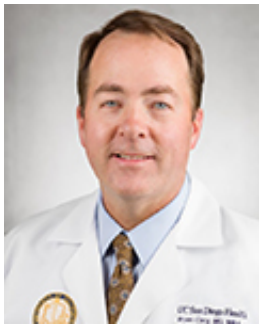




LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Esteemed Colleagues,

It is hard to believe that May is behind us and with it the beginning of summer upon us. Every May, the Department takes a pause to celebrate the robust and impactful research that our faculty, trainees, and collaborators have carried out over the past year. In this month's newsletter, we are proud to share a recap of the Department of Surgery Annual Research Symposium, during which we took an afternoon and evening to review posters, listen to incredible oral research presentations, and be inspired by the encouragement of our visiting keynote speaker, Dr. Christine Lau from the University of Maryland.

Academic surgery departments have an obligation to make tomorrow better than today for patients who are afflicted with surgically oriented diseases and conditions. Departments that succeed at the highest level in the research mission do so not merely as an obligation, but as a privilege. The joy of discovery, of moving a field forward, and of applying research findings to the clinical setting for patients is an act with inherently great value that drives our investigators through the ups and downs associated with carrying out their work. That joy and excitement was on full display at the symposium, and I walked away feeling so optimistic about the future of surgery. The evening was capped off by Dr. Lau, who shared with us the groundbreaking research on xenotransplantation that she and her team are spearheading at the University of Maryland. In this address, she gave a poignant discussion of how a 57 year-old man with severe heart failure and without other options led to a patient receiving a heart transplant from a genetically modified pig source animal. This experience was initially one of great triumph for the patient, with the heart functioning normally for many weeks. For reasons that at this time are unclear, the organ ultimately failed and in doing so the patient passed away. It would be hard to overstate the courage and generosity of the patient and his family, and of the team that brought this technology to the bedside.

Almost every major treatment in medicine that exists today was associated with early failures in the laboratory and/or clinical arena. The courage to “try” in each instance was only overshadowed by the courage to “try again.” In this context, we must remember with gratitude the patients and investigators who have brought us to where we are today, and we must support those who are working today to bring forth tomorrow’s advances.

As always, I thank you for your interest in the affairs of the Department.

Bryan Clary, MD, MBA

SUPPORT THE WORK OF UC SAN DIEGO'S DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

With your help, the Department of Surgery at UC San Diego School of Medicine is changing lives. Financial support from our community is critical to providing leading-edge surgical care to thousands of people every year. Your partnership enables UC San Diego's Department of Surgery to continue to serve our region's patients with the most expert care available.

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FEATURE STORY

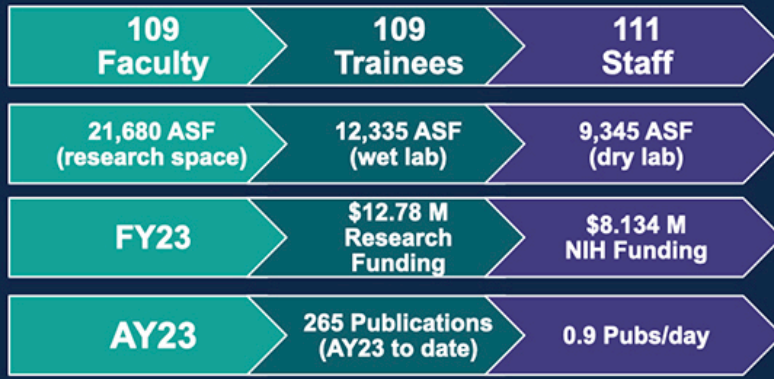


The “Moral Obligation” of Surgery: UC San Diego Surgery Gathers for Annual Research Symposium

The 11th Annual UC San Diego Department of Surgery Research Symposium, held May 3 at the UC San Diego Faculty Club, brought together faculty, trainees, and medical students to present and discuss their latest research and advancements in the surgical sciences.

Noting that UC San Diego has a “moral obligation to conduct research,” Department Chair Bryan M. Clary, MD, FACS, welcomed those gathered for this annual review of UC San Diego Surgery’s academic work. Among them were members of the Department’s 109 faculty and 109 trainees, in addition to several members of its 111-member clinical and administrative staff.

Department Research Overview



UC San Diego Health

A total of 73 abstracts were presented – including 24 oral presentations and 49 poster presentations – with all 13 divisions of the Department represented. Among the research showcased at the event were projects in basic/translational science, clinical research, health services research, engineering and robotics research, education research and global surgery research. “The breadth and depth of science being

performed in the Department is so impressive and invigorates everyone’s desire to continue making new discoveries to advance patient care,” said Jason Sicklick, MD, FACS, Executive Vice Chair of Research. (See sidebar for a list of winning abstracts.)

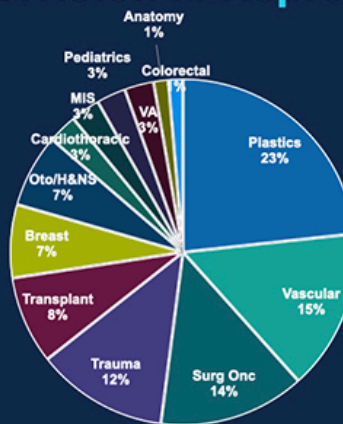
“Not only do we have to do this work, but we also get to do this work,” noted Dr. Clary. “There is an innate sense of joy in discovery. To me, that is the excitement of being a surgeon-scientist.”

One of the highlights of the symposium was the keynote address by Christine L. Lau, MD, MBA, the Chair of the Department of Surgery and Surgeon-in-Chief at the University of Maryland. Dr.

Lau's keynote address was titled "Always Bet on a Surgeon" and focused on the trials, tribulations, and successes of the University of Maryland Cardiac Xenotransplantation Unit, which has been conducting ground-breaking research and clinical work in the use of animal organs for heart transplant patients.

[Read more of The “Moral Obligation” of Surgery](#)

Every Division is Represented



UC San Diego Health

CLINICAL NEWS



Mark Porter, right, on a ski trip with his son Colton. In 2020, despite an exercise regimen that included weightlifting and water skiing, he began feeling increasingly short of breath. (Mark Porter)

From The Washington Post: Despite Treatment for Deadly Blood Clots, His Health was Going Downhill

Mark Porter was a man who experienced a medical mystery that began with blood clots and resulted in severe fatigue and breathlessness. After multiple medical consultations, he was diagnosed with chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension (CTEPH) and was referred to UCSD where he received a surgical procedure called a pulmonary thromboendarterectomy (PTE). Overall, Porter's successful treatment took a multi-day workup and a 9 hour operation, performed by Michael Madani, MD, FACS. UC San Diego is an internationally leading institution in PTE treatment, having performed over 4,000 procedures. [Read more about Mark Porter](#)



Modeling Sustainable Health Care at UC San Diego Health

As sea levels, temperatures and atmospheric CO2 levels rise, the pace of sustainability efforts within health care has accelerated in recent years, as such organizations account for more than 4% of global CO2 emissions, according to the World Economic Forum.

UC San Diego Health — the region's only academic medical center — has become a leader in advancing and modeling sustainable health care practices, with a goal of achieving

carbon neutrality by 2025.

"It is incumbent upon all of us to fully understand and to mitigate our own emissions because we are all in this together," said Patty Maysent, CEO at UC San Diego Health. "To help move everyone in the right direction, innovative leaders like UC San Diego Health often conceive and pilot novel solutions. We are leading the way by partnering with the nation's leading researchers on climate science at UC San Diego."

"Together, we are creating and achieving a new standard for sustainable, climate-smart health care while continuing to provide the highest quality of care to our patients."

Sustainability in the hospital setting has specific challenges. In addition to around-the-clock energy demands, hospitals have areas of environmental controls that are much more stringent than in non-clinical facilities. Heating, cooling, lighting, air circulation and infection prevention are all highly regulated in hospitals because they have measurable effects on patient care.

[Read more about modeling sustainable health care](#)



Toddler Experiences Second-Degree Burn, Goes Home Sooner with New Treatment

New treatment offered at the Regional Burn Center at UC San Diego Health uses an applied synthetic skin

substitute to encourage skin growth on burn wound, giving some patients the opportunity to be discharged same-day

For Julie Lu, one evening at home began as a night like any other. She had just finished giving dinner to her two-year-old daughter, Mai. They were about to begin their bedtime routine, which started by saying goodnight to family, who happened to be in the kitchen. While receiving sweet dream wishes, one sudden move changed the lives of all in the room.

Mai had reached for the hot-water dispenser unit and knocked it over, inadvertently pouring hot water all over her feet and all over Lu as well.

As a primary care doctor at a local health care organization, Lu says she went into “physician mode” and immediately took her daughter to the kitchen sink to run water over the area, trying to identify where Mai was injured.

“Within seconds, there was hot water everywhere, that’s how fast this happened,” said Lu. “By the time I pulled off her socks, her feet were already blistering and I knew we needed to get to the emergency department.”

It was determined that Mai had sustained second degree burns on the tops of both her feet.

“In my head, I knew it was a second-degree burn. I thought we’d have some wound dressings applied and could go home,” said Lu. “I definitely



Watching Loved One Go through Treatment Inspires Father to Become Nurse

Isaac Awolola has worn many hats. He’s a husband and father, he holds a bachelor’s degree in math

with a master’s degree in computer science, he was a Navy Corpsman with the United States Navy for eight years, he is a licensed vocational nurse, and now, he’s a registered nurse with UC San Diego Health.

Awolola credits going to the hospital to visit his dad as the inspiration to join the medical field.

“Seeing how the hospital staff took such great care of my dad to make sure he healed is what originally sparked my interest in health care,” said Awolola. “My first love was to become a doctor, but I’ve since realized bedside nursing is my true calling, because I get to build that relationship with each patient the way it happened for my dad.”

A recent alum of the [New Graduate Nurse Transition to Practice Program at UC San Diego Health](#), Awolola now works in the Medical/Surgical Telemedicine Unit at UC San Diego Medical Center in Hillcrest.

According to Awolola, the program truly set him up for success as a newly hired nurse at UC San Diego Health.

“While I’m already well-versed in the nursing skillset and scope, being partnered with an experienced mentor provided me with the guidance I needed to ensure I understood policies and processes already in place at this incredible institution,” said Awolola. [Read more about Isaac Awolola](#)

did not expect being admitted to the hospital.”

Mai was soon transferred to the [Regional Burn Center at UC San Diego Health](#), where a multi-disciplinary team performed a surgical procedure to clean and dress the wound.

“For young children such as Mai, we often clean and dress wounds under general anesthesia in order to minimize trauma for our patients and their loved ones,” said Jeanne Lee, MD, director of the Burn Center.

The Regional Burn Center, turning 50 this year, is verified by the American Burn Association as a pediatric and adult burn center. The team at UC San Diego Health treats approximately 450 hospitalized patients each year, and another 1,000 patients are seen in the outpatient burn clinic. Approximately one third of all admissions and outpatient visits are pediatric patients under the age of 18. [Read more about Julie Lu](#)

Vascular Lab Wins Patient Award

The XE OP Vascular Lab has been selected as a recipient of the 2023 Patient Experience Most Improved Award. This award recognizes clinics and units that showed the greatest improvement in their “Likelihood to Recommend” Percentile Rank from 2021 to 2022.

RESEARCH NEWS

ISP Awards for Medical Students

The Department of Surgery and the Summer Research Training Committee would like to announce three awardees for the Department’s MS1 Independent Study Program (ISP) in the summer.

- **Kelli Lopes** for a project titled: Retrospective Outcomes Study of Operative Treatments for Burn, Keloids, and Hypertrophic Scars. Mentor: Dr. Gosman
- **Shima Rahgozar** for a project titled: Outcomes of Concomitant Common Femoral Artery Endarterectomy and Distal Vessel Open Bypass vs. Distal Vessel Endovascular Intervention. Mentor: Dr. Malas
- **Miriam Becker** for a project titled: Evaluating Innovations in Breast Conserving Therapy: An Investigation of Long-term Outcomes of the Intercostal Artery Perforator Flap (ICAP) for Immediate Lumpectomy Reconstruction. Mentor: Dr. Reid

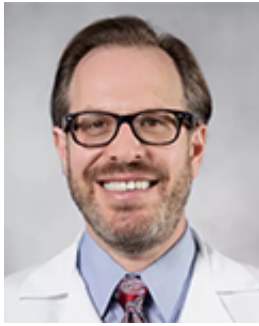
The award is for \$5,000, and requires an abstract summarizing the work be submitted for presentation at the Department of Surgery’s Research Symposium in May 2024. Congratulations to all three future



A Day in the Life of a Surgical Nurse

Ever wonder what a day in the life of nurse is like? For Nurses Week, Joshua Javier De Jesus, BSN, RN, walks us through his daily routine as a medical surgical nurse at UC San Diego Health. We give a big thank you to nurses like [Javier](#), who are a critical part of patient care. [Watch video](#)

FACULTY & STAFF NEWS



Dr. Jason Sicklick Appointed Co-Leader of the Structural and Functional Genomics Research Program

Please welcome Jason Sicklick, MD, FACS as the new Co-Leader of the Moores Cancer Center (MCC), Structural and Functional Genomics (SFG) Research Program, who will join current Co-Leader, Jill Mesirov, PhD at the helm of the program.

Dr. Jason Sicklick is an R01-funded investigator who specializes in (1) the treatment of complex retroperitoneal and abdominal sarcomas—in particular, gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GIST) and (2) hepatobiliary oncology. Dr. Sicklick has received many accolades for his contributions to advancing GIST treatments, which include the 2021 Rare Impact Award from the National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD). He has co-authored over 130 peer-reviewed articles, and the findings of his research have appeared in *Nature Medicine*, *Nature*, and *Gastroenterology*.

Dr. Sicklick brings extensive leadership experience from appointments that date back to his surgical residency at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, where he became the Administrative Chief Resident. Dr. Sicklick, who joined UC San Diego Health in 2010, was appointed as Executive Vice Chair of Research in the Department of Surgery at the UC San Diego, School of Medicine in 2020. In addition, he serves as Leader of the Sarcoma Disease Team at MCC, and previously he was the Deputy Director for Clinical Collection of the MCC Biorepository and Tissue Technology Shared Resource.

In Memoriam: Dr. Ralph E. Holmes, Pioneering Craniofacial and Pediatric Plastic Surgeon

UC San Diego Surgery mourns the loss of an exceptional individual whose impact on the medical field and the lives of countless patients will be remembered for generations to come. Dr. Holmes, an esteemed physician, and a beacon of compassion has passed.

Dr. Holmes was born in San Diego, and from an early age, it was evident his calling lay in the pursuit of medicine. With an unwavering dedication, he embarked on a remarkable journey that would leave an indelible mark on the lives of those he touched.

Dr. Holmes received his medical degree from Boston University School of Medicine and his otolaryngology training at the Yale-New Haven Medical Center. His interest in reconstructive surgery led him to complete a research fellowship and plastic surgery training at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

Throughout his career, Dr. Holmes held various leadership positions, including Chief of Plastic Surgery at UC San Diego and Chief of Rady Children's Pediatric Surgery Division, contributing significantly to the medical community. His exceptional skills as a clinician and ability to inspire and mentor aspiring physicians earned him the admiration and respect of colleagues and students alike.

A founder of the Craniofacial Surgery Program and the Vascular Lesion and Birthmark Center at Rady Children's, Dr. Holmes collaborated closely with many different specialties to provide comprehensive care to the children and families of San Diego. He had a personal interest in reconstruction of the outer ear and



was the first to bring to Rady Children's modern techniques of creating new ears from rib cartilage for children with microtia.

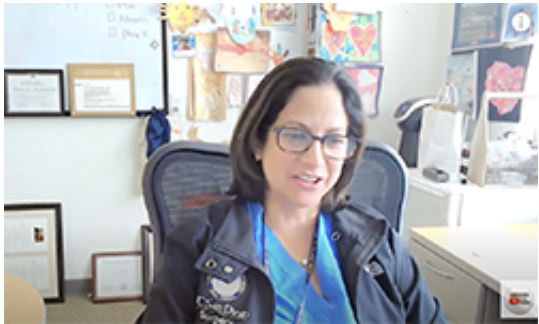
Dr. Holmes was an incredible researcher and innovator. He co-founded multiple companies including MacroPore and LeonardoMD. He has had notable contributions to the scientific literature and has published more than 100 peer review publications, 10 book chapters, and delivered over 160 scientific presentations.

Dr. Holmes' legacy will continue to resonate within the medical community and beyond. His tireless efforts to restore health have touched the lives of countless individuals, leaving an enduring impact that will not be forgotten. His passion for the outdoors and love of hiking in the Sierras was an inspiration to many who followed in his footsteps.

We plan to honor his legacy by establishing the Ralph E. Holmes Visiting Professorship in Craniofacial and Pediatric Plastic Surgery at UCSD. Please contact us if you are interested in contributing to this legacy.

As we bid farewell to Dr. Holmes, we extend our deepest sympathies to his family, friends, and colleagues who shared in their journey. Let us celebrate the life of an extraordinary healer, whose compassionate spirit will forever be a guiding light in the medical world. Dr. Holmes leaves behind a void that will be impossible to fill, but his legacy of healing, kindness, and dedication will inspire generations of physicians to come.

TRAINING NEWS



Dr. Sonia Ramamoorthy Featured on “Surgeons’ Lives: Stuff that Matters” Podcast

Referring to UC San Diego Surgery’s Sonia Ramamoorthy, MD as “a current star of the world of colorectal surgery,” host John Monson, MD, FRCS, interviewed Dr. Ramamoorthy about how she balances professional excellence, administrative workload and Society leadership with the important work of successful family life – always a challenge but something of which she is rightly proud. Listen to her story of starting life in the Northeast, fellowship in the midwest and faculty career in California – starting in San Francisco and long-term in San Diego. Dr. Ramamoorthy is soon to be President of American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons, and Monson calls her “a modern-thinking surgeon who sees beyond the traditional approach and works hard to support the values of diversity and inclusion – all while hiding a not so secret obsession with doughnuts!” [Watch the interview with Dr. Ramamoorthy](#)



Visiting Professor Lecture: Dr. Jamal Hoballah

A sincere thank you to Dr. Jamal Hoballah for visiting UC San Diego and giving us these excellent talks about mass casualty and aortic graft infection. The research team greatly appreciated your valuable input on our research projects and upcoming presentations at the Southern California Vascular Surgery Society. We look forward to more future collaborations between our respective institutions!

Dr. Jamal Hoballah is chair of the Department of Surgery at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. His work focuses on aortic aneurysms, vascular and endovascular surgeries, angioplasties, and more.



T32 Award Funds UC San Diego Surgery Residents in Surgical Oncology

Drs. Asimina S. Courelli and Mark Antkowiak have been awarded T32 training funds from the National Institutes of Health to support their work in the labs of Dr. Andrew Lowy and Drs. Jason Sicklick respectively.



Match Day

Congratulations to Dr. Sriganesh Sharma, a current resident at University of Michigan General Surgery alumni! He will be starting his fellowship with Cardiothoracic Surgery at

UC San Diego in July of 2024.

EVENTS

2023 PanCAN Purple Stride Event

A huge thank you to all of those who participated in the Purple Stride event this year, including our very own team from UC San Diego Health.



SECO - Sociedad Española de Cirugía de la Obesidad
@obesidadSECO

El cirujano Santiago Horgan @santihorgan @UCSDsurgery es nombrado miembro de honor de la Sociedad Española de Cirugía de la Obesidad durante el XXIV Congreso Nacional #SECO2023 🏆🏆🏆



Dr. Kristin Mekeel
@DrKMekeel

To know us is to love us @UCSDsurgery



THIS MONTH'S PUBLICATIONS

["PREPPED: Plastic Surgery Research, Education, and Preparation Promoting Equity and Diversity".](#)

Reghunathan M, Blum J, Davis GL, Ayyala HS, Leis A, Butler PD, Gosman A. *Plast Reconstr Surg.* 2023 May 10. doi: 10.1097/PRS.000000000010278. Online ahead of print. PMID: 37163483

["Comparing trends in Medicare reimbursement and inflation within plastic surgery subspecialties".](#)

Stoffel V, Shim JY, Pacella SJ, Gosman AA, Reid CM. *Plast Reconstr Surg.* 2023 May 16. doi: 10.1097/PRS.000000000010697. Online ahead of print. PMID: 37189227

["Human papillomavirus E5 suppresses immunity via inhibition of the immunoproteasome and STING pathway."](#)

Miyauchi S, Kim SS, Jones RN, Zhang L, Guram K, Sharma S, Schoenberger SP, Cohen EEW, Califano JA, Sharabi AB. *Cell Rep.* 2023 May 11;42(5):112508. doi: 10.1016/j.celrep.2023.112508. Online ahead of print. PMID: 37171962

["Rise of acellular dermal matrix: Cost consciousness, industry payment, and publication productivity."](#)

Hirpara MM, Clark RC, Hogan E, Dean R, Reid CM. *J Am Coll Surg.* 2023 Jun 1;236(6):1189-1197. doi: 10.1097/XCS.0000000000000648. Epub 2023 Feb 9. PMID: 36757115

["A thematic analysis of students' discussions on death and body donation in international online focus groups."](#)

Wu A, McWatt SC, Utomo R, Talis A, Xiao QY, Saraci K, Brassett C, Sagoo MG, Wingate R, Chien CL, Traxler H, Waschke J, Vielmuth F, Sigmund A, Yamada Y, Sakurai T, Zeroual M, Olsen J, El-Batti S, Viranta-Kovanen S, Keay K, Stewart W, Mao Y, Lang A, Kunzel C, Bernd P, Kielstein H, Noël GPJC. *Anat Sci Educ.* 2023 Mar 7. doi: 10.1002/ase.2265. Online ahead of print. PMID: 36883007

[Personal autonomy and self-determination are crucial for professionalism in healthcare.](#) Organ JM, Smith HF, Trainor PA, Allen K, Balta JY, Beresheim AC, Brewer-Deluce D, Brown KM, Burrows AM, Byers KT, Byram JN, Cale AS, Carroll MA, Champney T, Cornwall J, Dayal MR, DeLeon VB, Dunnwald M, Ferrigno C, Finn GM, Fox GM, Geller PL, Guttman GD, Harper N, Harrell KM, Hartstone-Rose A, Hildebrandt S, Hortsch M, Jackson J, Johnson LE, Lohman Bonfiglio CM, McCumber TL, Menegaz RA, Mussell JC, O'Loughlin VD, Ootobo TM, Oyedele O, Pascoe MA, Person D, Reidenberg JS, Robinson RE, Rogers KA, Ros MA, Ross CF, Sanders KA, Schmitt B, Schoenwolf GC, Smith TC, Smith TD, Sumner DR, Taylor AB, Taylor MJ, Teaford MF, Topp KS, Willmore KE, Wisco JJ, Yang J, Zumwalt AC. *Anat Sci Educ.* 2023 Apr 4. doi: 10.1002/ase.2278. Online ahead of print. PMID: 37014284

[See full list of publications](#)

JOB LISTINGS

[Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, Adjunct, In-Residence\) Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery](#)

[Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Transplant Surgery](#)

[Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clin, Clin X, In Residence, Adjunct\) - Plastic Surgery](#)

[Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clin, Clin X, Adj, In-Residence\) - Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery](#)

[Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clin, Clin X, Adjunct, In-Residence\) Vascular and Endovascular Surgery](#)

[Postdoctoral Research Fellowship](#)

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: SCOTT ELLNER, DO, MPH, MHCM, FACSD



Looking back on my time in the UCSD General Surgery Residency Program it was the people that made an impact on me. David Easter, MD, our program director, was kind-hearted, supportive and a leader in minimally invasive surgery. He patiently taught me the evolving skill set at the time of laparoscopic inguinal hernia repair and laparoscopic Nissen Fundoplication. Dr. Marshall Orloff was a “giant” in surgery and it was always a pleasure to round with him at Hillcrest discussing the patients with the team and bedside nurses on the Red Surgical Service.

His research on TIPS versus Portocaval Shunt was a tremendous opportunity for senior and chief residents to learn to operate near the vena cava on profoundly sick patients with medically recalcitrant portal hypertension. Dr. Anne Wallace was a strong mentor and leader who supported my foray into bench and clinical research with advancements in sentinel lymph node mapping. From that research experience I had the honor of being part of an incredible team of collaboration in the UCSD surgery and radiology departments that developed Lymphoseek®, a novel radiopharmaceutical specific to lymphatic mapping. Dr. David Hoyt instilled in me the poise and confidence to take on challenging surgical cases. He was instrumental in my development as a leader and through his guidance I became passionate about surgical quality improvement through the American College of Surgeons.

I remember many of my co-residents fondly. Some of us would steal away to Mission or Pacific Beach after grand rounds and M&M on Saturdays which were held at the VA for a quick surf session, if we weren't on call. I remember fondly, Dr. Sonia Ramamoorthy helped me get through my first week on rotation as an intern on the Burn service (during July 4 th weekend) under the late Dr. John Hansbrough.

Dr. Ramamoorthy, was friendly, funny, and a senior resident I looked up to for support and guidance.

I am grateful for my experience at UCSD as it shaped me as a surgeon, researcher in quality and comparative effectiveness, and as a healthcare executive.

Dr. Ellner has held roles with Billings Clinic (CEO); Centura Health (Group President and CEO of Physician Alignment); Trinity New England (President of Saint Francis Medical Group, Vice Chairman of the Surgery Service Line and Director of Surgical Quality); University of Connecticut School of Medicine (Assistant Professor of Surgery); and Connecticut Surgical Quality Collaborative (Chairman and Founder). He is now the Market President in Boston for Navvis, a value-based delivery operating company in partnership with Tufts Medicine. He completed his Residency in General Surgery at UC San Diego in 2005.



Forward to a Friend



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ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

The Department of Surgery at UC San Diego prides itself on maintaining a thriving clinical enterprise in 13 surgical divisions and providing exceptional care to patients; while educating future generations of surgeons and conducting ground-breaking research. Since 1968, our team of internationally recognized surgeons have performed cutting edge surgeries, which today include including awake brain surgery; heart-lung transplants; scarless appendectomies; and incisionless weight-loss surgery. We're proud of the research breakthroughs we make in surgical medicine and the quality rankings we achieve year after year. surgery.ucsd.edu