



**For Immediate Release**

**Contact:**

**Ron Harris**

**Director of Communications**

**202.683.0182**

**rjharris@howard.edu**

## *Howard University Hospital Introduces Incisionless Weight Loss Surgery to Region*

*WASHINGTON - Dr. Terrence Fullum, chief of the Division of Minimally Invasive and Bariatric Surgery at Howard University Hospital, has introduced incisionless weight loss surgery to Washington, D.C., and the surrounding community.*

*Under the procedure, called Stomaphyx, physicians can tighten the stomach pouch created during previous weight loss surgery to help patients maintain their weight loss without making an incision.*

*Fullum, director of the Howard University Hospital Center for Wellness and Weight Loss Surgery, is the only surgeon in the Washington area certified to perform the procedure.*

*Sometimes the smaller stomach pouches created in gastric bypass surgery become stretched over time and need readjusting, Fullum said. Doctors perform the surgery by entering through the esophagus while the patient is sedated.*

*The advantages over the old procedure are numerous, Fullum said. "There's no incision, so there's no scarring," he said. "Also, because there is no cutting, the chance of an infection is dramatically reduced. Additionally, the recovery time is a lot less. Compare two days to about a week, maybe more."*

*One of the first recipients of the new procedure was Alfreda Hill-Wilkerson, 48, who wanted her pouch readjusted after she regained nearly 48 of the 160 pounds she lost from her weight loss surgery years earlier. Since the surgery at the end of May, Hill-Wilkerson has lost 13 pounds. Her goal, she said is 40 pounds.*

*Hill-Wilkerson had bypass surgery in 2001. For years, she had struggled with her weight. She had tried every diet imaginable.*

*"I had done Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, NutriSystem, just about any and every diet that was out there," she said.*

*But there she stood at 310 pounds, a weight that was threatening her life. Due to her morbid obesity, Hill-Wilkerson struggled with a variety of illnesses, including asthma, diabetes, hypertension and sleep apnea.*

*"I took 17 pills and two insulin injections a day," she said. "I was on an oxygen tank and used a walker to get around."*

*So, eight years ago, Hill-Wilkerson decided enough was enough and chose to undergo gastric bypass surgery, a medical weight loss procedure for patients considered morbidly obese and whose weight-related diseases threaten their lives.*

*Following the surgery, Hill-Wilkerson kept to a healthy diet and an exercise regimen, and the pounds rolled off.*

*Within 14 months, she had lost 160 pounds and had gone from a size 22 to a size eight.*

*Best of all, she said, all of her related illnesses disappeared.*

*"It was life changing," Hill-Wilkerson, 48, said. "That's what this kind of surgery is. It's a life changing event."*

*But after Hill-Wilkerson's husband died in 2007, she began to gain weight again.*

*"I think it was stress," she said. "I just know that I started eating more."*

*And soon she ballooned to 198 pounds.*

*To the rescue came Stomaphyx. Hill-Wilkerson, a bariatric coordinator and clinical practice supervisor, said she had the surgery on a Friday and was back at work on Monday.*

*"I really like the fact that there's not a long recovery time," she said. "And you don't have the pain that you do with an incision. I just had a sore throat and it was over in a day. That was it."*