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# Department of Surgery News

## October 2024



### Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues and Friends of the Department,

As the fall season kicks into full gear, Halloween is not the only exciting thing happening in our department! Rady Children's Hospital was named the third-best children's hospital in the nation for heart surgery by U.S. News & World Report. This distinction speaks to the excellence and hard work of our Division of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery.

We're also excited to highlight a recent feature article that explores a new approach to anatomy education called Compassionatomy. Headed by Geoffroy Noel, Ph.D., chief of the Division of Anatomy, Compassionatomy encourages students to have empathy and compassion for donors. The process also teaches students to connect with their emotions and care for each other's well-being. This approach has transformed anatomy education, highlighting our department's dedication to patient-centered care.

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In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we sat down for an interview with Sarah Blair, M.D., a breast surgical oncologist who specializes in diagnosing and treating breast cancer and other conditions of the breast. Blair is currently working on new technology that will allow surgeons to locate and remove cancer cells quickly and more precisely.

Lastly, our department hosted many accomplished surgeons and scholars this month. Selwyn Vickers, M.D., president of the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, and Mayusaki Sho, M.D., vice president of Nara Medical University Hospital, both lectured at our Surgery Grand Rounds. Additionally, Zhen Bouman Chen, Ph.D., from City of Hope, presented her work at our Quarterly Research Seminar. These scholars, alongside our incredibly talented faculty and staff, speak to the standard of excellence in our department.

As always, we 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

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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: Compassionatomy — Redefining Anatomy Through Empathy and Compassion

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Compassionatomy is a new approach to anatomy training that emphasizes compassion and humanity in the lab. Led by Geoffroy Noel, Ph.D., chief of the Division of Anatomy, students are taught the importance of empathy, dignity and patient-centered care.

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## Q&A with Sarah L. Blair, M.D.

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Sarah L. Blair, M.D., is a breast surgical oncologist and board-certified general surgeon who specializes in diagnosing and treating breast cancer and soft tissue tumors. She is also the inventor of a new tumor localization system that helps surgeons rapidly detect and visualize breast tumors for precise cancer removal.



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## Featured News

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For the second year in a row, Rady Children's Hospital was named by U.S. News & World Report to its Best Children's Hospitals Honor Roll, a distinction awarded to only 10 children's hospitals nationwide. Rady Children's was also listed as the third-best children's hospital for cardiology and heart surgery.

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UC San Diego Health was named a top performer for Vizient's 2024 Bernard A. Birnbaum, M.D., Quality Leadership Performance Award. This is the sixth consecutive year that the health system has achieved this distinction.

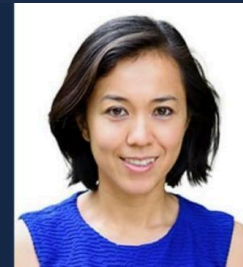
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## Research News



### Michael Bouvet Receives Multiple Grants for Work in Cancer Research

Michael Bouvet, M.D., receives a \$1.2 million grant from Veterans Affairs to study new methods for improving the detection and resection of colorectal cancer, as well as a \$360,000 Institutional Research Grant from the American Cancer Society to help initiate new cancer research projects.



### Quarterly Research Seminar with Zhen Bouman Chen

Zhen Bouman Chen, Ph.D., was invited to present "Elucidating Endotheliopathy in Diabetic Vasculopathy." She is an associate professor at the Arthur Riggs Diabetes Metabolism Research Institute at City of Hope.



### **Grand Rounds with Selwyn Vickers**

The department enjoyed a presentation by Selwyn Vickers, M.D., president and CEO of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, on the impact and opportunity of inclusive excellence: addressing social determinants of health in cancer clinical trials.



### **Grand Rounds with Masayuki Sho**

The department also appreciated a presentation by Masayuki Sho, M.D., Ph.D., chair of the Department of Surgery at Nara Medical University and vice president of Nara Medical University Hospital, on the current status and future perspectives of pancreatic cancer treatment.

## **Faculty News**

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### **Patricia Thistlethwaite Receives Trailblazer Award**

Patricia Thistlethwaite, M.D., Ph.D., receives the United Therapeutics Jenesis Trailblazer Award for her research in pulmonary hypertension. The award is given to exceptional and distinguished female clinicians and researchers, whose contributions have advanced the biology, diagnosis and treatment of pulmonary vascular disease.



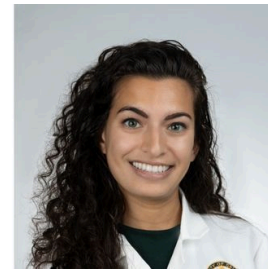
### **Gabriel Schnickel Receives Physician of the Year Award**

Gabriel Schnickel, M.D., M.P.H., receives the Physician of the Year Award from the Liver Coalition of San Diego. This award recognizes outstanding leaders in the field of liver disease.



### **Sonia Ramamoorthy Named Interim Director of Physician Wellness at UC San Diego Health**

Sonia Ramamoorthy, M.D., will serve as the Interim Director of Physician Wellness while the search for a permanent director is underway. She is also the chief of the Division of Colon and Rectal Surgery.



### **Welcome Afaaf Shakir**

Afaaf Shakir, M.D., joins the Division of Plastic Surgery after completing her microsurgery fellowship at the Hansjörg Wyss Department of Plastic Surgery at NYU Langone Health. She completed her plastic and reconstructive surgery residency at the University of Chicago and attended the Stanford University School of Medicine. Her research interests include optimizing clinical outcomes after complex reconstruction.

## **Staff News**

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### **Welcome Eastern Kang Sim**

Eastern Kang Sim, Ph.D., joins the Department of Surgery as a biostatistician after 14 years at the Department of Pediatrics. Kang Sim is an alumnus of UC San Diego, having completed his bachelor's and Ph.D. here, and also holds master's degrees in epidemiology and data science. Kang Sim is passionate about data, with research interests in applied statistics



### **Welcome Melissa Garth**

time, Kang Sim is a proud caregiver for his father and enjoys road trips and capturing nature photos.

Melissa Garth is a nurse practitioner who joins the Division of Plastic Surgery after working with the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at UC San Diego Health for over four years. Melissa completed her advanced degree at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine and previously worked in the field of plastic surgery at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.



### **Welcome Kimberly Tawfik**

Kimberly Tawfik joins the Division of Plastic Surgery as an executive assistant for the Chief of Plastic Surgery, Amanda Gosman, M.D. She completed her bachelor's degree in liberal arts and sciences at Oakland University in Rochester, MI. Before joining the department, Kimberly worked as an academic support coordinator supporting the vice chair of research in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at UC San Diego.



### **Welcome Samantha Phan and Oluyemisi Bolonduro**

Samantha Phan and Oluyemisi Bolonduro join the Department as communications interns. Samantha is a fourth-year undergraduate student in world literature and sociology. Oluyemisi is a second-year graduate student in the MFA in writing program.

## **Training News**

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### **Garrison Leach Places Second at the American Society of Plastic Surgeons Inventors Challenge**

Garrison Leach, M.D., received second place for his innovation, Drain Lock. Drain Lock is a novel device that aims to mitigate pain and scarring associated with post-surgical

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Leach spearheads a collaborative innovation initiative between the Division of Plastic Surgery and the Jacobs School of Engineering that is committed to the production of novel devices and solutions to improve surgical performance and patient care.

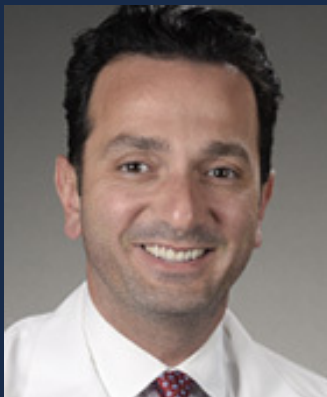
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The **Center for the Future of Surgery** held numerous trainings and workshops this month, including a general surgery lab, plastic surgery lab and bootcamp, liver surgery courses, and more!



## Alumni Spotlight

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***Pouria Parsa, M.D.**, completed his general surgery residency at UC San Diego Health in 2014 and his vascular surgery fellowship at Baylor University Medical Center. Since then, he has worked as a vascular surgeon at Kaiser Permanente San Diego. Parsa supervises UC San Diego vascular trainees at Kaiser when they rotate at that site. He has also served on the Society for Vascular Surgery's public and professional outreach committee and young surgeon advisory committee.*

“My most vivid memories from the general surgery residency revolve around the diverse

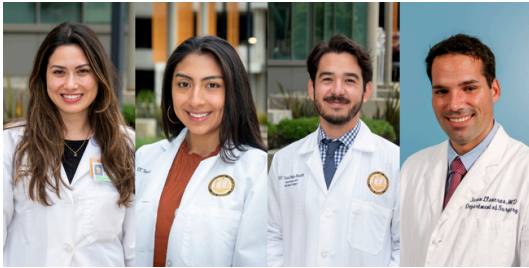
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challenges. This variety was instrumental in shaping my training, providing a well-rounded perspective on different medical cases and treatment approaches. The exposure to such a broad spectrum of environments and patient demographics enriched my learning experience and contributed significantly to my development as a surgeon. UC San Diego's dedication to excellence continues to set a high standard in the field, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have been part of such a pioneering program. The experience continues to inspire me in my career."

## As Seen on Social Media

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### Hispanic Heritage Month

Parisa Oviedo, M.D., Ruth Laverde, M.D., Sean Perez, M.D., and Jason Llaneras, M.D., were highlighted across our channels in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month.



### National Physician Assistant Week

Ellen Fink, P.A., spoke on what she loves most about her position in the Division of Colon and Rectal Surgery for National Physician Assistant Week.



### Pumpkin Carving Contest

The department held its annual pumpkin carving contest and received many spooktacular submissions. The winner was Kevin Ye, M.D., and the runner up was Victoria Heredia, M.S. Happy Halloween!



### Fifth Annual Miles for Merak: A Virtual Day of Movement

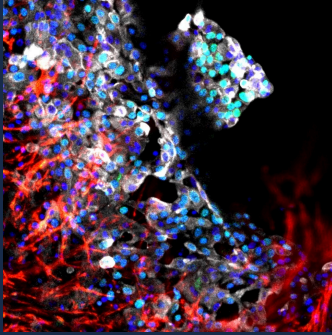
Simply donate, walk four miles or do a 40-minute activity of your choice. Proceeds will benefit the GIST cancer research of Jason Sicklick, M.D., in loving memory of Merak Melikian Hatounian.

## Science Discoveries and Recent Publications

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



A breast cancer treatment medication offers a promising alternative to traditional chemotherapy for patients with appendix cancer. [Read More](#)

[READ OUR LATEST PUBLICATIONS BY DIVISION](#)

## Recent Job Listings

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- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Vascular and Endovascular Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Project Scientist - Vascular & Endovascular Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(Clinical X, In-Residence\) Burn Surgeon](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Vascular and Endovascular Surgery](#)
- [Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X\) Chief, Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns and Acute Care Surgery](#)
- [Associate or Full Professor \(Ladder/In-Residence\) Chief, Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns and Acute Care Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X\) Transplant 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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