

PHOTO BY SHELLY PERRY, RN/VIVA RICHMOND



Radiologic Technologist Taylor Bugg (left) assists Dr. R. Donald Doherty Jr. in a UFE procedure at VIVA Richmond.

## Advances in Treating Uterine Fibroids Bring Faster, Nearly Painless Recovery

The bad news: growths that sometimes develop in the wall of the uterus, called uterine fibroids, can cause women severe discomfort, hamper everyday activities and lead to hysterectomy or other surgeries. The good news: they are rarely cancerous, and there is an alternative to hysterectomy for most women.

A procedure called uterine fibroid embolization (UFE) has proven to be a safe, effective, and minimally invasive treatment option. Small particles are delivered into the arteries that supply the uterus, destroying the growths without having to remove them through surgery.

Dr. R. Donald Doherty Jr., a Board Certified, Fellowship Trained Interventional Radiologist who heads Virginia Interventional and Vascular Associates (VIVA), specializes in UFE. The procedure is performed at VIVA Richmond's outpatient facility by Dr. Doherty and his colleagues Dr. Samer Hijaz, Dr. Gustavo Elias and Dr. John McLaughlin.

VIVA physicians have successfully performed hundreds of UFE procedures over more than 20 years. Yet, according to Dr. Doherty, two advances in pain control, before and after the procedure, have taken the patient experience from good to great.

First, VIVA doctors have introduced what he describes as a "very effective preoperative medication regimen," focused on reducing inflammation. Second, they have added a nerve block to control pain post-procedure. "It interrupts the pain pathway from the uterus to the brain," he explained. "For many years, we admitted patients for an overnight stay and provided an analgesic pump for pain control. They were discharged the next day and prescribed heavy pain medications. But with the pain block, discomfort after the procedure is minimal."

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## Radiologists Provide Medical Community HIPAA-Compliant Texting App – At No Cost

Healthcare providers can exchange texts, videos, and medical imaging photos securely on their smartphones with Spok Go®, a mobile app that Dominion Radiology Associates (DRA) is making available to the Richmond medical community. The app complies with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements and is being offered to area providers free of charge.

"This should make your workday more efficient by making your partners, your office staff, and your radiologists more accessible. If this is not the case, you may simply delete it from your phone as it is a free service without any obligation," said Dr. Neil B. Green, radiologist and chief medical informatics officer for DRA. The practice's radiologists serve patients at Dominion Imaging and Virginia Interventional & Vascular Associates (VIVA).

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## Spok Go®

**Want Spok Go?  
Have Questions?**

**Visit:**

[dominionradiology.com/spok-go/](http://dominionradiology.com/spok-go/)

**Call:** 855-723-5463

**Email:** [concierge@dominionradiology.com](mailto:concierge@dominionradiology.com)

**Or scan this QR Code:**



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“We know that better patient care comes from providers being able to reach a radiologist easily to ask questions, triage cases, or confer on the results,” he added. “Too often with groups, the provider has to call radiology reception or go through a phone tree to reach a radiologist. We wanted to create a direct channel of HIPAA-compliant communication with our colleagues – one that doesn’t interfere when their patients are being seen.”

Providers can also use the app for communicating with their partners, staff, and other medical providers, not just DRA radiologists. For those who already have HIPAA-compliant mobile apps, Spok Go offers an additional channel for secure communications, Dr. Green noted.

Spok Go is a cloud-native communication platform designed to improve collaboration and increase efficiency for healthcare providers. Spok, the company that created Spok Go, reports that healthcare providers are using the app nationwide. ■

### Spok Go Benefits

Dr. Green has helped produce a brief video summarizing the benefits of Spok Go for local healthcare providers. Key benefits include:

- Free text communications that avoid risky and costly HIPAA violations.
- The ability to keep personal cell phone numbers private.
- Fewer interruptions to patient care, as texts are less obtrusive than calls.
- Time stamps noting when texts are sent, delivered, and read.
- Reduced provider calls, freeing up front desk staff to help patients.
- The ability to send and receive high-resolution photos of imaging scans.
- “Do not disturb” capabilities to communicate unavailability.
- A system for secure texts with other colleagues and staff – not just with radiologists.
- Downloadable app that doesn’t interfere with other apps and can be deleted at any time
- Increased daily efficiency, thanks to streamlined communications.

## Radiologist Spotlight: David L. Glasser, MD

Working in a hospital emergency department (ED) can make an indelible mark. For Dr. David L. Glasser, it was the catalyst for a career in medicine. In his fourth year at the University of Pennsylvania, while “shadowing” a variety of careers, he volunteered in a local ED. “I saw how, with medical training, I could help people immediately, in what may be their most vulnerable moment,” he said.

A Florida native, he went on to receive his medical degree in 1994 from the University of South Florida, completing his radiology residency and fellowship at the University of Maryland. A classmate there kept in touch and suggested he join his practice in Virginia.

“Twenty years later, I can honestly say, I still enjoy coming to work every day,” Dr. Glasser said.

### Rewarding Work

Dr. Glasser is a Board-Certified, Fellowship-Trained Diagnostic Radiologist with Dominion Radiology Associates (DRA). He works at the practice’s Dominion Imaging center in Richmond, interpreting cross-sectional imaging studies to help diagnose and treat patients. He has impressed colleagues over the years with his profound grasp of musculoskeletal imaging, which is his subspecialty, and with his listening, teaching, and leadership skills—all of which come into play at Dominion Imaging.

During the course of a workday, Dr. Glasser analyzes medical imaging studies and discusses findings with referring providers, and often with patients. He collaborates with other DRA radiologists and staff to fulfill Dominion

Imaging’s mission of delivering high-quality, lower-cost medical imaging services to the Richmond area.

Working there is rewarding for him on many levels.

Dominion Imaging provides accredited medical services and radiology expertise but, in many ways, feels like a family-run entity, Dr. Glasser noted. “(Our practice) built this special medical facility from the ground up as an independent imaging center run by radiologists who understand what it is like to be a patient. We treat patients with respect and monitor our patient satisfaction scores to ensure we are fulfilling that commitment.”

This commitment extends to referring providers and the community at large. “We are building relationships with clinicians in the area and are happy to speak with them about their patients,” Dr. Glasser said. “We are excited to offer high-quality imaging at lower costs to the Richmond community, where we live and work.”

### Ultimate Richmonders

Dr. Glasser’s family is an active one with strong ties to the area. He and his immediate family, parents, and sister’s family all live in Richmond.

His wife, Dr. Joanna Wares, is an Associate Professor of Mathematics at the University of Richmond. Daughter Casey, 20,



**Dr. Glasser (waving in back) with his family.**

is a Mills Godwin High School graduate who attends Virginia Tech; daughter Julia, 17, is a student at the New Community School; and Aviva, 14, his “bonus” daughter through his marriage, will attend the Center for Information Technology at Deep Run High School this fall. Nina, the cat, rounds out the family.

They enjoy the outdoors, exercise, music, and art. With such diverse interests, what’s their ultimate pursuit? Lately, it has been ultimate, a team sport more universally known as Ultimate Frisbee. While Richmond has organized ultimate teams, Dr. Glasser’s family plays the sport informally.

“We were looking for an activity to do during the pandemic with our family and extended pod, and many of us had played Ultimate Frisbee in the past,” Dr. Glasser said.

It has proven a perfect pastime for the unusual times we are in. ■

## Radiologist Spotlight: Samer Hijaz, MD

Dr. Samer Hijaz is no stranger to overcoming challenges. He was born in Lebanon in the midst of the Lebanese Civil War. Today, he is a Board-Certified, Fellowship-Trained Interventional Radiologist at Virginia Interventional & Vascular Associates (VIVA) in Richmond.

“Our family had planned to emigrate to the U.S. in the mid-’80s, when I was a toddler, but the only one granted a visa was my dad, Salman,” Dr. Hijaz said. “Dad relocated to Richmond and opened up Captain Sam’s Seafood, which for 21 years was a popular restaurant in the 6th Street Marketplace. I stayed in Lebanon with my mother and two brothers, and together, we lived through some tough, war-torn years.”

After Salman received his U.S. citizenship, he applied for visas for his family members. One by one, they joined him in Richmond. Dr. Hijaz arrived in 2002, two years after graduating at the top of his high school class in Lebanon. He immediately enrolled at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to pursue a degree in engineering.

“I wanted to focus on a subject I was passionate about, get through school quickly, and start working to help support my family,” he said. He graduated from the VCU School of Engineering in 2006—again, at the top of his class. When not studying, he managed a concession stand at Colonial Downs, the horseracing track just outside of Richmond. “I was the dedicated guy who fed the jockeys their mini-sandwiches and Gatorade,” he noted.

### Best of Both Worlds

Midway through his undergraduate studies in biomedical engineering, friends suggested that he consider medical school. “I was always drawn to medicine, and as my family stabilized in the U.S., I felt I could devote more time to education,” Dr. Hijaz said.

He went on to receive his doctor of medicine degree from VCU, with a focus on Interventional Radiology—a field that complemented his engineering background. Other posts have included an internship at Riverside Regional Medical Center in Newport News, VA; a Diagnostic Radiology residency at VCU; an Interventional Radiology fellowship at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, DC; and service as a Diagnostic Radiologist in Johns Hopkins’ Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, MD.

Dr. Hijaz is Board Certified in both Interventional Radiology and Diagnostic Radiology. He has practiced Interventional Radiology at VIVA since 2016 and served

patients at its Richmond location on West Broad Street since 2020.

Trained in the full range of Interventional Radiology services, from prostate embolization to interventional oncology, Dr. Hijaz has a special interest in working with dialysis patients. He has expanded also into cosmetic procedures, including VASER liposuction, a procedure used to change body contours by removing fat deposits. He has also been recognized for his proficiency in cardiovascular imaging, receiving an award from VCU in 2015 for his dedication to new modalities.

“Interventional Radiology for me is the best of both worlds,” Dr. Hijaz said. “The engineering side of me appreciates the science of interpreting medical images. The relational side of me is totally at home interacting with patients, hearing their stories, and providing therapeutic options.”

Dr. Hijaz and other VIVA Richmond providers are part of a larger practice, Dominion Radiology Associates (DRA), which includes not only Interventional Radiologists but also physicians trained in all major sub-specialties of radiology.

“DRA is well organized and well run,” Dr. Hijaz said. “It’s rare to find a private physician group that truly puts patients first. We are diverse specialists but we share a unified vision of excellence in patient care.”

### Pushing the Limits

Dr. Hijaz met his wife, Carol Baddour, in 2011, on a visit to Lebanon, where she was finishing her degree in nutrition and dietetics. “I fell in love with her instantly,” he said. “She continues to be the best thing that ever happened to me.”



Dr. Hijaz and family before the birth of their son.

The two forged a long-distance relationship and eventually married. Carol joined Dr. Hijaz in Richmond, and she, too, studied at VCU, receiving a master’s in business administration. Today they are the proud parents of a three-year-old daughter Maya and newborn son Liam.

One key to their happy marriage? They give each other space to pursue individual interests. “For example, Carol let me have the entire basement to work on my extracurricular projects.”

Those projects include building a professional-grade home racing simulator from scratch, from chassis, wheel, and pedals to console and monitor. “I’ve always loved racecars, and I’ve always felt comfortable developing computer hardware and software, so creating a simulator rig came naturally. Nothing feels better than pushing the limits, over and over again—without even leaving the ‘man cave!’”



**Access medical images easily** — VIVA Richmond and Dominion Imaging are offering a new, cost-free way for patients and referring providers to access medical images via a secure email link. It’s called Nucleus.io. Visit our practice website at [dominionradiology.com/press](http://dominionradiology.com/press) and click the Richmond location for details.



Ed Swager, Chief Executive Officer

Dominion Radiology Associates provides high-quality, high-value medical imaging services to residents of Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina. The physician-owned practice serves patients at Dominion Imaging and Virginia Interventional & Vascular Associates in Richmond, VA.

DRA publishes *Imaging Advances – Richmond* periodically for referring physicians and the greater medical community. For more information, please contact Tammy Gressly, Director of Administrative Operations, at [tgressly@dominionrad.com](mailto:tgressly@dominionrad.com).

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Now, all UFE procedures are same-day, he explained, and pain is treated through over-the-counter medication. Recovery time is just three to seven days after the procedure, depending on the size of the fibroids—compared with eight to 12 days before the pain block was introduced.



“With these two ways of dealing with pain, we have ‘cracked the code’ on discomfort,” Dr. Doherty said. “Before these new pain-control measures, patients almost always reported complete satisfaction after six to eight weeks, once the fibroids had shrunk. Now, in the first office visit after two weeks, patient satisfaction has gone through the roof!”

UFE is effective for multiple fibroids, and the recurrence of treated fibroids is rare, he noted. Most women with symptomatic fibroids are candidates for UFE, regardless of fibroid size.

VIVA’s Interventional Radiologists are board certified and fellowship trained, and their outpatient facility in Richmond’s West End is accredited by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care

For more information, call 804-486-4625 or visit [vivarichmond.com](http://vivarichmond.com). ■

### Benefits of UFE over hysterectomy surgery

**Uterus preserved.** Because hysterectomy surgery removes the uterus, it also removes the option of future fertility. UFE leaves the uterus intact, making it a good choice for women who may want to bear children in the future.

**Less risk.** Unlike hysterectomy, UFE does not involve general anesthesia or being completely unconscious during the procedure. Also, compared to hysterectomy, risk of major bleeding or pelvic infection is minimal.

**Shorter recovery.** After undergoing a hysterectomy, a patient may remain at the hospital two or three days. Once she is home, her recovery time is typically from six to eight weeks. After a UFE procedure, patients can go home the same day as their procedure, and most are back to normal activities within one to two weeks.

**No stitches or scarring.** A hysterectomy requires stitches and leaves a scar. In a UFE procedure, the Interventional Radiologist makes a small nick in the patient’s upper thigh to place a tiny catheter. The small cut is covered by a bandage, no stitches are needed, and no scar is left.