Airline Pilots Offer Insight for Quality Improvement in the Operating Room BY DIPALI PATHAK

What do surgeons and pilots have in common? Baylor College of Medicine’s Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery and American Airlines Flight Academy came together recently to determine just that.

Through a program with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas, leaders from the two organizations joined forces to learn about communicating and managing high-stress situations, whether in the operating room or 36,000 feet above the ground.

As part of the Department of Surgery’s quality and safety initiative, the event, held May 4 on the main Baylor campus, started with a presentation from Capt. John Duncan and Capt. Chris Moran on safety training and compliance of pilots at the airline. The presentation was followed by breakout sessions where the captains observed various surgery scenarios presented by Baylor’s Simlympics Team and brainstormed solutions for the medical world based on aviation safety experiences. For example, one scenario simulated a lack of communication with the surgeon on the patient’s allergies as well as an interruption to communicate about an upcoming surgery during a critical period in the operating room.

Many ideas were discussed, including following standard operating procedures as well as communicating intentions and potential problems. However, the main message gained from the event was that whether in the air or in the operating room, collaboration is in everyone’s best interest.

“This is a first step in a journey — there’s a lot we can take from this,” said Dr. Todd Rosengart, chair of surgery at Baylor.

“The meeting was a unique opportunity for both groups to learn from each other,” said Moran, senior manager of flight safety and investigations at American Airlines. “It quickly became clear that we have more in common than one would think! Continuous improvement is an important part of our safety culture and we look forward to additional exchanges of ideas that benefit both communities.”
Texas Children’s Hospital is proud to announce that the American College of Surgeons (ACS) has verified the hospital as a Level I Children’s Surgery Center.

The one-year verification was awarded following an extensive pilot site visit in May 2015. During the visit, Texas Children’s assisted in the review and refinement of guidelines set forth by ACS with the goal of improving the safety and quality of pediatric surgery performed at centers across the country. At this time, Texas Children’s is among only three Level 1 Children’s Surgery Centers in the U.S., and the only children’s hospital in Texas and the southwest region to earn this distinction.

“We are honored to be one of the inaugural hospitals to receive this esteemed verification,” said Dr. Charles D. Fraser Jr., surgeon-in-chief at Texas Children’s and professor of surgery at Baylor College of Medicine. “As a leader in pediatric surgical care, we believe it is important for children to undergo surgery with a focused, dedicated team of specialized pediatric surgeons, anesthesiologists, radiologists, intensivists, nurses, staff and support departments committed to pediatric care. We carefully track our outcomes with the goal of providing the best possible results. We are honored to be recognized for our commitment to high-quality care for our patients.”

A Level 1 verification requires Texas Children’s to provide surgery and anesthesia for all major pediatric specialties for children of all ages—from premature infants to adolescents. Additionally, the hospital must have not only the highest level Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), pediatric emergency medicine physicians and pediatric radiologists available all day, every day, but also the most robust data collection, outcomes assessment and quality improvement efforts.

A team of 25—physicians, nurses and members of the administration, anesthesiology, the outcomes and impact service, the pediatric intensive care unit (PICU), quality, radiology, surgery and transport—served on Texas Children’s ACS verification committee.

The Department of Surgery at Texas Children’s represents more than 90 full-time pediatric-focused surgeons who are also faculty members at Baylor. Surgeons, advanced practice providers and more than 700 Texas Children’s staff members are dedicated to caring for and improving the health of children through patient care, education and research. The team’s efforts are evident in the more than 26,700 operative cases performed, more than 1,200 trauma admissions and 144,800 outpatient clinic visits in 2015.

For more information about Texas Children’s Department of Surgery visit texaschildrens.org/surgery. For more information about the American College of Surgeon’s Children’s Surgery Verification, visit https://www.facs.org/quality-programs/childrens-surgery-verification.
Lester and Sue Smith commit $10 million to the Lung Institute at Baylor College of Medicine  BY DANA BENSON

Baylor College of Medicine has received a $10.2 million gift from the Lester and Sue Smith Foundation that will support treatment and research efforts at the Lung Institute.

The gift, announced April 8 at the Partnership for Baylor College of Medicine gala benefitting the Lung Institute, continues Lester and Sue Smith’s longstanding commitment to supporting programs at Baylor, and throughout the Texas Medical Center, that are focused on improving patient care and finding cures for cancer and other diseases.

The couple has provided more than $100 million in transformational gifts to Texas Medical Center institutions, including Baylor College of Medicine.

“Lester and Sue Smith have made life better for thousands in our city through their generosity, and now that extends to patients receiving care at the Lung Institute,” said Baylor President, CEO and Executive Dean Dr. Paul Klotman.

“We are so grateful for their steadfast devotion to improving the quality of life for patients in Houston and beyond.”

Past, Present, Future

The Lung Institute was founded in July 2014 under the direction of Dr. David J. Sugarbaker, an internationally renowned leader in the care of pleural mesothelioma. The comprehensive, multi-specialty Institute offers advanced technology and individualized treatment, backed by Baylor’s top-ranked genetics program, to patients from all over the world who are dealing with diseases of the lung – from asthma to lung cancer. The specialties that are working together in the Lung Institute include medical oncology, pulmonary medicine, radiation oncology and radiology. It is based at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center, part of CHI St. Luke’s Health.

Sugarbaker is professor of surgery and chief of the division of general thoracic surgery at Baylor College of Medicine. He directs the clinical and research programs at the Institute’s Mesothelioma Treatment Center.

“This amazing and generous gift from Lester and Sue Smith will ensure that the Lung Institute at Baylor College of Medicine will take a national leadership position in the treatment of lung disease,” said Sugarbaker. “This support comes at a critical time in the Lung Institute’s growth and development. The members and staff of the Institute are most grateful to Lester and Sue for their leadership.”

In recognition of this generous gift, the Institute’s outpatient clinic will be designated as The Lester and Sue Smith Lung Clinic.

In addition to the Lester and Sue Smith Endowed Chair in Surgery, Baylor also will establish the Lester and Sue Smith Endowed Chair in Lung Health, the Lester and Sue Smith Endowed Fund in Lung Health and the Lester and Sue Smith Endowed Professorship in Lung Health.
EDUCATION

Graduation

Department of Surgery training program graduates and their friends and families gathered with department faculty on June 12 to celebrate their high achievement and to recognize their outstanding work. The Department of Surgery celebrated the graduation of 22 residents and fellows in its training programs including General Surgery, and the specialties of Surgical Critical Care, Pediatric Surgery, Plastic Surgery, Pediatric Plastic Surgery, Thoracic Surgery, Vascular Surgery, Aortic Surgery, and Congenital Cardiac Surgery. In addition, the department recognized faculty, residents and students with various awards (see Graduation Ceremony Awards on page 15.)

Program Director Dr. Bradford G. Scott presents Dr. Carlos Palacio with the Outstanding Chief Resident Award.

Left: Dr. Mary L. Brandt received the DeBakey Distinguished Service Award, Right: Dr. David E. Wesson received the George P. Noon Faculty Professionalism Award.

Dr. James W. Suliburk received the General Surgery Chief Residents Award to a Faculty Member presented by the chief residents.

See HONORS and AWARDS for full list of awards presented at graduation.
Third Annual Surgical Skills Olympics

The Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery held its third annual Surgical Skills Olympics April 13, 2016, in the Baylor College of Medicine Simulation Center. General surgery residents participated in a friendly, team-based competition to test their surgical dexterity, skill and speed. Just as our much-anticipated Winter Surgical Jeopardy event highlights didactic knowledge growth, so too does our Spring Surgical Skills Olympics highlight the importance of our trainees’ developing the technical skills of a surgeon.

Seven resident teams, each led by a chief resident, were timed as they competed in surgical skills activities. The exercises featured both open and laparoscopic skills, including open bowel and vascular anastomoses, three laparoscopic skills activities (peg transfer, pattern cutting, and intracorporeal suturing), and open knot tying and suturing.

The Surgical Skills Olympics consisted of two individual competition heats as well as a final team relay. The team relay featured open and laparoscopic skills as well as a “Mystery Bag Challenge” where residents were required to identify a surgical instrument by touch alone. While maintaining their competitive spirit, residents shared tips with one another on techniques, approaches and strategies for improvement throughout the event. In addition, faculty scorers were able to provide feedback regarding performance on specific skills exercises.

Scores received individually and as a team enabled residents to quantify their surgical skill development. Surgical “athletes” earned points in each of the individual competition heats to place their respective teams in medal contention. Competition medals were awarded to the teams scoring the most points across individual events and clocking in at the fastest time on the team relay event.

Overall and relay winners Drs. Virginia Tran, Somala Mohammed, Catherine Seger, Genna Lubrano, Michael Kueht, Carlos Palacio and Michael Pan.
The Fourth Annual Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery Resident Research Day Symposium was held Wednesday June 1, 2016. A record number of over 200 faculty, residents, students and staff gathered in the Denton A. Cooley Auditorium, including Katrin and Olga DeBakey who were our special guests this year. After introductory comments by Drs. Todd K. Rosengart, Scott A. LeMaire and Jennifer Christner, dean of the School of Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, Keynote Speaker Dr. Justin B. Dimick, chief of the Division of Minimally Invasive Surgery at the University of Michigan presented, “Innovative Approaches for Improving Surgical Quality.”

This year, 74 abstracts by resident and student authors were selected for presentation from a record field of 102 abstracts. The top 23 submissions were presented as oral presentations during the symposium and 51 abstracts were presented as posters. An additional 16 project plans were featured in the program.


Best Clinical Research Presentation – Dr. Jennifer Moffett “Probability of Transplant (POT) Index: A Novel Method to Predict the Likelihood of an Adult Liver Transplant” — $1000 toward travel to academic meeting of choice.

Best Basic Science Presentation – Dr. Vivek Patel “Unlocking Reprogramming Capability: Silencing Antiplasticity Gene p63 Enhances the Reprogramming of Fibroblasts into Induced Cardiomyocytes” — $1000 toward travel to academic meeting of choice.

Best Student Quick Shot Presentation – Phoebe Lewis “Combination Therapy of miR-198 with Gemcitabine Reduces Tumor Progression in Patient-derived Xenografts (PDX) Models for Pancreatic Ductal Adenocarcinoma (PDAC)” — $100 educational award.
RESEARCH
Seminal TAAA Analysis Gives Patients, Surgeons New Insight into Procedures  BY ANA RODRIGUEZ

It’s rather uncommon that a surgeon who is dedicating his life to treating a particular condition presents a rigorous analysis of the outcomes of his professional experiences over decades. Dr. Joseph S. Coselli and his colleagues have presented such a study in the May issue of the Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery. Their seminal study reveals the results of Coselli’s nearly 30 years of experience performing open thoracoabdominal aortic aneurysm (TAAA) repairs.

“TAAA repairs were first performed more than 60 years ago and since then Baylor College of Medicine has continued leading the way in the treatment of patients who are in need of prompt intervention for very complex TAAAs,” said Coselli, professor and chief of the division of cardiothoracic surgery at Baylor College of Medicine. “This study, the largest series of patients treated for thoracoabdominal aortic aneurysms ever reported, has continued the tradition of excellence and dedication of pioneering predecessors in the field, Drs. Michael DeBakey, Denton Cooley and Stanley Crawford.” This study reflects the tremendous physical and intellectual effort, the teamwork and the hours required to improve the outcomes of such critical repairs.

Dr. Coselli is the Cullen Foundation Endowed Chair at Baylor College of Medicine, chief of Adult Cardiac Surgery at Texas Heart Institute and chief of the Adult Cardiac Surgery Section and associate chief of the Cardiovascular Service at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center. Dr. Coselli is an innovator and a leader in his field and he is highly experienced in complex aortic repair, such as repair performed in patients with connective tissue disorders (such as Marfan and Loeys-Dietz syndromes), as well as emergent repair performed in patients with conditions such as acute aortic dissection or aortic rupture.

The value of Coselli’s study is monumental. The comprehensive analysis of tremendous amounts of data allows surgeons and patients to capture both a detailed and an overall perspective of the potential risks and benefits of the procedures. The analysis allows surgeons to discuss with their patients what to expect, supported by almost three decades of experience, and illustrates the complexity of both the nature of thoracoabdominal aneurysms and the procedure that aims to repair them.

Dr. Coselli’s landmark paper can be accessed via: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26898979

Take-home message
After more than 3,300 operations to repair thoracoabdominal aortic aneurysms, which represent “some 15,000 hours” performing surgery over nearly 30 years in a single institution, according to estimates calculated by Dr. Lars Svensson, Chairman of the Sydell and Arnold Miller Family Heart & Vascular Institute at Cleveland Clinic, Coselli and his team have refined their technique to set the standard, reducing the risk of early death and complications that would affect the patient’s quality of life.
Surgery Faculty Research Grants
The Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery Faculty Research Grant provides support to eligible junior faculty members for research projects with a high likelihood of future extramural funding. This year four recipients will receive $20,000 each for their research project.

Dr. Ethan Poteet from the Division of Surgical Research received funding for his basic science proposal, “Regulation of EGFR by Mesothelin Expression in Pancreatic Cancer.”

Dr. Ori Wald from the Division of General Thoracic Surgery received funding for his basic science research proposal, “Modulating the Tumor Microenvironment via Targeting the Chemokine/Chemokine Receptor CXCL12/CXCR4 as an Emerging Therapeutic Approach in Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma.”

Dr. Konstantinos Makris from the Division of General Surgery received funding for his clinical research proposal, “Evaluation of Diagnosis and Surgical Treatment Utilization of Primary Hyperparathyroidism in the Veteran Population.”

Dr. David S. Lee from the Division of General Surgery received funding for his clinical research proposal, “Chronic Pain after Inguinal Hernia Repair: Does Major Depression Play a Role?”

Prior recipients, almost a dozen in total, have all gone on to transition this seed support into extramural funding and/or peer-reviewed publications. Said Dr. Rosengart, “We are pleased to see our program continue to hit its mark of encouraging and supporting research in our department.”

New Grants

**Dr. Bryan Burt:** Dan L Duncan Comprehensive Cancer Center Pilot Project Program Award: “Window of Opportunity Clinical Trial of Neoadjuvant Checkpoint Inhibitor Therapy for Patients Undergoing Surgical Resection of Pleural Mesothelioma”

**Dr. Xin-Hua Feng:** NIH R21: “ALK Causes TGF-ß Insensitivity in Lung Cancer Cells”

**Dr. Hu Ying Shen and Dr. Scott A. LeMaire:** NHLBI R01: “Targeting Endoplasmic Reticulum Stress in Aneurysms”

**Dr. Bijan Najafi:** NIH STTR Award: “Residential Smart Carpet”

  - NIH R21: “Managing Chemotherapy Induced Neuropathy in Cancer Patients Using Exergaming”
  - NIH R42: Phase IIB: “Portable Device for Telecare Monitoring of Elderly People” (Biosensics LLC)
  - NIH R44: “Upper Extremity Frailty Assessment Tool” (Biosensics LLC)

**Dr. Hop S. Tran Cao:** Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center Seed Award Program: “Impact of Malnutrition on Treatment Outcomes for Patients with GI Malignancies”

High-Impact Publications


Balentine C; Aanand D. Naik, MD; David H. Berger, MD, MHCM; Herbert Chen, MD; Daniel Anaya, MD; Gregory D. Kennedy, MD, PhD. Postacute Care After Major Abdominal Surgery in Elderly Patients Intersection of Age, Functional Status, and Postoperative Complications, JAMA Surg. 2016 Mar 6. [Epub ahead of print]

**LEADERSHIP**

**Dr. S. Rob Todd Named Chief of Acute Care Surgery**

Dr. S. Rob Todd, associate professor of surgery at Baylor College of Medicine, has been appointed chief of the Section of Acute Care Surgery in the Division of General Surgery. Dr. Todd also serves as program director of the Surgical Critical Care Residency at Baylor College of Medicine and chief of General Surgery, director of the Ginni and Richard Mithoff Trauma Center, and medical director of the Trauma Surgical Intensive Care Unit at Ben Taub Hospital.

Dr. Todd received his Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Finance from The University of Texas at Austin in 1992. He then matriculated from Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine with a Doctorate of Medicine in 1996. He remained in the Texas Tech University system where he completed his General Surgery residency in 2001. He followed that with a Fellowship in Trauma and Surgical Critical Care from Oregon Health & Science University in 2003.

Dr. Todd has extensive experience in Acute Care Surgery, having past academic appointments at McGovern Medical School (UT Medical School at Houston), Houston Methodist/Weill Cornell Medical College, and New York University School of Medicine.

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**Dr. Mills Appointed SVS Member to the AHA PAD Council, Medical Director of Baylor St. Luke’s Diabetic Foot and Wound Care Center**

Dr. Joseph L. Mills Sr., chief of the Division of Vascular Surgery and Endovascular Surgery in the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine, has been appointed as the Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS) member representative to the AHA Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD) Council.

Dr. Mills was also recently named medical director of the Baylor St. Luke’s Diabetic Foot and Wound Care Center. In his role at Baylor St. Luke’s, Dr. Mills will develop new programs and initiatives that will prevent limb amputation by developing a multidisciplinary team that provides advanced therapeutic approaches. Under his leadership, the Center will be expanded to optimize clinical outcomes, seek to decrease limb loss and complication rates, and increase patient satisfaction. He and his team will introduce innovative new therapies and approaches in the treatment of patients with complex wound healing problems and limb-threatening ischemia through strategic collaborations with industry leaders, faculty and staff.

Dr. Mills also serves as the director of the Vascular Surgery Residency Program in the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine.

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*Source UpFront @ Baylor St. Luke's*
Dr. Mattox Named Inaugural Visiting Professor at University of Wisconsin - Madison

Dr. Kenneth L. Mattox was named the Inaugural Louis C. Bernhardt Spring Visiting Professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Dr. Mattox is one of the most recognized trauma and cardiothoracic surgeons around the world. He is distinguished service professor in the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine and chief of staff/chief of surgery at the Ben Taub Hospital. He helped develop the internationally renowned Ben Taub Hospital Emergency Center and its equally respected Trauma Center.

He has served as second vice-president of the American College of Surgeons and president of the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma, among many other national organizational offices. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Houston Rotary Club and is chairman of the Board of Directors of the Southeast Texas Regional Advisory Council.

Drs. Hollier and LeMaire Elected to the ASA

Dr. Larry H. Hollier, professor of surgery and chief of the Division of Plastic Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine, associate surgeon-in-chief for clinical affairs, chief and S. Baron Hardy Chair of Plastic Surgery at Texas Children’s Hospital, and Dr. Scott A. LeMaire, professor of surgery in Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery and vice chair for research in the Department of Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine, were elected as fellows of the American Surgical Association. The ASA also nominated Dr. Hollier to represent ASA on the American Board of Plastic Surgery.

Drs. Hollier and LeMaire join 20 other faculty members from the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery who have been elected to the ASA, likely making our faculty the most represented department in the ASA.

As the premier academic society for surgeons, the American Surgical Association strives to benefit the patient and the profession of surgery by advocating and promoting excellence, innovation, and integrity in science, education, and patient care. The American Surgical Association was founded in 1880 and is the nation’s oldest and most prestigious surgical organization. Its members include the nation’s most prominent surgeons from the country’s leading academic medical institutions, many of whom are chairs of the Departments of Surgery at these institutions. Membership also includes leading surgeons from around the world, making it much more than an American Association.

Our ASA Fellows

David H. Berger, MD, MHCM
Mary L. Brandt, MD
Denton A. Cooley, MD
Joseph S. Coselli, MD
Steven A. Curley, MD
Charles D. Fraser, Jr., MD
O. Howard Frazier, MD
John A. Goss, MD
Grady L. Hallman, MD
Larry H. Hollier, MD
Paul H. Jordan, Jr., MD
Scott A. LeMaire, MD
Kenneth L. Mattox, MD
Charles H. McCollum, MD
Joseph L. Mills, Sr., MD
Jed G. Nuchtern, MD
Oluyinka O. Olutoye, MD, PhD
George Reul, Jr., MD
Robert C. Robbins, MD
Todd K. Rosengart, MD
David J. Sugarbaker, MD
COMMUNITY

Reach for the Stars! STEM Festival

General Surgery residents Dr. Meredith Mason, Dr. Yangyang Yu, Dr. Stephanie Cruz and Dr. Brandi Scully, represented the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery at the Reach for the Stars! STEM Festival. Established in honor of the memory of astronaut Sally Ride, the Festival, for the past nine years, has encouraged middle school-aged girls to pursue interest and careers in STEM fields by exposing them to fun, hands-on activities and inspirational role models. The event was held April 9, 2016 at Rice University and was a great success, teaching over 200 middle school girls about fields in medicine, engineering and science.

With the help of Deborah Taylor, LAT, CerAT from the Baylor College of Medicine Simulation Center, the team created a surgery exhibit that was visited by over 200 middle school girls who learned about a career in surgery and received hands on experience with surgical knot tying, suturing and laparoscopic simulation.

Dr. Lauren Kane, assistant professor of surgery in the Division of Congenital Heart Surgery, was the group’s faculty volunteer for the event.

Houston Walk for Victory an Outstanding Success!

Saturday, Feb. 20, 2016 was a victory for the Marfan syndrome and related disorders community here in Houston as Baylor College of Medicine participated in the first Houston Walk for Victory, benefitting The Marfan Foundation, held at Discovery Green.

Marfan syndrome and related disorders are rare conditions sometimes called “orphan diseases” because there is less funding available for patient and research support for these diseases. Raising nearly $140,000, the Houston Walk for Victory was the largest and most successful fundraising event in the history of The Marfan Foundation, exceeding the initial $100,000 goal by almost 40 percent. It took the amazing efforts of 62 participating teams, 734 donations and more than 600 people in attendance for what turned out to be a perfect day for the walk. Isaiah Austin, former Baylor University Bears basketball player and the National Walk Ambassador, led the event along with Rod and Owen Gray, Walk for Victory chairs.

Baylor College of Medicine has a long standing history of supporting the Marfan Foundation and the Marfan community. Dr. Joseph S. Coselli, professor and chief of the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, has been a member of The Marfan Foundation Professional Advisory Board for more than 20 years. He is the principal investigator for a multi-center international Aortic Valve Operative Outcomes in Marfan Patients Study. Dr. Shaine A. Morris, assistant professor of pediatrics in the Section of Pediatric Cardiology, was another key supporter and participant at the event. Dr. Morris serves as co-principal investigator for the GenTAC multi-center study looking at genetically inherited diseases such as Marfan syndrome and other connective tissue diseases. She is a recent recipient of the K23 career award from the NHLBI for studying the rare diseases.

Dr. Coselli’s and Dr. Morris’s teams placed among the top five fundraisers with a total of $18,635 raised by team members and sponsors.

There is no shortage of applications for the funds raised during this highly successful event. Advocacy efforts; education provided to school nurses, parents and doctors; research funding; annual patient conference setup and support to patients and families are just some of the targets for these much-needed funds.
IN THE OR LIGHT

Jaye Chambers
Academic Coordinator
Thoracic Surgery Residency Program, Vascular Surgery Residency Program and Transplant Surgery Fellowships

I am originally from Baton Rouge, LA and joined the Department in July 2014 after I graduated from Louisiana State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies. I was very excited to move to Houston and start my work at Baylor. The history and background of this institution is like no other!

I assist Program Directors Dr. Joseph S. Coselli and Dr. Joseph L. Mills as well work with Dr. Todd Rosengart, Chair for the department and Vice Chair for Education, Dr. Bradford Scott. I am responsible for the educational activities, rotation schedules, travel, credentialing, graduation requirements—all while adhering to ACGME and TSBME standard practice and policies. My degree in Communications helped prepare me for this position in terms of event planning, organization, leadership and working with multiple learners. Under the leadership of my manager, Holly Shilstone, I have been able to grow and evolve very well into my position. One of my greatest satisfactions is being able to work as a team with great people in a collaborative atmosphere and see our efforts contribute to a greater cause.

In my free time, I enjoy kayaking, cooking and attending LSU football games. Although I am partial to the oysters and crawfish served in Baton Rouge, I love to explore new restaurants around the Houston area where you can find authentic cuisine from all over the world.

Dr. Eric Rachlin
General Surgery Resident (PGY-2)

I am a general surgery resident in my second year of clinical training. I grew up in Houston and always looked upon the medical center and Baylor College of Medicine, in particular, through an idealistic lens. During my summers in high school and college, I worked at the Human Genome Sequencing Center at Baylor College of Medicine. While pursuing my undergraduate degree at the University of Texas, my interest in science evolved into a desire to pursue a career in medicine. This was largely due to multiple shadowing experiences, one of which was through the ophthalmology department at Baylor.

However, during my senior year of college, I heard about Teach for America and was inspired to join a national movement to promote education reform. I spent two years teaching high school physics and chemistry at YES College Prep in north Houston. YES Prep is a charter school system dedicated to serving low income communities throughout Houston.

While my experience as a high school educator was enriching, I decided after two years to pursue my dream of becoming a doctor. In 2011, I enrolled at BCM for medical school and fell in love with general surgery during my clinical rotations. Currently, my interests in general surgery range from acute care surgery and trauma to cardiovascular surgery. I am excited to continue my training and further explore all that the world of general surgery has to offer.
If I had to summarize my life in a few words, the best I could come up with is ‘product of globalization.’ My father, a physician specialist in physical medicine and rehabilitation from Costa Rica, met my mother, a nurse from Arizona, while traveling at a young age. Shortly after dating they married and moved to England, where my father did his fellowship in spinal cord injury and I was born during a cold winter.

Shortly after my father finished his fellowship, we moved back to Costa Rica. I grew up there and elected to become a medical doctor, following the steps of my father and grandfather (the first ophthalmologist in the country!). I completed med school at the U. of Costa Rica and then an integrated vascular surgery residency. Most of my training was at the San Juan de Dios Hospital, one of the largest of the country. After finishing residency training, it was clear to me that vascular surgery was rapidly evolving and the need to become a hybrid physician (both endo and open skills) was essential. I was awarded a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) scholarship to satisfy my training interests in interventional therapies in Leipzig, Germany. After 3 years and a plenitude of cases, I elected to go back home and build the first limb salvage program at my former hospital.

We developed the first advanced endovascular program for critical limb ischemia and the first model – linking podiatric care, wound care and advanced techniques for limb revascularization. The regional need was such that in 2011 I developed a scientific meeting to address the gaps in the knowledge and care of the complex patient with peripheral arterial disease in Latin America. The meeting, currently known as HENDOLAT (Endovascular Horizons of Latin America), is held annually in different Latin American cities, nests over 500 participants and showcases multiple live complex procedures transmitted.

Driven by my passion for research and development of novel interventions for ischemic limbs, and having followed very closely the career of Dr. Joseph Mills Sr., I elected to return to residency and complete an Integrated Vascular Surgery Residency under his mentoring at the U. of Arizona. Shortly after graduation, I joined the faculty as an Assistant Professor in Tucson, Arizona.

Baylor was certainly a surprise opportunity. Bottom line: I felt that as a natural born global dreamer, there were few places in the world I would rather be. The opportunities of growth here are limitless. I’m excited and happy to be here, life is good.
Faculty Honors and Awards

Dr. Bryan Burt: *Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* Editorial Board; *Video-Assisted Thoracic Surgery* Editorial Board

Dr. Joseph S. Coselli: 2016 Master Clinician Award, Baylor College of Medicine

Dr. O. Howard Frazier: Lifetime Achievement Award in Life Sciences, Houston Technology Center (HTC)

Dr. Prasun Jalal: Stan and Sue Partee Endowed Chair in Surgery

Dr. Joseph L. Mills Sr.: Medical Director, Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center Diabetic Foot and Wound Care Center

Drs. Timothy C. Lee, Monica E. Lopez, Eric J. Silberfein and James W. Suliburk: Baylor College of Medicine Rising Star Awards

Dr. Todd K. Rosengart: Editor of *Seminars in Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery*; Co-chair of the NIH Bioengineering, Technology, and Surgical Sciences (BTSS) Study Section

Dr. David J. Sugarbaker: President of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery Graham Foundation Board of Directors

Finalist, Premier Giants in Cancer Care Award, Intellisphere Oncology Specialty Group

Dr. George Van Buren II: Baylor College of Medicine Faculty Senate

Resident and Student Awards

Dr. Peter Chen: Joint Council on Thoracic Surgery Education Top Gun Competition finalist. Mentor: Dr. Lorraine D. Cornwell.

Dr. Courtney Gemmato: 2016 Thoracic Surgery Directors Association boot camp in Chapel Hill, NC.

Chad Moles: Pediatric Research and Fellows’ Symposium Award for Research Presentation. Mentors: Drs. Sundeep Keswani and Swathi Balaji.


Dr. Elaine Vo: 2016 Baylor College of Medicine Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Conference Outstanding Abstract: 2nd Place; Surgical Infection Society Clinical Research Training Fellowship. Mentor: Dr. Samir S. Awad.

Dr. Xinyi Wang: Pediatric Research and Fellows’ Symposium Award for Translational Research Poster Presentation - Postdoctoral Fellow. Mentors: Dr. Sundeep Keswani and Swathi Balaji.
Graduation Ceremony Awards

Dr. Katherine Baugh: McCollum Academic Achievement Award and the Outstanding Intern Award
Dr. Neal R. Barshes: Vascular Surgery Chief Residents Award to a Faculty Member
Dr. Mary L. Brandt: DeBakey Distinguished Service Award
Dr. Edward Chamata: Baron Hardy Award for Outstanding Academic Performance
Dr. Tue Dinh: Plastic Surgery Outstanding Clinical Faculty Award
Matthew Grant: Outstanding Student in Surgery Award
Dr. Edward I. Lee: Plastic Surgery Outstanding Faculty Award
Linda T. Li: Medical Student Award for Best Teaching Resident
Dr. Carlos Palacio: Outstanding Chief Resident Award
Dr. Ourania Preventza: Thoracic Surgery Chief Residents Award to a Faculty Member
Dr. James W. Suliburk: General Surgery Chief Residents Award to a Faculty
Dr. Nicole Tapia: Outstanding VA Chief Resident Award
Dr. David E. Wesson: George P. Noon Faculty Professionalism Award
Dr. R. Mario Vera: Medical Student Award for Best Teaching Faculty and the Gene A. Guinn Faculty Teaching Award
Ryan Wagner: Plastic Surgery Outstanding Medical Student Award

Upcoming Events

Be sure to save the date for exciting and collaborative conferences in Houston hosted by the Department of Surgery.

www.bcm.edu/surgical-conference

DFCon
Houston 2017
March 23-25, 2017
Royal Sonesta Houston Galleria
www.dfcon.com
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To be added to the Newsletter e-mail database please write to:

Scott Holmes, CMI
One Baylor Plaza, MS: BCM390
Houston, Texas 77030

or e-mail: surgerynews@bcm.edu

Editor-in-Chief: Todd K. Rosengart, MD
Editors: Scott C. Holmes, CMI and Kimberly Macellaro, PhD

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