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July 23, 2010

To the Family of Nola Bolla:

Your mother has a swollen gallbladder. The gallbladder is a small balloon-like organ that holds digestive juices that come from the liver. When the stomach is empty it fills up with the digestive juices, and when we eat —especially a fatty meal—it squeezes the juices into the intestines. The evidence of a swollen gallbladder is severe belly pain that comes and goes in the area just below the ribs on the right side. This area gets so tender that pushing on it causes a person to gasp.

Digestive juices form into stones. These are called gallstones, and they cause the problem. A lot of people have gallstones, but they don't bother most people. The problem comes if one of them gets stuck in the passage leading to the intestine. The digestive juices can't get out, the gallbladder gets swollen, and it becomes painful.

Your mother is diabetic. Diabetes is a condition that makes one more likely to have gallstones and gallbladder disease. Tight glucose control will help prevent this from happening again. If surgery is needed to remove the gallbladder, good glucose control will speed the recovery time.

Gallstones can be seen with an ultrasound machine (like examining a pregnant woman). If the gallbladder is swollen this is also seen. We also do a blood test. After these are done, we decide the best plan. Your mother's ultrasound has shown a swollen gallbladder. She may have to have her gallbladder taken out. This would mean going in for surgery if the swelling does not go down on its own.

Treatment is no food for 24 hours, drink a lot of water and clear liquids, and take pain medication as needed. Vicodin is a combination of hydrocodone and acetaminophen, a pain, fever, and cough medication in pill form. The prescription calls for 2 pills every four hours as needed. Vicodin can cause lightheadedness, dizziness, nausea, and sedation. Be sure to read the label thoroughly and use only as directed.

Please note that this letter is only an informational guide and a summary of the things we discussed. It does not take the place of first-hand medical diagnosis and treatment. Thank you for coming in today.

Sincerely,

Dr. Morin