



# **Department of Surgery**

### NEWSLETTER

#### WINTER 2020-2021



#### Letter from the Chair

Who could have predicted the events of 2020; not only the global pandemic, but also the awkward transition of power from one President to another, the drama around which has drifted into 2021?

In 2021, we must close the chapter of the 45th president, and start to write the chapter of the 46th. Likewise, with the vaccination effort that we have embraced at UMass, and across the country, we should be able to close the chapter on Covid-19. If I were writing the next chapter, I would be looking for peace and prosperity for the

nation, and I would be writing about the resumption of normal social activities that help define our society and our culture.

We are social creatures and to some extent our joy and happiness, as well as our tolerance for others, is dependent on interpersonal contact. Our resilience is bolstered by our ability to share success and failure with friends and family. Our capacity to face our society's challenges head on, together, equally, is predicated on our commitment to a "just" society.

As we emerge from Covid, the chapter I would write would be uplifting, would be one of human perseverance despite obstacles, and would rejoice in the resilience of the human spirit, and would reaffirm our dedication to our friends, family, society and culture.

Wishing you good health and happiness in 2021. Demetrius

#### **Robotic Milestones**

**Philip Cohen, MD** recently completed his 500th lifetime robotic case, and **Donald Czerniach, MD** recently completed his 100th case. Congratulations!

UMass Memorial offers a number of robotic procedures with the da Vinci system, the most advanced technology available today. Procedures include: robotic weight loss procedures, robotic hiatal and paraesophageal hernia surgery, and robotic abdominal wall hernia repair.

(Left to right) Dr. Philip Cohen and Dr. Donald Czerniach, Division of General, Minimally Invasive and Bariatric Surgery, in front of the Intuitive DaVinci Xi robot.



## The Division of Thoracic Surgery has had a very busy 2020!

Samantha Johnson, Executive Administrative Secretary, Thoracic Surgery

First, we would like to congratulate our Division Chief, **Karl Uy, MD**, on his additional appointment to the position of Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery. In addition, the division has strengthened it's relationship with the thoracic surgery division at St. Vincent's Hospital and has begun covering call along with thoracic surgeon, **Mohir H. Hedeshian, MD**.

**Feiran Lou, MD** is one of only two nationwide recipients of the Women In Thoracic Surgery (WITS) Robotic Surgery Fellowship grant, which will allow her to be trained and mentored closely by one of the most accomplished female robotic thoracic surgeons in the world.

The division is also proud to announce that our research and data manager, **Isabel Emmerick**, **PhD**, was promoted to Assistant Professor of Surgery. This year, our research activity increased significantly with 14 ongoing research projects. We have many hard-working team members to thank for our success including our Head of Thoracic Surgery research **Feiran Lou**, **MD**, (left) research resident **Bryce Bludevich**, **MD**, (right) and research associate **Keren Guiab**, **MD**.



We are very grateful to have received an ECOG grant for a study on the prevention of post-operative urinary retention in thoracic surgery patients. Additionally,

**Feiran Lou, MD**, who is the recipient of an institutional grant from the UMass Memorial Health Care Quality Improvement and Clinical Innovation Grant Program for her research project "Does Prophylactic Tamsulosin Decrease Post-operative Urinary Retention Rates in Patients Undergoing Thoracic Surgery?" Congratulations!

The Division of Thoracic Surgery obtained a Training and Education grant from Intuitive Surgical for a robotics project entitled: "Simulating Emergency Scenarios in Thoracic Robotic Surgery: A Pilot Study of the Creation and Implementation of Emergency Protocols." This study aims to determine if there is a clinically significant difference in training OR staff in new emergency protocols and checklists with a video-based didactic or a hands-on simulation-based session. This will provide a framework by which other institutions can teach our protocols and adjust them to meet their needs with a systems test. This study will highlight in-situ experiences with these high stakes, low frequency emergency events, and identify potential Latent Safety Threats (LST) prior to an actual patient associated intra-operative emergency event. Congratulations to Drs. Bryce Bludevich and Feiran Lou!

Starting in 2021, the division, in collaboration with Philips Image-Guided Therapy Systems, the Department of Radiology, and the Division of Interventional Pulmonology, has entered into an agreement to conduct a series of animal studies to develop Philips' mobile cone beam CT unit for lung nodule localization purposes.

In addition to the clinical and research accomplishments, the division welcomed three healthy babies. In June, **Poliana Lin, ACNP** and her husband Alex welcomed their daughter, Liliana. Several months later in October, **Feiran Lou, MD** and her husband welcomed their son, Nolan. Not long afterward, **Mark Maxfield, MD** and his wife Alice welcomed their son, Jack.

This year has been full of changes and growth despite the challenges we have all faced due to COVID-19. We are looking forward to a new year of growth!

(Thoracic Surgery Spotlight continued on page 3)

#### **Employee Recognition**

Heather M. Tessier, MA, Research Associate, Plastic Surgery - 15 Years
Lyne Khair, MS, PhD, Senior Research Scientist, Vascular Surgery - 10 Years
Patricia Ann Gillies, Residency Program Coordinator, Vascular Surgery - 5 Years
Mollynda Vanna McArthur, Research Coordinator, Vascular Surgery - 5 Years

#### (Thoracic Surgery Spotlight continued from page 2)

**Isabel Emmerick PhD**, participated at ASCO-2019 presenting 2 posters. Her work included:

#### Impact of timing of Lung resection on Survival for Clinical Stage I and II Lung Cancer

A retrospective cohort study, using institutional data, aimed to assess whether increasing time between diagnosis/first doctor visit and surgery for early stage non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) is associated with poorer survival. Greater intervals between diagnosis of early-stage NSCLC and surgery are associated with worse survival. Efforts to minimize delays, particularly factors that prolong the period from diagnosis to first contact with a lung cancer provider may improve survival.

The paper regarding this study is in preparation to be submitted to *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

#### "Early Impact" of the Lung Cancer Screening in US Population in the SEER Registries

Rate sessions from the SEER18 database were accessed during the years 2008-2015. Since the publication of the

#### How Do You Repay Somebody for That?

Near death, injured motorcyclist and his family bond with life-saving UMass Memorial doctor

Steven H. Foskett Jr, Telegram & Gazette Staff Published Sept. 11, 2020

The injuries Dan Hall suffered June 23, when the motorcycle he was riding collided with a vehicle on Plantation Street, were about as severe as you can get while still surviving.

Dan's mother credits **George DeBusk, MD** (Trauma Surgery) with bringing her son back from the brink of death with skill, patience and compassion. Dr. Debusk said "It's a testament to his family how well he has done. And to our whole team here. More than 100 people were involved in his care." *Read full article* 



George DeBusk, MD shows off the gift that was presented to him by Dan Hall's family. Dr. DeBusk helped save Hall's life after he was critically injured in a motorcycle crash in June. NLST in 2011, there has been no impact on lung cancer mortality or incidence of lung cancer in the general US population. However, there were favorable increases in the proportion of early stage lung cancers, depending upon median family income, race, and location, showing an effect on the proportion of early detection.

#### **Improving Patient and Family Education**

The Division of Cardiac Surgery has worked with the marketing department, patient advocacy, and interpreter services to generate patient education videos that are now available in the five most requested languages in addition to English. This project has brought standardization to patient education as well as increasing availability of the information in an on-demand fashion

for patients. This project was made possible with support from the innovation fund and a generous patient. Check out the video by scanning this QR code.



#### Gun Buyback Co-founder Michael P. Hirsh, MD Receives Public Safety Award

Praised as a "living hero" for his surgical skills, dedication to the Goods for Guns program, and public health advocacy, **Michael P. Hirsh, MD** (Pediatric Surgery) was honored with the Worcester District Attorney's Team Excellence and Merit (TEAM) Award.



Dr. Michael Hirsh, right, co-founder of the annual Goods for Guns buyback, is presented with a 2020 TEAM Award by Worcester District Attorney Joseph Early. Dr. Hirsh is Medical Director of the Worcester Department of Public Health.

#### **UMass on Social Media**

To continue to highlight our Department's and Institution's great accomplishments, please follow and add @UMassSurgery, @UMassPlastics, @UMassVascSurg, and @UMassColorectal, when you Tweet and umasssurgery, umassvascular, umassplasticsurgery, and umassthoracic on Instagram.

#### Promotions, Appointments and Recognitions



**Anne C. Larkin, MD**, (Surgical Oncology) Vice Chair and Associate Professor of Surgery, has been promoted to Vice Provost for Educational Affairs. This newly created position includes responsibility for creating an inclusive process to implement the educational goals of our IMPACT 2025 Strategic Plan as well as oversight of crucial educational resources that support the educational mission of our three schools: the School of Medicine, Graduate School of Nursing and Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. Dr. Larkin's new appointment takes effect January 1, 2021.



Congratulations to **Karl Uy, MD**, Chief of the Division of Thoracic Surgery, on his additional appointment to the position of Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery.



**Isabel Emmerick PhD** (Thoracic Surgery Research) has been promoted to Assistant Professor of Surgery.

#### **NESS Annual Meeting Award Winner**



Congratulations to **Hannah Buettner, MD** (Academic Development Time Resident) for being selected as the Poster of Distinction winner for her presentation "A Single Intratumoral Injection of Ipilimumab Induces Changes in T-lymphocytes and Delays Subsequent Tumor Growth" at the Virtual 101st NESS Annual Meeting!



**Candace Scanlon**, General Surgery Residency Program Coordinator, graduated from Emmanuel College with a BS in Biology. After graduation, Candace worked at Tufts Medical Center in the Division of Cardiology as the Fellowship Program Coordinator and at the Joslin Diabetes Center as a Medical Office Coordinator

before taking the job as the Residency Program Coordinator here at UMass.



(Left to right) Congratulations to **Paulo Martins, MD, PhD, FAST, FEBS, FACS** (Organ Transplantation) who was elected into the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Honor Medical Society as a faculty member. **Ashley Russo, MD** (PGY-5) and **Ricardo Bello Boccardo, MD, MPH** (PGY-4) were elected as resident members.

Dr. Ricardo Bello was also named as the NRMP Resident Board Member. http://www.nrmp.org/2020-board-members

#### Welcome New Faculty



Nicole Cherng, MD, Assistant Professor, recently joined the Division of General, Minimally Invasive and Bariatric Surgery. Dr. Cherng is a Massachusetts native who attended Tufts University for her undergraduate degree. She then received her medical degree from the University of Massachusetts Medical School where she continued her sur-

gical education for both General Surgery residency as well as Minimally Invasive Surgery fellowship. Her clinical interests include foregut and endocrine surgery and bariatric surgery and robotics. She has a strong interest in surgical education and residency wellness.



**Douglas Jones, MD,** Assistant Professor, joined the Division of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery. He was recruited from his prior position at Boston Medical Center/Boston University School of Medicine to serve as Director of the UMass Limb Preservation Center. Though he has broad clinical interests, including aortic and carotid vascular pathology, his primary interest

is the multidisciplinary management of patients at risk for limb loss due to vascular disease, particularly patients with diabetes and end stage renal disease. He performs advanced open surgical and endovascular lower extremity revascularization procedures. Dr. Jones received his medical degree from Dartmouth Medical School, completed his general surgery residency at New York Presbyterian Hospital – Weill-Cornell Medical Center, and completed his Vascular Surgery fellowship at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. In addition to his clinical interests, he has extensive clinical research experience focusing on variation in treatment patterns for patients with vascular disease. He plans to further develop and evaluate metrics for quality of surgical care which leverage regional and national quality initiatives. Dr. Jones will also play an integral role in the division's outreach efforts in the region.



Jonson Yee, MD, Assistant Professor, joined the Division of Trauma and Surgical Critical Care. He received his medical degree from the University of Nevada, Reno and completed his General Surgery residency training at the Los Angeles County and University of Southern California Medical Center. From there, he went to Baylor Medical Center in

Houston, TX for fellowship training in Surgical Critical Care. Although he has just completed his training, he is looking forward to contributing to resident and medical student education and being an integral member of the Trauma division.



Mary E Huerter, MD, MA, Assistant Professor, joined the Division of Cardiac Surgery. She completed cardiothoracic fellowship at UTSW in Dallas, TX and General Surgery residency at the University of Illinois in Chicago. She received her MD from the University of Illinois in Chicago and her undergraduate degree at

Loyola University Chicago. Dr. Huerter was a research fellow at UVA and investigated acute lung ischemia-reperfusion injury as it relates to lung transplantation using murine and porcine models and further defining the role of adenosine receptor modulation in lung protection with the ex vivo lung perfusion (EVLP) system, which is utilized for the assessment and rehabilitation of marginal donor lungs as well as a platform for drug delivery. Dr. Huerter additionally received a Master's degree in Bioethics at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and was a graduate research assistant at the Center for Bioethics, which entailed work regarding policy recommendations to the Indiana State Department of Health regarding pandemic preparedness, biopharmaceuticals, genetic testing, and biological specimen repositories. Her interests include adult cardiac surgery, medical ethics, and residency education.



Tammy Nguyen, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor and Medical Director of the Lower Extremity Wound Clinic, joined the Division of Vascular Surgery after completing her Integrated Vascular Surgery Residency at UMass in June 2020. Dr. Nguyen received her MD/PhD from the University of Utah. Her clinical role will focus on open and endovascular

surgeries with an emphasis on lower extremity wounds and limb salvage. Her research will focus on a bedside-to-bench and bench-to-bedside translational research model to develop technologies to enhance wound healing, tissue perfusion and limb salvage. Specifically, she plans to leverage her training as a vascular surgeon and molecular biologist to investigate the molecular mechanisms that compromise the immune system and inhibit wound healing in diabetes and limb threatening ischemia. Dr. Nguyen is currently building a patient tissue bio-bank that will facilitate her research efforts towards understanding the mechanisms for non-healing diabetic foot ulcers.

> Thank you for all of your submissions for the Department of Surgery Newsletter! Send submissions to: Darius.Jagminas@umassmemorial.org

#### Welcome Fellows



Jeremy Springer, MD is the current Colon and Rectal Surgery Fellow at University of Massachusetts. He grew up in Ontario, Canada and completed a B.Sc (Hons) in Physiology at the University of Western Ontario. He then moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia where he completed his M.Sc. in electrophysiology followed by his MD at Dalhousie University.

He completed his general surgery residency at McMaster University in Hamilton Ontario where he was awarded St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton Best Resident in Surgery Award and the Resident Award for Teaching Excellence from the Canadian Association of General Surgeons. Jeremy is a board-certified general surgeon and a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada. He is very excited to continue his education at UMass to obtain preeminent training in colorectal surgery.



**Dustin Powell, MD** grew up in southern New Hampshire before moving to the Midwest to attend college at the University of Michigan. To complete his training, he returned to New England where he attended medical school at Tufts University School of Medicine and surgical residency at St Elizabeth's Medical Center both in

Boston. He is now completing his one year fellowship in Minimally Invasive and Bariatric Surgery at UMass Memorial Medical Center. His clinical interests are in laparoscopic foregut surgery and robotic surgery. In his free time, he enjoys various outdoor activities including skiing, mountain biking, and hiking.

#### Medical Group Announces 3rd Annual PACE Prize Winners

Congratulations to the 2020 PACE Award team members (left to right) **David Cave, MD, PhD**, Professor of Medicine, GI Research Director; **Julianna Buchwald**, **MD, PhD**, Graduate Student; **Paulo Martins, MD, PhD**, **FAST, FEBS, FACS**, Associate Professor of Surgery, Division of Organ Transplantion, and **Anastasia Khvorova**, **PhD**, Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Pharmacology on their recent PACE Award for their work on "Silencing of Apoptotic Genes During Liver Machine Preservation to Alleviate Ischemia Reperfusion Injury of Liver Grafts."

The goal of this project is to improve the quality of suboptimal liver grafts that would otherwise be discarded. More specifically, the team will try to improve the quality of liver grafts by using gene modulation approaches during machine pump preservation — before transplant — to prevent damage and cellular death. The team will be using microsurgical techniques in a model of extra-corporeal circuit to preserve livers and a rodent model of liver transplant to test this hypothesis. This approach has the potential to improve transplant outcomes and decrease the discard rates, thereby increasing the pool of liver grafts and reducing wait time and mortality on the liver transplant wait list. This project will



be carried out by a UMass MD-PhD student, **Julianna Buchwald** for her PhD thesis.

The PACE Award is awarded annually by UMass Memorial Medical Group (UMMMG). The award supports the engagement of our Medical Group physicians in cutting edge-research, encourages interdepartmental collaboration, showcases UMMMG's commitment to academic excellence, and reinforces UMMMG's identity as a group comprised of academic physicians. Each team receives a \$100,000 prize.

#### Welcome Department of Surgery Babies





**Feiran Lou, MD** (Thoracic Surgery) and husband Henry Shin welcomed a baby boy, Nolan on October 12, 2020.

**James Lindberg, MD** (Surgical Oncology) and Kathleen Barry, MD (Department of Family Medicine) welcomed a baby boy. Matthew John Lindberg was born November 30, 2020. Matthew is pictured above with brother Andrew and sister Elizabeth.



**Poliana Lin, ACNP** (Thoracic Surgery) delivered baby girl, Liliana, June 31, 2020. Mom and dad, Alex, are ecstatic and can't get over it.

Thank you for all of your submissions for the Department of Surgery Newsletter! Send submissions to: Darius.Jagminas@umassmemorial.org



Mark W. Maxfield, MD (Thoracic Surgery) and Alice Maxfield, MD gave birth to a baby boy, Jack Webster. Jack was born on November 30, 2020.

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#### From the DCU Front Lines

Today I finished one of the most rewarding weeks of my medical career. I took off my vascular surgery loupes and lead, threw on my Medicine Hat and volunteered with my medical colleagues at our DCU Covid Field hospital acting as a "hospitalist." It was a tremendous and rewarding experience; my medical colleagues have taken the brunt of the COVID work and this was the least I could to help. It was incredible to witness the teamwork and comraderie and be invited to be part of their team. It is a huge need for our community and patients; they receive incredible compassionate care by a team of people who want them to do better and make it home. Thanks for welcoming me and allowing me to help!

Dejah Judelson, MD Assistant Professor of Surgery Program Director, AV Access Medical Director, Center for Venous Disease

#### **Research and Publications - Department of Surgery 2020**

#### Publications

#### **Cardiac Surgery**

- Balsam L, Hoffman W. The unacceptable aortic risk with fluoroquinolone exposure in Marfan syndrome. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg. 2020 Oct 4.
- Balsam LB. The dilemma of donor heart cold storage: are stem cell vesicles the answer. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg. 2020 Sep 18.
- Fryer M, Balsam L Single-dose cardioplegia: adjusting the brew. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg. 2020 Sept 12.
- Balsam L. The shortfall of annular repair for functional tricuspid regurgitation. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg. 2020 Sep 10.
- Balsam L, Grossi E. Spooky action at a distance: an example of ventricular entanglement. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg. 2020 Sep 3.
- Balsam L. Management of the aortic arch in Loeys-Dietz and Marfan syndromes. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg. 2020 Jul 25.
- Fryer M, Balsam L. Designing better broken hearts: modeling regurgitant bicuspid aortic valve disease. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg. 2020 Jul 13.
- Kanei Y, Qureshi W, Walker J, Kakouros N. Guide extension assisted stent implantation at ostial right coronary artery creating stent tunnel during transcatheter aortic valve replacement. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg. 2020 Apr 23.
- Balsam L, Hoffman W. The molecular pandemonium of coronavirus disease 2019. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg. 2020 Jun 6.

#### **Colon and Rectal Surgery**

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#### General, Minimally Invasive and Bariatric Surgery

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#### **Organ Transplantation**

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#### **Pediatric Surgery**

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#### **Plastic Surgery**

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