound repercussions as the symptoms might be due to a more severe matter including:

- Hiatal hernia
- Barrett's esophagus
- Cancer

### **Minimally Invasive Procedures**

For some, the only viable and effective solution is a procedure to repair the root cause of the heartburn symptoms.

The Heartburn Center of California's procedure of choice is minimally invasive, laparoscopic. The advantages of laparoscopic procedures are:

- Less discomfort due to smaller incisions
- Quicker recovery
- Reduced hemorrhaging (i.e. bleeding)
- Reduction in wound complications
- Cosmetically, incisions are smaller and tend to be less visible

### **LINX® Reflux Management System**



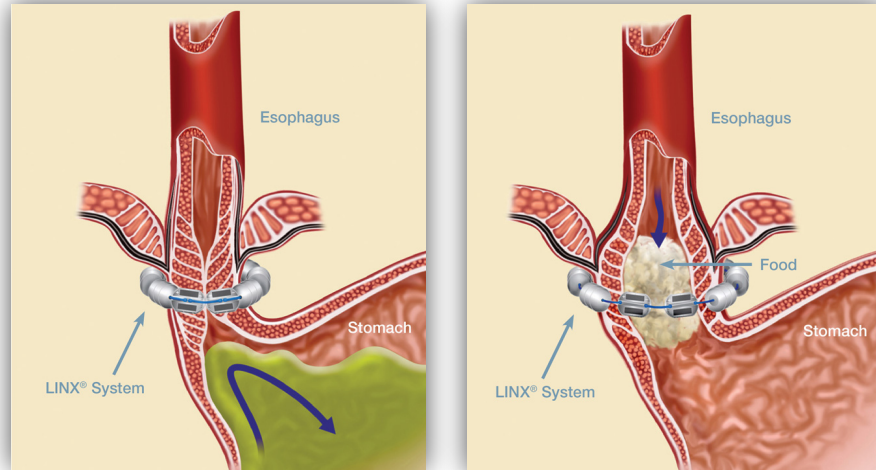
One of the most recent, minimally invasive and effective treatments for candidates with GERD caused by a weak lower esophageal sphincter (LES) is LINX®. The weak LES allows acid and bile to reflux, or flow back, from the stomach into the esophagus. The LINX® Reflux Management System is a small, flexible band of magnets enclosed in titanium beads. The beads are connected by titanium wires. The magnetic attraction between the beads helps keep the weak LES

closed to prevent reflux. Swallowing forces temporarily break the magnetic bond, allowing food and liquid to pass into the stomach. Magnetic attraction closes the LES after swallowing, to reinforce the body's natural barrier to reflux.



### *How is the LINX® System Implanted?*

The LINX® System is placed around the esophagus just above the stomach using a common, minimally invasive, surgical technique called laparoscopy.



Patients are placed under general anesthesia during the procedure, which is generally completed in less than one hour. Once implanted, the device will begin working immediately.

### **Minimally Invasive, Laparoscopic Anti-Reflux Procedure**

This procedure, used to treat GERD due to a weak LES that cannot be treated by the LINX® System and a hiatal hernia, involves wrapping the top portion of the stomach around the lower esophagus, applying pressure to the LES and preventing stomach contents from entering the esophagus (i.e. causing reflux or heartburn). The same procedure with the addition of pulling down the portion of the stomach that has moved up in the esophagus can relieve a hiatal hernia.

### **Barrx Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA)**

For those patients that develop Barrett's esophagus, a condition marked by an abnormal change of cells in the lower esophagus, which can lead to esophageal cancer, the physician may prescribe Barrx Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) treatment. This is a very specific type of ablation, in which thermal (heat) energy is delivered in a precise and highly controlled manner eliminating the Barrett's tissue. Clinical studies have demonstrated the Barrett's tissue can be completely eliminated with Barrx RFA technology in 98% of patients.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Fleischer DE, Overholt BF, Sharma VK, et al. *Endoscopic ablation of Barrett's esophagus: a multicenter study with 2.5-year follow-up*. *Gastrointest Endosc* 2008; 68:867-76



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**PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release  
October 14, 2014**

**First in Kind Heartburn Center of California established to  
combat Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)**

*A chronic and often progressive ailment affecting 1 out of 5 people*

**Walnut Creek, CA — October 14, 2014** — Dr. Wilson Tsai, in partnership with Bay Area Surgical Specialists (BASS) announces the establishment of the Heartburn Center of California to combat Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), a chronic and often progressive disease affecting 64 million Americans. The visionary and holistic approach of diagnosing and treating the disease at the Heartburn Center of California goes beyond addressing the symptoms of GERD, but looks to diagnose the cause and treat the condition at the source.

“Medications that reduce the amount of acid in the stomach can be effective in alleviating the burning sensation in the chest caused by GERD,” said Dr. Wilson Tsai, Program Director at Heartburn Center of California. However, for chronic sufferers, this might be masking an underlying structural issue such as a weak lower esophageal sphincter (LES) or hiatal hernia. If these structural issues are treated solely with medications, stomach contents including bile can continue to flow back into the esophagus, potentially leading to Barrett’s esophagus, which can lead to esophageal cancer” he continued.

**Progressive & Holistic Approach**

The Heartburn Center of California will work with patients to diagnose the cause of the heartburn, reflux and other symptoms and prescribe a customized treatment plan. This could be lifestyle changes, medications or minimally invasive procedures. These procedures vary depending on the diagnosis. They may include the LINX® System, which involves laparoscopic placement of a small, magnetic band around the LES allowing food and liquid to pass into the stomach but prevents stomach content from flowing back up into the esophagus. In a recent study<sup>3</sup>, those

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Riegler, Sebastian Schoppman, et al. *Magnetic sphincter augmentation and fundoplication for GERD in clinical practice: one-year results of a multicenter,*

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receiving the device reported that quality of life scores improved 85% on average and antacid medications were discontinued by 82%.

Some patients will have developed Barrett's esophagus, a condition marked by an abnormal change of cells in the lower esophagus, which can lead to esophageal cancer, the physician may prescribe Barrx Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) treatment. This is a very specific type of ablation, in which thermal (heat) energy is delivered in a precise and highly controlled manner eliminating the Barrett's tissue. Clinical studies have demonstrated the Barrett's tissue can be completely eliminated with Barrx RFA technology in 98% of patients.<sup>4</sup>

### **Locations**

The first office of the Heartburn Center of California is located within the BASS offices at 365 Lennon Lane, Suite 250, Walnut Creek CA 94598. LINX®, Barrx RFA and other minimally invasive, laparoscopic, anti-reflux procedures are conducted at Sutter Eden Medical Center in Castro Valley, CA. Minimally invasive, laparoscopic, anti-reflux procedures are also performed at John Muir Health's Medical Center in Concord and Walnut Creek, CA.

### **About**

#### **Heartburn Center of California**

The Heartburn Center of California was established to provide specialized and focused care to patients suffering from esophageal and digestive disorders resulting in what is commonly known as heartburn. The Center is dedicated to providing very specialized medical professionals with in depth knowledge and focused technics in diagnosing and treating ailments that result in Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), also referred to as heartburn.

The holistic and methodical approach to diagnosis and treatment by the Center contribute to a high success rate in identifying and addressing the root cause of the heartburn as opposed to just treating the symptoms of this increasingly common ailment.

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*prospective observational study, "Surgical Endoscopy", Published online: 30 August 2014*

<sup>4</sup> Fleischer DE, Overholt BF, Sharma VK, et al. *Endoscopic ablation of Barrett's esophagus: a multicenter study with 2.5-year follow-up*. *Gastrointest Endosc* 2008; 68:867-76

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According to the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP), “Up to 60 percent of the population at some time during the year, and 20 to 30 percent weekly, experience symptoms of [GERD], such as heartburn and acid regurgitation.”<sup>5</sup> With such a high prevalence and few organizations focused specifically on accurately diagnosing and treating the disease, the healthcare professionals at the Heartburn Center of California are unique in their dedication and focus on esophageal and digestive disorders in particular as they pertain to GERD or heartburn.

[www.heartburncenterofcalifornia.com](http://www.heartburncenterofcalifornia.com)

### **The LINX Reflux Management System**

LINX is a small implant comprised of interlinked titanium beads with magnetic cores. The magnetic attraction between the beads augments the existing esophageal sphincter’s barrier function to prevent reflux. The device is implanted using a standard laparoscopic procedure and is an alternative to fundoplication, commonly used in surgical anti-reflux procedures. The LINX® Reflux Management System is indicated for those patients diagnosed with Gastro-esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) as defined by abnormal pH testing, and who continue to have chronic GERD symptoms despite maximum medical therapy for the treatment of reflux.

LINX does require a surgical procedure and is associated with potential risks, contraindications and life style modifications. For more information on LINX, including a statement of risks, please visit [www.linxforslife.com](http://www.linxforslife.com).

### **Torax Medical**

Torax Medical, Inc. is a privately held medical device company headquartered in St. Paul, Minnesota that develops and markets products designed to treat sphincter disorders utilizing its technology platform, Magnetic Sphincter Augmentation (MSA). Torax Medical is currently marketing the LINX® Reflux Management System for the treatment of GERD in the U.S. and Europe and the FENIX™ Continence Restoration System for the treatment of Fecal Incontinence (FI) in Europe. For more information, please visit [www.toraxmedical.com](http://www.toraxmedical.com).

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<sup>5</sup> Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project’s (HCUP) “Statistical Brief #44”

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### **Covidien**

Covidien is a leading global health care products company that creates innovative medical solutions for better patient outcomes and delivers value through clinical leadership and excellence. Covidien develops, manufactures and sells a diverse range of industry-leading medical device and supply products. With 2013 revenue of \$10.2 billion, Covidien has more than 38,000 employees worldwide in more than 70 countries, and its products are sold in over 150 countries. Please visit [www.covidien.com](http://www.covidien.com) to learn more about our business.

### **Sutter Eden Medical Center**

The new Eden Medical Center opened on December 1, 2012. Eden is an award-winning, 130-bed, full-service acute care hospital. Since the original Eden Hospital opened in 1954, we have proudly served the communities of Castro Valley, Hayward, San Leandro, San Lorenzo, Dublin, Pleasanton, Livermore, San Ramon and surrounding areas.

Investing in the most advanced technology, and recruiting top-notch physicians, Eden has been named a national “Top Performer” in key quality measures by the Joint Commission. Eden Medical Center offers excellence in inpatient and outpatient care.

Eden Medical Center is part of the Sutter Health network of care, connecting our patients to medical experts across Northern California. In the East Bay, Eden and Sutter Health affiliates Alta Bates Summit Medical Center, Sutter Delta Medical Center and Sutter East Bay Medical Foundation provide seamless, comprehensive care throughout our region.

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**For more information on the Heartburn Center of California, please visit:**  
[www.heartburncenterofcalifornia.com](http://www.heartburncenterofcalifornia.com)

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## TESTIMONIALS

### David P.

I wish to thank Dr. Wilson Tsai for changing my life!

I have been a GERD patient for about 10 years. My symptoms started as occasional heartburn and chest pain and steadily grew to an almost daily occurrence of moderate to severe pain and discomfort, especially over the last few years. This condition affected every aspect of my life. I could not travel easily since taking long trips in cars or planes would mean that I would be sitting for long periods of time. Sitting for prolonged periods of time made my symptoms worse. I was continuously missing out on family events, work obligations and my quality of life was suffering greatly. Most alarming of all was my symptoms were always accompanied by chest pain and I lived in constant fear that the symptoms could also be related to coronary artery disease.

I sought treatment early for my condition and had been on some type of medication for ten years. PPI's, antacids, home remedies, pain meds, changing my diet... I think I must have tried every prescription and non-prescription treatment to control the reflux and nothing seemed to work. I have seen multiple Gastroenterologists and other physicians who basically had told me that I would need to live with his condition and that there was basically nothing else that could be done.

I met Dr. Wilson Tsai in early 2013. He explained that my story was not unique, that he saw patients with my condition every day. He took the time to explain to me that not only is this condition uncomfortable, there is also a marked increase in the incidence of esophageal cancer and this increase may be linked to GERD. After listening to my story and conducting a series of medical tests he told me that there was an option after all. But I was reluctant. I had never had surgery before and I spent several months contemplating my options.

Finally I could not take the discomfort anymore and on April 1, 2014 I underwent corrective surgery for my GERD. The procedure was pretty straight forward and the recovery was uneventful. I spent one night in the hospital and was up and around shortly after the surgery and back to work in a week.

But remarkably I have had absolutely no symptoms since the surgery! I stopped taking all medication and my life has completely changed. Now I think of the years that I suffered needlessly with this condition. Just three months following the

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surgery I enjoyed a three week vacation to Yellowstone with my family and drove fifteen hours in the car each way with no problems whatsoever. I cannot thank Dr. Tsai and his staff enough for everything. I cannot believe I waited to have this surgery. I highly recommend Dr. Tsai and his staff.

**Kelli M.**

I am 34 years old and had been dealing with heartburn for about 15 years before going to Dr. Tsai's heartburn clinic. Before seeing Dr. Tsai I had no idea that heartburn could cause cancer. For many years I had seen several Gastroenterologists that would prescribe me PPI's for my heartburn and told me to change my lifestyle and I would be fine. Never did they ever mention once to me that it could cause cancer. My heartburn finally got to the point that I was being woken up by it in the middle of the night with severe burning and vomiting and pain so bad in my chest that I could not lay back down.

After a few sleepless nights I had a consultation with Dr. Tsai. He sent me for a series of tests and the results were shocking. I was on the path to Barrett's Esophagus, which is pre-cancer. At 32 years old I could not believe what I was hearing and was very upset that all my previous doctors brushed it off as nothing and just suppressed it with medications. Little did I know that suppressing the problem does not make it go away, it is only making it worse in the future. It also scared me knowing how many of my family members and friends were suffering with the same symptoms.

I was explained by Dr. Tsai a couple of options for surgery and what would be best for my condition and I scheduled the surgery the next week. The surgery was a breeze and I felt very informed beforehand what was going to happen before and after surgery. I am happy to say that since having my surgery I have not had one single heartburn episode, even through my entire pregnancy!!!!

This surgery not only changed my life but also has helped me inform my loved one's about the severity that heartburn can cause. I would strongly recommend anyone to Dr. Tsai and encourage anyone with heartburn to take the first step, and that is understanding that heartburn can in fact cause cancer and there is safe, and very effective ways to help cure it.

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### **Marika R.**

Before I came to Dr. Tsai at his heart burn center I was extremely uncomfortable and in a lot of pain. Because of Dr. Tsai's expertise and knowledge he was able to diagnose my problem and informed me of all my treatment options. He made me feel extremely comfortable and safe in his care by taking his time to explain everything and answer all my questions. After he operated on me my quality of life increased very much. All my previous symptoms are now gone and my Barrett's esophagus has gotten better and I no longer have to worry daily about taking pills or about my esophageal health. I highly recommend Dr. Tsai's heart burn clinic because of his great staff as well as Dr. Tsai's expertise in his specialty

### **Pam & Ron K.**

April 15, 2013, Income Tax Day. For some, a dreaded day, for us it was an average day. My husband, Ron was scheduled for a routine Endoscopy at John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek, with Dr. David Wong, GI. Little did we know this would become one of the most difficult days in our lives.

I was on my lunch break, when I received the dreaded phone call from Dr. Wong, "We found esophageal cancer!" I have a hard time recalling what came immediately following that phone call. I was driven by a coworker to the hospital and met with the recovery nurse. My husband handled this news better than I did. It was explained to us, that a "team" of doctor's was being put together and we would receive a phone call in the next couple of days to be scheduled with Ron's physicians. Dr. Shoba Kankapati, oncologist, called me personally. I'll never forget hearing her children in the background as she explained the treatment plan for chemo and radiation that would soon become Ron's care plan. That was so comforting to know she was so available.

Next, we met Dr. Wilson Tsai, Thoracic Surgeon. When Dr. Tsai began telling us of his plan to do the preliminary surgery necessary to "set the stage" for an eventual esophagectomy, my brain couldn't fathom the intensity of what Ron would endure and how he would survive. Dr. Tsai's exemplary knowledge is only exceeded by his patient and caring bedside manner. He took all the time we needed to be sure we understood his plan of care. He even went as far as to draw me pictures of the planned procedure. Although it was hard to hear, Dr. Tsai gave us a very clear understanding of what to expect.

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Over the next year and a half, we became very close to Dr. Tsai, Sherri Golden, PA and the team of outstanding medical professionals that led us through a very dark and frightening season. Ron was hospitalized many times for the multiple surgeries needed to keep his esophagus opened and functional. I recall one time, when the scar tissue in Ron's esophagus became so constricted, that Dr. Tsai offered to make himself available immediately, later that evening. He has always made Ron and I feel like we were the most important people under his care.

This week, my husband's stent is constricted and again Dr. Tsai has made himself available to meet his needs outside of his normal schedule. I cannot fully comprehend, how a physician of Dr. Tsai's caliber, is so readily available to Ron and I. He is a husband and father and still makes us feel like he has all the time in the world to meet Ron's medical needs and my questions and concerns. We have Dr. Tsai on speed dial on our cell phones, and he has responded to us so quickly. I recall one time, when my husband was ill, Dr. Tsai apologized via text that he was at a concert, and would have to get back to us later (which he did). I cannot speak highly enough about a man that not only has a gift of being an outstanding surgeon, but also the talent of coupling that with a caring bedside manner and availability that we have the pleasure of being a recipient of. We thank God for placing Dr. Wilson Tsai (and his team) in our lives and as the man who has kept Ron going for nearly two years. Our deepest heartfelt appreciation goes out to him, his team and his family. We will be indebted to them forever.

With Our Appreciation,  
Pam & Ron

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## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)**

### **What is the Heartburn Center of California?**

The Heartburn Center of California is an organization that provides specialized and focused care to patients suffering from esophageal and digestive disorders resulting in what is commonly known as heartburn. The Center is dedicated to providing very specialized medical professionals with in depth knowledge and focused technics in diagnosing and treating ailments that result in Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), also referred to as heartburn.

### **What is heartburn?**

Heartburn is the burning sensation felt in the lower chest, which may also be associated with a sour / bitter taste or the taste of what was recently ingested, in the mouth. Typically, the feeling lasts minutes to hours, however, depending on the cause, this uncomfortable sensation might be symptomatic of other, more critical physiological issues.

### **What causes heartburn?**

When one eats or drinks, the food or liquid travels from the mouth down a tube called the esophagus, past the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) to the stomach. The LES is a region of the lower esophagus that acts as a gateway between the esophagus and the stomach. When working normally, it allows foods and liquids to enter the stomach, while preventing stomach contents from entering the esophagus. However, when the LES does not close fully, stomach contents might enter the esophagus (known as acid reflux or reflux) causing irritation and the burning sensation known as heartburn.

A hiatal hernia can also cause reflux and heartburn symptoms.

### **What is a hiatal herni?**

Normally, the diaphragm separates the chest area (i.e. heart, lungs and esophagus) from the abdomen (i.e. stomach and intestines). Weakness in the diaphragm causes a separation of the muscle. This causes a portion of the stomach to enter the chest cavity, which results in reflux.

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## How do you treat heartburn?

### Lifestyle Changes

Treatment for heartburn will vary depending on the diagnosis. Thankfully, for many, the treatment only requires a lifestyle change. Examples of what the Heartburn Center of California specialist may recommend include:

- Weight loss
- Quit smoking
- Avoiding meals just before bedtime
- Elevating the head during sleep
- Avoiding certain foods

### Medications

The doctor may also recommend medications, including:

- Antacids
- H2 blockers / antagonists which help by reducing the amount of acid produced by the stomach
- Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) act similarly to H2 blockers, but tend to be more effective and can assist in healing esophageal tissue.

If symptoms of heartburn persist, then more thorough testing (please see diagnosis) to determine the root cause of the discomfort.

For many, over the counter and / or prescription medications are enough to resolve the heartburn. However, it is imperative that if the symptoms persist, continuing to take medications that solely address symptoms and not the cause of the heartburn can have profound repercussions as the symptoms might be due to a more severe matter including:

- Hiatal hernia
  - Barrett's esophagus
  - Cancer
-



### **Minimally Invasive Procedures**

For some, the only viable and effective solution is a procedure to repair the root cause of the heartburn symptoms.

The Heartburn Center of California's procedure of choice is minimally invasive, laparoscopic. The advantages of laparoscopic procedures are:

- Less discomfort due to smaller incisions
- Quicker recovery
- Reduced hemorrhaging (i.e. bleeding)
- Reduction in wound complications
- Cosmetically, incisions are smaller and tend to be less visible

### **LINX® Reflux Management System**

One of the most recent, minimally invasive and effective treatments for candidates with GERD caused by a weak lower esophageal sphincter (LES) is LINX®. The weak LES allows acid and bile to reflux, or flow back, from the stomach into the esophagus. The LINX® Reflux Management System is a small, flexible band of magnets enclosed in titanium beads. The beads are connected by titanium wires. The magnetic attraction between the beads helps keep the weak LES closed to prevent reflux. Swallowing forces temporarily break the magnetic bond, allowing food and liquid to pass into the stomach. Magnetic attraction closes the LES after swallowing, to reinforce the body's natural barrier to reflux.

### **Minimally Invasive, Laparoscopic Anti-Reflux Procedure**

This procedure, used to treat GERD due to a weak LES that cannot be treated by the LINX® System and a hiatal hernia, involves wrapping the top portion of the stomach around the lower esophagus, applying pressure to the LES and preventing stomach contents from entering the esophagus (i.e. causing reflux or heartburn). The same procedure with the addition of pulling down the portion of the stomach that has moved up in the esophagus can relieve a hiatal hernia.

### **What is Barrett's esophagus?**

Barrett's esophagus refers to abnormal change in the cells of the lower esophagus, which can lead to esophageal cancer. Typically, this is caused by repeated exposure to stomach acid, which is a symptom of gastroesophageal reflux (GERD). Although



the risk of developing Barrett's esophagus from GERD is small, it is important to monitor GERD patients to ensure early detection and treatment.

As there are no signs or symptoms for Barrett's esophagus, it is important, in particular if one suffers from GERD to periodically get tested for the disorder.

### **How do you treat Barrett's esophagus?**

For patients that develop Barrett's esophagus, the physician may prescribe Barrx Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) treatment. This is a very specific type of ablation, in which thermal (heat) energy is delivered in a precise and highly controlled manner eliminating the Barrett's tissue. Clinical studies have demonstrated the Barrett's tissue can be completely eliminated with Barrx RFA technology in 98% of patients.<sup>6</sup>

### **How do I make an appointment at the Heartburn Center of California?**

#### **Heartburn Center of California**

365 Lennon Lane, Suite 250  
Walnut Creek CA 94598

Phone: +1 (925) 932-6330

[www.heartburncenterofcalifornia.com](http://www.heartburncenterofcalifornia.com)

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<sup>6</sup> Fleischer DE, Overholt BF, Sharma VK, et al. *Endoscopic ablation of Barrett's esophagus: a multicenter study with 2.5-year follow-up*. *Gastrointest Endosc* 2008; 68:867-76

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