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SURGERY Synopsis

Chair’s Message



Douglas E. Wood, MD,
FACS, FRCSEd (ad hom)
The Henry N. Harkins
Professor and Chair

The Department of Surgery will provide compassionate and high quality patient care, train future generations of surgical leaders and conduct research in a collegial environment which embraces diversity and promotes inclusiveness.

The Department of Surgery (DOS) adopted this mission statement several years ago. Our mission statement was crafted by our Council on Diversity and Inclusion, co-led by Dr. **Jorge Reyes**, Professor & Chief, Division of Transplant Surgery, and Dr. **Elina Quiroga**, Assistant Professor, Division of Vascular Surgery, and reflects the strong desire and commitment of this Department to improve in how we reflect and serve diverse communities that are historically under-represented in surgery, and in our department.

As Chief of the **Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery**, I grappled with the issue of diversity – beginning with the obvious issue of gender disparity in CT Surgery.

Conscious attention to inclusion and diversity began some years ago through the leadership of Dr. **Carlos Pellegrini**, who was passionate about making the Department and the field of surgery more diverse and inclusive. One of the first steps he took was the establishment of a departmental scholarship to send residents and junior faculty to the annual meeting of the **Society of Black Academic Surgeons (SBAS)**. Dr. Pellegrini’s goal was to encourage their ongoing participation and eventual leadership in that organization and in their own institutions. Shortly before he stepped down as Chair, Dr. Pellegrini and his wife, Kelly Pellegrini, along with Dr. Reyes, established the **Carlos A. Pellegrini Diversity Visiting Student Internship Program**. This scholarship is a funded program designed to give under-represented minority (URM) medical students a chance to experience the exceptional training that the University of Washington has to offer. We have selected remarkable medical students for the sub-internship, many of whom have subsequently applied for internships in our program.

Like many surgical specialties, CT Surgery has for many years been primarily a male-dominated specialty, with only 6% women in the field until very recently. I believe that we offer better care to our patients when surgeons reflect the population of the patients they serve. Roughly 50% of our patients are women; our faculty should reflect this. Just as importantly, I felt that cardiothoracic surgery was missing out on some of the most talented surgeons, teachers, and scientists because the specialty was not attractive, or welcoming, to women. It also seemed clear that women provide important leadership traits that would enrich and improve cardiothoracic surgery. **Wood DE. 2014. Take It to the Limit. Ann Thorac Surg;98:1893–901.**

My own commitment and emphasis on diversity overlapped with what was already happening within the Department.

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