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UC San Diego

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY NEWS

September 2024



Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues and Friends of the Department,

As we move into the fall season in San Diego, the Department of Surgery remains as active as ever! We are excited to welcome several new faculty members and trainees to our team. A major highlight this month was the UC San Diego Center for Research, Education, Innovation and Transformation in Organ Donation (REIMAGINE) hosting its inaugural national symposium, which was focused on developing strategies that will sustainably expand the availability and use of organs. REIMAGINE was born out of a need for a structured approach to exploring new technologies, policy, and community engagement with the goal of expanding access and improving patient outcomes.

In this month's Q&A, we sat down with Gabriel Schnickel, M.D., M.P.H., our surgical director of liver transplantation and executive director of the REIMAGINE Center. His path

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to surgery was not always clear-cut—in fact, his initial ambition was to become a professional cyclist before his passion for medicine took hold.

We are also pleased to highlight exciting scientific discoveries from our faculty in the past month. Lastly, we are actively recruiting for several key positions, including a new chief of the Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns & Acute Care Surgery. If you or someone you know would be a great fit, we encourage you to explore or share this opportunity.

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

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 Article: REIMAGINE Symposium



On September 20, 2024, the UC San Diego Center for Research, Education, Innovation and Transformation in Organ Donation (REIMAGINE) hosted its first symposium called REIMAGINE Organ Donation and Transplantation: Paving the Path to 60k. Thought leaders from across the country attended the event, which featured presentations by numerous UC San Diego Department of Surgery faculty members and others.

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Q&A with Gabriel Schnickel, M.D., M.P.H.

Schnickel is a transplant and hepatobiliary surgeon and surgical director of liver transplantation in the Department of Surgery at UC San Diego Health. He is also the executive director and co-founder of the Center for Research, Education, Innovation and Transformation in Organ Donation (REIMAGINE), which was created to address the urgent public health crisis caused by the dire organ shortage and ever-increasing need for transplants.

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Featured News



August marked the 40th anniversary of the opening of the San Diego Trauma Center. In this Q&A, Laura Haines, M.D., reflects on the system, her career, the patients she serves and provides a first-hand glimpse of what a typical day looks like in the Trauma Center at UC San Diego Health.

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Minimally invasive surgeons, led by Santiago Horgan, M.D., are the first in the nation to evaluate the potential use of spatial computing apps on Apple Vision Pro in the operating room. This feasibility study was initiated after two months of testing in the Center for the Future of Surgery.

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September is Women in Medicine Month and Diane M. Simeone, M.D., from the Department of Surgery and others were recently interviewed for a story about breaking barriers in the field of medicine.

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Mark Washburn was the 5,000th patient to undergo a PTE surgery at UC San Diego Health, which pioneered the surgery and has performed the most in the world. During the innovative procedure, a team of surgeons, led by Michael Madani, M.D., removed blood clots and scarring from major blood vessels in the arteries of the lungs to restore blood flow.

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Research News



Aleah Brubaker and Gabriel Schnickel Awarded Inaugural Chancellor's Interdisciplinary Team Catalyst Fund Award

Aleah Brubaker, M.D., Ph.D., and Gabriel Schnickel, M.D., M.P.H., along with Mita Shah, M.D., and Sheri Hartman, Ph.D., will receive up to \$75,000 to catalyze collaborative and transformative change in organ donation. The UC San Diego Catalyst Fund supports multidisciplinary collaborations, advances innovative research and paves the way for long-term funding strategies.



Sunidhi Jaiswal Receives 2024 Women in Molecular Imaging Network (WIMIN) Research Scholar Award



Michael Bouvet Named Associate Editor-in-Chief for Gland Surgery

Gland Surgery is a monthly peer-reviewed journal that aims to provide findings and information on gland diseases from a range of fields. Michael Bouvet, M.D., will be in charge of thyroid, parathyroid, adrenal and pancreatic submissions to the journal.



Elsie Ross and Omar Al-Nouri Mentor Engineering Team for Prestigious Competition

Elsie Ross, M.D., M.S., and Omar Al-Nouri, D.O., M.S., along with Nate Delson, Ph.D., sponsored a mechanical engineering student group to develop a new device for quickly clearing clots from blood vessels. The team was awarded Honorable Mention in the prestigious Design by Biomedical

Sunidhi Jaiswal, Ph.D., a postdoctoral scholar in the lab of Michael Bouvet, M.D., received the award for her research presentation at the 2024 World Molecular Imaging Congress. Her work examines the potential of fluorescent antibodies to target human pancreatic cancer in mouse models.

Challenge, which includes \$1,000 for the undergraduate team members.

Faculty News



Winta Mehtsun to participate in JUMPSTART Program

Winta Mehtsun, M.D., M.P.H., was selected to participate in the 2024-2026 cohort of the Junior Underrepresented Mentorship and Promotion (JUMP) Start program, sponsored by the Association for Academic Surgery and the Society of University Surgeons. The goal of the program is to “advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in surgery and, thereby, better health outcomes for all.”



The Department of Surgery Welcomes Hannah Hollandsworth

Hannah Hollandsworth, M.D., joins the Division of Minimally Invasive Surgery after completing her residency at UC San Diego Health. She attended Michigan State University for medical school and has a research interest in the education of residents and medical students.



The Department of Surgery



The Department of Surgery

Kyle Thompson, M.D., joins the Division of Pediatric Surgery after completing his fellowship in pediatric surgery earlier this year at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital. He attended the University of Texas in Houston for medical school and completed his residency at UC Davis Health. He has a clinical background in complex esophageal atresia and airway diseases and is interested in building a clinical program and center of excellence that can not only serve San Diego but grow to service Southern California and beyond.

Benjamin Massenburg, M.D., joins the Division of Plastic Surgery after completing his craniofacial surgery fellowship earlier this year at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. He attended Harvard University as an undergraduate, the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai for medical school and completed his residency in plastic surgery at the University of Washington. He has a strong research interest in three-dimensional craniofacial and cleft shape changes following surgery.

Staff News



Department Team Lunch with Chair Bryan Clary

UC San Diego Department of Surgery team members enjoyed lunch with Chair Bryan Clary, M.D., M.B.A., and discussed topics that influence their daily work lives.



The Department of Surgery Welcomes Krista Munro

Krista Munro, nurse practitioner, joins the Division of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery after working in the cardiovascular center at UC San Diego Health for over seven years. She completed her bachelor's in nursing at California State University San Marcos, master's in nursing at Azusa Pacific University and acute care N.P. specialization at West Coast University.

Training News

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UC San Diego Health Research Boot Camp

A huge thank you to department members Jason Sicklick, M.D., Yuan Chen, M.D., Brian Eliceiri, M.D., Cosimo Commisso, Ph.D., Joel Baumgartner, M.D., Jeff Reeves, M.D., and Terry Doherty who participated in the Research Boot Camp on August 28, 2024.



Welcome to our New Fellows!

The Department of Surgery is excited to welcome its incoming 2024 fellows! The Department looks forward to supporting their growth and contributions throughout their fellowship and beyond. Welcome to UC San Diego Surgery!

Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns, & Acute Care Fellowships

Dayle Colpitts, M.D., Lara Spence, M.D., Michelle Lippincott, M.D., Simone Hyman, M.D., Jessica Masch, M.D.*, and Brandon Harris, M.D.*

**starting the Acute Care Surgery Fellowship*

Cardiothoracic Surgery Fellowship

Sriganesh Sharma, M.D., Ph.D.

Minimally Invasive Surgery Fellowship

Ana Cabrera, M.D. and Jeffery Reeves, M.D.

Pediatric Surgery Fellowship

Megan Birkhold, M.D.

Vascular Surgery Fellowship

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Agustin Sibona, M.D. and Annie Lo, M.D.



Alumni Spotlight



Elizabeth Pocock, M.D., completed her general surgery residency at UC San Diego Health in 2012. She went on to complete her cardiothoracic surgery training at the Texas Heart Institute at Baylor College of Medicine, followed by an advanced coronary surgery fellowship at Mount Sinai Morningside. Since then, she has worked at George Washington University Hospital and Mount Sinai Morningside. She is currently an assistant professor of cardiac surgery at the University of Vermont.

“When I applied for residency, my goal was to pursue cardiothoracic surgery, but since there was no integrated cardiac surgery program available directly from medical school, I applied for general surgery residency at UC San Diego Health as a pathway to a cardiac surgery fellowship. And to this day I am so grateful that that is how my training turned out. I am a much better cardiac surgeon with my understanding of all the critical care I learned doing trauma, burn, and general surgery. I understand vascular surgery, urology, otolaryngology, and neurosurgery—which are all issues my patients have! I genuinely believe this broad-based learning continues to create the best surgeon for the future. The Department of Surgery also fully supported my heart surgery goals and allowed me to do many months on cardiac surgery during my general surgery residency, which both solidified my decision to pursue that as my career and made me fantastically well-

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I am proud to see how the program has evolved since I graduated and keeps doing the most phenomenal cutting-edge work.”

As seen on social media



Update on Wendy Nguyen’s Double Lung Transplant

After the successful transplant surgery by Eugene Golts, M.D., Nguyen felt fragile, delicate and easily broken. But as soon as she began to heal, both physically and mentally, she knew she was well taken care of and that was her motivation to fight.

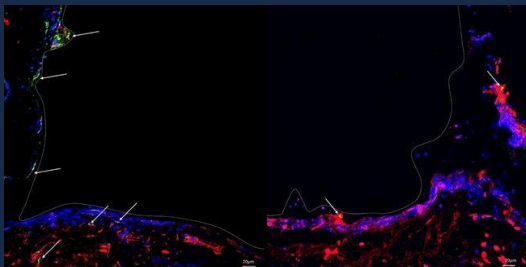


The Division of Vascular & Endovascular Surgery and others enjoyed a hike

"Exploring the outdoors is the best way to recharge the mind and fuel the curiosity for science," says Ann Gaffey, M.D., M.S.

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.



Engineered extracellular vesicles can accelerate impaired wound healing in diabetic mice. [Read More](#)



A new study on influenza-infected mice suggests that adenosine triphosphate (ATP) release in the lungs can promote the progression of disease. [Read More](#)

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Job Listings

- [Assistant, Associate or Full Project Scientist - Surgical Oncology](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Minimally Invasive Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Vascular and Endovascular Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Plastic Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery](#)
- [Assistant, Associate or Full Professor \(HS Clinical, Clinical X, In-Residence, Adjunct\) Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery Faculty](#)
- [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](#)



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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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