

UC San Diego

Department of Surgery News

December 2025



Letter from the Chair

Dear colleagues and friends of the department,

The holiday season is upon us, and I hope this letter finds you in the midst of good times with family and friends. I can hardly believe that 2025 is coming to a close, and what a year it has been! This year marked my 10-year anniversary as chair of the Department of Surgery. Despite my objections, our communications team insisted that I partake in a celebratory Q&A to reflect on the past 10 years at this incredible institution. I enjoyed thinking about how much we've grown in that time.

Of course, there are many more accomplishments to celebrate this month. General Surgery Resident Sean Perez, M.D., was the first author of not one but two publications this month! Below, you can read about his journey to becoming a surgeon and his interest in surgical research.

This newsletter also contains news of some exciting new grants and achievements of our faculty and trainees. We also welcome three new exceptional surgeons to the team — Jared Forrester, M.D., Thomas O’Keefe, M.D., and Ana Garcia Cabrera, M.D. Their addition strengthens the pursuit of our mission, and I could not be happier in welcoming them to our department.

I wish you the very best during this season and want to thank you again for your continued interest in the important work of the Department of Surgery.



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



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 Story: The Path to Research with Sean Perez



Sean Perez, M.D., is a fourth-year general surgery resident in the Department of Surgery in the UC San Diego School of Medicine. He is also the first author of two recent manuscripts published in *JAMA Surgery* and the *Annals of Vascular Surgery*. The Department of Surgery spoke with Perez about his path to surgery and interest in research.

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Featured News



Members of the Department of Surgery received a total of \$2.5 million in research grants from Curebound. These awards included the \$1 million Curebound Cure Prize, given to Diane Simeone, M.D., and team, and up to \$500,000 grants, given to Yuan Chen, Ph.D., Andrew Lowy, M.D., Hervé Tiriac, Ph.D., Jonathan Weitz, Ph.D., and teams. These grants will fund research in colorectal and pancreatic cancer.

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Q&A: Bryan Clary

Bryan Clary, M.D., M.B.A., is a professor and chair of the Department of Surgery in the UC San Diego School of Medicine. He recently celebrated his 10th anniversary as chair and shared his path to UC San Diego, accomplishments and hopes for the future.



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Research News



Miles4Merak Raises Over \$73,000

Miles4Merak, a 30-day virtual movement challenge in the memory of Merak Melikian Hatounian, ended this month. The proceeds will fund gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GIST) research at Moores Cancer Center at UC San Diego Health.

Faculty News



Priya Lewis Accepted to the National Center of Leadership in Academic Medicine (NCLAM)

The NCLAM is a UC San Diego Health Sciences professional development program for junior faculty at UC San Diego. As a member, Priya Lewis, M.D., will develop skills for her academic career, implement a personal strategic plan, and expand her network within the university.



Jared Forrester Joins the Division of Transplantation and Hepatobiliary Surgery

Jared Forrester, M.D., joins the division as an assistant professor. He completed his general surgery residency at Stanford University and went on to complete a hepatopancreatobiliary surgery fellowship at Providence Portland Medical Center. Most recently, he worked as a hepatobiliary and pancreas surgeon at Hoag Family

Cancer Institute in Newport Beach. His research interests include surgical education, quality improvement and surgical infections.



Thomas O'Keefe Joins the Division of Breast Surgery

Thomas O'Keefe, M.D., joins the division as an assistant professor. He received his medical degree from the University of Illinois and completed his general surgery residency at Loyola University and UC San Diego. He then completed a quality improvement and patient safety fellowship at the Jennifer Moreno Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center and a breast surgery fellowship at UCSF. O'Keefe's research interests include ductal carcinoma in situ, breast cancer outcomes, bioinformatics, theranostic radiopharmaceuticals and surgical education.



Ana Garcia Cabrera Joins the Division of Minimally Invasive Surgery

Ana Garcia Cabrera, M.D., joins the division as a general surgeon. She received her medical degree from the Universidad Iberoamericana (UNIBE) School of Medicine and completed her general surgery residency at Montefiore Medical Center. She then completed her minimally invasive surgery fellowship at UC San Diego. Garcia Cabrera's research interests include advancing minimally invasive surgical techniques through innovations that improve precision, efficiency and patient outcomes.

Staff News



Center for the Future of Surgery Team Dinner

The Center for the Future of Surgery team met for a holiday dinner.



Division of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery Party

The division hosted a festive party for faculty and staff in the division.



Department of Surgery Soup Group

This fall, members of the Department of Surgery became Earls of Soup and cooked weekly delicious stews for their colleagues.

Training News

This month, the [**Center for the Future of Surgery**](#) hosted a minimally invasive fellows lab with general surgery residents, as well as several general surgery simulation labs.



Alumni Spotlight



Sasha Douglas, M.D., completed her general surgery residency at the UC San Diego Department of Surgery in 2024. She went on to complete a breast surgical oncology fellowship at Duke University and is now a breast surgical oncologist at Trinity Health of New England Saint Francis Hospital.

“One of the best parts of my training at UC San Diego was definitely the people. Surgical training is often one of the toughest and most formative times in a surgeon’s life. The weight of responsibility is immense, and the learning curve is steep. It is important to lean on friends, family and colleagues and to find the lessons hidden in every situation. When you have a great team, you can tackle anything that comes your way. I know I can always turn to my UC San Diego family for advice, encouragement or a laugh. Even though we may scatter across the country after graduation, we always have a network to rely on.”

As Seen on Social Media

2025 Wrapped

Dive into the
Department of Surgery
at UC San Diego.



Department of Surgery Wrapped

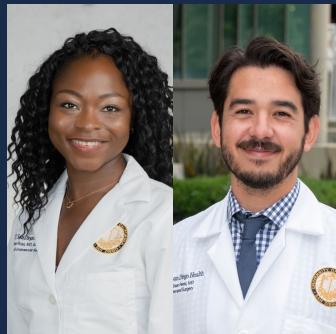
The department wrapped up the 2025 with highlights from our year in surgery! Learn more about our 2025 accomplishments [here](#).



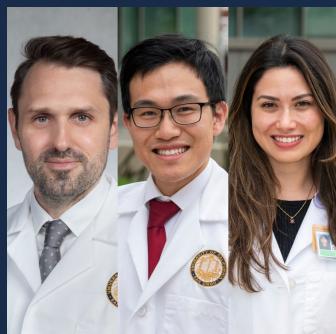
Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Week

In honor of Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Week, we spoke to Lisa Parry, M.D., on being a colorectal surgeon specializing in Crohn's and Colitis treatment options. [Read more](#)

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



Patients undergoing surgery for vascular diseases are routinely monitored to ensure adequate blood flow following the procedure. However, it can be difficult to monitor numerous patients at once. Now, **Elsie Ross, M.D., M.S., Sean Perez, M.D.**, and team evaluated the performance of a new remote ultrasound surveillance device that will allow patients to be monitored at home. They found that the device measures blood flow similarly to the current standard of care in healthy patients, suggesting it may be a viable tool for monitoring patients after surgery in the future. [Read more](#)



Timely dosing of anti-blood-clotting medications in trauma patients is difficult due to surgical workflow issues. Now, **Jarrett Santorelli, M.D., Tom Mou, M.D., Parisa Oviedo, M.D.**, and team have used tools embedded within the electronic health records to better display when medications were ordered and given to patients. The electronic tool decreased the average time these medications were given to patients, suggesting that trauma centers could implement the tool to improve and maintain timely dosing. [Read more](#)

[READ OUR LATEST PUBLICATIONS](#)

Recent Job Listings

- [Assistant, Associate or Full Project Scientist - Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clin, Clin X, In-Res, Adjunct\) Thoracic Organ Procurement and First Assistant Surgeon](#)
- [Philanthropic Officer - Surgery- 135682](#)
- [JPF04307 Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Vascular and Endovascular Surgery](#)

- [JPF04346 Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clin, Clin X, In-Res, Adjunct\) Transplant Surgery/Surgical Oncology](#)



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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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