

# Department of Surgery News

## April 2025



### Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues and Friends of the Department,

Contrary to popular belief, San Diego experiences seasons, albeit more subtly than other areas in the country. Spring is in the air, bringing reminders of how our environment is in a constant cycle of change and rebirth. Academic surgical departments have their version of this, reflected in the retirements, departures and new arrivals of faculty. Healthy departments see intermittent departures when faculty retire or transition to new roles at other institutions, offering opportunities to make an even greater impact.

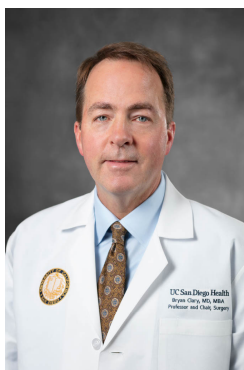
This month, we announce the impending departures of two faculty members who have been woven into the fabric of our department for decades: Jay Doucet, M.D., chief of the Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns, and Acute Care Surgery, and Kristin Mekeel, M.D., chief of the Division of Transplantation and Hepatobiliary Surgery. Jay Doucet, M.D., has announced his retirement and will be heading to sunny Florida, while Kristin Mekeel, M.D., will assume the role of Chief Quality Officer at the University of Colorado Health

Anschutz Hospital. We are incredibly grateful for their many contributions to our patients across the region and our institution. They are part of this department's extended family and will be greatly missed.

This month's newsletter is relatively heavy with research content and announcements, including a Q&A with Tatiana Hurtado de Mendoza, Ph.D., assistant professor in residence in the Division of Surgical Oncology, who gives us some insight into the future of breast cancer immunotherapy research. In other news, research by Chris Reid, M.D., associate professor in the Division of Plastic Surgery, was featured in HealthDay News. Reid found that breast-conserving radiation therapy for breast cancer can cause breast shrinkage. This knowledge is vital in guiding patient expectations and planning for future breast restoration surgeries.

Other updates from this month include several faculty and trainee awards and reflections on recent visits by professors Donald Mackay, M.D., D.D.S. (Penn State University) and Andrea Schlegel, M.D., M.B.A. (Cleveland Clinic).

We sincerely appreciate your ongoing support and engagement with the department.



**Bryan Clary, M.D., M.B.A.**

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 FUTURE OF SURGERY**

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The Department of Surgery relies on the financial support of our alumni and friends to conduct groundbreaking research and train the next generation of surgeons. We invite you to partner with us by contributing to the Department of Surgery Excellence Fund. Every gift, no matter the size, is crucial in advancing our vital missions.

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## Feature Article

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A new study led by Chris Reid, M.D., found that breast-conserving radiation therapy for breast cancer can cause

breast shrinkage. Those who undergo this cancer treatment may lose approximately 20% of their breast volume in one year.

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## Q&A with Tatiana Hurtado de Mendoza, Ph.D.

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**Tatiana Hurtado de Mendoza, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor in the Division of Surgical Oncology. Her research interests include virology, immunology, immunotherapy and translational cancer research. Hurtado de Mendoza, along with Chris Benedict, Ph.D., recently received a Curebound grant to further their breast cancer research. She also serves as a mentor to undergraduate, graduate and medical students.



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## Featured News

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Jennifer Berumen, M.D., associate professor in the Division of Transplantation and Hepatobiliary Surgery, spoke to UC San Diego Health about kidney donation for National Donate Life Month.

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UC San Diego was named a Wellbeing First Champion by the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation. This award is given to systems without intrusive mental health questions or stigmatizing language in their licensure and credentialing applications.

[READ MORE](#)

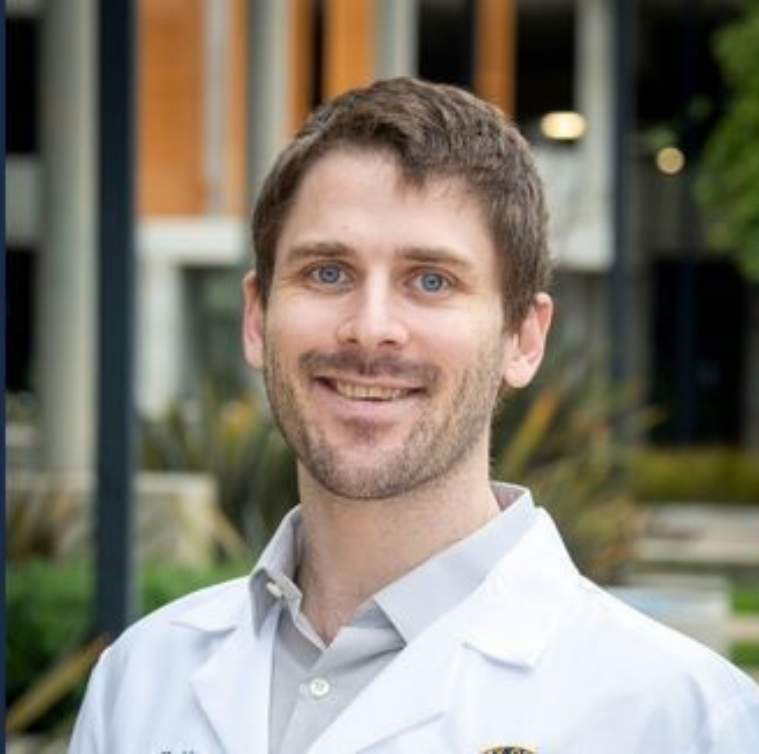
## Research News

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### **Jonathan Weitz Receives Mentored Research Scientist Development Award**

This National Cancer Institute award is given to early career-stage researchers working in cancer control and treatment. Weitz, mentored by Andrew Lowy, M.D., will receive a 5-year grant of over \$800,000 to support his research on pancreatic cancer.



### **Mark Antkowiak Receives Society of Surgical Oncology's Harvey Baker Traveling Fellow Award**

This award celebrates outstanding abstracts by postdoctoral oncology trainees. Mark Antkowiak, M.D., will receive \$1,000 in travel support for his abstract on gene expression in gastrointestinal stromal tumors.



### **Department of Surgery Attends Various Surgical Society Meetings**

These meetings included the Society of Surgical Oncology meeting, the Americas Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association meeting, the American Burn Association meeting and the Southwestern Surgical Congress meeting.



### **San Diego Hosts American Surgical Association Meeting**

The 2025 American Surgical Association meeting was held in San Diego, CA. Bryan Clary, M.D., M.B.A., chair of the Department of Surgery, was the local arrangements chair for this event.

### **Faculty News**

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### **Jay Doucet Departs from UC San Diego Department of Surgery**

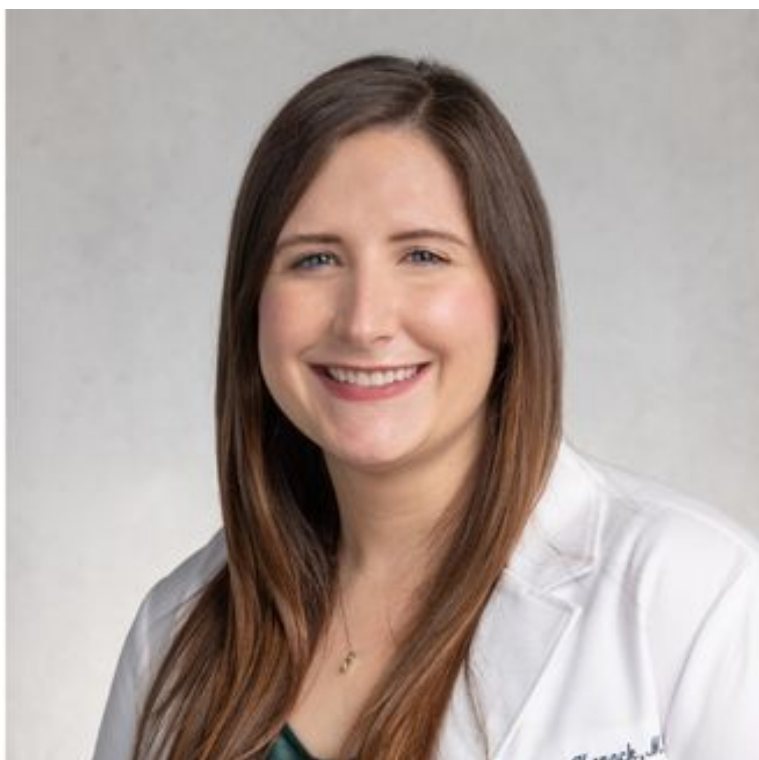
Jay Doucet, M.D., served as the chief of the Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns and Acute Care

Surgery and the director of emergency management. Laura Haines, M.D., has been appointed as the interim chief of the division.



### **Kristin Mekeel Accepts New Role at University of Colorado Health**

Kristin Mekeel, M.D., former chief of the Division of Transplantation and Hepatobiliary Surgery, will transition into a new role as Chief Quality Officer at UC Health Anschutz Hospital. She will also continue her work as a transplant surgeon.



### **Melissa Kanack Receives 2025 Joseph G. McCarthy Visiting Scholar Award**

This award, given by the American Society of Craniofacial Surgeons, aims to encourage collaboration between craniofacial scholars. Melissa Kanack, M.D., assistant professor in the Division of Plastic Surgery, will receive a \$7,500 stipend to visit a craniofacial center of excellence.



### **Laura Haines Receives UC San Diego Medical Staff Physician Professionalism Award**

This award is given to UC San Diego Health physicians who model core values of quality, caring, integrity, respectfulness and teamwork and promote a culture of safety. Laura Haines, M.D., received this award for her work in the Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns and Acute Care Surgery.



**Jason Sicklick Researcher Spotlight**

Jason Sicklick, M.D., was featured in Moores Cancer Center's Inside the Lab: Researcher Spotlight for his work in gastrointestinal stromal tumor (GIST) treatment.

## Staff News

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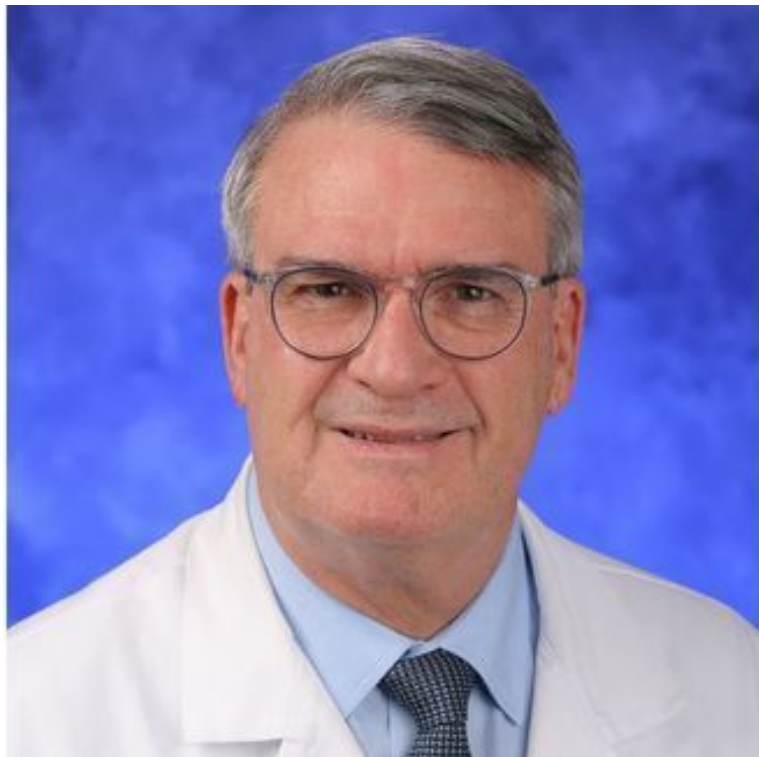


### Department of Surgery Staff Luncheon

This month, the Department of Surgery hosted a staff lunch filled with great conversation and delicious food.

## Training News

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### Donald Mackay Visits UC San Diego Department of Surgery

Donald Mackay, M.D., D.D.S., is a professor in the Division of Plastic Surgery at Penn State Health. Mackay gave a grand rounds presentation titled "The Past Present and Future of Plastic Surgery" and hosted a jaw surgery

lab for plastic surgery residents.



### **Andrea Schlegel Grand Rounds**

Andrea Schlegel, M.D., M.B.A., is a transplant surgeon at the Cleveland Clinic. Schlegel gave a grand rounds presentation titled “Mitochondria and Transplantation.”

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This month, the **Center for the Future of Surgery** hosted various surgical trainings, including a jaw surgery lab with Penn State Health's Donald Mackay, M.D., D.D.S., a vascular surgery lab with Ann Gaffey, M.D., M.S. and a laparoscopic surgery lab with Bryan Sandler, M.D.



## Alumni Spotlight

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*Eric Raschke, D.O., completed his surgical critical care fellowship and acute care fellowship at UC San Diego while concurrently serving as a general surgeon in the United States Army in San Antonio, Texas. Raschke is now an Army trauma surgeon at Madigan Army Medical Center.*

"I saw firsthand how a diverse group of professionals, each contributing their specialized knowledge, redefined what is possible for patient care. The connections I formed with colleagues and mentors have become an invaluable support network, guiding my practice both stateside and while deployed. I left the experience deeply inspired by their passion for care and education, which influences me daily."

## As Seen on Social Media

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### Doctors' Day with the San Diego Padres

In honor of Doctors' Day, UC San Diego Health invited physicians from the Department of Surgery and beyond to attend a San Diego Padres game.



### Humans of Surgery

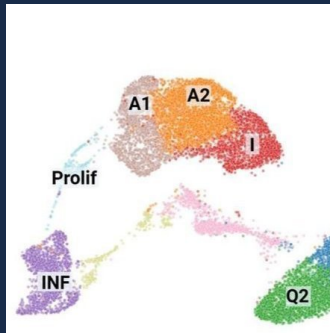
This month, we highlighted Isaac Meyer, nurse practitioner in the Division of Plastic Surgery and Winta Mehtsun, M.D., M.P.H., assistant professor in the Division of Surgical Oncology.

## Science Discoveries and Recent Publications

Our diverse faculty are highly productive and actively disseminate new discoveries relevant to understanding and improving the management and treatment of surgical disease.



A study found that cryoneurolysis, a procedure that uses cold temperatures to temporarily disrupt nerve function, may help with rib fracture pain management. [Read More](#)



A study examined the role that hepatic stellate cells play in the onset and development of liver fibrosis. This research may influence liver fibrosis and cancer treatments. [Read More](#)

[READ OUR LATEST PUBLICATIONS BY DIVISION](#)

## Recent Job Listings

- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Minimally Invasive Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Surgical Sciences](#)
- [Associate or Full Professor \(Ladder Rank/In-Residence\) Surgical Sciences](#)
- [Assistant Professor \(Ladder Rank/In-Residence\) Surgical Sciences](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Breast Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X\) Transplant Surgery](#)



## **About the Department of Surgery**

The Department of Surgery at UC San Diego prides itself on delivering state-of-the-art, nation-leading clinical care to the diverse communities of Southern California and beyond. We are dedicated to transforming the lives of future patients through groundbreaking research and shaping the next generation of surgeons and leaders through our exceptional training programs. These training programs are a key reason UC San Diego Health hospitals rank among the top twenty nationwide and why our School of Medicine is recognized as a leader in research and medical education.

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