

# MCIRCC WELCOMES NEWEST ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, SCOTT VANEPPS, MD, PHD, FACEP

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Scott VanEpps, MD, PhD, FACEP is the newest MCIRCC Associate Director. As an Associate Director, he will provide feedback and guidance to ensure that MCIRCC achieves its strategic goals, and will help facilitate multidisciplinary collaborations between members.

Dr. VanEpps is an Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine and Biomedical Engineering. He has been an active MCIRCC member since MCIRCC's launch and was one of MCIRCC's [original Sepsis Grand Challenge](#) grant recipients. His scientific work in critical care is at the juncture of biomaterials and bacteriology/infection. His collaboration with fellow Associate Director [Robert Dickson, MD](#), via MCIRCC, has resulted in an R-21 award and Joint Institute pilot grant on [bacterial detection and typing](#). VanEpps is working to develop a new generation of antimicrobials.

VanEpps' PhD is in Bioengineering, working closely with collaborators in the [Biointerfaces Institute](#). We're sure that his fluency in medicine and engineering - in addition to his leadership - will be key in MCIRCC establishing and leading additional transformative collaborations across campus.

## **Quick Q&A**

### **Describe your research and the accomplishments you're most proud of.**

My research is focused on life-threatening infections with particular emphasis on medical device related infection. We are developing technologies for rapid diagnosis of bloodstream infection, novel materials to prevent bacterial contamination of medical implants and environmental surfaces within the hospital, new classes of antimicrobials based on nanomaterials, and strategies for in situ treatment of biofilm related infections. I am most proud that for each of these projects, I have encouraged team members to escape their individual silos and pool our expertise in medicine, chemistry, biology, physics, and engineering. Our innovations are a product of breaking these barriers.

### **How do you foresee your role within MCIRCC changing or growing now that you're an associate director?**

I have spent my life at the interface. As an undergrad, I was in the college of engineering **and** the college of arts and sciences. In graduate school, I pursued an engineering PhD in **addition to** medicine. **Now** I find myself in the medical school **and** the college of engineering **and** a member of the “Biointerfaces Institute.” I pride myself on speaking the language of medicine, biology, and engineering. I believe my role will be to facilitate the breaking of the “language barrier” between these specialties. When experts in disparate fields can actually communicate, the activation energy for new innovation is greatly reduced. This is the definition of a catalyst and my intention for this position at MCIRCC.

### **What advice do you have for other MCIRCC members who want to become more involved?**

All of the problems that can be solved by a single scientist working alone in a laboratory have been solved. The tough problems, the ones whose solutions will have meaningful impact cannot be solved in isolation. These solutions are in reach for those with the courage to step outside the confines of their silo, department, or field and build lasting cross disciplinary relationships. So, for those with interest, by all means participate. Specifically, subscribe and read the MCIRCC newsletters, come to the MCIRCC events, reach out to the catalyst team members, and don't be afraid to leave the comforts of your office. I am a hardcore introvert. If I can do it...so can you.