

SURGERY

Synopsis



CHAIR'S MESSAGE



Douglas E. Wood,
MD, FACS, FRCSEd
*The Henry N. Harkins
Professor & Chair*

The 2024 Fall Issue of Surgery Synopsis focuses on philanthropic giving and what it means to the Department of Surgery (DoS).

We have been so very fortunate over the course of our history to have numbers of individuals who support our mission with their philanthropy. We are profoundly grateful and appreciative of those gifts. The stories of what has inspired them to give to our department would fill a book: A patient, grateful to be

alive after a difficult surgery shows their gratitude with a gift – large or small; the family of a patient, in gratitude or in memory, sets up a fund to advance research related to their disease; alumni grateful for the outstanding education they received give to make sure that commitment to education continues; staff members who are proud of the mission and demonstrated expertise in this department, give to help carry on their good work. And our faculty give back because they are the lifeblood of the department, and want to ensure its future impact to individual patients, to training the next generations, to expanding care through research, and to be a positive influence in our community.

Philanthropic giving from our friends, patients, alumni and current staff and faculty is critical to fulfill our mission to “improve the health of the public”. Without this generous support to our programs, research to advance innovation would be

curtailed, some clinical programs reduced in scope, investments in our residents and fellows diminished, and our commitment to vulnerable populations threatened. This is particularly true in the uncharted waters of distrust of science and expertise where we find ourselves. We do not want to give up on our departmental mission “to 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.” We move forward pursuing these important values, while realizing we may face fewer resources from traditional sources.

In this issue you will find accounts of giving, in particular, our faculty who have supported the department in meaningful ways and describe what motivates their giving. These gifts support our department’s tripartite missions: teaching,

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research, and clinical care, and describe how giving relates to our initiatives to become an ever-more diverse and inclusive department. As the holder of the Harkins Endowed Chair, I can tell you that sustained gifts such as endowments, professorships, and chairs have given us the ability to recruit new talent, grow important and life-saving programs and launch new initiatives in our department. Without these gifts, our department would not be the powerhouse it is today. As Chair, I am grateful to each and every donor.

Please read the entire issue to capture the flavor, depth and breadth of the philanthropy support of our department. You will read about the Schilling and Howie funds – both endowments that further surgical research and assist our faculty and residents in establishing their own research interests. These two special funds are highlighted on pages 4 and 5.

The DoS is particularly indebted and proud of the philanthropic participation of our own department members—faculty, staff and alumni. They give gifts large and small – and we're grateful for them all. A list of all our endowed fellowships,

professorships, and chairs is on page 8, and we thought it might be of interest to highlight several. The stories behind these gifts as well as their intent are inspiring. Dr. Alec Clowes, former Chief of Vascular Surgery, before his death, worked to establish the Alexander W. Clowes, MD Endowed Chair in Vascular Surgery. Please read about this endowment on page 9. Dr. **Nicholas Vedder**, inspired by events and mentors, has established an endowed chair in Plastic Surgery. You will find this inspiring story on page 7. Dr. Pellegrini and his wife Kelly established the Kelly and Carlos Pellegrini, MD Endowed Faculty Fellowship in Surgical Ethics. I was privileged to begin the Douglas E. Wood Fellowship for Diversity in Surgical Education & Leadership. This area has been a priority for me for a long time and I'm happy to be able to establish this fellowship to support the recruitment, retention, and professional development of individuals in surgery who have overcome difficult paths to surgery. You can read more about this on page 10.

Congratulations to Dr. **Jeff Friedrich** who was awarded a 2025 Parker J. Palmer Courage to Teach Award by the Accreditation Council

(continued on page 3)

for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). Dr. Friedrich was one of 10 program directors selected this year out of the more than 13,000 residency and fellowship programs accredited by the ACGME. This award is among the highest honors in graduate medical education and recognizes program directors who have fostered innovation and improvement in their programs and served as exemplary role models for residents and fellows.

The 75th Harkins Symposium and Strauss Lecture were held on November 1st. We were honored to have Dr. **Patricia Turner**, MD, MBA, FACS, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the American College of Surgeons as the Strauss Lecture invited speaker. Her address on **"Agility in Medical Leadership"** was inspiring and created an example of a career with meaning for our residents, fellows, and faculty.

Dr. **Niten Singh** has been offered and has accepted to be the Chief of the Division of Vascular Surgery. We are delighted that he is filling this very

important role. You can read about Dr. Singh as well as an overview of the Vascular Surgery Division on pages **25** and **26**. And our always popular #GettingtoknowDoS column features one of our newest vascular surgeons, Dr. **Kirsten Dansey** on page **18**.

Dr. **Jay Pal**, the Vice Chair for Quality, has written a column on his vision for quality in the department to bring knowledge of data reporting tools to the faculty and trainees so that embarking on QI projects is not as burdensome as in the past. One of the Quality projects the department is embarking on is development of a department-wide surgical database that can be used for quality reporting and analysis and can serve as a ready platform for future QI efforts.

Finally, we are saying goodbye to one of our outstanding surgeons, Dr. **Gabriel Aldea**, long-time Chief of Cardiac Surgery. Dr. Aldea is retiring at the end of December 2024. Please read our tribute to him on page **22** which catalogues so many of his achievements, as well as read the

tributes given by residents, fellows, and peers. We will miss Dr. Aldea and his passion for his patients and for teaching future cardiac surgeons.

We welcomed some new faculty since the last issue. Please read their bios on pages **15** and join us in welcoming them to our department.

There is much more in this edition, including our surgeons who are in the news, papers published and more. I hope you will take the time to read all of Surgery Synopsis.

As we enter the holiday season, I wish each and all Happy Holidays and a promising New Year.

Sincerely,



Douglas E. Wood, MD, FACS, FRCSEd
*The Henry N. Harkins
 Professor & Chair
 Department of Surgery
 University of Washington*

JOHN A. AND HELEN R. SCHILLING TRAVELLING SURGICAL FELLOWSHIP

Surgeon-scientists begin building their research careers during their surgical residency, a period of immersion aimed at developing clinical skills to become safe and competent surgeons. However, this is also an ideal time to ignite interest in research while providing residents with the skills and experience needed to embark on a career as a surgical investigator. The optimal environment for this growth relies on a multi-dimensional foundation: 1) experienced surgeon-scientists as mentors, 2) a departmental plan for integrating research training with clinical training, 3) a culture that embraces evidence-based medicine in the care of our patients, and 4) the financial resources needed to create a supportive research environment for our residents. The role of generous and ongoing philanthropy in this four-part foundation is critical.

Established in 1986, the John A. and Helen R. Schilling Travelling Surgical Fellowship sought to provide funding for residents to travel to other institutions for their research development and experience. It was also used for research development for potential faculty, a need Dr. John Schilling observed during his years as a distinguished member of our faculty. In 1996, the endowment



Dr. John A. and Helen R. Schilling

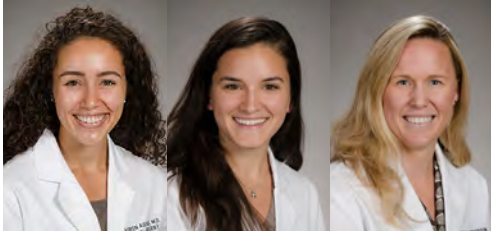
was amended to reflect the robust research environment at the University of Washington (UW) and allowed funding for research experiences at UW laboratories. The Schilling Fellowship exists distinctly yet is inseparable from the Helen and John Schilling Endowed Lectureship and Research Symposium in Surgery. Together, these gifts reflect Helen and John Schilling's devotion to the science and art of surgery and honor that tradition. Together, they provide the foundation of philanthropy in our department's mission to train future surgical scientists.

Support from the Schilling Fellowship has been used in a number of ways since it was established and has impacted the research education and training of dozens of our residents. The endowment has provided resident salary support either as a supplement to other funding, or in whole when other funding is unavailable but an excellent research opportunity presents itself.

Recent recipients include Drs. **Lauren Agoubi**, a research fellow in the NIH-funded T32 Pediatric Injury Research Training Program; **Nina Clark**, a T32 research fellow in Gastrointestinal Surgical Outcomes Research funded by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK); **Lindsay Dickerson**, a research fellow in the UW Tumor Immune Microenvironment Lab; **Alexandra Hernandez**, a PGY-4 general surgery resident participating as a T32 fellow in the Surgical Outcomes Research Center; **Divya Ramakrishnan**, a T32 research fellow in Gastrointestinal Surgical Outcomes Research funded by the NIDDK; and **Hanna Wild**, a research fellow in the UW Rural Surgery Track Fellowship.

Endowment support has enabled the department to increase the breadth and depth of the research experience of our trainees. Trainees now want

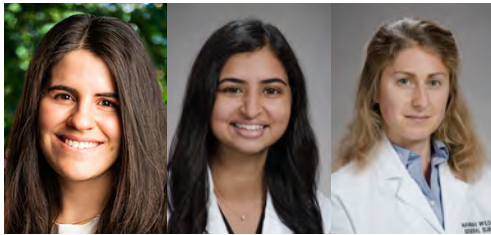
JOHN A. AND HELEN R. SCHILLING TRAVELLING SURGICAL FELLOWSHIP



Dr. Lauren Agoubi

Dr. Nina Clark

Dr. Lindsay Dickerson



Dr. Alexandra Hernandez

Dr. Divya Ramakrishnan

Dr. Hannah Wild

to study the epidemiology of surgical conditions in a global context, they want to design clinical trials of surgical interventions, they want to learn how to lead teams that develop systems of surgical care, and they want to study the molecular biology of surgical diseases. The Schilling Fellowship has facilitated this aspect of research training by also providing tuition support for advanced degrees. Philanthropic support is central to the continued growth of this robust

environment that will foster research training experiences and improve the care of our patients.

We are thankful for the vision of Mrs. Helen and Dr. John Schilling and for their ongoing support of resident research in our department. We look forward to building on their generosity by growing our foundation of philanthropic support in parallel with the continued growth of our cadre of mentors and the expansion of our research training programs.

[MAKE A GIFT](#)

THE HOWIE SURGERY RESEARCH ENDOWMENT FUND

Commitment to the Development of Surgical Scientists



Dr. K. Alvin Merendino

Leading innovation in surgical science is fundamental to the Department of Surgery’s (DoS) research mission, with philanthropy playing a critical role in the development of the DoS’s research agenda. **The Howie Surgery Research Endowment Fund** in particular has been foundational in promoting research across every division in the department.

Named for Ruth and Raymond Howie, the Howie Surgery Research Endowment

Fund was established in 1981 with a \$1.5M gift after Mrs. Howie underwent surgery at University Hospital, now UW Medical Center, where she met Dr. K. Alvin Merendino. Dr. Merendino was a pioneering open-heart surgeon who led the team that performed the northwest’s first open-heart surgery in 1956 at Harborview Medical Center. He served as Chair of the DoS from 1964 until 1972. Dr. Merendino was passionate about research and innovation,

and the Howies’ gift and resulting dividends continue to be a tremendous boon to the department’s research mission on multiple fronts.

Perhaps one of the most impactful uses of the Howie endowment has been in providing critical startup funding to new faculty recruits who are interested in building a career grounded in research. This startup funding helps to defray the costs of protected research time and provides

THE HOWIE SURGERY RESEARCH ENDOWMENT FUND

Commitment to the Development of Surgical Scientists

the necessary resources to hire lab staff, purchase supplies, services and materials, and begin developing pilot data, methodologies and techniques that will help faculty researchers launch their careers and ultimately build grant-funded and sustainable research programs.

Recent recipients of the Howie Endowment funds include Drs. **Katie Liu**, Assistant Professor in the Division of Plastic Surgery, faculty in the UW Institute for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine (ISCRM); **Scott Brakenridge**, Associate Professor in the Division of Trauma, Burn and Critical Care Surgery; and **Meghan Flanagan**, Associate Professor, Division of General Surgery.

Dr. Liu's lab focuses on two main areas of research. First, it investigates the mechanisms of nerve regeneration, aiming to accelerate the process to improve patient outcomes. Second, the lab works to prevent the degeneration of motor endplates in muscle tissue, ensuring that when regenerating axons reach the target muscle, new neuromuscular junctions regenerating axons reach the target



Dr. Katie Liu

Dr. Scott Brakenridge

Dr. Meghan Flanagan

muscle, new neuromuscular junctions can successfully form, restoring the vital connection between nerves and muscles.

Dr. Brakenridge's research seeks to improve understanding and treatment of sepsis and persistent critical illness, as well as outcomes for trauma patients. His research includes the development of predictive models for sepsis treatment response and the enhancement of cancer treatment outcomes, as well as for informing clinical practices and policies that impact patients' long-term recovery.

Dr. Flanagan is a renowned breast surgical oncologist whose research focuses on improving breast cancer surgery outcomes, quality of life after breast cancer treatment, and addressing disparities in surgical care.

Other notable recipients include Drs. **Chris Childers**, **Farhood Farjah**, **Charles Liu**, **Harveshp Mogal**, **Deepika Nehra**, **Katie O'Connell**, **Jonathan Scott**, **Jonathan Sham**, **Barclay Stewart**, **Matt Sweet**, and **Sara Zettervall**.

The Howie Endowment is a critical resource in supporting the department's research mission. A research portfolio as robust as ours depends on grateful patients, alumni, and friends of the department who see the value in the innovative work we do. We're incredibly grateful for their support. These gifts live on long after they are given and make a truly meaningful impact on healthcare.

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THE JOY OF GIVING

Nicholas B. Vedder, MD

Professor & Chief of Plastic Surgery – Jamie Hunter Endowed Chair

When I joined the Department of Surgery (DoS) faculty in 1990, my chief and mentor, Dr. Loren Engrav, Professor Emeritus in the Division of Plastic Surgery, shared a key principle with me: The most effective way to raise money is to show how important it is to you by leading with giving yourself. That principle has been in my heart ever since.

Twenty years ago, I had the good fortune to be able to help rebuild the body and life of a young woman who was nearly killed when a falling boulder crushed her on Mt. Adams. Her grateful family honored me by creating the Jamie Hunter Endowed Professorship in Reconstructive Plastic Surgery at Harborview, an endowed professorship that I have held since. I have been fortunate to be able to use that endowment for all the critical areas I describe above, helping our program in plastic surgery more than double in faculty, residents, and developing innovative clinical programs during that period. While stewarding the creation of the endowment, former Chair Dr. Carlos Pellegrini, Professor Emeritus, the most important leadership and “life mentor” in my life, demonstrated the power of Dr. Engrav’s principle when he called to tell me that he and his spouse, Kelly, had

just donated \$50K to the creation of the Hunter Professorship. I thanked him and said to my wife, “Wow, we need to give \$50K, too.” And that was the beginning of my passion for philanthropy.

Six years ago, my wife, Susan Heckbert, MD, PhD, and I were able to realize a life goal of ours in becoming University of Washington (UW) “Laureate” donors,

with lifetime giving of over \$1 million. This allowed us to double the size of the Hunter Endowment and make it an endowed chair, and to create an endowed fellowship in Epidemiology in Susan’s name.



Dr. Nicholas Vedder, wife Dr. Susan Heckbert, and “Dubs”

THE JOY OF GIVING

Nicholas B. Vedder, MD

Professor & Chief of Plastic Surgery
Jamie Hunter Endowed Chair

The founding document for the Hunter Professorship, now chair, stipulates that upon my retirement, which will be July 1, 2025, the Jamie Hunter Endowed Chair will become the Nicholas Vedder Endowed Chair, though it will always be associated with Jamie, who remains a dear friend. Recently, the grateful father of another patient of mine (I replanted her nearly severed foot when she was seven, and she is now in graduate school at Cornell), made a major legacy gift to the future Nicholas Vedder Chair. A reminder that giving often leads to more giving. And, doing good can also mean doing well; donations often come with tax advantages. Upon exploring options with our financial consultant, we were able to not only obtain a better benefit for the University, but for ourselves.

But helping to create the future does not require a gift of \$1 million. Any gift to something that holds personal significance or meaning to you can help create the future. Several of

our graduates have created endowment funds to support areas important to them. Vishal Kapoor created the “Vishal Kapoor, MD, Endowed Fund for UW Residents in Plastic Surgery” to support educational opportunities and professional development for our plastic surgery residents. Emilia Ploplys created the “Emilia Ploplys, MD, UW Plastic Surgery World Travel Endowed Fund” to support UW plastic surgery residents’ participation in global surgery mission work. Many of our faculty and alumni have contributed to these funds in Plastic Surgery.

I am proud to say that 100% of the faculty in the Division of Plastic Surgery participate in UW giving every year. Whatever future is important to you, I urge you to give to it. In life, the more you give, the more you will receive in the end.

Nicholas B. Vedder, MD
*Professor & Chief of
Plastic Surgery
Jamie Hunter Endowed Chair*

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CURRENT DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY ENDOWMENTS

[Alexander Whitehill Clowes, M.D.
Endowed Chair in Vascular Surgery](#)

[Herbert E. Coe Endowed Chair in
Pediatric Surgery](#)

[Ronald and Lauren Maier Endowed Trauma
Research and Education Fund](#)

[Roger K. Giesecke Distinguished Chair
in Transplant Surgery](#)

[UW Medicine Distinguished Endowed
Professorship in Lung Transplant Research](#)

[David and Nancy Auth-Washington
Research Foundation Endowed Chair
for Restorative Burn Surgery](#)

[Byers Endowed Chair in
Esophageal Research](#)

[The Edmark Professorship in
Cardiovascular Surgery](#)

[Jane and Donald D. Trunkey Endowed
Chair in Trauma Surgery](#)

[Lester and Connie LeRoss Endowed
Professorship in Cardiovascular Surgery](#)

[K. Alvin and Shirley E. Merendino
Endowed Professorship](#)

[Kelly and Carlos Pellegrini, M.D. Endowed
Faculty Fellowship in Surgical Ethics](#)

[Douglas E. Wood Fellowship for Diversity
in Surgical Education & Leadership](#)

[Patricia L. Dawson Endowed
Faculty Fellowship](#)

THE ALEXANDER W. CLOWES, MD ENDOWED CHAIR IN VASCULAR SURGERY



Dr. Alexander Clowes

The Alexander W. Clowes, MD Endowed Chair in Vascular Surgery was founded by The Clowes Fund through the vision of Dr. Clowes, to enhance the University's ability to recruit and retain distinguished faculty in vascular surgery. Through strategic allocations, funds will support vascular surgery research, training, education and clinical care.

The Clowes Fund foundation was established in 1952 by Dr. Clowes' grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. George Henry Alexander Clowes, and their two sons George, Jr. and Allen. The mission of the organization is to enhance the common good by encouraging

organizations and projects that help to build a just and equitable society, create opportunities for initiative, foster creativity and the growth of knowledge, and promote appreciation of the natural environment.

Dr. Clowes served as a Director of The Clowes Fund for nearly 50 years, and he was president of The Clowes Fund Board for 15 years. As The Clowes Fund worked to determine the best way to honor his life and service, Dr. Clowes made the following request of the Board: "It has been my desire for decades to endow a chair in vascular surgery at the University of Washington (UW) for career development within my department. I personally benefited greatly from a research and career development award during my early years on the UW faculty. As I have grown older, I have devoted a large portion of my time as a professor to mentoring young surgical faculty to help them launch and develop their own careers. The funds from the proposed endowed chair would be used...in part, for a research career development award, and, in part, for education and clinical innovation."



Dr. Benjamin Starnes



Dr. Niten Singh

Dr. **Benjamin Starnes**, Professor of Vascular Surgery, and then Chief of Vascular Surgery, was the inaugural holder of the Clowes Endowed Chair. The current Chief of Vascular Surgery, Dr. **Niten Singh**, is nominated as the Chair holder. Over the years the proceeds from the endowment have been used to support the division's two FDA investigational device exemption (IDE) trials and the research staff managing the clinical, regulatory and administration aspects of the trials, among other projects. The Department of Surgery is grateful for this tremendous gift from The Clowes Fund and will continue to use it to further the aims and dreams of Dr. Clowes for the Vascular Surgery Division to be a world-leader in research, clinical care and education.

MAKE A GIFT

DOUGLAS E. WOOD FELLOWSHIP FOR DIVERSITY IN SURGICAL EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP

Douglas E. Wood, MD, FACS, FRCSEd

The Henry N. Harkins Professor and Chair



Dr. Douglas Wood

The primary purpose of the **Douglas E. Wood Fellowship for Diversity in Surgical Education and Leadership** is to enhance the University of Washington's ability to promote diversity within the UW Department of Surgery (DoS) by supporting the department's ability to recruit, retain, and provide opportunities for professional development for faculty, residents, and fellows in the DoS. The funds shall be used to support the recruitment, retention, and professional development of individuals in surgery who have overcome difficult paths to surgery, some examples being

the overcoming of racism, sexism, xenophobia, and poverty, among other forms of marginalization. Additionally, it will support candidates that show a commitment to applying their service, scholarship, or teaching to further diversity within surgery. The fellowship will provide training and support that will help advance the careers of successful candidates. To address the needs of training, retention and career advancement, the endowment will provide funding for one year, up to \$10,000 per year.

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mark your calendar

2025 RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM & ANNUAL HELEN & JOHN SCHILLING LECTURE

Friday, March 21, 2025
7:00am-4:00pm

More details to be announced.

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

Saturday, December 14, 2024
6:00pm-9:00pm

The Edgewater Hotel, Seattle, WA

Event contact: dosadmin@uw.edu

[CLICK](#) OR SCAN TO VIEW OUR UPCOMING EVENTS



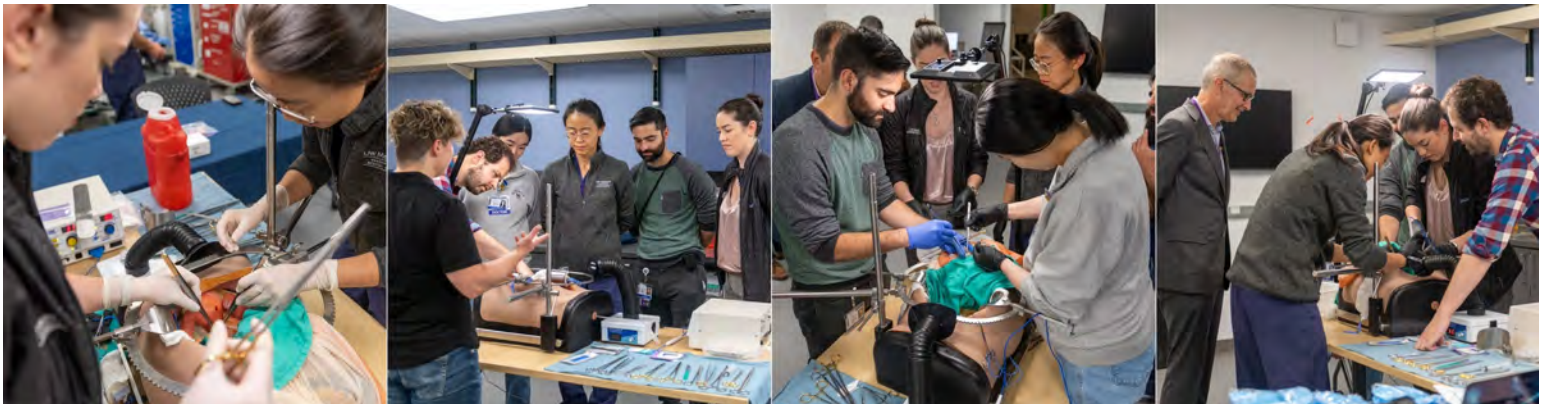
DIVISION OF HEALTHCARE SIMULATION SCIENCE

The Future of Surgery

As the healthcare landscape evolves, the demand for skilled professionals who can adapt to rapidly changing technologies and patient needs has never been greater. The training of future surgeons must keep pace, and our **Division of Healthcare Simulation Science** (HCSS) is helping UW Medicine and the Department of Surgery (DoS) accomplish just that. Through advanced simulations, surgical trainees can hone their skills in suturing, laparoscopic procedures, robotic surgery, and other intricate surgical tasks

The HCSS is comprised of two entities that help promote development of skilled surgeons: the **WWAMI Institute for Simulation in Healthcare (WISH)** and the **Center for Research in Education and Simulation Technologies (CREST)**. For nearly 20 years, education provided through WISH has enhanced the UW's capabilities to recruit, train, and support the highest quality healthcare providers. In 2016, WISH's partnership with CREST further expanded the engineering and development capabilities of simulation delivery within

Philanthropic support is vital in sustaining and advancing the educational initiatives of healthcare simulation. It is through generous donations that the division has been able to fund numerous simulation-based pilot-projects across UW Medicine and to support the development of future leaders in the field. Donations to the **Pellegrini-Oelschlager Endowed Fellowship in Surgical Simulation** and our annual WISH Innovations in Simulation Award enrich educational resources, promote innovative practices, foster collaboration, and increase



Resident trainees in WISH pilot CREST's develop trainer to practice surgical repair of ureter. Dr. Hunter Wessells, Professor and Nelson Chair of the Department of Urology, observed and supported the learning session.

without the immediate pressures of a live operating room. This hands-on approach not only enhances technical proficiency but also fosters critical thinking, decision-making abilities, and interprofessional team performance —all skills that are vital for successful surgical practice.

DoS. Now in its fifth year, HCSS continues to advance its mission to improve the health of the public through simulation science and the addition of academic programming, including the debut of its **Masters of Healthcare Simulation Education degree** earlier this fall.

access to training, all investments that demonstrate a commitment to nurturing compassionate, skilled, and knowledgeable healthcare providers and paving the way for a brighter future in healthcare.

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DIVERSITY IN DOS



Dr. Carlos Pellegrini

In its endeavor to find ways to fulfill our DEI goals, the Department of Surgery (DoS) is committed to membership in the **Society of Black Academic Surgeons** (SBAS) and **Society of Asian Academic Surgeons** (SAAS). Every year members of our department attend both annual conferences, the SBAS having occurred at UC-Davis Sacramento from Sept 19-22, and the SAAS conference having occurred at Tulane University in New Orleans, from Sept 5-6. Former DoS Chair Dr. Carlos Pellegrini provided a summary of his experience at the SBAS meeting:

"I attended the 2024 meeting of the Society of Black Academic Surgeons. The meeting was well organized and attended by some 330 surgeons. This meeting provides an opportunity for networking, for recruiting academic



Left to right - Drs. Douglas Wood, Hope Jackson, Nzuekoh Nchinda, Vanessa Dlamini, Denzel Woode, Betelhem Yohannes, and Bisu Asmerom



Left to right - Dr. Douglas Wood, Nzuekoh Nchinda, Bisu Asmerom, and Vanessa Dlamini

surgeons, and certainly for learning. In addition, it provides a window into the Department of Surgery of the hosting institution, in this case the University of California-Davis. I was impressed by UC Davis faculty's commitment to diversity and to the care of underserved populations. Faculty presentations on these topics were outstanding. The one keynote that had the greatest impact on me was Dr. Lisa Newman's (from Cornell), who talked about the anthropologic and genetic elements of breast cancer in African American Women- a huge amount of new information presented in a concise and easily understandable fashion. And of course, the meeting allowed me to rekindle relationships with many friends."

Carlos Pellegrini, MD
Professor Emeritus
Department of Surgery
University of Washington

MAKE A GIFT

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Jay D. Pal, MD, PhD

Vice Chair for Quality & Safety



Dr. Jay Pal

During my surgical residence and early years in practice, handwritten medical records were the norm. Charting was quick and to the point. During my intern year, I embarked on a Quality Improvement (QI) project to determine if CT scans were sufficiently accurate to replace diagnostic peritoneal lavage to rule out intestinal injuries in patients who sustained blunt abdominal trauma (Archives of Surgery, 2002). Answering this question required the manual review of 1,388 archived paper charts housed in the dustiest room in the hospital.

In the era of paper charting, all data not collected prospectively required

manual abstraction from yellowing paper with fading ink. Prospective data collection, on the other hand, required deliberate forethought and focused record keeping as these databases were inflexible and were maintained manually at considerable effort and expense. With the development of electronic medical records (EMRs), many of these challenges disappeared. Almost all clinical data became readily available for patient care, research, or quality improvement.

Most EMR systems prioritize data accessibility to facilitate clinical documentation and charge capture. Data reporting or analysis for research and quality improvement is a secondary goal. However, a number of tools are available within Epic and as adjuncts to provide ready access to clinical data for quality assurance/quality improvement efforts. Unfortunately, most clinicians are unaware of these tools or lack sufficient training in their use. My goal, as Vice Chair of Quality in the Department of Surgery (DoS), is to

bring knowledge of these tools to the faculty and trainees so that embarking on a QI project is not as burdensome as it was for me. One of the Quality projects the department is embarking on is development of a department-wide surgical database that can be used for quality reporting and analysis, that can serve as a ready platform for future QI efforts. A cross departmental group of surgeons, Drs. [Judy Chen](#), [Catherine Kling](#), [Nam Tran](#), [Ryutaro Hirose](#), and myself, are working to bring structured QI to the DoS. We will be presenting this work at DoS Grand Rounds on May 7, 2025.

Epic



HARKINS CORNER



Dr. Jonathan Sham

For nearly 70 years the Henry Harkins Surgical Society has served as the alumni organization for the University of Washington (UW) Department of Surgery, supporting UW Surgical Trainees through community building events like the New Intern BBQ and Oyster Fry, and engaging its members through annual events like the Harkins Symposium. This year, with the help of our incredible alumni, we created the Harkins Scholars Program which supports

trainees from across the department to participate in academic conferences and other professional development programs to help them achieve their career goals. On November 1st, we celebrated these trainees at our annual Harkins Alumni Dinner with Dr. Patricia Turner, Executive Director and CEO of the American College of Surgeons; Dr. Lillian Kao, our 2024 Harkins Distinguished Alumnus; and over 80 residents, faculty, and alumni from across the region.

I'd be honored if you would consider joining me in continuing Dr. Harkins' legacy of community building and supporting our

trainees. You can make an impact online by visiting the [Harkins Annual Fund For Surgery Resident Education support page](#) or connect with Jeannie Stuyvesant, Assistant Vice President of Development and Major Gifts, at jstuy@uw.edu or 503.679.4067, or reach out to me any time. I'd love to hear from you!

Jonathan G. Sham, MD, MBEE
President, Harkins Society
jsham@uw.edu
781-330-9384

MAKE A GIFT

MEET A FEW OF OUR HARKINS SCHOLARS FROM ACROSS THE DEPARTMENT



DR. ARJUNE DHANEKULA
PGY-6, Cardiothoracic Surgery

Presenting my work at national and regional conferences has increased my visibility in the world of academic surgery. It allowed me to hone my scientific communication skills in a public format. I greatly appreciate the gift—thank you!



DR. DANI EBLE
PGY-6, Plastic Surgery

World Professional Association for Transgender Health is the largest, most highly regarded conference in transgender healthcare. I learned so much from my colleagues and was also fortunate to present three of my own research projects. It was an incredibly unique and inspirational educational and professional experience.



DR. JAMIE OLAPO
PGY-4, General Surgery

I was able to attend the American Society of Breast Surgeons Annual Meeting in spring 2024 and present my research on the use of nomograms to assist counseling patients on their treatment options with a diagnosis of DCIS. I was also able to meet breast fellowship program directors from across the country—invaluable as I plan to apply for fellowship in the coming years.

WELCOME NEW FACULTY



Alison Bae, MD

Division of Plastic Surgery

Dr. **Alison Bae**, Assistant Professor, Plastic Surgery, joined the Department of Surgery in October 2024. She received her undergraduate degree in biology from Georgetown University and her medical degree from the Perelman School of Medicine in Pennsylvania. Her integrated plastic and reconstructive surgery residency

was completed at the University of Washington and she completed her microsurgery fellowship at Stanford University. Her research focus will be in the area of clinical outcomes in plastic and reconstructive microsurgery, and her clinical specialty will be microsurgery.



Chris Childers, MD, PhD

Division of General Surgery

Dr. **Christopher Childers**, Assistant Professor, Division of General Surgery, joined the Department of Surgery in September 2024. He obtained a PhD in Health Policy & Management with work focused on healthcare finance prior to his residency. He completed his residency in general surgery at the University of California, Los Angeles, followed by his surgical oncology fellowship at the MD Anderson Cancer Center. Chris has broad clinical

interests encompassing benign and malignant lesions of the liver, pancreas, and bile ducts with expertise in open, laparoscopic, and robotic techniques. He is dedicated to fully informing and supporting patients and their families as they navigate the expanding range of treatment options. Dr. Childers enjoys quality time with his family, engaging in DIY projects, hiking, running, and cooking.



Richard Dubois, MD

Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery

Dr. **Richard Dubois**, Assistant Professor, Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, joined the Department of Surgery in September 2024. He obtained his undergraduate degree in biology from the University of Rochester and then attended medical school at the University of Buffalo School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. He completed his general surgery residency at the New York Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Irving Medical Center, as well as his Adult

Extracorporeal Life Support ECMO Fellowship, with his educational journey culminating in the completion of his Cardiothoracic Surgery Fellowship at the University of Washington Medical Center. He provides clinical care in the thoracic surgery section, and his research interests include translational projects related to lung transplantation. Dr. Dubois enjoys running, cycling and hiking.



Ali Haruta, MD

Division of General Surgery

Dr. **Ali Haruta**, Acting Assistant Professor, Division of General Surgery, joined the Department of Surgery as faculty in September 2024. She completed her general surgery residency at the University of Washington (UW) and trauma/critical care fellowship at Parkland before returning to UW for a palliative care fellowship. Her clinical and research interests focus on the intersection

of palliative care and communication skills with surgical education and trauma surgery. She hopes to help surgeons become more comfortable with serious illness communication and integrate palliative care skills to deliver high quality, holistic care to all of her surgical patients.

WELCOME NEW FACULTY



Katherine Jackson, MD

Division of General Surgery

Dr. **Katherine Jackson**, Assistant Professor, Division of General Surgery, joined the Department of Surgery in October 2024. She received her undergraduate education at the Rochester Institute of Technology with a degree in Biomedical Sciences and her medical degree from the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth. Her general surgery residency was completed at the University of Rochester Medical Center, where she dedicated time studying translational research in cancer immunology and clinical outcomes research.

She graduated from her Complex General Surgical Oncology Fellowship at Saint John's Cancer Institute in Santa Monica, California. Her clinical interests include skin and breast surgical oncology using oncoplastic techniques. She is passionate about surgical oncology and patient-centered care. She looks forward to teaching and mentoring future physicians and surgeons, and to advancing the field of surgical oncology.



Saba Kurtom, MD, MS

Division of General Surgery

Dr. **Saba Kurtom**, Assistant Professor, Division of General Surgery, joined the Department of Surgery in October 2024. She received her undergraduate degree in biochemistry from Stony Brook University, and her MS in Biomedical Sciences, as well as her MD, at Eastern Virginia Medical School. Her general surgery residency was completed at Virginia Commonwealth University, and she completed a two-year post-doctoral research fellowship with the University of Miami-Miller School of

Medicine. Her research focused on the gut microbiome and its role in GI malignancies, as well as melanoma. She finished her training through the Complex General Surgical Oncology and Comprehensive Endocrine Surgery Fellowships at the University of Pittsburgh. She is passionate about providing excellent patient care and surgical outcomes.



Charles Liu, MD, MS

Division of General Surgery

Dr. **Charles Liu**, Assistant Professor, Division of General Surgery, joined the Department of Surgery in October 2024. Dr. Liu completed his general surgery residency training at Stanford and a two-year health policy research fellowship at University of California, Los Angeles. He then completed a colorectal surgery fellowship at the University of Minnesota. He's very

excited to join the colorectal surgery section of general surgery and will be conducting policy-relevant health services research in collaboration with the Surgical Outcomes Research Center (SORCE). He and his wife live in Ravenna and would appreciate any recommendations on good hikes or restaurants in the Seattle area!

WELCOME NEW FACULTY



Chris Marfo, MD, MBA

Division of Trauma, Burn & Critical Care Surgery

Dr. **Chris Marfo**, Assistant Professor, Division of Burn & Critical Care Surgery, joined the Department of Surgery in September 2024. He received his undergraduate degree in biotechnology from Rutgers University and then completed his medical education at the Yale University School of Medicine. He completed his residency and Trauma and Surgical Critical Care Fellowship at the

University of Washington. Dr. Marfo's clinical interests include trauma surgery, emergency general surgery, hernia repair, and critical care. He believes in providing the most current information to his patients and guiding them to a treatment plan that works best for them. In his free time, Dr. Marfo enjoys reading, watching soccer, and spending time with family.



Raga Siddharthan, MD

Division of General Surgery

Dr. **Ragavan (Raga) Siddharthan**, Assistant Professor, Division of General Surgery, joined the Department of Surgery in October 2024. He worked as a staff surgeon at the Capital District Colon and Rectal Surgery Associates in Albany, NY, for two years prior to his arrival. Dr. Siddharthan grew up in Reno, NV, and completed his medical school at Emory University Medical School and

then his general surgery residency at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, OR. His colorectal fellowship was completed at the Lahey clinic in Massachusetts. His clinical practice is across the full spectrum of colorectal disease. He is excited to join the department and return to the Pacific Northwest. In his free time, he enjoys hiking and traveling.



David Zonies, MD, MPH, MBA

Division of Trauma, Burn & Critical Care Surgery

Dr. **David Zonies**, Professor of Surgery, Division of Burn & Critical Care Surgery joined the Department of Surgery in November 2024, and assumed the position of Chief Medical Officer (CMO) at Harborview Medical Center (HMC). Dr. Zonies is an alumnus of our HMC surgical critical care fellowship (2007-2009) and joins us after a distinguished career in the US Air Force and most recently as the Associate Chief Medical Officer and Founding Director of the Critical Care Service line

at Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU). In his new role as CMO, he will be responsible for the quality and safety of patient care, research, and teaching activities at HMC. Additionally, he will serve as the Chair of the HMC Medical Executive Board, Associate Chief Medical Officer for UW Medicine, and Associate Dean in the UW School of Medicine. His clinical practice and commitment to education will be in trauma and critical care services at HMC.

GETTING To Know DoS

KIRSTEN DANSEY, MD, MPH
Assistant Professor, Division of Vascular Surgery



During your medical education did you always want to be a surgeon?

When I went to medical school, I actually thought that I wanted to be a cardiologist and continue treating that kind of spectrum of disease, and I loved what I did, and I loved our patient population. But during my surgical rotation I fell in love with “open” surgery, and I wanted to be able to do both endovascular operations as well as “open”. And so, I think vascular surgery was kind of the natural fit for me.

What is your area of research? And how did you get interested in it?

I’m mainly interested in clinical outcomes research. I have a particular interest in the cross section of medical management for patients with peripheral vascular disease and optimizing their comorbidities to really improve outcomes, improve longevity, and survival for these patients.

I think the reason why I got into it, or how I got into it was a lot of our patients carry a lot of

severe comorbidities and trying to understand and manage them appropriately is more complex than many other kinds of surgical patients. I think that was where I saw an area of need and, I think I’ve always had an interest in drug design drug interactions and the effect on patients.

What have you found most challenging in your surgical career?

A lot!

I mean trying to balance competing priorities has probably been the most challenging thing in my surgical career. There are a lot of areas where you can really devote a lot of time and attention and every time you devote a lot of time and attention to one area, it takes away from something else. I think just trying to balance patient care and research, just making sure that you’re giving enough time and attention to each one component, has been the most challenging. In my personal journey, motherhood is where I’ve been able to spend a little bit more time on like my personal life. My family’s growing



Top—Husband Matt and son Roger

Middle—Division of Vascular Surgery at the Society of Vascular Surgery Conference in Chicago 2024

Bottom—Husband Matt and I, skiing in Zermatt

GETTING To KNOW DoS

KIRSTEN DANSEY, MD, MPH

Assistant Professor, Division of Vascular Surgery



and with that each person needs you and needs more attention and it's hard.

What are some things you've accomplished this past year that you're proud of?

Being asked to give cardiology grand rounds was such an honor and such an accomplishment for such a prestigious department. That was very exciting for me.

Also, my husband and I welcomed our first child—a son. I think that was my leading accomplishment and learning how to balance work with that and continue to be active on a national

level, I think has been something that I'm particularly proud of.

I've mentored one medical student and one resident with their podium presentations at national meetings - seeing those projects to completion and mentoring each one of those students has been exciting for me.

What's the best career advice you ever received?

If you love what you do then, then when you go to work, it's not really considered work. I think that's particularly important in medicine, because I don't think that this is just a job. It's more of a lifestyle and I think that adjusting and making sure that you

can manage all the complexities that come with it, is just so important and essential, for your own happiness.

What are you known for? Professionally or personally?

I think professionally, I have a particular interest in peripheral vascular disease. And so, with that you establish a very good relationship with the patient's care team.. I think that I have established really good relationships with cardiology as well as nephrology and other kinds of supporting services and I can make sure that the patient is being well taken care of. I think that is one thing I'd say that I'm probably known for is that I'm very accessible and always willing to help.



Left—Dr. Dansey and mother Sally on vacation in Antigua

Right—Husband Matt and my son Roger on our safari in Africa

RAPID FIRE

WHAT IS THE LAST BOOK YOU READ?

“Here We Go” by Betty White
That was the last audible book I listened to. It's really cute. She reads it, and I love Betty White (who doesn't?). It's a good listen.

WHAT TV SHOW ARE YOU CURRENTLY WATCHING?

My husband and I just started “The Bear.”

WHAT IS YOUR GO-TO SNACK?

Chocolate!

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE GUILTY PLEASURE?

Probably chocolate and a good book.

WHO IS YOUR INSPIRATION, AND WHY?

My mother. She gave a lot, raising all five children, and she's always been a huge inspiration in my life, and she's always had just such a positive attitude. She can find light and fun and joy in really any situation. She worked hard and was very active with raising all five of us, and I think becoming a mother has made me realize how incredible she is. It's just shed a whole new light on how I view my mother.

IF A MOVIE WAS MADE ABOUT YOUR LIFE, WHO WOULD PLAY YOU?

I would love to say Betty White (she laughs).
Who would play me?
Maybe someone like Kristen Wiig, someone who doesn't take life too seriously.

2024 AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS CLINICAL CONGRESS

Department of Surgery faculty and trainees had the opportunity to showcase their research at this fall's 2024 American College of Surgeons (ACS) Clinical Congress, held in San Francisco, CA, from October 19th-22nd. In addition to the educational program, ACS offered many special events and activities for its attendees: Convocation, the Annual Business Meeting, ACS Career Fair, exhibits, social and wellness events, History of Surgery poster sessions, Surgical Ergonomics Clinic, Military Events, and a Surgical Metrics Project booth. Anton Sidawy, MD, MPH, FACS, was elected President-Elect of ACS during the Annual Business Meeting of Members, and Fabrizio Michelassi, MD, FACS, was announced as the new chair of the ACS Board of Regents. Below is a list of the department's presentations at ACS:



Front row: Dr. Douglas Wood, Kira Baker, Susan Marx
Back row: John Christopher, Matt Spotanski, and Kate Rimmer

DR. GRIFFEN ALLEN

Research Resident
Surgical Outcomes
Research Center (SORCE)

"Incorporation of Trauma and Emergency General Surgery Into Estimations of Standardized Surgical Site Infection Risk After Colon Surgery"

DR. SCOTT BRAKENRIDGE

Associate Professor,
Division of Trauma, Burn
& Critical Care Surgery

"Fournier's Gangrene - Multidisciplinary Management"

DR. JOHN SCOTT

Associate Professor
Division of Trauma, Burn
& Critical Care Surgery

1ST PRESENTATION—
"ECMO for the Trauma Surgeon"

2ND PRESENTATION—
"The Impact of Trauma Activation Fees"

DR. GIANA DAVIDSON

Professor & Section Chief,
Emergency General Surgery,
Division of General Surgery

"ACS General Surgical Review Course: Benign Hepatobiliary Disease, Small Bowel Obstruction"

DR. NINA MIRABADI

T32 Fellow
Harborview

"Early Immune Cell Changes After Severe Trauma Associated with Chronic Critical Illness"

2024 American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress

DR. SARDAR SHAHMIR CHAUHAN

Postdoctoral Scholar
Division of General Surgery

1ST PRESENTATION—

*“Robotic Central Pancreatectomy
for a Pancreatic Body
Neuroendocrine Tumor”*

2ND PRESENTATION—

*“Robotic Right Hepatic Duct
Reconstruction for Type IV
Mirizzi Syndrome”*

DR. DIVYA RAMAKRISHNAN

Research Resident
Division of General Surgery

*“Communicating Risk to
Surgical Patients: A RCT of
Verbal vs Numerical
Descriptors (Quick-Shot)”*

DR. PATRICK JAVID

Professor, Pediatric
General Surgery
Surgical Director of the Intestinal
Rehabilitation Program
Program Director of the Pediatric
Surgery Fellowship, Seattle
Children’s Hospital

*“The Ethics of Trainee
Involvement in Surgery”*

DR. ELINA QUIROGA

Professor, Vascular Surgery
Director, Vascular Surgery
Residency and Fellowship
Training Programs

1ST PRESENTATION—

*“Management of Symptomatic and
Ruptured Infrarenal Abdominal
Aortic Aneurysm”*

2ND PRESENTATION—

*“How Best Endovascular Versus
Best Surgical Therapy in Patients
with Clti (BEST-CLI) Has or Has Not
Altered My Approach to Chronic
Limb Threatening Ischemia (CLTI)
Workup/Management”*

DR. LINDSAY DICKERSON

PGY-4
Division of General Surgery

*“Overcoming CXCR4-Mediated
T Cell Exclusion Potentiates
Antitumor Cytotoxicity in
Fibrolamellar Carcinoma”*

DR. NINA CLARK

PGY-4
Division of General Surgery

1ST PRESENTATION—

*“Should They Stay or Should They
Go? Factors Associated with
Transfer In Emergency General
Surgery Patients Requiring Short
Hospitalizations”*

2ND PRESENTATION—

*“Evaluating Social Determinants
of Health and Unmet Social Needs
Among Surgical Patients in The
United States: An Analysis of
National Survey Data”*

DR. ANDREW WRIGHT

Professor, Endowed Professor
for the Center for
Videoendoscopic Surgery
Division of General Surgery

*“Critical Issues in Laparoscopic
Ventral Hernia Repair”*

General Surgery - Hernia I
(Moderator)

DR. ALEXANDRA HERNANDEZ

Research Resident
Division of General Surgery

1ST PRESENTATION—

*“The Financial Impact of
Surgery Among Working Age
US Adults: The Health Shock
of Unplanned Surgery”*

2ND PRESENTATION—

*“Travel Time versus Rurality
as Indicators of Poor Access to
Emergency Surgical Care”*

DR. GABRIEL ALDEA RETIRES



Dr. Gabriel Aldea

After an esteemed and impactful career in cardiac surgery, Dr. Gabriel Aldea announced his retirement, effective December 31, 2024. Dr. Aldea has been an exemplary leader, educator, and clinician, dedicating decades to advancing the field of cardiothoracic surgery and shaping the lives of countless patients, colleagues, and trainees. His commitment to excellence, compassion, and innovation has left an indelible mark on the University of Washington (UW) and the broader medical community.

Dr. Aldea's journey in medicine began at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, followed by residency and fellowship training at Cornell Medical Center. After

eight years on the faculty at Boston University Medical Center, he joined the UW as Section Chief of Cardiac Surgery in 1999, and is currently the holder of the Edmark Professorship in Cardiovascular Surgery and the Surgical Director of the UW Heart Institute. Over the past 25 years he helped lead his division to achieve notable accomplishments. The division ranks top five in the United States for catheter-based valve therapies (structural heart therapies), top ten in the United States for heart transplantation and mechanical assist for advanced heart failure, and top ten in the United States for its

cardiothoracic residency. In addition, they were awarded the prestigious Reference Center Award for Mitral Valve Repair by the national Mitral Foundation for several years (the only center in the Pacific Northwest to win this) and have been recognized as one of the top ten international sites for developing and testing advanced heart therapies.

Clinically, Dr. Aldea became widely respected for his expertise in mitral valve repair techniques and heart valve repair and replacement procedures, offering open-heart, minimally invasive or catheter-based



Dr. Aldea with team

ALDEA RETIRES



Dr. Aldea enjoying the PNW with his wife Susan

options. A former mitral valve patient offered praise: *“Excellent bedside manner. Excellent results. I am an OR nurse. After discussing with my colleagues and some investigating, I have come to the conclusion that Dr. Aldea is one of the best cardiac surgeons in the country.”*

In addition to his clinical expertise, Dr. Aldea has been a passionate educator, deeply committed to training the next generation of cardiac surgeons. His trainees and colleagues describe him as a patient and insightful mentor whose teachings extend beyond technical skills to encompass values of empathy and lifelong learning. UW Cardiothoracic surgeon Dr. **Lara**

Oyetunji, a former UW trainee, attests to Dr. Aldea’s impact: *“Dr. Aldea epitomizes what it means to be an academic cardiac surgeon—combining technical excellence, intellectual rigor, and a relentless commitment to advancing the field. His unmatched professionalism, meticulous attention to detail, and unwavering integrity set the standard for all who trained under him. Beyond his remarkable surgical skill, his passion for teaching was transformative. Dr. Aldea inspired young surgeons, myself included, to master our craft with empathy and dedication. He shaped not only our skills but also our values, leaving a legacy that will endure for years to come.”*

Dr. **Christopher R. Burke**, Associate Professor, Cardiac Surgery, Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, Co-Director of Cardiothoracic Surgery, Co-Director Multidisciplinary Thoracic Aortic Program (MTAP), Associate Program Director, Cardiothoracic Surgery Residency Programs, shares his thoughts:

“Dr. Aldea is a rare combination of excellent surgeon, thoughtful mentor, and a caring and empathetic human-being. This is all too rare in our field. He has been a stabilizing force within cardiac surgery for several decades. His quick wit will forever be missed here. He cared deeply about his patients, residents, and colleagues. He

was a thoughtful surgical leader and help build several clinical programs in the mitral and structural heart space that boast excellent clinical outcomes. I fondly remember the period of time in my first year as faculty when we were severely shorthanded. At one point, we were down to three total cardiac surgeons, including Dr. Aldea and myself. We were covering all aspects of the cardiac service and things were extremely busy to say the least. However, it was probably the most fun I have had as faculty and will cherish those chaotic days working side-by-side with Gabriel to keep the service afloat. Always with a smile, usually a laugh, and always with the goal of excellence in the surgical care of the patient. He will be dearly missed.”

Cardiothoracic Surgery PGY-6 resident Dr. **Arjune Dhanekula**, echoes his sentiment: *“Dr. Aldea has long been an exemplar of the UW cardiac surgeon: unendingly dedicated to his patients, enthusiastic about the frontiers and advancements in the field, passionate about education, and a pure joy in the operating room. His warmth and humor make even the longest of days fun, and his deep interest in your own life makes you feel seen and appreciated. I cannot even begin to recite all of his classic one-liners and quips that have now become a part of my own language. It is amongst these*

ALDEA RETIRES



Top - Dr. Aldea's medical school graduation with friends

Bottom - Dr. Aldea's son's graduation with family

wonderful traits and memories that I feel both sad for Dr. Aldea's retirement, but excited for what lies ahead for him. However, if I had to pinpoint one thing in particular that I will forever remember, it is how he led this division during a time of uncertainty, with only three surgeons on staff during the height of a global pandemic. He worked doggedly to rebuild the cardiac division to its current strong position, bringing in faculty that not only brought immense skill and knowledge, but personalities that matched the culture he wanted to build. He succeeded, and we are all better off for it."

Dr. Aldea's contributions go beyond his roles as surgeon and teacher. A prolific researcher, he has authored numerous publications that have significantly advanced the field, specializing in the areas of minimizing morbidity of cardiopulmonary bypass, atrial fibrillation (irregular heart rhythm) therapy including the Maze procedure, and coronary artery bypass grafts (CABG). His dedication to evidence-based practice and clinical excellence has earned him widespread respect and recognition both nationally and internationally.

Colleagues, patients, and friends alike will remember Dr. Aldea for his kindness, humility, and relentless drive to improve the lives of those around him. Former Cardiothoracic Surgery chief Dr. **Edward Verrier** sums up Dr. Aldea's contributions: *"He is a very good surgeon, dedicated to resident education, loyal to his patients, and someone we all could rely on."*

Dr. Aldea reflects on his time at the UW: *"It's been the honor of my professional life to serve as the Section Chief of Cardiac Surgery at the University of Washington for the past 25 years, as the Co-Director of the UW Heart Center and more recently as the Surgical Director of the UW's Heart Institute. This professional journey and working at the UW have been gratifying, challenging and enriching, and has surpassed my professional expectations and goals. I will remember fondly the warmth that you have shown me over the years and the way we collectively embraced this culture of true respect and collaboration within and across specialties."* As for life after his years of service, Dr. Aldea plans to enjoy more time with his family and friends.

Dr. Aldea's presence will be deeply missed, but his legacy will live on through every patient cared for, every student taught, and every heart healed.

MAKE A GIFT

DR. NITEN SINGH

NEW VASCULAR SURGERY DIVISION CHIEF



Dr. Niten Singh

The Department of Surgery is pleased to announce Dr. **Niten Singh** as the next chief of the Division of Vascular Surgery at the University of Washington (UW). Dr. Singh follows a long line of distinguished vascular surgery leaders, beginning with Dr. Eugene Strandness, followed by Dr. Alec Clowes, and most recently, Dr. Ben Starnes.

Dr. Singh arrived at UW as an associate professor and as Vascular Surgery Education associate program director in 2013 and has had an enormous impact

on their clinical and teaching programs. He assumed the program director role in 2014 and was instrumental in establishing their integrated vascular surgery residency, solidifying it as the premier training program of its kind in the country, and growing the residency to two residents per year.

While there are many examples of Dr. Singh's impact on clinical programs, the prime example is his leadership of the limb preservation program. Under his direction, vascular surgery has led multidisciplinary efforts to prioritize limb salvage through an increase in peripheral interventions, resulting in a 76% reduction in amputations. The UW Vascular Division's success in limb salvage is sought out as a model of multidisciplinary care in many of its peer institutions.

In addition to the gains his leadership helped achieve for the Vascular division itself, Dr. Singh's initiative has established himself as a leader in vascular surgery nationally. In 2008, he founded the Pacific Northwest

Endovascular Conference (PNEC), which has now grown to be one of the largest and most popular vascular conferences in the country. In partnership with Dr. Starnes, UW Vascular has a prominent presence at the podium of all its regional and national vascular meetings, resulting in more than 100 peer-reviewed publications each year. Dr. Singh is the former president of the Pacific Northwest Vascular Society, currently the recorder of the Western Vascular Society, a member of the Board of Governors for the American College of Surgeons and was recently inducted as a member of the American Surgical Association.

Most importantly, Dr. Singh is a dedicated educator, a thoughtful mentor, and a calm, understated leader who takes care of his team and gets things done. He is the right person to take the great division of vascular surgery to new levels of clinical innovation and care, educating the next generation, and fostering an environment of discovery that improves patient care in the future.

VASCULAR SURGERY DIVISION FALL HIGHLIGHTS

The Division of Vascular Surgery enjoyed the summer months and welcomed a new faculty member, Dr. **Derek Nathan**, to the VA Puget Sound. He graduated from our Vascular Surgery Fellowship in 2015 and has practiced in Seattle for the past nine years. We are excited to welcome Dr. Nathan as faculty!

We welcomed our two PGY-1 Integrated residents, Drs. **Karissa Wang** and **Kay Darkwa**, along with our first year fellow Dr. **Claire de Crescenzo**, to the division. Dr. **Amit Pujari** returned from the University of Pittsburgh where he completed his Palliative Care Fellowship. Our Education Program

Director, Dr. **Elina Quiroga**, was promoted to Professor of Surgery in July, which is a well deserved accomplishment as she leads our great group of trainees into the new year.

In August we welcomed Dr. Dawn Coleman, Chief of Vascular Surgery at Duke University, as a visiting professor and she presented at the Department of Surgery Grand Rounds. The conference season kicked off with the Western Vascular Society in September. The University of Washington was well represented with Dr. **Ben Starnes** (past president), Dr. **Elina Quiroga** (past program chair), Dr. **Niten Singh** (current recorder), Dr. **Matthew Sweet** (current bylaws chair),

Dr. **Nam Tran**, and Dr. **Kirsten Dansey** attending from the faculty side. Our trainees presenting included Drs. **Rebecca Sorber**, **Sam Schwarz**, **Nico Stafforini**, and Varad Shenoy.

From a clinical and innovation perspective, Dr. Starnes performed the first in the world fenestrated endovascular aneurysm repair (EVAR) with the Terumo Treofit device.

As we move into the new academic year, we feel we are hitting our stride and look forward to meeting the challenges of the new year.



Top left: Drs. Elina Quiroga, Sam Schwarz, Niten Singh, Rebecca Sorber, Rebecca Shenoy, and Nicolas Stafforini

Top right: Drs. Rebecca Sorber (Podium 1), Nicolas Stafforini (Podium 2), and Sam Schwarz (Podium 3)

Bottom left: On October 3rd, 2024 there were two "Firsts" at the University of Washington. Dr. Benjamin Starnes and his team implanted the first Terumo Fenestrated Treo Company Manufactured Device in the United States and the first Terumo "Treo Fit" Physician Modified Endograft in the world.

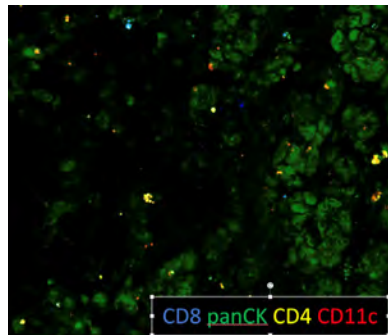
Bottom right (left to right): Using TreoFit template and Sewing rings around fenestrations

TIME LAB

The University of **Washington Tumor Immune Microenvironment (TIME)** Lab in the Department of Surgery (DoS) is a world leader in studying the ways immune cells interact in cancer. Since the immune response is now understood to be critical to cancer treatment response and survival, this work is of the utmost importance. The TIME Lab, with the assistance of the DoS and numerous generous philanthropic donors, recently purchased a state-of-the-art Leica



State-of-the-art Leica Mica microscope



Pancreatic cancer slice culture with cancer cells stained green and various immune cells within the tumor

Mica microscope that is capable of imaging living tumor slice cultures at high resolution, while keeping the tissue alive and healthy in its built-in incubator. This nearly half million dollar investment will provide a window into the effects of various drugs on the ability of the immune system to kill the cancer cells. The image below, taken by Dr. **Sheela Damle**, postdoctoral fellow in the TIME Lab, shows a pancreatic cancer slice culture with cancer cells stained green and various immune cells

within the tumor. Using the new microscope, the TIME Lab can create both still images and time-lapse videos that capture cellular movement in three dimensions. The microscope will also be used by Drs. **Raymond Yeung**, **Nick Crispe**, and **Jeremy Sharib**.

PATCHS STUDY



Dr. David Flum

The **Prevention and Treatment of Common Hyperglycemia in Surgery (PATCHS)** study is a blinded, randomized pilot trial focused on improving glucose management in patients undergoing abdominal and pelvic surgeries. Elevated intraoperative glucose levels, which significantly heighten morbidity and mortality risks, are frequently observed—

not only in patients with diabetes but also in up to two-thirds of non-diabetic patients. The study will test the role of giving prophylactic insulin (delivered in combination with glucose and potassium) to prevent complications in patients without diabetes who are having major surgery.

The primary goal of PATCHS is to assess the feasibility and determine the necessary sample size for a larger, multi-site randomized controlled trial (RCT). The study seeks to further establish the safety profile of glucose, insulin, and potassium (GIK) therapy while examining its physiological effects. We hypothesize that administering GIK to non-diabetic patients during abdominal or pelvic surgery will reduce morbidity and mortality rates compared to standard care. **David Flum**, MD, MPH, Department of Surgery Associate Chair for Research, **Ian Jones**, MD, Anesthesiology resident; **Sara DePaoli**, Research Manager for the **Surgical Outcomes Research Center** (SORCE), and **Armando Rodriguez Martinez**, Research Coordinator, SORCE, will conduct this study.

UW APPROVED FOR CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN HCM CARE



Dr. Lara Oyetunji

The Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Association (HCMA) informed the Department of Surgery that the University of Washington was approved to become a Center of Excellence in Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM) care. This was one of the growth initiatives presented by **Lara Oyetunji**, MD, MPH, FACS, Assistant Professor of Cardiac Surgery, in July of 2021. Currently, there are only 48 centers nationwide, with none in Washington State and just two in the Pacific Northwest. The nearest centers are at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), Intermountain, the University of Colorado, and the University of Utah. The HCMA is an essential resource for HCM patients, and the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery hopes this designation will help increase referrals to their program. The UW HCM team is currently in the planning stages with the HCMA for a patient- and provider-oriented launch event the last week of July 2025.

PROSPECTIVE LONGITUDINAL ASSESSMENT OF NERVE TRAUMA (PLANeT)

Brachial plexus injuries have a devastating impact on patients, not only leading to partial or complete paralysis of their arm, but also affecting their quality of life, emotional health, functional independence, and financial state. To best serve these patients, Dr. **Katie Liu** led the creation of the Northwest Institute for



Dr. Katie Liu

Nerve Injury at Harborview Medical Center in October 2023 to provide comprehensive, streamlined care. This multidisciplinary team provides diagnostic testing; new patient consultations in a single coordinated visit with surgeons, physiatrists, and rehabilitation psychologists; surgical coordination; and postoperative rehabilitation with hand therapy.



Dr. Jeffrey Friedrich

The vast majority of prior research studies have focused on prognostication of, and surgical interventions aimed at, functional muscle recovery. However, a few recent studies have noted the important role of psychosocial factors in patients with these types of nerve injuries. The Prospective Longitudinal Assessment of Nerve Trauma (PLANeT) study is one such study. Dr. Liu and fellow Plastic Surgery Division faculty member Dr. **Jeffrey Friedrich** serve as site PIs for this multi-institutional study, which recruits nerve injury patients through the Northwest Institute for Nerve Injury. The study is led by Washington University in St. Louis, and supported by the NIH NIAMS R01 grant, “Establishing the validity, responsiveness, and appropriateness of patient-reported outcome measures for adult traumatic brachial plexus injury.” The objective of this research is to determine the outcome measures that best capture the experience of brachial plexus injury recovery, encompassing physical function, mental health, pain, and social support.

honors & awards

CARLOS A. PELLEGRINI DIVERSITY VISITING STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM – 2024 AWARDEES

The Department of Surgery Council for the Promotion of Diversity and Inclusion created the Carlos A. Pellegrini Visiting Internship Program, which offers minority medical students from around the country a Sub-Internship (Sub-I) within our department. The Visiting Internship Program is named for Dr. Pellegrini in recognition of his many contributions to the personal

and professional development of minority medical students, residents, fellows and faculty. The internship program is open to full-time fourth-year students who are in good standing at LCME-accredited U.S. medical schools; demonstrate academic excellence, strong leadership skills, and extra-curricular experience; and are members of a group or groups that are recognized as historically

underrepresented in the health and science professions, including African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Hispanic American and Asian/Pacific Islander. At present, we are able to fund three opportunities per year. This sub-internship provides a stipend of up to \$3000 to help cover the airfare, lodging and living expenses in Seattle during the sub-internship, with rotations lasting four weeks in duration. The first recipients were awarded in October of 2014.

INTERN AWARDEES TO DATE

Queena Chen, Transplant Surgery, 8/19-9/13/24
Cole Valerio Roblee, Plastic Surgery, 7/22-8/16/24
Maria Cristina Gil Diaz, Burn Care, 9/16-10/11/24
Keilan Michael Johnson, Cardiothoracic Surgery, 10/14-11/8/24

[MAKE A GIFT](#)

publications

“Sliding and Paraesophageal Hiatal Hernias are Distinct Diseases: Surgeons are Responsible for Delineating the Differences”

Foregut: The Journal of the American Foregut Society – February 8, 2024

Brant Oelschlager, MD
Professor & Chief
Division of General Surgery

“A Call for Standardization in Rural Surgery Training”

JAMA Surg. – October 23, 2024

Nina M. Clark, MD, MS
R4 - General Surgery

“Pre-therapy Laparoscopic Jejunostomy Provides Safe, Reliable Nutrition for Trimodality GEJ Cancer Care”

Foregut: The Journal of the American Foregut Society – August 5, 2024

Brant Oelschlager, MD
Professor & Chief
Division of General Surgery

honors & awards

DR. JEFF FRIEDRICH RECEIVES THE PARKER J. PALMER COURAGE TO TEACH AWARD



Dr. Jeff Friedrich

Dr. **Jeff Friedrich** was awarded a 2025 **Parker J. Palmer Courage to Teach Award** by the **Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)**. Dr. Friedrich was one of 10 program directors selected this year out of the more than 13,000 residency and fellowship programs accredited by the ACGME. This award is among the highest honors in medical education, and recognizes program directors who have fostered innovation and improvement in their programs and served as exemplary role models for residents and fellows.

Dr. Friedrich holds many roles in the UW School of Medicine, including Vice Chair for Education in the Department of Surgery, Professor of Surgery in the Division of Plastic Surgery, Professor of Orthopedics and adjunct professor of Urology, in addition to his role as a plastic surgeon at Harborview Medical Center and Seattle Children’s Hospital. He was program director for the UW Medicine Plastic Surgery residency program from 2011 to 2024 and is also a graduate of the program. During his 12-year tenure, Dr. Friedrich grew the residency

program from a “coordinated” residency of three residents/year (total nine) to currently the largest integrated Plastic Surgery Residency Program in the world—it includes 30 ACGME-accredited residency positions and was recently ranked first nationally on Doximity.

An excerpt from Dr. Friedrich’s nomination noted:

“Dr. Friedrich lives out Parker Palmer’s courage to teach philosophy with his daily work for our plastic surgery residency. He has the heart necessary to necessary to sustain himself and others around him as he examines his own insights and ignorance, and the courage to change the learning environment to enable all his trainees to achieve their educational goals.”

“We are fortunate to have Dr. Friedrich as a dedicated and inspiring role model of surgical education,” says Douglas Wood, MD, Henry N. Harkins professor and chair of the Department of Surgery.”

Friedrich will be honored during the 2025 ACGME Annual Educational Conference in February 2025.

in the media

listen

BEHIND THE KNIFE PODCAST - PART 1

May 9, 2024

[“Clinical Challenges in Burn Surgery: Burn Resuscitation – Getting Things Started” Part 1 of 2](#)

Dr. **Tam Pham**, Professor & Chief, Burn Center
Division of Trauma, Burn & Critical Care Surgery

BEHIND THE KNIFE PODCAST PART 2

September 9, 2024

[“Clinical Challenges in Burn Surgery: Burn Resuscitation - Titrating and Troubleshooting” - Part 2 of 2](#)

Dr. **Tam Pham**, Professor & Chief, Burn Center
Division of Trauma, Burn & Critical Care Surgery

BEHIND THE KNIFE PODCAST

August 26, 2024

[“Journal Review in Surgical Palliative Care: 2023 Pediatric & Adult Brain Death/Death By Neurologic Criteria Consensus Practice Guideline”](#)

Dr. **Katie O’Connell**, Associate Professor
Division of Trauma, Burn & Critical Care Surgery

NORTHWEST REPORTS PODCAST | CASCADE PBS - PART 1

September 25, 2024 - Season 1 – Episode 77

[“First Response: The medical professionals treating gunshot wounds” Part 1 of 3](#)

Dr. **Sam Arbabi**, Professor & Chief of Trauma
Division of Trauma, Burn & Critical Care Surgery

NORTHWEST REPORTS PODCAST | CASCADE PBS - PART 2

October 2, 2024 - Season 1 - Episode 78

[“First Response: The hospital working to cure the gun violence cycle - Part 2 of 3”](#)

Dr. **Deepika Nehra**, Associate Professor
Division of Trauma, Burn & Critical Care Surgery

NORTHWEST REPORTS PODCAST | CASCADE PBS - PART 3

October 9, 2024 - Season 1 - Episode 79

[“First Response: The specialists helping patients heal from gunshots” - Part 3 of 3](#)

Paul Carter III, Violence Intervention and Prevention Specialist
Tarrell Harrison Jr., Violence Intervention and Prevention Specialist

read

[“3 Tips to Help You Manage Anxiety Before Surgery”](#)

Right as Rain | UW Medicine

September 16, 2024

Dr. **Giana Davidson**, Professor & Section Chief,
Emergency General Surgery
Division of General Surgery

[“Optimizing Peripheral Nerve Injury Care”](#)

The Huddle | UW Medicine

October 16, 2024

Dr. **Katie Liu**, Assistant Professor
Division of Plastic Surgery

[2024 Fred Hutch Obliteride](#)

Dr. **Jonathan Sham**, Assistant Professor

Division of General Surgery

[“58 US hospitals honored for ‘meritorious’ surgical care”](#)

Beckers Clinical Leadership

Nov 7, 2024

watch

[“Harborview hosts arm of trauma team for training”](#)

UW Medicine Newsroom

Dec 4, 2024



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DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

Surgery Synopsis is an in-house newsletter published on a quarterly basis to highlight the clinical, academic and research activities of the University of Washington School of Medicine Department of Surgery. This publication is distributed to the department's faculty, residents, staff, and friends.

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