

# From China to the Jersey Shore: Finding the Best Thyroid Solution

An e-mail from Sichuan, China, to an endocrine surgeon in New Jersey began Michele Taing's journey halfway around the world to seek treatment for thyroid cancer at the very hospital in which she'd been born 39 years earlier.

In January 2011, the English teacher and mother of three felt a sensation "like a lump stuck in my throat" and sought help for a possible thyroid problem at a hospital in Thailand.

The biopsy of a mass on Michele's thyroid suggested cancer. The proposed treatment plan was to remove half the thyroid and test the suspicious mass for malignancy, and then remove the rest of the thyroid during a second surgery if the growth was malignant.

But Michele didn't like the idea of potentially undergoing two surgeries due to an inconclusive biopsy. She and her husband, Sky, also felt that there wouldn't be adequate support for her and the children if she had the surgery in Bangkok, where they knew no one.

Michele's sister, Brick resident Marge Winters, helped Michele find an endocrinologist, who referred Michele to Alexander Shifrin, M.D. A Fellowship-trained endocrine surgeon, Dr. Shifrin is an expert at using advanced procedures to treat thyroid cancer through **Meridian Cancer Care** at Jersey Shore University Medical Center.

Michele and Dr. Shifrin scheduled a consultation via e-mail, and Michele and her two daughters set off for the U.S. to stay with relatives in March. "Once we made contact with Dr. Shifrin's office, everything fell into place," says Michele.

A second biopsy performed by Dr. Shifrin confirmed thyroid cancer. He removed Michele's thyroid via minimally invasive surgery several days later.

Being treated at Jersey Shore, which is an academic medical center, offered numerous advantages to Michele, from specialized surgical equipment

to specialty trained doctors and nurses. Jersey Shore also has an experienced anesthesia team that specializes in minimally invasive thyroidectomy under local anesthesia.

"We have equipment here that allowed me to use minimally invasive techniques," says Dr. Shifrin. "The minimally invasive thyroidectomy is well tolerated, with a smaller incision, faster recovery time, and a good cosmetic result. It's a same-day outpatient surgery."

Now reunited with her family in China, Michele is taking steps to stay healthy.

"Everything from the initial consultation, biopsy, surgery, and postoperative visit happened in five weeks," says Michele. "I cannot thank Jersey Shore and Dr. Shifrin enough for the excellent care and willingness to help me." ●



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## Thyroid Cancer Support Group

Jersey Shore's new Thyroid Cancer Support Group meets the first Monday of each month from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. The free group is open to anyone affected by thyroid cancer. To register, call 732-776-4394.

A resident of China, Michele Taing traveled halfway around the world to Jersey Shore to get the advanced medical care she needed for thyroid cancer. At top left: Michele with children Caleb, Rachel, and Jerusha. At bottom right: Jerusha, Michele, and Caleb riding elephants in Thailand.