

Department of Surgery News

June and July 2025



Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues and Friends of the Department,

While the summer months often herald a time to slow down and relax, there have been no shortage of major events in the life of the Department of Surgery. For starters, I am excited to share that once again, UC San Diego Health was ranked as the No. 1 San Diego hospital by U.S. News & World Report. Of the specialties with top national ratings, four of them represented the Department of Surgery, including Lung Surgery (8), Heart & Vascular Surgery (27), GI Surgery (28) and Cancer (41).

In addition, we announced the opening of our new McGrath Outpatient Pavilion on our Hillcrest medical campus. The six-floor, 250,000-square-foot advanced medical facility houses key clinical programs, such as the new breast center; digestive diseases; outpatient surgery; plastic, burn and trauma surgery; and a vascular

clinic. We are proud to continue our legacy in serving the greater San Diego community with infrastructure updates that will allow us to continue delivering excellent patient care.

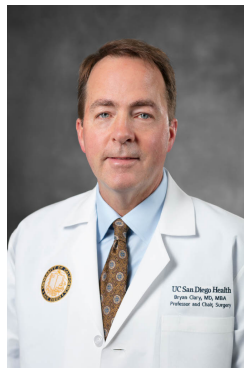
The new Vascular and Endovascular Surgery Clinic at Chancellor Park also opened this summer. The 8,487 square foot space is part of the ongoing expansion of vascular and endovascular services to meet the growing needs of our community.

And we are happy to share that Laura Haines, M.D., was promoted to chief of the Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns and Acute Care Surgery; and Garth Jacobsen, M.D., was promoted to chief of the Division of Minimally Invasive Surgery. The future of this department is very bright, in large part from the exceptional leadership of our division chiefs. Haines and Jacobsen bring years of experience, track records of excellence and a fresh vision to these critical programs. I could not be more excited and look forward to witnessing the future successes that they and their teams will bring forth.

For this month's Q&A, we sat down with Sonia Ramamoorthy, M.D., M.B.A., chief of the Division of Colon and Rectal Surgery and immediate past president of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons, to learn about her new role as director of the Physician Wellness Office at UC San Diego Health. The health and longevity of the physician workforce is a growing concern nationwide, including in our own region. Ramamoorthy has a deep commitment to the well-being of the physician workforce and is well-poised to lead us forward in this important work.

Finally, we take time in this month's newsletter to celebrate the graduation of our 2025 residents and fellows. They are exceptional in their own right and have secured amazing opportunities in academic and community health systems. The department wishes you the best as you embark on the next steps of your journey. We are certain that you will have an extraordinary impact on patients and become leaders in your fields and your communities.

As always, thank you for your continued 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



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: McGrath Outpatient Pavilion



On July 28, 2025, UC San Diego Health opened the highly anticipated McGrah Outpatient Pavilion at its Hillcrest medical campus. The facility will provide greater availability to high-quality, integrated care, addressing the region's increasing demand for innovative diagnostic, treatment, surgical and cancer care.

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Featured News

UC San Diego Health



Leading the Way
in San Diego

UC San Diego Health once again secured the No. 1 hospital ranking in San Diego, according to the 2025-2026 U.S. News & World Report "Best Hospitals" survey.

The survey evaluated more than 4,400 hospitals across 15 specialties and 22 procedures and conditions. Among these, UC San Diego Health achieved national recognition in 9 specialties.

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Q&A with Sonia Ramamoorthy, M.D., M.B.A

Sonia Ramamoorthy, M.D., M.B.A., is the chief of the Division of Colon and Rectal Surgery, former president of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons and the newly appointed director of the Physician Wellness Office at UC San Diego Health.



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Clinical News



New Vascular and Endovascular Surgery Clinic Opens

Led by Mahmoud Malas, M.D., M.H.S., the 8,487 square foot space is designed to meet the unique needs of vascular patients and is part of the ongoing expansion of the vascular and endovascular services at UC San



Minimally Invasive Surgery Milestone

Ryan Broderick, M.D., Garth Jacobsen, M.D., and team completed the first surgical removal of the gallbladder (called a cholecystectomy) using Distalmotion's DEXTER Robotic Surgery System outside of Europe. The milestone continues to position UC San Diego as a leader in surgical innovation, especially in soft tissue robotics.

Research News



REIMAGINE Organ Perfusion in Donation Course

The UC San Diego Center for Research, Education, Innovation and Transformation in Organ Donation (REIMAGINE), in partnership with the Donation and Transplant Institute (DTI), hosted a course on advanced organ donation techniques at the Center for the Future of Surgery. REIMAGINE Director and Division of Transplantation and Hepatobiliary Surgery Interim Chief Gabe Schnickel, M.D., M.P.H., and Assistant Professor Aleah Brubaker, M.D., Ph.D., directed the event. Experts from Europe and the United States taught organ perfusion techniques and recovery strategies.

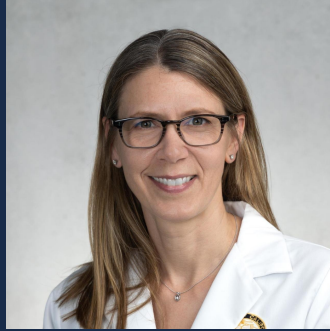


Jason Sicklick and Diwakar Guragain Receive \$3.3 Million NIH Grant

Jason Sicklick, M.D., and Diwakar Guragain, Ph.D., received a \$3.3 million R01 grant from the National

Institutes of Health for their research on gastrointestinal stromal tumor (GIST) treatment. Using this funding, Sicklick and Guragain will use biomarkers to target cells that resist standard GIST treatments, aiming to develop more comprehensive combination therapies.

Faculty News



Laura Haines Appointed Chief of the Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns and Acute Care Surgery

Laura Haines, M.D., was formerly interim chief of the division. She is also a professor, the trauma medical director, medical director of the surgical intensive care unit and program director of the surgical critical care fellowship and acute care surgery fellowship.



Garth Jacobsen Appointed Chief of the Division of Minimally Invasive Surgery

Garth Jacobsen, M.D., was formerly interim chief of the division. He is also a professor, director of the general surgery residency program and associate director of the Center for the Future of Surgery.

Training News



New surgery residents attended a three-week long resident boot camp at the Center for the Future of Surgery. This training aimed to introduce new residents to surgical techniques and robotic tools.

The Division of Plastic Surgery also held a plastic surgery lab where they learned breast reconstruction techniques.

We also welcomed our new general surgery residents to the department at the Annual General Surgery Resident Olympics and Intern Welcome Event. The day was filled with teamwork, competition and celebration between residents and faculty.



Congratulations to all of our graduates!

This summer, we celebrate this year's graduating residents and fellows. We wish them all the best as they move on to the next stage of their journey.

Residency Graduates



Rachel Blitzer
General Surgery



Rachel Jensen
General Surgery
*Colon & Rectal Surgery
Fellowship, University of
Minnesota Twin Cities*



Sohini Khan
General Surgery
*Surgical Oncology
Fellowship at UT
Southwestern Medical
Center*



Jay Meisner
General Surgery
*Pediatric Surgery
Fellowship, UC San Diego
Health and Rady Children's
Hospital*



Tom Mou
General Surgery
*Surgical Critical Care and
Acute Care Surgery
Fellowship, Vanderbilt
University*



Rohini Patel
General Surgery
*Vascular Surgery
Fellowship, UC San Diego
Health*



Michael Turner
General Surgery
*Surgical Oncology
Fellowship, Massachusetts
General Brigham*



Meera Reghunathan
Plastic Surgery
*Hand Fellowship, Mayo
Clinic in Rochester*



**Austin Cooper
Morgan**
Plastic Surgery
*Naval Medical Center San
Diego*

Fellowship Graduates



Vamsi Aribindi
Cardiovascular Surgery
Sharp Grossmont Hospital



Ana Cabrera
Minimally Invasive Surgery



Jeffrey Reeves
Minimally Invasive Surgery
UC San Diego Health



Keon Young Park
Pediatric Surgery
Pediatric Colorectal Surgery



Fellowship, Children's National Hospital



Brandon Harris

Acute Care Surgery
Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in San Bernardino



Jessica Masch

Acute Care Surgery



Simone Hyman

Pediatric Surgical Critical Care
UC San Diego Health General Surgery Residency



Dayle Colpitts

Surgical Critical Care
Inova Fairfax Medical Campus



Michelle Lippincott

Surgical Critical Care
Acute Care Surgery Fellowship, UC San Diego Health



Lara Spence

Surgical Critical Care
Acute Care Surgery Fellowship, UC San Diego Health



Agustin Sibona

Vascular Surgery
Hoag Jeffrey M. Carlton Heart & Vascular Institute in Newport Beach

Alumni Spotlight



Garth Jacobsen, M.D., completed his minimally invasive surgery fellowship at UC San Diego. He is now the chief of the Division of Minimally Invasive Surgery, director of the general surgery residency program and the associate director of the Center for the Future of Surgery at UC San Diego.

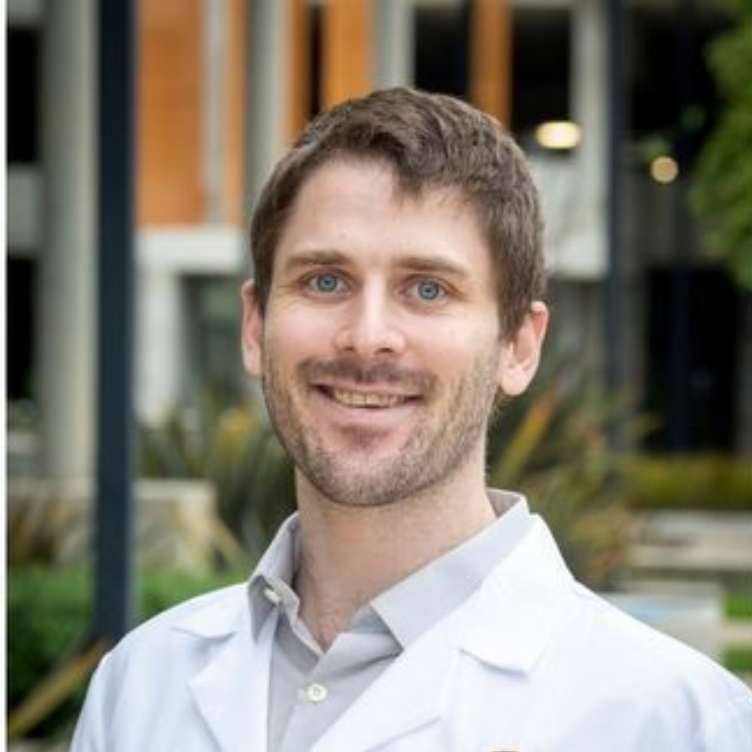
"My experience with the UC San Diego Department of Surgery has been transformative and deeply fulfilling. Coming from traditional medical school and residency training in more conventional, structured environments, I deliberately sought a fellowship opportunity that would challenge me to push the boundaries of surgical technology and innovation. UC San Diego provided exactly that environment — a place where faculty and staff genuinely embrace cutting-edge approaches while maintaining an infectious enthusiasm for their work. The department's commitment to advancing patient care is matched only by its dedication to teaching and mentoring the next generation of surgeons. As a younger institution, the UC San Diego Department of Surgery possessed the unique combination of innovative spirit and visionary leadership necessary to drive both technological advancement and exceptional patient care forward. The culture of curiosity, collaboration and excellence was so compelling that after completing my fellowship, staying on as faculty felt like the natural and only choice — I simply could not imagine practicing anywhere else."

As Seen on Social Media



World Plastic Surgery Day

In honor of World Plastic Surgery Day, Plastic Surgery Resident Mary Lee, M.D., shared a day in her life.



GIST Awareness Day

In honor of Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumors (GIST) Awareness Day, General Surgery Resident Mark Antkowiak, M.D., spoke about his work and the importance of GIST research.

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.



Stephen Bickler, M.D., and colleagues recently identified a cellular mechanism that explains how inflammation may be affected differently by rural versus urban living in sub-Saharan Africa. The findings provide a new hypothesis for how environmental factors are linked to health and disease states. [Read More](#)

[READ OUR LATEST PUBLICATIONS](#)

Events



UC San Diego Center for Research, Education, Innovation and Transformation in Organ Donation (REIMAGINE) Annual Symposium

When: October 12 - 14, 2025

Where: The Estancia La Jolla

[Details and registration](#)

Recent Job Listings

- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clin, Clin X, In-Res, Adjunct\) Thoracic Organ Procurement and First Assistant Surgeon](#)
- [Philanthropic Officer - Surgery - 135682](#)
- [JPF04316 Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X\) Transplant Surgery](#)
- [JPF04307 Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Vascular and Endovascular Surgery](#)
- [JPF04317 Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Breast Surgery](#)
- [JPF04318 Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Minimally Invasive Surgery](#)



UC San Diego

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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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