

## CHARLOTTE HEALTHCARE LEADERS

## “Access” is the Key to Exceptional GI Care

An independent practice model gives Carolina Digestive Health Associates the depth and flexibility to best meet patients' needs.

There are more organs under the umbrella of gastrointestinal care than any other medical subspecialty.

“We treat the esophagus, the stomach, the small intestine, the colon, the liver, and the pancreas, which means we have more diseases to consider than any other specialty,” says Dr. Stephen Deal of Carolina Digestive Health Associates.

They all, however, have one thing in common, he adds: “They just make you feel badly.”

That's why it's imperative to have access to a comprehensive gastrointestinal practice with the expertise, technology, and agility to restore your quality of life—as quickly as possible.

In Charlotte, that practice is Carolina Digestive Health Associates.

### The Independent Advantage

With eight offices and five endoscopy centers, patients are never far from a Carolina Digestive Health Associates location.

“We aim to get patients in to see a provider in a timely way; we don't want anyone to be in pain and told their appointment is eight weeks away,” says Dr. Glen Portwood. “Our independent model allows for a higher percentage of office visits that include direct interaction with a physician—not just a mid-level provider, like most practices.”

Independence also means more efficiency when integrating the latest technologies. “We can meet the unique needs of the local community and individual patients in a way that's



less restricted than a large hospital system,” says Dr. Portwood. “At the same time, we enjoy partnering with area medical systems to bring new advancements to the region.”

For example, Carolina Digestive Health Associates was the first to bring open-access colonoscopy to Charlotte, allowing patients to directly schedule a colonoscopy following a referral by their primary physician, rather than first needing a screening appointment with a gastroenterologist. It's a now-common standard that saves patients time and money.

The practice also introduced advanced esophageal testing to Charlotte's rural communities when such services were previously only available in larger metropolitan markets.

As part of its ongoing commitment to leading-edge medicine, Carolina Digestive Health Associates also participates in clinical trials that provide patients access to up-and-coming treatments.

### Physicians Who Care

Across Carolina Digestive Health Associates' team of 14 gastroenterologists, there is one unifying theme. “We're a very hardworking and committed group of physicians who put every effort into the best patient outcomes,” says

### Women and GI Health

Though colon cancer has a reputation as a “man's disease,” the hard truth is it's the No. 3 cancer killer in women, and women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer are at an even higher risk. The good news, says Dr. Portwood, is “colon cancer is the most preventable cancer.”

Women also need to be on alert for inflammatory bowel disease, which often strikes between ages 18 and 35 and can cause internal scarring that may affect fertility.

Liver disease and cirrhosis, on the other hand, have become “national epidemics, thanks to processed foods and an overweight population,” says Dr. Portwood.

For all these conditions, diligence surrounding early diagnosis and management is the key to a healthy prognosis.

Dr. Portwood.

“Our independence allows us to serve Atrium Health, Novant Health, and independent physicians in the Charlotte region, which means we can follow the patients' desires regarding who and where their care is provided,” adds Dr. Deal.

What matters most, they agree, is helping patients improve their quality of life. “It's an exceptionally rewarding and privileged experience,” Dr. Portwood concludes.