Pioneer in Minimally Invasive Heart Surgery Joins Baylor College of Medicine and Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center

Dr. Joseph Lamelas, an internationally recognized expert in minimally invasive heart surgery, has joined the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine as associate chief of cardiac surgery in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery. He will conduct surgeries at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center, part of CHI St. Luke’s Health. Lamelas, who has completed more than 14,000 cardiac surgical operations in his career, has played a significant role in advancing the field of minimally invasive cardiac surgery, as well as developing facilitating instruments. He has trained more than 700 physicians from around the world in this approach over the last 12 years.

“Dr. Lamelas is a true pioneer in the field of minimally invasive valve surgery,” said Dr. Paul Klotman, president, CEO and executive dean at Baylor College of Medicine. “He will be a great addition to our impressive cardiothoracic team.”

Lamelas joins Baylor from Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami, Florida, where he served as the chief of cardiac surgery for the past eight years. Lamelas has been in practice in Miami for more than 26 years.

Chairman’s Message

As 2017 begins and we approach the 70th anniversary of Dr. DeBakey assuming the chairmanship of the department in 1947, the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery is poised and ready to begin an exciting new chapter in advancing the great legacy of this storied institution. Over the past four years, nearly 80 faculty members have been recruited from across the nation to join our already accomplished faculty. These high-impact recruits have already made their mark, amongst other achievements, helping us to build a number of important new divisions and sections in our department, grow our clinical activity by over 60 percent at our new Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center, achieve an expected “Top 30” rank in NIH funding, and recruit ever more accomplished surgery residents and students into our programs.

In this year’s annual “State of the Department” grand rounds presentation, entitled “Team of Teams,” I referenced General Stanley McChrystal’s observation in his book of the same name that in any great organization, success begins with having great people in your organization. Our department is most fortunate to count a great many such empowering contributors as colleagues. Amongst our faculty of some 140 surgeons and scientists, we can count 22 members of the American Surgical Association — the most prestigious surgical society in the world — placing us in the top three departments most well represented in this society. But even in our daily lives, I think it is clear to us all that we work with a very special class of exceptional surgeons and scientists.
Chairman’s Message FROM PAGE 1

In reviewing the growth our department has witnessed over the past four years, it is remarkable to consider the many new divisions and sections brought into existence by our faculty leaders, and by the nationally acclaimed leaders in surgery that we have recently welcomed to our department. These new endeavors include a new Division of Surgical Oncology, led by Dr. Steven Curley (recruited from UT MD Anderson Cancer Center in 2014) who co-leads a novel, matrixed unit with our Division of General Surgery chief, Dr. Bill Fisher (appointed in 2013); a new Division of General Thoracic Surgery, led by Dr. David Sugarbaker (recruited from the Brigham and Women’s Hospital in 2014 to also lead the new, multi-specialty Lung Institute at Baylor College of Medicine); a revitalized Division of Vascular Surgery and Endovascular Therapy, led by Dr. Joseph L. Mills Sr. (recruited from the University of Arizona in 2015); a Division of Surgical Research led by Dr. Johnny Chen, and our 30-member strong research team.

Other new leaders joining the department include Dr. Edward Reece (St. Joseph Medical Center), joining us as a new chief of adult plastic surgery, working in tandem with Division of Plastic Surgery chief Dr. Larry Hollier; Dr. Jeffrey Morgan (Henry Ford Hospital), taking on the mantle of leadership of the Division of Cardiothoracic Transplantation and Circulatory Support from our iconic pioneers Dr. O. Howard Frazier and Dr. George Noon; lung transplant director Dr. Gabriel Loor (University of Minnesota); Ben Taub Hospital cardiac surgery chief Dr. Ravi Ghanta (University of Virginia), Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center general surgery chief Dr. Christy Chai (UT Health Science Center, San Antonio) and VA cardiac surgery chief Dr. Ernesto Jimenez (University of South Florida), and acute care surgery chief, Dr. S. Rob Todd (New York University).

Our new recruits bring an array of new clinical services to the department. Notably, our recent recruitment of Dr. Joseph Lamelas (Mount Sinai Medical Center) as associate chief of cardiac surgery brings his 14,000-case experience and world-renowned expertise to minimally invasive cardiac surgery to the Texas Medical Center. Dr. Lisa Haubert (Cleveland Clinic Florida; colorectal, female pelvic floor, and inflammatory bowel disease), Dr. Stacey Carter (Baylor College of Medicine/UT MD Anderson Cancer Center; breast surgery), Dr. Miguel Montero-Baker (University of Arizona; endovascular surgery), and Dr. Eugene Choi (University of Chicago; HIPEC, melanoma/sarcoma) are others among the many talented new surgeons we welcomed to the department over the past four years. Finally, with the recruitment of podiatrists Dr. Jeffrey Ross and Dr. Brian Lepow, the vascular surgery division is innovating a new, multidisciplinary STEP (Save The Extremity Program) limb salvage program modeled on Dr. Mills’ pioneering efforts in this arena.

Under the leadership of Dr. John Goss and Dr. Christine O’Mahony, Baylor St. Luke Medical Center’s liver and kidney transplant programs are the highest rated of any program in Houston and in Texas according to the latest available (July 1, 2013 to Dec. 31, 2015) Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR) data. Dr. Christy Chai and colorectal surgery chief, Dr. Avo Artinyan, and thoracic surgeons, Drs. Shawn Groth and Bryan Burt, have led efforts to dramatically expand our robotic surgery programs. Finally, amongst our many rapidly growing services, standouts include thoracic surgery, which from cold start just over two years ago is now projected to perform 1,200 cases annually, and vascular surgery, which last year performed over 800 procedures on the Baylor St. Luke’s service organized only a year ago.

Accolades and recognitions of the accomplishments of our faculty, residents and students continue apace. Dr. Coselli joined Dr. Sugarbaker as immediate past president of the world’s most prestigious society for cardiothoracic surgery—The American Association for Thoracic Surgery (making the department one of the few ever with two active faculty members as AATS past presidents)—and was recently recognized as the Houston Surgical Society’s Distinguished Houston Surgeon for 2016. In addition, Dr. Coselli recently reported the world’s largest-ever series of thoracoabdominal aneurysm procedures—more than doubling the largest previous series reported by Dr. Coselli’s mentor and pioneer of the field, Baylor’s own Dr. Stanley Crawford. Our vice chair for research, Dr. Scott LeMaire, was named editor-in-chief of the high-impact Journal of Surgical Research. Dr. Hollier was named the 2016 Press Ganey Physician of the Year. Perhaps most notable, Dr. Kenneth Mattox amongst his many honors was recognized this past year with the Kenneth L. Mattox Endowment in Surgery, founded by Dr. S. Rob Todd and Dr. Eric Silberfein.

New special programs also highlight the accomplishments of the department over the past several years. These include our Department of Surgery Incubator (DoSI) led by Dr. Billy Cohn and Dr. Stuart Corr, translating the ideas of our faculty and staff into commercially viable ideas; our highly acclaimed, state-of-the-art Surgery Simulation Center led by Dr. Nilson Salas, and the Interdisciplinary Consortium on Advanced Motion Performance (iCAMP), our translational research and development collaboration led by Dr. Bijan Najafi.

Our surgical education programs likewise continue to excel. This past year we launched a highly regarded “rural surgery” rotation with our CHI Colorado Springs Community Trauma Surgery Elective, and surgery resident, Dr. Rachel Davis, inaugurated our Global Surgery Program with an innovative international curriculum encompassing Malawi, Africa and Guatemala. Our Michael E. DeBakey Summer Surgery Program is thriving under the direction
DoSI Innovation Challenge

Based upon the great success of the program and by popular demand, a second, highly successful Department of Surgery Incubator (DoSI) Innovation Challenge, on the theme of surgical simulation, was held this past December 9 to 11. The event brought together 20 “makers” and “minders” from Baylor, Texas A&M University and industry. Three teams had 72 hours to design, or hack, a 3D surgical simulation workstation for practicing complex aortic repair surgery based on a computerized tomography (CT) patient scan. Dr. Stuart Corr, Dr. Nilson Salas and Dr. Ramyar Gilani served as judges. The winner, Team AbX, created a fully functioning 3D printed model that showed blood flowing and life-like organs. They received $500 and seed resources to further their ideas into a patentable product.

A DoSI Innovation Challenge is planned with up to $50,000 in seed funding available.

Dr. Joseph Lamelas FROM PAGE 1

“As an internationally renowned cardiothoracic surgeon, Dr. Lamelas brings an extraordinary mix of experience and talent that will be a true benefit to our cardiovascular program at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center and the community,” said Gay Nord, president at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center.

While he practices all facets of cardiac surgery, Lamelas’ main focus over the past 12 years has been minimally invasive cardiac surgery. He has developed techniques to facilitate minimally invasive approaches for repairing simple congenital cardiac defects, removal of cardiac tumors, aortic valve surgery, mitral valve surgery, double and triple valve surgery, as well as replacing the ascending aorta without splitting the sternum.

“The procedures involve a small incision on the right side of the chest and do not involve opening the breast bone. Utilizing specialized equipment and instruments, access to and exposure of the heart chambers and valves are obtained,” said Lamelas.

Minimally invasive valve surgery allows for a shorter stay in the hospital as well as a quicker return to a full and normal level of activity. Most valve surgery patients are candidates for this procedure.

“The addition of Dr. Lamelas is an enormous asset to the Department of Surgery, Baylor College of Medicine and the Houston community,” said Dr. Joseph Coselli, vice-chair of surgery and chief of cardiothoracic surgery at Baylor College of Medicine. “His minimally invasive approach offers patients an important option that allows them to return to their daily lives faster.”

“Dr. Lamelas is a world class cardiac surgeon who will bring invaluable synergies to the great strengths and legacy of our program,” said Dr. Todd K. Rosengart, chair of surgery at Baylor College of Medicine. “We are absolutely thrilled to have him joining our institution.”

“I’m proud to be able to continue my career at an institution that was there when cardiac surgery began and now be a part of its history,” said Lamelas. “It will help me disseminate my knowledge and experience in cardiac surgery. In addition, I will have the opportunity to train the surgeons of the future in minimally invasive surgery and make this more of a reproducible and widely adopted technique that will benefit a larger population of patients.”

Lamelas, who was born in Cuba and came to the United States with his family at the age of two, is also fluent in Spanish. Lamelas is board certified in thoracic surgery and a member of the American Association of Thoracic Surgeons and the Society of Thoracic Surgeons. He also is a fellow of the American Board of Surgery, American College of Cardiology, American College of Chest Physicians, and American College of Surgeons. Lamelas has lectured both nationally and internationally and his work in the field of minimally invasive valve surgery has been extensively published.

Dr. Shayan Izadddoost, with over 100 applicants from around the country seeking to enter, and our novel Wellness and Mentoring Programs continue to excel under the direction of Dr. Eric Silberfein.

In looking to the future, we are finally very excited about our new Aviation Applications In Surgey (AAiR) program, established in collaboration with the American Airlines Flight Safety Academy to enhance our patient safety, crew resource management and faculty development efforts. Under the direction of Drs. Todd, O’Mahoney and Dr. Samir Awad, this look to the future aims to advance the mission of the department through programs for online clinical error self-reporting, faculty coaching, and operating room team interaction observerships enacted in collaboration with Baylor’s Student Surgical Society.

2017 promises to be another exciting year for our department as we continue to build on our great legacy and traditions. We look forward to sharing news with you of our continued growth and achievement. We again thank our members, friends and colleagues for your interest and support.

A DoSI Innovation Challenge, on the theme of surgical simulation, was held this past December 9 to 11.
The Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery’s inaugural Surgical Collaboration Day, organized by two of our faculty leaders and founders of the Department of Surgery Incubator (DoSI)—Dr. Stuart Corr, our newly-appointed director of technology development and Dr. Billy Cohn, the newly-appointed director of the Texas Medical Center/Johnson & Johnson collaboration, The Center for Device Innovation — was held on Aug. 27, 2016. Over 180 clinicians, researchers, engineers and industry thought leaders from the Houston area (and from afar) gathered for the event to share their cutting-edge ideas and new technologies. The event provided a unique forum for new surgery-related collaborations with Department of Surgery faculty, residents and staff.

Topics ranged from in utero surgery for gastroschisis to global health challenges to bridging the radiology-surgery gap. The event was divided into three sessions: Session I: Clinicians and Surgeons featured speakers from the Department of Surgery, the National Space Biomedical Research Institute, and Baylor Global Initiatives; Session II: Innovators and Technologists was comprised of talks by faculty from Rice University, the University of Houston, and our department, and inventors and engineers from TMC startups. Session III provided the opportunity for participants to attend interactive exhibitions and collaborate over lunch.

Former NASA astronaut Dr. Scott Parazynski delivered the event’s keynote address titled, “Innovation in the Extreme.” Parazynski, a prolific inventor, is co-founder of Blue Marble Exploration, where he serves as chief explorer. Blue Marble is focused on pushing human capabilities in extreme environments through technology innovation and pursuing challenging expeditions around the world. Parazynski also recently founded and serves as managing director of Apogee Interests, focused on commercializing his extensive innovation portfolio, including medical devices, consumer products and gear developed for extreme environments.

Parazynski’s presentation highlighted defining moments in his career where perseverance and multidisciplinary collaboration sparked innovative solutions under the most extreme conditions. Parazynski’s rousing message was that pressing the boundaries of human performance and creativity at the ends of the earth — in space, at the top of Mount Everest, from the bottom of the sea — will generate the world’s greatest medical and technological advances. Attendees also heard from other experts working at the crossroads of electrical engineering, biomechanics and medicine. Baylor medical student Patricia Ho discussed revolutionizing surgical procedures in space to meet the clinical needs of astronauts in extended duration spaceflight. Department of Surgery professor and director of Clinical Research in the Division of Vascular Surgery and Endovascular Therapy, Dr. Bijan Najafi discussed how body-fixed sensors can enhance preoperative decision making. Rice professor of electrical and computer engineering, Dr. Ashu Sabharwal exhibited the PulseCam, a device that can capture skin perfusion in real time using a camera and a pulse oximeter. Also, Dr. Cohn discussed how surgical innovation happens, and why it is so exciting and crucial.

We look forward to Surgical Collaboration Day being an important annual event fostering our developing translational research initiatives and collaborations between department members and colleagues at the TMC and beyond.
Department of Surgery Launches AAiR (Aviation Applications In Surgery) Program with Voluntary Reporting of Errors and Safety Issues System

Based on our highly successful grand rounds meetings with members of the American Airlines Flight Academy, we recently launched our AAiR (Aviation Applications In Surgery) program to improve our performances as a department of surgery. First up: an online error self-reporting system, available to all department members to alert each other to potential clinical quality improvement (CQI) opportunities. The goal of the system is to help establish an open, engaged culture and to enhance the situational awareness, self-awareness and leadership skills among the faculty, clinical staff and trainees of the department, leading to optimal performance and ultimately improved patient outcomes.

Information submitted into the system is retained only for Department of Surgery quality assurance/quality improvement (QA/QI) purposes and is legally privileged, confidential and protected from disclosure by Texas medical peer review laws. An error-reporting CQI team led by Dr. Samir Awad will periodically report to the department on CQI opportunities identified through the system, and initiate discussions on proposed solutions. Already, 18 events that might not have otherwise come to our attention have been entered into the system. Data outputs from the self-reporting system will interface and complement the existing QA/QI systems at our affiliate hospitals.

Beyond the self-reporting project, our next project in the AAiR program is a voluntary operator room observer program, based upon the “jump seat” program used by the aviation industry, which will involve providing feedback to department members based on specially-trained medical students recording faculty-resident-student-staff interactions. Another component of our AAiR program will be the creation of an intramural faculty coaching program, in collaboration with Rice University and Baylor, to help pro-actively foster faculty development and professional satisfaction.

Dr. Samir S. Awad moderates a session reenacted by members of the Student Surgical Society
EDUCATION NOTES

New Global Surgery Fellowship

As a reflection of the Department of Surgery’s commitment both to state-of-the-art resident training and providing exceptional care in our region as well as for the international community, we are proud to announce the launch of our innovative two-year curriculum to train leaders in academic global surgery. This program was established in collaboration with Baylor’s School of Tropical Disease led by Dr. Peter Hotez and the Departments of Pediatrics and Obstetrics and Gynecology at Texas Children’s Hospital, each of which has extensive experience in the field.

Our Global Surgery Fellowship will include an initial (PGY3) year focused on training locally to hone skills critical for rural or global surgery practices (but including time testing these skills in actual practices here in rural Texas and abroad in Africa and Guatemala), and then a second PGY7 year, after the candidate has completed their formal general surgery training, dedicated to practicing in global surgery settings. The program’s combination of the “early” and “late” phases, as opposed to other global surgery programs that include one or the other, was developed by our first global surgery trainee, general surgery resident, Dr. Rachel Davis. This two-phase approach allows the candidate to early on develop an awareness of skills required for such practices, and more effectively apply so-identified skills after allowing time for additional training. In addition to local clinical rotations, fellows will participate in an extensive global surgery didactic schedule that includes modules such as the establishment of a field hospital, approaches to natural disasters, cultural considerations in medical care, and economic evaluation of volunteerism.

The Global Surgery Fellowship is staged analogously to our long-established General Surgery Research Track, which includes two years of focused research training following the second year of the five-year clinical residency track. Through the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP #1716440C2), we will accept at least one resident into the Global Surgery Track every year. During the program, fellows may choose to complete either certification or an advanced degree from Baylor’s Clinical Science Training Program, a master’s degree in public health from The University of Texas School of Public Health, or the Diploma Course in Tropical Medicine from Baylor’s National School of Tropical Medicine. A new Diploma in Tropical Surgery, the first of its kind in the US, is anticipated to be approved as part of this program as well.

New Vascular Surgery Integrated Residency Program

Beginning in 2017, the Department of Surgery will offer an Integrated Vascular Surgery Residency Training Program, following its recent approval of as an accredited program by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and the Residency Review Committee (RRC) for Surgery. Designed by Division chief, Dr. Joseph L. Mills Sr., a past member of the vascular surgery RRC-S, this program will include both a standard five-year clinical training program integrating vascular surgery training with elements of our general surgery residency training, as well as an additional dedicated research year, focused on study design, biostatistics and outcomes, between clinical years two and three.

Vascular surgery trainees will receive a diverse experience at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center, Texas Children’s Hospital, The Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Administration Medical Center and Ben Taub Hospital (Harris Health) that will include a broad clinical exposure to all aspects of vascular surgery, including the noninvasive vascular laboratory, carotid occlusive disease, complex aortic aneurysm, visceral and renal artery disease, lower extremity occlusive disease, limb salvage, diabetic foot, acute and chronic venous disease, dialysis access management. In addition, the Integrated Program is intended to produce leaders and innovators in the field of vascular disease who educate patients, train residents, direct important research, create new treatment algorithms and develop...
completed an ACGME-accredited general surgery residency training program.

Baylor College of Medicine has been a leader in the field of vascular surgery for over five decades. The high standards of excellence and spirit of innovation originally established by Dr. Michael E. DeBakey and Dr. E. Stanley Crawford, who established our vascular surgery training program in 1970—one of the first in the nation—are well exemplified by this new addition to our education portfolio, which has graduated over 120 vascular surgery trainees over the past four decades.

After a summer-long “boot camp” of learning the basic skills needed to begin their residency, 20 interns from general surgery, urology and plastic surgery competed in our 3rd Annual Intern Skills Competition, held on Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2016 in the Baylor College of Medicine Surgical Simulation Center. The interns were tested on such elemental skills as one-handed and two-handed knot-tying, instrument-tying, interrupted and continuous wound closure, laparoscopic peg transfer, laparoscopic pattern-cutting and laparoscopic camera driving.

Dr. Jebran Haddad won first place, second place was won by Dr. Shreeya Popat, and third place went to Dr. Hart Donahue. A three-way tie for first place was broken by a unique skill test — an off-axis laparoscopic camera placement. As explained by the program director, Dr. Nilson Salas, recently recruited from the Houston Methodist Institute for Technology, Innovation & Education (MITIE), “We postulated that an off-axis idea would give the residents a taste of the steps a laparoscopic surgeon has to do in order to perform some advanced laparoscopic cases. Studies have shown that the off-axis skills could be developed through training in medical students.”

The intense competition was enjoyed by all. Moreover, it kicked off and was the beginning of what will hopefully be a long and productive relationship between our residents and trainers at the Sim Center.
We are extremely proud of the extraordinary work being done at Texas Children’s to optimize the care experience for our patients and their families,” said Dr. Charles D. Fraser Jr., surgeon-in-chief and chief of congenital heart surgery at Texas Children’s and Division chief of Congenital Heart Surgery at Baylor, “Dr. Larry Hollier has been an outstanding and visionary leader for the surgery service, and his recognition by Press Ganey is a testimony not only to his enormous contributions, but to the effective team spirit we are so proud of at Texas Children’s.”

Hollier has led many patient experience innovations within Texas Children’s Department of Surgery including the Meds to Beds program, which delivers post-surgery medications to a patient’s bedside before discharge; same-day surgery consultation appointments; standardized pre-surgery materials; and a physician communication course, among others. He has also been instrumental in advancing the hospital’s expertise in caring for patients with a range of complex conditions while simultaneously becoming a leader in outcomes measurement and patient experience.

Hollier holds the S. Baron Hardy Endowed Chair in Plastic Surgery at Texas Children’s and serves as professor and chief in the Division of Plastic Surgery at Baylor. In addition, he is chairman of the Medical Advisory Board of Smile Train, an international children’s charity that provides free cleft repair surgery and comprehensive cleft care worldwide, and serves on the board of the Duke Global Health Institute. Hollier has authored more than 190 articles for scholarly and professional publications, written 37 book chapters and sits on the editorial board of numerous journals. His surgical specialties include craniofacial conditions, cleft lip and palate, and microsurgical hand repair.

Dr. Panos Kougias to Head up National TOP Trial

Dr. Panos Kougias, associate chief of the Division of Vascular Surgery & Endovascular Therapy and chief of the Section of Vascular Surgery at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, was awarded a $17 million grant from the VA Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) as national principal investigator for the trial titled, “Transfusion Triggers after Operations in High Cardiac Risk Patients (TOP).” CSP funds projects that address important research questions and have the potential to substantially change clinical practice, and are provided by the Division of VA Research and Development, which is responsible for the planning and conduct of large
multicenter clinical trials and epidemiological studies in the Department of Veterans Affairs. The study is a multicenter, randomized, controlled trial that will take place over five years in 15 sites around the United States. In the context of recent studies that have reopened the question of safe and effective triggers for red blood cell transfusions for surgery, the trial will address the question of transfusion triggers in high cardiac risk patients, a patient population with the highest sensitivity to transfusion thresholds and that has not previously been well-examined in previous trials. Patients in the TOP trial who become anemic after major general or vascular surgical procedures will be randomly assigned in two different transfusion thresholds; a liberal (transfusion trigger at postoperative Hemoglobin less than 10 gm/dL) or a restrictive (transfusion trigger at postoperative Hemoglobin less than 7 gm/dL). The primary endpoint of the study is a composite of 90-day mortality or major ischemic events (myocardial infarction, renal failure, stroke, or coronary revascularization).

Dr. Kougias’ clinical interests include complex aortic endograft placement and carotid revascularization, but his research is focused on studies of clinical systems redesign. He has previously received funding and executed two single-center randomized controlled trials that examined the effects of carotid revascularization on cognition, and the role of a predictive modeling system in improving the efficiency of the operating room.

Mesothelioma Treatment Center at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center Launches First-in-Human Clinical Trial for Cancer Patients

The Mesothelioma Treatment Center at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center, led by Dr. David J. Sugarbaker, recently launched a new clinical trial that combines immunotherapy and surgery for the treatment of mesothelioma. This first in-human study of neoadjuvant (before surgery) administration of checkpoint inhibitor immunotherapy attempts to examine the combined use of a preoperative boost to the immune system with state-of-the-art cytoreductive surgery to treat this challenging malignancy. Checkpoint inhibitors are drugs that block the negative signals that tumor cells display to the body’s immune system. By blocking such negative signals, the immune system is re-activated and the tumor is targeted. If the tumor tries to recur, the immune system, through its previous reactivation by the drugs, should develop a quick memory response to eradicate the recurring tumor.

The groundbreaking protocol will lay the foundation for multimodality therapy that includes using the patient’s own immune system in combination with surgical resection. Said Dr. Bryan Burt, assistant professor of surgery in the Division of General Thoracic Surgery and principal investigator of the trial, “This trial is one of the first of its kind in which immunotherapy is given before surgery, and from it, we expect to learn an enormous amount about this disease. Much of our own data suggests that pleural mesothelioma may be a more immunogenic tumor than previously realized, and I predict that immunotherapy will rise to become a critical component of multimodality therapy for mesothelioma patient.”

In the study, two therapies will be compared: MEDI4736 alone (monotherapy with one type of checkpoint inhibitor) and MEDI4736 plus tremelimumab (combination therapy with two types of checkpoint inhibitors). In the research protocol, the tumors will first be biopsied and the patients will receive one of the two doses of immunotherapy. Following medication delivery and immune reactivation, patients will undergo surgical resection with contemporary surgical techniques to remove all visible tumors, which will be collected for investigation by the Mesothelioma Treatment Center research team.

“This clinical trial is only one of many mesothelioma treatment protocols available at the Mesothelioma Treatment Center and builds upon a strong foundation of mesothelioma research at Baylor College of Medicine,” said Dr. David Sugarbaker.
Peripheral Interventionsal Devices (RAPID) is one of the Prediction and SuStainable Implementation of National Registries (PASSION) CV registry projects approved by the Scientific Oversight Committee of the Medical Device Epidemiology Network Public-Private Partnership.

Baylor College of Medicine Selected as Core Clinical CTSN

Baylor College of Medicine was selected as a Core Clinical Center (CCC) for the NIH-funded Cardiothoracic Surgical Trials Network (CTSN). Led by The Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery, Baylor College of Medicine is one of 30 highly experienced cardiothoracic surgical centers participating in the CTSN Tricuspid Repair Trial entitled “Evaluating the Benefit of Concurrent Tricuspid Valve Repair during Mitral Surgery,” as well as the design, conduct and analysis of other CTSN trials. Currently, the medical community has conflicting views on whether tricuspid valve (TV) repair in patients with mild to moderate tricuspid regurgitation (TR) who are undergoing planned mitral valve surgery (MVS) improves heart health compared to that of MVS patients who do not receive concurrent TV repair. With its proposed rigorous scientific methods, the CTSN Tricuspid Repair Trial’s international randomized, double-blinded multicenter study should provide an answer to this question with a very high level of certainty. In collaboration with other Network CCCs, Baylor’s Department of Surgery, and its affiliated hospitals, will conduct a CTSN-sponsored trial that evaluates management practices and determines the best surgical approaches for cardiac patients with this condition.

Supported by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) at the NIH, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the CTSN provides comprehensive infrastructure to develop, coordinate to conduct multiple collaborative proof-of-concept studies and interventional protocols to improve cardiovascular disease outcomes. The Network trials reflect the collaboration of many of the foremost cardiac surgeons, cardiologists and neurologists in North America. The participating sites are all highly experienced cardiothoracic surgical centers with established expertise conducting trials in this area. Since its inception, the Network has developed a portfolio of trials that evaluate clinically meaningful questions and address important public health issues.

LEADERSHIP NOTES

Dr. William Fisher Named Vice Chair for Clinical Affairs

Dr. William Fisher, professor and chief of the Division of General Surgery, has been appointed vice chair for clinical affairs in the Department of Surgery. In this role, Dr. Fisher will help lead and oversee the implementation of effective, high quality clinical operations in each of the department’s surgical specialties at the Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center (BSLMC). Consistent with this department role, Dr. Fisher was also recently appointed service chief for the surgery service line at BSLMC, responsible for oversight of clinical operations and quality assurance for the general surgery, plastic surgery, urologic surgery and OB/GYN services at the hospital.

As director of the Elkins Pancreas Center at Baylor College of Medicine, Dr. Fisher has developed and coordinates all the clinical care for a large pancreatic cancer patient population as well as all the basic science and clinical research related to pancreatic cancer being performed at Baylor College of Medicine. He leads a team of research clinicians dedicated to translating discoveries from the bench to the bedside and has served as principal investigator on more than 15 clinical trials for patients with pancreatic cancer. Since his becoming a member of the faculty in 1998, Fisher has built one of the largest clinical programs for the surgical treatment of pancreatic disease in the Houston area.

Dr. Scott LeMaire Appointed to National Library of Medicine Committee

Dr. Scott LeMaire, professor in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery and vice chair for research in the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery, was appointed by Dr. Francis Collins, director of the NIH, to the United States National Library of Medicine’s (NLM) Literature Selection Technical Review Committee. The committee is tasked with reviewing journals that have applied to be indexed in MEDLINE. This appointment suitably brings full circle the relationship of the department with the NLM, as Dr. Michael E. DeBakey was one of the principal founders of this noted institution. This appointment is one of many recent honors that Dr. LeMaire has received. He was named editor for the respected Journal of Surgical Research in 2015, and was awarded an NIH R01 grant to study aortic disease in the same year. In 2014, he received the prestigious Michael E. DeBakey, M.D. Excellence in Research Award from Baylor College of Medicine.
Dr. Nilson Salas Named Director of the Surgical Simulation Lab

Dr. Nilson Salas, assistant professor of surgery, brings a unique passion and a widely recognized set of talents to his recent appointment as director of the Surgical Simulation Lab at the Baylor College of Medicine Simulation Center. Dr. Salas also serves as director of the Surgical Skills Committee and director of the Microsurgical Research and Training Program at Baylor. Recently recruited from Methodist Institute for Technology, Innovation & Education (MITIE), where he also served as Sim Lab director, Dr. Salas will lead efforts to design and implement a thoroughly modern surgical simulation curriculum using innovative models of medical education and new advances in surgical technology, fulfilling the mission of the center to provide trainees with improved knowledge, technical skills, and clinical judgment using simulation as a learning vehicle. Surgical residents and students can train in the Lab to acquire basic and advanced open, laparoscopic, and robotic surgical skills.

Known in the medical field as the “MacGyver” of simulation models, Dr. Salas has designed and implemented medical and surgical simulation models that have been used to train nurses, medical students, residents, fellows, and practicing physicians throughout the Texas Medical Center and who visit from outside institutions. His research interests include designing novel ways of teaching and evaluating microsurgery skills, utilizing laboratory-based training bench models in the acquisition of microsurgical skills, and developing novel approaches to teaching microvascular anastomoses. He is interested in the use of mind mapping as a tool for teaching, learning and research, and the use of word clouds to engage students in critical thinking.

Dr. Chad Wilson Named Associate Trauma Director at Ben Taub Hospital

Dr. Chad Wilson, who recently joined the Division of General Surgery and the Acute Care Surgery team at Ben Taub Hospital (BTH) after having served in similar roles at NYU Medical Center and Bellevue Hospital, was recently named associate trauma director at BTH under the leadership of Dr. Rob Todd, professor and chief of the Section of Acute Care Surgery in the Division of General Surgery, chief of General Surgery and director of the Ginni and Richard Mithoff Trauma Center at BTH. Dr. Wilson received his clinical training in surgery at the Massachusetts General Hospital, during which time he spent a year working at Kijabe Hospital in Kenya as part of the Thomas S. Durant Fellowship in Refugee Medicine. He later completed a two-year fellowship in Acute Care Surgery at Massachusetts General.

Dr. Wilson was born in Houston and grew up here, ultimately graduating from the University of Texas at Austin with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering. He left Texas to attend medical school at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Dr. Stuart Corr Named Director of Technology Development

Dr. Stuart Corr, assistant professor of surgery in the Division of Surgical Research, has been named director of Technology Development in the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery. Dr. Corr is an expert in nanomedicine, non-invasive radiofrequency hyperthermia, and surgical technology. He was lead organizer of the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery’s inaugural Surgical Collaboration Day held Aug. 27, 2016. The event brought together over 180 clinicians, researchers and engineers in the Houston area to share their cutting-edge ideas and technologies.

Dr. Corr obtained his BEng (Hons) in Electronics with Music from The University of Glasgow. He received an MEng in Electrical Systems and Ph.D. in the field of silver nanoparticles and thin-films for surface enhanced Raman spectroscopy of strained silicon from Dublin City University, Rep. of Ireland. He subsequently spent a three-month period at the International Space University, Strasbourg, France, as part of their MSc. in Space Studies program—a program with which he is still affiliated. With this knowledge and experience, he was asked to return to Rice as a postdoctoral fellow, to synthesize and apply silver nanoparticles to non-invasive radio frequency (RF) hyperthermia. Dr. Corr has since been involved in the research and development of nanoparticle-assisted non-invasive RF hyperthermia.

Dr. David Wesson to Serve as Interim Surgeon-in-Chief at CHofSA

Texas Children’s Hospital Associate Surgeon-in-Chief for Academic Affairs, Dr. David Wesson, will serve as interim surgeon-in-chief at Children’s Hospital of San Antonio (CHofSA). This is an exciting opportunity for the department to assist and deepen our relationship with CHofSA, which is the longest-serving non-profit academic pediatric hospital in San Antonio and its only free-standing children’s hospital.
Dr. Wesson is expected to serve in this role for six months to 12 months while CHofSA and Baylor College of Medicine work to identify a strong, permanent surgeon-in-chief. Dr. Wesson will spend every other Tuesday through Thursday in San Antonio while maintaining his clinical and academic duties at Texas Children's.

In San Antonio, Dr. Wesson's priorities include restructuring the CHofSA surgical academic affairs program, strengthening CHofSA's clinical programs that are currently in place, and optimizing communication between institutions.

Welcome David O. Anderson

Dave Anderson joined the Department of Surgery on November 30th as department administrator, bringing a remarkable combination of management and analytical skills. With over 15 years of academic health center experience at Duke University, Creighton University, and the University of Texas Medical Branch- Galveston, Dave is intimately familiar with the operations of academic health science centers. Dave earned both his Master of Health Administration and Master of Business Administration (with an emphasis in finance) degrees from the University of Missouri.

Dave is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE) and fellow in the American College of Medical Practice Executives (FACMPE). Please join us in welcoming Dave to the department!

NEW GRANTS

Dr. Panos Kougias: VA Cooperative Studies Program (CSP): “TOP Trial: Transfusion Triggers after Operations in High Cardiac Risk Patients.” Role: PI

Dr. Jeffrey Morgan: St. Jude Medical: “Favorable Outcomes in Patients Undergoing HeartMate II LVAD Implant While on Short-Term Mechanical Circulatory Support: A Single Center Experience at Texas Heart Institute.” Role: PI

Dr. James Suliburk: CPRIT Early Translational Research Award: “Ambient Mass Spectrometry for Preoperative Molecular Diagnosis of Thyroid Fine Needle Aspirate Biopsies.” Role: Co-PI


Dr. John Vierling: NIH NCI R01: “Early Detection of Hepatocellular Carcinoma.” Role: Co-I. The project’s PI is Laura Beretta, Ph.D.

Dr. Nicole Villafañe-Ferriol: CPRIT Training Grant: “Functionalizing Metabolic Pathway Driver Aberrations in Pancreatic Cancer.” Role: PI

Dr. Qizhi Cathy Yao: NIH SBIR STTR: “The VesiVax System: Vaccine Development Made Easy.” Role: PI

HIGH IMPACT PUBLICATIONS


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HIGH IMPACT PUBLICATIONS


IN THE OR LIGHT

CHRISTY YOON-HEE CHAI, MD
Assistant Professor of Surgery
Divisions of General Surgery/Surgical Oncology
Baylor College of Medicine
Chief, Section of General Surgery and Surgical Oncology
Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center

My family moved to St. Louis, Missouri from South Korea when I was a freshman in high school. Even though I barely understood a sentence in English, my family and teachers encouraged me and never showed any doubts regarding my abilities. I didn’t face diverging roads like some in life. I knew I wanted to become a physician and which road to take. I only needed some encouragement to get on that long, tortuous road which “has made all the difference.”

When I learned about different fields and specialties in medical school, I knew I had to be a surgeon. Besides, a white-haired professor of surgery whom I respected greatly told me what made a great surgeon was “hands of a lady, a heart of a lion and eyes of an eagle.” Surely, I have them all, I thought. I loved to work with my hands, and being able to offer patients definitive solutions to a problem, either elective or emergent, seemed perfect. My journey as a surgeon led me to BCM as a general surgery resident. I am grateful to have met so many giants in surgery and remarkable people who molded me during my residency.

After residency, I served in the U.S. Air Force as a surgeon. The military experience taught me things I wouldn’t have learned elsewhere—leadership as an officer, comradery in a confined and hostile environment, situational awareness and why our military is so highly regarded. In addition, I was able to see a glimpse of how medicine is practiced in Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, England and South Korea. In order to provide advanced cancer care and broaden scope of practice to meet clinical challenges, I completed a surgical oncology fellowship at Moffitt Cancer Center during my active duty years. The training enabled me to see beyond surgical treatment for cancer patients, individualizing treatment options for their needs and how to care for the whole person.

After completing my service in the U.S. Air Force, I was fortunate to have this opportunity to return to Baylor as a faculty. Seeing familiar faces made me feel like returning home after a short trip. I appreciated welcoming, kind words from many who knew me in the past. Currently, I serve our veterans at Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center as the section chief for General Surgery & Surgical Oncology. Our veterans deserve the best care, and I want to make our VA the best place for patients and staff, proud to carry the name of late Dr. Michael E. DeBakey.
HONORS AND AWARDS

Colleagues Create Permanent Legacy to Honor Dr. Ken Mattox

Faculty members of the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery have created the Kenneth L. Mattox, M.D. Endowment in Surgery. This endowment honors Dr. Mattox and will forever support Houston’s underserved through the clinical and educational activities of Ben Taub Hospital and the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery at Baylor College of Medicine. During his more than 50-year career as a physician, Dr. Mattox has touched the lives of friends, patients, residents, students and colleagues with his warmth, compassion and near-encyclopedic knowledge of medicine. He has helped guide his patients toward better health and, through his leadership, has helped train hundreds of residents and fellows to become the next generation of leaders in the fields of trauma, general surgery, surgical critical care and thoracic surgery. He has worked tirelessly to support Ben Taub, building one of the greatest Level I trauma centers in the country and creating an invaluable learning resource for Baylor trainees.

Faculty Honors and Awards

Dr. Mary L. Brandt: Re-elected as the South Texas Chapter Governor of the American College of Surgeons.

Dr. Subhasis Chatterjee: Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) Workforce on Critical Care

Dr. William Cohn: Director, Center for Device Innovation, Johnson & Johnson/TMC.

Dr. Nader N. Massarweh: Associate Editor for the Healthcare Delivery/Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement section of the Journal of Surgical Research.

Dr. Charles H. McCollum: Alumni Association Lifetime Achievement Award, Baylor College of Medicine


Dr. Todd K. Rosengart: Elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Society of Surgical Chairs

IN THE OR LIGHT

JENNIFER FADNER, MHA
Division Administrator
General Surgery/Surgical Oncology

I joined the Department of Surgery in March of 2016 as division administrator for General Surgery and Surgical Oncology. In this capacity, I serve the 33 faculty members in integrating the vision of the division across the clinical, educational and research missions of the College. I am responsible for managing business operations and development of the division, including faculty development, recruitment, clinical productivity and human resources. Since joining the division almost a year ago, we have on-boarded seven new faculty members with clinical appointments at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center and Harris Health System’s Ben Taub Hospital.

I started my career at BCM right out of graduate school as an administrative intern in Medicine and have been with BCM for over seven years. Prior to my role in the Department of Surgery, I served as a Section Administrator in the Department of Medicine here at BCM and also in an administrative role for the Dan L. Duncan Cancer Center.

ARVIND CHINTAGUMPA MOHAN
Medical Student

I have wanted to be a physician for almost my entire life and coming to Baylor College of Medicine was a dream come true. My first exposure to medicine was through my parents, particularly when my mother, a gastroenterologist, would come home and bring colonoscopy scans with her. As I grew older, I began to engage more with the medical community around me, and as a native Houstonian, I encountered Baylor College of Medicine time and time again, whether it was through volunteering at the Texas Children’s Hospital Cancer Center, or working on a research project through the Baylor Pediatric AIDS Initiative in Botswana. I have always been thrilled to work with Baylor faculty and staff, and I was incredibly excited to join the College as a student in 2014 for the foundation of my medical training.

Since coming to Baylor, I have been truly lucky to learn from such a diverse and talented group of physicians and other educators. I have particularly loved my surgery rotations and look forward to eventually pursuing a residency in a surgical specialty. The surgeon’s ability to perform an acute hands-on intervention to cure a patient of an illness or improve quality of life is something so incredibly special. I am particularly honored that the Department of Surgery recognized me for my role as part of the surgical team during my surgery rotation. I am so happy to be at an institution where my participation, and that of all medical students, is so deeply encouraged and valued—it really makes me feel like an important member of the team.
Resident and Student Awards

Seven medical students were awarded the 2016 Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery American College of Surgeons (ACS) Travel Award. Awardees were Baylor medical students Sarah Commander, Michael Mederos, Ndidi Okeke and Kayla Kumm. Finalists were Baylor medical students Alfred Song, Rohan Shah and Anand Ganapathy. The award will support their travel to the clinical congress this year in Washington, DC.

Dr. Stephanie Cruz: Annual Meeting of the World Federation of Associations of Pediatric Surgeons (WOFAPS) Runner-up Oral Presentation. Mentor: Dr. Olutoye.

Kayla Kumm: First prize in the Clinical Research Category Medical Student Program Poster Session at the American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress in Washington, DC. Mentors: Abdominal Transplantation faculty.

Dr. Patricio Lau: 2016 American College of Surgeon’s Operation Giving Back Resident and Junior Faculty Scholarship; Canadian Association of Pediatric Surgery Second Prize for Best Poster. Mentor: Dr. Olutoye.

Dr. Jessica Mayor Southern Thoracic Society Association (STSA) Resident Scholarship Award finalist. Mentor Dr. Preventza.

Dr. Vivekkumar Patel: 2016 Society of Thoracic Surgeons Looking to the Future Resident Scholarship. Mentor: Dr. Rosengart.

Dr. Eric Rosenfeld: 2016 Association for Academic Surgery (AAS) Fall Courses Travel Grant. Funded by the NIH and the University of Wisconsin. Mentor: Dr. Naik-Mathuria.

Dr. Jens Rosenkrantz: American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Surgery Resident Clinical Research Award. Mentor: Dr. Olutoye.


Dr. Dor Yoeli: 2017 Association for Academic Surgery Senior Medical Student Travel Award; 7th Annual International Hepato-Biliary-Pancreatic Surgery and Transplantation Symposium Best Oral Presentation (awarded a two-week fellowship with the Division of Hepatobiliary and Transplant Surgery at the University of Montpellier in 2017). Mentors: Drs. Goss and Galvan.

Drs. Elaine Vo, Yangyang Yu, and Nader Zamani selected to participate in The Comparative Effectiveness Research Training and Instruction (CERTaIN) program’s Winter Institute offered by The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Dr. Nader Zamani awarded the Golden Scalpel by the Department of Emergency Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine. Mentor: Dr. Mills.

Upcoming Events

DFCon is the premier international, interdisciplinary diabetic foot conference in North America. In its 17th year, the conference is designed for the wide spectrum of generalists and specialists who diagnose and manage the diabetic foot.

Register at DFCon.com

DFCon Houston 2017

March 23-25, 2017
Royal Sonesta Houston Galleria

Take the first step, Register today!