Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Springtime is an amazing time of the year with incredible displays in nature that herald new growth and new life. For the Department of Surgery it is also a time of rebirth as we welcome the next generation of trainees. Every March, graduating medical students and their future residency training programs complete a nationally orchestrated match process that culminates in “Match Day” where all students across the country learn of their next training destination. For our residency programs, it is the end of a very long application process that starts with the screening of hundreds of applications, interviews with 45-90 applicants, and the creation of a rank preference list that is submitted to the national match organization. In this month’s newsletter, we are happy to introduce the 2024 matriculants to our primary residency programs in general surgery, plastic surgery, and vascular surgery. It is a truly extraordinary list of matriculants who will enrich our environment as they develop the skills to make an outsized impact in their chosen fields.

In addition, we have the privilege of introducing our readership to the new Moores Cancer Center Director, Dr. Diane Simeone. Dr. Simeone is a world-renowned surgeon-scientist whose portfolio of clinical and research are focused on pancreatic cancer. A long-time faculty member at the University of Michigan, Dr. comes to us from New York University where she has served as the Director of the NYU Pancreatic Cancer Center and as Associate Director for Translational Research for their Perlmutter Cancer Center. We are truly excited to have such an extraordinary addition to our cancer center leadership and to the Department of Surgery. We are equally delighted to welcome Dr. Ted Welling also from NYU to our faculty as a clinician-scientist who specializes in hepatobiliary and pancreatic malignancies. The recruitment of both of these faculty reflect the incredibly rich environment in the Department, our institution, and more broadly across our region.
We also want to take time in this month’s communication to congratulate UCSD faculty member and Chief of the Division of Colorectal Surgery, Dr. Sonia Ramamoorthy on her election as President of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons. This is the largest medical society dedicated to colon and rectal surgery. Her election is a testament to the impact that she has had in the field and on the recognition of these efforts and UC San Diego by colleagues across the country. Congratulations, President Ramamoorthy!

These features and more are ours to share with you, our supporters whose efforts are integral to making tomorrow better for patients. As always, I thank you for your continued interest and support.

Bryan Clary, MD, MBA
Marshall J. Orloff Family Endowed Chair
Professor and Chair, Department of Surgery
UC San Diego Health Sciences
Surgeon-in-Chief, UC San Diego Health

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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Q&A: DR. JASON SICKLICK

Dr. Jason Sicklick recently received notice of award for his NCI-supported U01 cooperative project titled, “National Succinate Dehydrogenase-deficient GIST Translational Research and Clinical Trial Consortium.” The study is advancing translational gastrointestinal stromal tumor research in collaboration with the physicians and scientists at the NIH and 10 other academic institutions, as well as a patient advocacy group (Life Raft Group) and an industry partner (Inhibrx, Inc.). For this month’s Q&A, we talked to Dr. Sicklick about his research on gastrointestinal stromal tumors and the importance of this new study.

Q: What sets gastrointestinal stromal tumors apart from other cancers?
A: A gastrointestinal stromal tumor is a rare cancer that occurs throughout the gastrointestinal tract. These tumors can be quite variable in terms of clinical characteristics. For example, gastrointestinal stromal tumors can be sporadic or inherited, can vary greatly in growth and invasiveness capacity from indolent to aggressive, and can occur across the age spectrum from childhood to late adulthood.

Q: What distinguishes the gastrointestinal stromal tumor research being done at UC San Diego?
A: Our gastrointestinal stromal tumor program is unique from other research programs in that we focus on studying the rarer subsets of this disease, like SDH-deficient gastrointestinal stromal tumor, where we have only a limited understanding of the underlying biology or how best to treat these tumors. In 2016, we were the first group to study so-called quadruple negative gastrointestinal stromal tumor (i.e., no known “driver” mutations). This emphasis was important because we identified ETV6-NTRK3 and FGFR gene fusions in gastrointestinal stromal tumors that are now targetable with newer drugs. This seminal finding is
now incorporated into the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines for managing gastrointestinal stromal tumors.

Q: What is the value of having a National Succinate Dehydrogenase-deficient Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor Translational Research and Clinical Trial Consortium?
A: This consortium creates a large, formal alliance of SDH-def gastrointestinal stromal tumor clinicians and researchers that consists of both intramural investigators with the NIH and extramural investigators from medical centers throughout the US, an alliance that has worked out well in many clinical applications in the past. These SDH-def gastrointestinal stromal tumor investigators and clinicians have demonstrated expertise in adult and pediatric medical oncology, surgical oncology, basic and translational science. Together with patient advocates and an industry partner, our goals are to: (1) evaluate the safety and efficacy of TMZ with INBRX-109 (a potent DR5 agonist) among patients with progressive SDH-def gastrointestinal stromal tumor in a Phase I/II clinical trial; (2) create a centralized biobank of well-annotated SDH-def gastrointestinal stromal tumor samples for later study; (3) develop a network of research laboratories to develop improved preclinical models to investigate diverse SDH-deficient gastrointestinal stromal tumor biology; and (4) develop new clinical tools to predict SDH-def gastrointestinal stromal tumor prognosis. This will represent a major step forward in understanding the underlying biology of SDH-def gastrointestinal stromal tumor, in developing new ways to predict the eventual course of these tumors, and in creating novel ways to treat them, and it will unite the field in each of these endeavors, as well.

Q: Why are SDH-def gastrointestinal stromal tumors so hard to treat?
A: It has been challenging to treat SDH-deficient gastrointestinal stromal tumors in the past because we lacked human models to study this cancer and identify therapeutic targets. Moreover, we still do not fully understand why some patients with a SDH-deficient gastrointestinal stromal tumor have very indolent biology while about 1-in-4 patients will die from their cancer within 10 years after diagnosis.

Q: How do you hope this trial will add to existing therapies for SDH-def gastrointestinal stromal tumor?
A: Our hope is that the clinical trial of temozolomide with INBRX-109 that we propose will be the first FDA-approved therapy approved specifically for SDH-deficient gastrointestinal stromal tumor. While we are still early in the trial, our previous trial of single agent temozolomide showed that even this drug therapy can be used to effectively treat a subset of SDH-deficient gastrointestinal stromal tumor patients. This is a first for the field, but we need to do much better than this. We have found clear evidence that temozolomide and INBRX-109 have two independent mechanisms of efficacy, and that exploiting both of these will target a key weakness of SDH-def gastrointestinal stromal tumor. We thus hope that a combination of two drugs with entirely different but related mechanisms of action will be more effective than either drug alone.

FEATURE STORY

UC San Diego Department of Surgery Presents the 12th Annual Research Symposium

The Department of Surgery presented its annual Research Symposium on Tuesday, May 21, 2024. The event began with opening remarks by Dr. Bryan Clary, Chair of the Department, who emphasized the importance of surgical science in patient care now and in the future. He was followed by Dr. Jason Sicklick, executive vice chair of research, who commented on
Over 140 people attended the Symposium this year, with 101 abstract submissions—a 40.2% increase from 2023. Members of the Department of Surgery are more engaged than ever and eager to support the implementation of the Department’s Research Vision Statement: “to transform surgical care through collaborative, impactful research and innovation.”

Research at the Symposium spanned from basic science and translational science to clinical research to health services and education research. These topics were highlighted in 24 oral presentations and 77 poster presentations. These presentations were judged by faculty in the Department of Surgery, with prizes awarded for the best presentations in several categories. Below is a list of all awardees:

**Postdoctoral Researcher: Best Oral Presentation for Clinical/HSR/Education**
Graham J. Spurzem, Hannah M. Hollandsworth, Ryan C. Broderick, Santiago Horgan, “Pumping the Brakes on Robotic Sleeve Gastrectomy: MBSAQIP Database Analysis of Nearly 600,000 Cases Shows Higher Complication Rates Compared to Laparoscopic,” from the Division of Minimally Invasive Surgery

**Postdoctoral Researcher: Best Oral Presentation for Basic/Translational/Engineering Research**
Mark Antkowiak, Ashwyn Sharma, Alex Wenzel, Jill P. Mesirov, Jason K. Sicklick, “A Novel Molecular Risk Score for Estimating the Risk of GIST Recurrence” from the Division of Surgical Oncology

**Medical Student: Best Oral Presentation for Basic/Translational/Engineering Research**
Athena Wu, Shanglei Liu, Karcher Morris, “Improving Surgeon Ergonomics Using Novel Mobile Application and Commercial Earphones,” from the Division of Colon and Rectal Surgery

**Medical Student: Best Oral Presentation for Clinical/HSR/Education Research**
Sabrina Straus, Batol Barodi, Daniel Willie-Permor, Nishita Vootukuru, Mahmoud Malas, “Re-evaluating the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) High Risk Criteria for Carotid Artery Revascularization,” from the Division of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery

**Postdoctoral Researcher: Best Poster Presentation for Basic/Translational/Engineering Research**
Sadatsugu Sakane, Takahiro Nishio, Animesh Singh, Yusuke Kimura, Kiroaki Fuji, Raquel Carvalho Gontijo Weber, Hyun Young Kim, Moigan Hosseini, Kei Ishizuka, Wonseok Lee, Souradipta Ganguly, Vivan Zhang, Barun Das, Xiao Liu, Debanjan Dhar, Karin Diggle, Kristin Mekeel, David Brenner, Tatiana Kisseleva, “Activation of Mesothelin/Mucin16 signaling in portal fibroblasts (aPFs) facilitates cholestasis-
induced tumorigenesis in aged Mdr2 knockout mice,” from the Division of Transplantation and Hepatobiliary Surgery

**Postdoctoral Researcher: Best Poster Presentation for Clinical/HSR/Education Research**

Sean Perez, Nishant Garg, DeLee Glasser, Nicholas Hilbert, Amirali Salmasi, Kristin Mekeel, Jula Veerapong, “Targeted Implementation of ERAS Protocols and Intra-Operative QI Initiatives Results in Improved Outcomes in Patients Undergoing Nephrectomy,” from the Division of Surgical Oncology

**Postdoctoral Researcher: Best Poster Presentation for Basic/Translational/Engineering Research**

Sohee Lee, Jessica R. Della Ripa, Kristin E. Cox, Jared S. Matson, Thinzar M. Lwin, Michael Bouvet, “Quantitative intraoperative ICG perfusion assessment of parathyroid adenomas using a handheld near-infrared fluorescence system,” from the Division of Surgical Oncology

**Postdoctoral Researcher: Best Poster Presentation for Clinical/HSR/Education Research**

Tiffany S. Zheng, Romeo Ignacio, David Lazar, “Depression in Hospitalized Pediatric Surgery Patients: A Preliminary Study,” from the Division of Pediatric Surgery

The Symposium also featured a Keynote Address by Dr. Scott LeMaire from the Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine. His outstanding lecture on thoracic aortic disease—Advancing the Field: The Impact of Academic Surgery—discussed the evolution of treatment approaches to this complex disease, which have become more personalized over time. Early in Dr. LeMaire’s career, thoracic aortic disease was categorized along a dichotomy between “Marfanoid” disease (consistent with Marfan’s Syndrome) and other causes. Today, timing of surgical replacement is fine-tuned based on the precise cause of the disease, which radically affects the expected durability of the aorta. Dr. LeMaire also discussed the importance of academic research in training programs for surgeon-scientists.

The annual Research Symposium exemplifies the Department of Surgery’s unwavering dedication to academic research. The Department currently ranks among the top 20 Departments of Surgery nationwide for NIH funding and remains proudly committed to training the next generation of surgeon-scientists.

**CLINICAL NEWS**

**Dr. Diane M. Simeone Reflects on New Position as Moore’s Cancer Center Director**

As of April 1, 2024, Dr. Diane M. Simeone started her new tenure as director for the UC San Diego Health Moores Cancer Center. In a conversation with Cancer Network, Dr. Simeone expressed why she was thrilled to be the new director.

Some of her goals for her time as director include early detection of pancreatic cancer, submitting a Cancer Center Support Grant to the National Institutes of Health, and expanding clinical trials. She aims to continue many of the center’s ongoing projects, including the UC Pancreatic Cancer Consortium and the Pancreatic Cancer Early Detection (PRECEDE) Consortium. Read more
Drs. Gabriel Schnickel and Aleah Brubaker Awarded Inaugural Chancellor’s Interdisciplinary Team Catalyst Award

The grant is titled “Catalyzing Collaborative and Transformative Change in Organ Donation: The UCSD Center for Organ Donation Research, Education, and Innovation” and awards $37k in direct costs in the first year with possible renewal. Drs. Schnickel and Brubaker will collaborate with Dr. Mita Shah and Dr. Sheri Hartman, Associate Professor of Family Medicine and Public Health and in Cancer Control at Moore’s Cancer Center, on this interdisciplinary research.

Dr. Mark Onaitis Awarded Targeted Grant from Curebound

The $250k grant will help fund his research titled, “Targeting PI3Kg to Reverse Immune Suppression in Lung Cancer”.

Dr. Andrew Lowy Awarded Cure Prize for Pancreatic Cancer Research

The $1M award will help fund Dr. Lowy’s research project titled, “Perioperative Fostamatinib + Chemotherapy for Resectable Pancreatic Cancer.” Cure Prizes are awarded by Curebound, a San Diego-based philanthropic organization, to projects that aim to improve the standard of care for a typically deadly cancer with patient application in three to five years.

Drs. Andrew Lowy, Cosimo Commissio, and Herve Tiriac Awarded Discovery Grant from Curebound

The $50k grant will support their project titled, “WNK4: A New Drug Target in Pancreatic Cancer.”
Dr. Sonia Ramamoorthy Elected as President of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons

ASCRS is the premier colorectal society representing nearly 5000 colorectal surgeons throughout the United States. Dr. Ramamoorthy is the fourth female president and the first Asian female president of the 125-year-old surgical society. She previously served as vice president, treasurer, and member-at-large and helped establish the Leadership and Professional Development Program (Surgical Leadership Institute), and the New Tech Symposium, among many other contributions to the society.

Dr. Elsie Ross Selected as Associate Editor of Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes

The publication is part of the American Heart Association’s Circulation family of journals.

Dr. Elsie Ross Receives NIH Grant Review Committee Appointment

She will serve a 4-year term as a Standing Member of the NIH Bioengineering, Technology, and Surgical Sciences Study Section (BTSS).

Dr. Michael Turner Receives Americas Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association Travel Award

The Americas Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association (AHPBA) has awarded Dr. Michael Turner a Travel Award for Underrepresented Minorities! This $625 award will helped offset travel costs to the AHPBA Meetings in Miami Beach, Florida in April, and included special recognition at the AHPBA Opening Session on Friday, April 5.

TRAINING NEWS

Match Day 2024 Results

The National Resident Matching Program announced the 2024 Main Residency Match. The Department of Surgery is thrilled to welcome our 2024 class—in General Surgery, Plastic Surgery, and Vascular Surgery—and begin another year educating the best and brightest in academic surgery.
Congratulations to All Who Presented at the 2024 Academic Surgical Congress Meetings

UC San Diego Department of Surgery gave 22 different presentations at this year’s Academic Surgical Congress, held February 6-8 in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Ana Maria Dumitru: Prenatal therapeutic base editing for hereditary tyrosinemia type 1

Dr. Louis Perkins: The scalding truth: An analysis of pediatric patients at risk for admission after scald burn & unmasking the impact: Exploring the role of masks in trauma-informed care communication

Michael Oca: Diversity in surgical specialties: Trends in representation from 2016 - 2022

Catherine Williamson: Outcomes of necrotizing enterocolitis in patients with congenital heart disease

Dr. Kristin Cox: A new mouse of linitis plastica gastric cancer visualized with fluorescent anti-CEA antibody

Dr. Jorge De La Torre Medina: SUMOylation and TIGIT inhibition: A novel immunotherapy combination for pancreatic cancer

Madeline Goldfarb: Predictors of neurodevelopmental impairment in surgically managed necrotizing enterocolitis

Dr. Michael Turner: Patterns in perioperative chemotherapy utilization for resectable gastric cancer

Jessica Kang: CT imaging and operative management of severe craniofacial pediatric dog bites: A descriptive study

Dr. Kim Nguyen-Ta: Early adoption and survival of patients with metastatic gastric cancer treated with

Dr. Sophie Chung: Discordance of clinical and pathological gastric cancer staging at a safety-net hospital & Practice patterns of non-oncological resection for high-risk appendiceal adenocarcinoma

Dr. Kendra Black: In-hospital drug use affects a broad patient population and health care system

Dr. Kazuki Sugahara: The iRGD tumor-penetrating peptide modifies the tumor microenvironment

Julissa Arzave: Traumatic brain injury leads to increased intestinal CCL5

Dr. Keita Nakatsutsumi: Alveolar extracellular vesicle diversity after blunt chest trauma

Dr. Lisa Kurth: High mortality in clostridium sordellii soft tissue infections

Joseph Lee: Use of postmortem computed tomography scans in pediatric patients with uncertain cause of death

Dr. William Johnston: Evaluating the safety of Enoxaparin in critically ill patients with renal insufficiency
Medical Student McKay Reese Obtains First Place Award at the Undergraduate Campus Master’s Research Symposium

Reese’s presentation at UC San Diego’s Fifth Annual Clinical Research Symposium was titled "Academic Influence and Industry Funding in Nerve Allograft Research". Reese is mentored by Associate Professor, Dr. Christopher Reid in the Division of Plastic Surgery. Watch here

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

F. Barry Knotts, MD, PhD, FACS

“I have a distinct advantage in relating how much my training at UCSD, Department of Surgery, has meant to me. I have the benefit of hindsight now that I am retired from a wonderful career in medicine and surgery. Although challenging, the training prepared me very well for life as a practicing surgeon. This short reflection has given me an opportunity to recall many of the memorable moments of my training at UCSD. I had the good fortune of learning from world class experts in so many surgical disciplines.

Marshall Orloff was my boss at UCSD. I have endeavored to emulate his mastery of surgery. As I reflect on my training many of the names of those who mentored me leap to mind: J. Pilch, R. Virgilio, G. Greenburg, R. Bell, R. Barone, P. Goldfarb, R. Smith, R. Ignelsi, J. Alksne, F. Lynch, T. Canty, and my fellow residents S. Shackford (Navy), J. Hurst (Navy) and D. Hoyt, to mention a few.

A feature of the program at UCSD was an opportunity to ‘sample’ the style and type of practice in a wide variety of clinical environments. City of Hope, Scripps Memorial Hospital, San Diego Mercy Hospital, Kaiser Hospital, Balboa Naval Hospital, Bakersfield Memorial Hospital, and, of course, the La Jolla VA Hospital and the UCSD Hospital. The experiences gained from these glimpses of what might be my future helped direct me in choosing a career path.

One of my most rewarding experiences in training was to accompany my professor of Pediatric Surgery, Dr. Timothy Canty, to Mexico to provide pediatric surgical care to Mexican citizens who would otherwise find care inaccessible. I also had the great honor of operating with Thomas Starzl, famed transplant surgeon, and participating in the first liver transplant at UCSD.”
Prior to his retirement from general and trauma practice in 2017, Dr. F. Barry Knotts was an associate clinical professor of surgery at Ohio University and section chief for Trauma and Acute Care Surgery and medical director of surgical intensive care at Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center in Toledo, Ohio. Currently, he is president and chairman of the board for Trauma Specialists of Toledo and Trauma and Acute Care Surgery Specialists. He completed his internship and general residency at UC San Diego between 1975 and 1981. From 1990-1991, he was an assistant clinical professor of surgery at UC San Diego.

**SEEN ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Click images below to visit the sites and to read more

**Jay Doucet** @jaydoucet · 12h
Fantastic visit this week by @SteinSister - our 2024 @UCSDsurgery Visiting Trauma Professor - focused on patient centeredness, patient reported outcomes & trauma informed care: lessons from @shocktrauma we are incorporating at @UCSDTrauma

**Dr. Kristin Mekel** @DrKMex · 4/10/24
Congratulations to Dr. Brubaker and the consortium for this seminal work which will increase livers available for transplant in the US and save more lives.

**Waddah Al-Refaie** @wbalref... · 4/10/24
One of the highest honors is when trainees are invited to speak at their alma mater. Many thanks Dr. @clary_bryan @UCSDsurgery @UCSDSurgeryRes on a phenomenal Alumni Visiting Professor. Great to be back with Drs. @SoniaRamMD @JasonSicklick Lowy, Blair, Bouvet, and Malas! Please... Show more

**UC San Diego Health** @UCSDH... · 4/2/24
The #UCSDHealth Center for Transplantation had its biggest life-saving year thus far with 481 organ #transplants in 2023. This remarkable achievement includes 178 kidney transplants, 148 liver transplants, 95 heart transplants and 60 lung transplants. health.ucsd.edu/care/transplan...


Traumatic brain injuries after falls from height vs. falls at the US-Mexico border wall. Tenorio A, Brandel MG, McCann CP, Doucet JJ, Costantini


IN THE NEWS

This Father’s Day, one daughter gave her father a kidney with the help of Dr. Jennifer Berumen, associate professor in the Division of Transplant and Hepatobiliary Surgery and director of living donor kidney transplant. Read more

JOB LISTINGS

Assistant, Associate or Full Project Scientist - Surgical Oncology

Assistant, Associate or Full Professor (HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct) Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery

Assistant, Associate or Full Professor (HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct) Minimally Invasive Surgery

Assistant, Associate or Full Professor (HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct) Plastic Surgery

Assistant Professor (Ladder Rank/In-Residence) Surgical Scientists

Assistant, Associate or Full Professor (HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct) Plastic Surgery

Assistant Research Scientist - Surgical Oncology

Assistant, Associate or Full Professor (HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct) Pediatric Surgery

Assistant, Associate or Full Professor (HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct) Surgical Scientists

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