

Department of Surgery News

September 2025



Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues and Friends of the Department,

Fall is upon us, which, along with superb college football, marks a time of year when many new faculty members begin their affiliation with the department. In August, we welcomed Sophie Wang, M.D., and Sadia Ilyas, M.D. (Vascular and Endovascular Surgery). Now, we are pleased to highlight Sean Hickey, M.D., (Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns and Acute Care Surgery) and Glen Wakam, M.D. (Transplant and Hepatobiliary Surgery). More new faculty will be announced in October as well.

The process of hiring a new faculty member is typically lengthy and involves input from the division as well as multidisciplinary partners both within and outside the department. As you would expect, opportunities in the Department of Surgery at UC San Diego attract highly competitive candidates from across the country. The core of the decision focuses on attracting talented faculty who best meet our patients' needs, bring fresh ideas and innovation, have a passion for training the next generation, and maintain a collegial spirit. Our new faculty embody all of these qualities and more, and we are thrilled to welcome them.

I am also pleased to share that UC San Diego Health was once again named by Vizient as a top ten performer in their annual Bernard A. Birnbaum, M.D. Quality Leadership Ranking. This marks the seventh consecutive year that UC San Diego has received this prestigious and meaningful recognition. The Vizient award is a data-driven patient care quality award that reflects mortality, efficiency, effectiveness, patient-centeredness, safety, and the degree of variation in care. The recent cohort includes 118 leading academic medical centers across the nation, representing nearly every institution recognized by U.S. News & World Report.

We also took time this month to sit down with Kate Hinchcliff, M.D., (Plastic Surgery) to learn about how she works closely with occupational therapists to achieve the best outcomes in upper extremity rehab. When different UC San Diego teams collaborate, we can create a truly transformative patient experience.

Finally, this month is filled with other celebrations and achievements. Joel Baumgartner, M.D., (Surgical Oncology) and Priya Lewis, M.D., (Plastic Surgery) received a 2025 Exemplary Professionalism in the Clinical Learning Environment Award from the UC San Diego School of Medicine. This honor reflects both the highly positive perceptions of these faculty members by students and education leaders, and their unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional training and care.

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

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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UC San Diego Health Honored as Top Performer in Quality Care



UC San Diego Health recognized for seventh consecutive year as a top performing health system with high quality outpatient care by Vizient, Inc., reflecting dedication to improved patient outcomes and experience.

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In the News



UC San Diego received \$1.7 billion in grants over the previous year, supporting thousands of active research projects and fueling critical discoveries in several areas, including surgical science.

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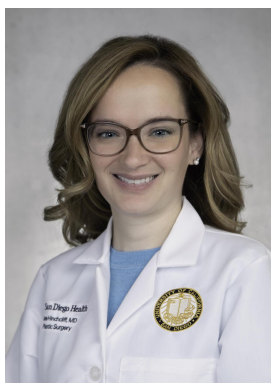


Diane Simeone, M.D., director of Moores Cancer Center and founding director of the Pancreatic Cancer Early Detection Consortium, spoke to the New York Post about how jaundice can be an early sign of pancreatic cancer.

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Q&A with Kate Hinchcliff, M.D.

Kate Hinchcliff, M.D., is an associate professor in the Division of Plastic Surgery with dual appointments in the Departments of Surgery and Orthopaedic Surgery. As a hand surgeon and director of hand and peripheral nerve surgery at UC San Diego, she works closely with the health system's rehabilitation services and Hand Therapy Program.



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Faculty News



Sean Hickey Joins the Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns and Acute Care Surgery

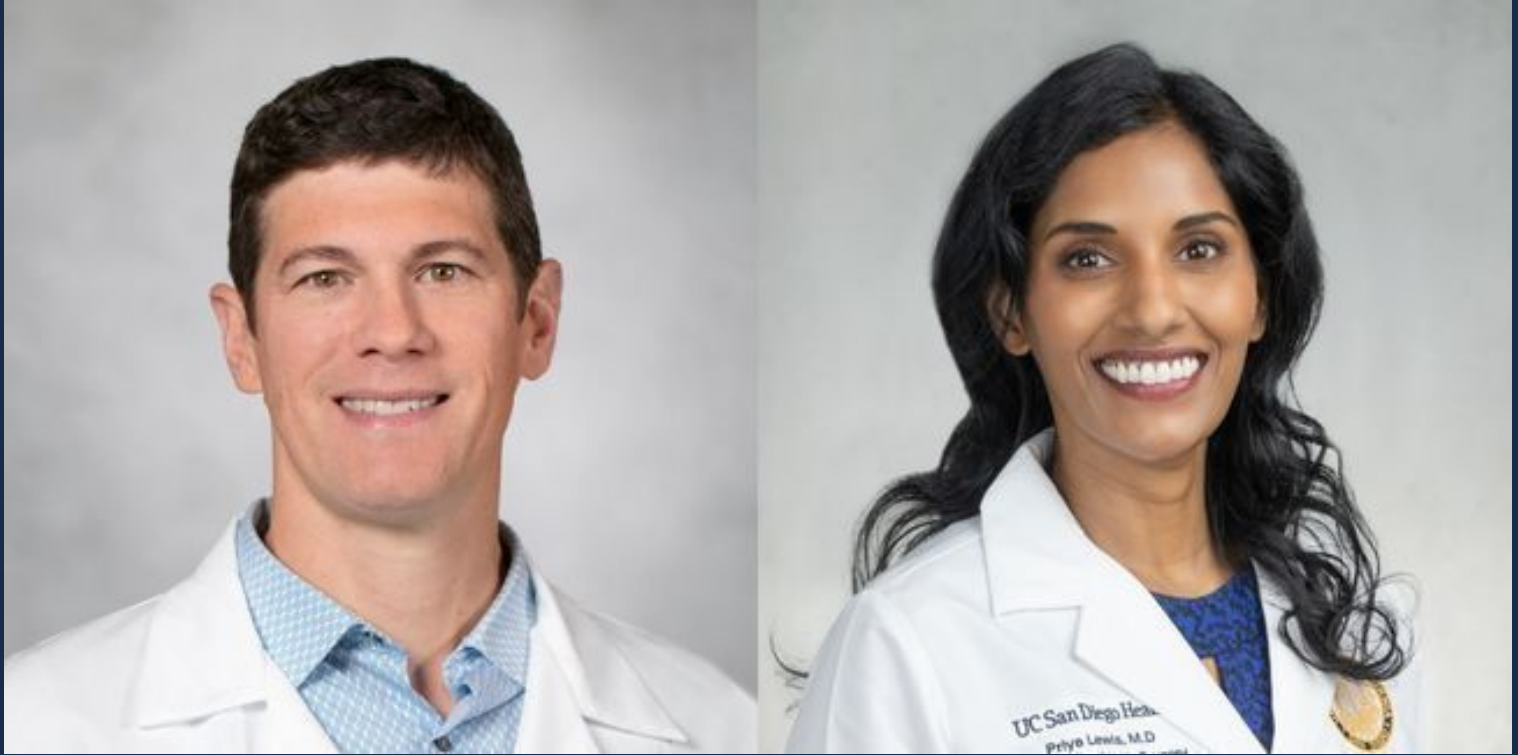
Sean Hickey, M.D., joins the division as an associate professor. He completed three one-year fellowships in surgical critical care; acute care surgery; and acute and reconstructive burn surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital (now Mass General Brigham). He later practiced at Massachusetts General and Shriners Children's Hospitals. His research focuses on the use of skin substitutes, laser therapy for hypertrophic scars, and the surgical management of calciphylaxis, a condition characterized by the deposition of calcium in the small blood vessels of the skin.



Glenn Wakam Joins the Division of Transplantation and Hepatobiliary Surgery

Glenn Wakam, M.D., joins the division as an assistant professor. Wakam received his medical degree from UCSF.

He then completed his general surgery residency at the University of Michigan and his abdominal transplant fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic. Wakam's work and research center on health equity in transplantation, innovations in surgical education, organ allocation and resident education.



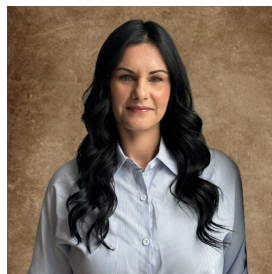
Joel Baumgartner and Priya Lewis Receive 2025 Exemplary Professionalism in the Clinical Learning Environment Awards

This award, given by the UC San Diego School of Medicine, recognizes exceptional commitment to professionalism, integrity and ethical leadership in the clinical learning environment. Joel Baumgartner, M.D., and Priya Lewis, M.D., will be honored at the Celebrating Educators and Elevating Teaching event in October.

Staff News

Shalynn “Shay” Castro Joins the Department as Executive Assistant to the Chair of Surgery

Shay has been part of the Division of Surgical Oncology since joining UC San Diego Health in 2021. With over a decade of experience in healthcare administration, she is passionate about building connections, supporting teams and improving operational efficiency.



Training News

2025 Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (PRS) National Mentorship Experience

The Division of Plastic Surgery hosted the 2025 PRS National Mentorship Experience at UC San Diego. This event provides mentorship and support for medical students interested in plastic surgery. This year's event included a suturing workshop, four plastic surgery labs, and lectures by Amanda Gosman, M.D., Kate Hinchcliff, M.D., Garrison Leach, M.D., and Benjamin Massenburg, M.D.





Alumni Spotlight



Thinzar Lwin, M.D., M.S., is a surgeon-scientist and assistant professor in surgical oncology at the City of Hope National Medical Center. She completed her general surgery residency at UC San Diego in 2020 and later went on to complete the Mass General Brigham/Dana-Farber complex general surgical oncology fellowship at Harvard Medical School. Her research expertise is in tumor-specific fluorescent probes for intraoperative navigation during cancer surgeries.

“The best part of training at UC San Diego was the great combination of amazing faculty, inspiring scientific progress and diverse clinical settings, all located in a wonderful place to live. The thing I appreciated the most about my training was how broad it was. Even though I am now a cancer surgeon, my training at UC San Diego

taught me to be comfortable with the full breadth of general surgery. The faculty equipped me with the clinical reasoning and research skills necessary for an independent career as a surgeon-scientist. One of my favorite memories from training was watching the sun rise on my way to work and then meeting my family at the Gliderport at the end of the day to watch the sunset.”

As Seen on Social Media



National Advanced Practice Providers (APP) Week

In honor of National APP Week, nurse practitioners Corinne Beck and Bernadette Choate spoke about what it means to work in the Division of Minimally Invasive Surgery.

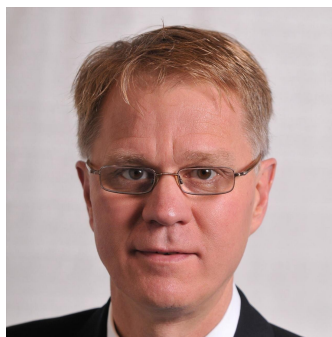


Humans of Surgery

Samuel Eisenstein, M.D., associate professor in the Division of Colon and Rectal Surgery, and Erika Somers, program administrator for the Division of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery residency and fellowship program, were highlighted for Humans of Surgery.

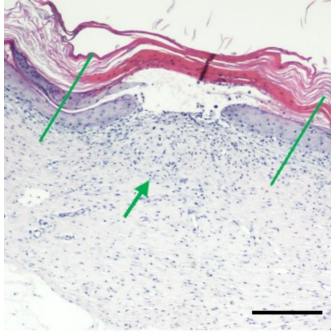
Science Discoveries and Recent Publications

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



Michael Bouvet, M.D., and colleagues used a tumor marker (anti-CA19-9 antibody) bound to a fluorescent molecule to visualize pancreatic cancer in mice. The new technique could help surgeons better target and remove pancreatic tumors in humans in the future.

[Read more](#)



Brian Eliceiri, Ph.D., and colleagues identified a mechanism for the release of small extracellular vesicles that regulate neutrophil recruitment in genetically defined mouse models of wound healing. They showed that an enzyme called Rab27a, which regulates vesicle release, controls the loading of proteins associated with inflammation, providing a better understanding of the molecular mechanisms involved in wound healing.

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Events



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

With **Keynote Speaker Amy Purdy** — paralympian, best-selling author, dancer, model, motivational speaker and kidney transplant patient!

When: October 12 - 14, 2025

Where: Estancia Hotel and Spa, 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](#)
- [JPF04307 Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Vascular and Endovascular Surgery.](#)
- [JPF04318 Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Minimally Invasive Surgery.](#)



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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.

9500 Gilman Dr.
La Jolla, CA 92093

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