Academic Rigor, Mentorship, & Compassion Pave the Way to Clinical Excellence

Within the Department of Neurosurgery, we have always had as our motto that we focus on, “Our patients...past, present, and future.” With this patient-centered approach, we have been fortunate to see excellence in many areas.

Under the leadership of Dr. Greg Thompson, Program Director, our residents have continued to demonstrate the true meaning of accomplishment. They have been chosen for outstanding fellowships and positions in academic neurosurgery and practices throughout the country. Publications from both our residents and faculty have grown consistently in recent years. Our alumni have gone on to become esteemed members at a variety of institutions with now six sitting Chairs of neurosurgical departments counted among the graduates of our neurosurgical residency. In recent years, we have seen a blossoming of not only publications but academic output from our faculty, residents, mid-level providers, as well as our administrative staff.

Mentorship has played an important role in our growth; its importance has been demonstrated not only by our faculty and residents, but in all areas of the Department. Professional growth and development have been key elements to success at all levels within the Department. I personally was fortunate enough to have a delightful session with Dr. Sanjay Gupta, in which he spoke to the importance of mentorship for himself and for others and particularly how his time here at the University of Michigan helped shape his own practice.

Within our Department, individual leadership has led to team efforts to provide food, clothing, and school supplies for a variety of organizations that provide for those in need. These efforts have all been organized by our administrative staff. Additionally, Project Shunt, our outreach program to Guatemala, has now been part of the Department for nineteen years.

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Our compassion for our patients and for each other is reflected in not only the quantity of our efforts but also in the emphasis we place on patients’ quality of life. We have begun a functional wellness initiative which is highlighted in the Department Features section. This initiative emphasizes whole body wellness. Compassion for others has been demonstrated through our community benefit activities as well as a variety of our educational activities. We have learned over the years that local control of complex problems plays an important role in helping one to develop job satisfaction and, more importantly, to expeditiously address patients’ needs. As a result, we have empowered administrative staff members to solve problems for patients at the very entry point into our system, which has integrated them further into the compassionate care that is delivered to our patients.

At the system level, the administrative and governance structure of our entire hospital and medical school has been reorganized. The hospital at all levels is now organized and controlled around a tumor team which includes physician, nursing, and administrative leadership. The entire theme of this reorganization of “MICHIGAN MEDICINE” is to create a clinical enterprise environment in which the various individuals responsible for care have control over both the financial and the strategic vision of the institution. Neurosurgery is an active member of this team.

We are beginning a four-year reorganization process at the medical school, which has recently redesigned its curriculum to incorporate science into the clinical practice of medicine in a more seamless fashion. We are beginning a four-year reorganization process at the medical school, which will ultimately allow our students to experience first-hand how scientific breakthroughs affect patient care in a meaningful way. The ability of our surgeons to communicate effectively with patients and students has been the hallmark of this Department and is now being directly applied to the education of medical students.

It has been a very exciting time in the Department with a series of accomplishments they each achieved during their residencies at U-M. We are quickly approaching the 100th Anniversary of the Department of Neurosurgery within the greater medical school in 2018. Although the Department itself was not named until 2001, the first subspecialized, recognized section of neurosurgery occurred within the Department of Surgery in 1918. Dr. Max Peet was the leader of this enterprise and began focusing his practice entirely on neurosurgical needs. Afterward, under the leadership of Dr. Edgar Kahn and subsequently Dr. Richard Schneider, the section continued to grow. Under the leadership of Julian Hoff, we became established as a department with a variety of subspecialty areas in neurosurgery. Since 1981, we have continued to expand further to include 23 clinical neurosurgeons, four neuro-intensivists, and eight research scientists. We also have 18 residents alternating two or three residents each year and a handful of fellows.

Finally, we have embarked on a journey of creating a new inpatient tower, which will have as its anchor tenant, the Department of Neurosurgery. The development of this new clinical facility, which will likely take four to five years, will allow us to expand our services.

As we collectively design this new hospital, we aim to make it a hospital for not only the present but also for the future. The goal will be to integrate clinical research, including aspects of brain machine interface, and quality and outcomes studies into the very backbone of clinical practice. It is an exciting time to be a member of the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Michigan. We have an illustrious past from which we can learn, and a dynamic and exciting future to look forward to. I hope that each of you will come visit us and learn about all we are doing. I hope you will enjoy this newsletter which captures just a few of the highlights from our Department within the last two years.

I wish you all health and happiness in the coming year and I thank you for your continued support for this spectacular Department.

Sincerely,

Julian T. Hoff, M.D.
Professor and Chair

MEDICAL EDUCATION UPDATE

Chief Resident Graduates 2015

William Stetler, Jr., M.D. and Jennifer Strahle, M.D.

One of the highlights of each academic year is to gather and celebrate the graduation of the chief residents as they complete their seven-year neurosurgical training program. On Monday, June 22, 2015, faculty, residents, staff, friends, and family gathered at the Ann Arbor City Club for an evening of recognition and celebration honoring Drs. William Stetler, Jr. and Jennifer Strahle. It was an evening of laughter, tears and, of course, the historical “roasting” of the chiefs by their resident cohorts.

After residency graduation, Dr. Stetler completed an endovascular fellowship at the University of Florida under the tutelage of Dr. Brian Hoh. Following the completion of this fellowship, Dr. Stetler returned to his southern roots, joining the faculty at the University of Alabama as an Assistant Professor. Dr. Strahle completed a pediatric fellowship at Washington University in St. Louis and is currently on their faculty as Assistant Professor of Neurological Surgery, Orthopedic Surgery, and Pediatrics. We wish both of them much success in their neurosurgical careers.

Chief Resident Graduates 2016

Wajd Al-Holou, M.D. and Thomas J. Wilson, M.D.

The 2016 Chief Resident Graduation celebration was held on Saturday, June 18, 2016 at The Polo Fields in Ann Arbor. Guests gathered to honor Drs. Wajd Al-Holou and Thomas J. Wilson and celebrate their completion of the neurosurgical residency training program. Those in attendance bid Drs. Al-Holou and Wilson farewell and celebrated the many accomplishments they each achieved during their residencies at U-M.

Dr. Al-Holou is further enhancing his education at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston doing a tumor fellowship under the tutelage of Dr. Jeffrey Weinberg. Dr. Wilson is also engaged in a fellowship program, specifically a peripheral nerve fellowship at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, training with Dr. Robert Spiller. Dr. Wilson will join the faculty at Stanford upon completion of his fellowship.

 canon chief medical correspondent & u-m neurosurgery alumnus
Dr. Sanjay Gupta
New Neurosurgery Residents 2015

In 2015, we were excited to welcome Drs. Amy Bruzek and Siri Sahib Khalsa to our residency training program.

Amy Bruzek, M.D., M.S.
Medical School: Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine/Medical College of Virginia
Graduate School: Virginia Commonwealth University
Undergraduate: Carroll College
Hometown: New Prague, MN

**Why Neurosurgery?:** Seven years ago I stepped foot in a neurosurgery operating room, and ever since then I haven’t wanted to stay away. The challenge of the surgeries, the connection to the patients, and the beauty of neuroanatomy quickly drew me to the field. From studying the anatomy of the nervous system to conducting research and learning the newest techniques in the field, every aspect of neurosurgery is fascinating to me. No other career or specialty makes me as excited to go to work every day.

**Hobbies or Interests:** I am an avid ice hockey player and a hockey fanatic in general. I enjoy anything active, including snowboarding, skiing (water or downhill), kayaking, hiking, and hiking. I also love the arts, namely ballets, symphonies, and theater.

**Clinical Interests:** General neurosurgery, pediatrics, and basic and translational research

Siri Sahib Khalsa, M.D.
Medical School: George Washington University
Graduate School: University of Virginia
Undergraduate: I grew up in a few different places, including Los Angeles, Tucson, and Bangalore, India.
Hometown: Munster, IN

**Why Neurosurgery?:** I was convinced that neurosurgery would be my ideal specialty during a research fellowship sponsored by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons the summer after my first year of medical school. Neurosurgery inspired me because it offered the opportunity to solve complex problems for the direct benefit of other human beings and their families; with the help of novel treatment techniques and technology, and also contribute academically to the forefront of one of the most fascinating and rapidly evolving fields.

**Hobbies or Interests:** I enjoy scuba diving, water sports, working on cars, racquetball, and trying new foods

**Clinical Interests:** General and pediatric neurosurgery and computational modeling

2016 Spine Fellow

Dr. Daniel Harwell joined our Neurosurgery Service in July 2016, beginning a one-year clinical fellowship in complex and reconstructive spine surgery focused on sophisticated spinal surgery techniques under the direct supervision of Dr. Frank La Marca with assistant supervision by Dr. Paul Park. He received his Bachelor of Science in Zoology-Biomedical Science from the University of Oklahoma in 2006. He attended medical school at that same institution, receiving his medical degree in May 2010.

He then joined the University of Cincinnati's neurosurgical residency program in July 2010, successfully completing his training in June 2016. Dr. Harwell's hobbies include cycling, golf, and trying to re-learn what hobbies he enjoys post-residency.

New Neurosurgery Residents 2016

In 2016, we were delighted to have Drs. Badih Junior Daou, Timothy Yee, and Catherine Ziats join our residency training program.

Badih Junior Daou, M.D.
Medical School: University of Balamand, Lebanon
Post-Graduate Training: Thomas Jefferson University
Undergraduate: University of Balamand, Lebanon
Hometown: Houmal, Lebanon

**Why Neurosurgery?:** During my first year of medical school, my brother suffered a stroke due to a traumatic vertebral artery dissection. Ever since that time, my interests in medicine were drastically shifted towards neurological sciences. Another passion emerged during that first year of medical school, that of surgery, as I learned the techniques of dissection during the anatomy course, how meticulous one should be, and as I discovered the satisfaction of working with my hands. In particular, I was captivated by the complexity, intricacy, and delicacy of the human brain. A fascination with dissection then turned into a passion for the surgical field during my clinical years. Following my Neurosurgery subinternships, after experiencing the exciting spectrum of neurosurgery from operative management to post-operative patient care and neuro-critical care, I was certain that the path of neurosurgery was the right one for me.

**Hobbies or Interests:** Basketball, soccer, movies, and theater

**Clinical Interests:** Vascular neurosurgery, endovascular neurosurgery, and clinical research

Timothy Yee, M.D.
Medical School: University of Michigan Medical School
Undergraduate: University of Notre Dame
Hometown: Munster, IN

**Why Neurosurgery?:** During medical school, I took great interest in neuroanatomy and the unique manner in which structure and function correlate in the nervous system. Furthermore, the breadth and intensity of neurosurgical care will serve to stimulate a life-long pursuit of both technical mastery and scientific inquiry.

**Hobbies or Interests:** Tennis, photography, and gastronomy

**Clinical Interests:** Spine and vascular neurosurgery

Catherine Ziats, M.D.
Medical School: University of Florida
Undergraduate: University of Florida
Hometown: Coral Gables, FL

**Why Neurosurgery?:** It was the field that best combined my research and clinical interests.

**Hobbies or Interests:** I enjoy running, playing golf, and any sport involving water. Additionally, I am a huge college football fan and enjoy going to football games.

**Clinical Interests:** Pediatrics and neurodevelopment
A Word from the Program Director, Dr. Greg Thompson

Michigan Neurosurgery residency alumni have so much to be proud of: 1999 graduate Dr. Nate Selden provides just one example of why this is the case. Dr. Selden returned as our Julian Hoff Visiting Professor and Honored Guest Speaker for the 3rd annual Michigan Neurosurgery Resident Research Symposium in May, 2016. He is now the Professor and Chair of Neurosurgery at the Oregon Health & Science University, as well as the past president of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons. In May, he returned to U-M and presented on his ongoing research endeavors in his keynote address “Neural Stem Cell Transplantation: Safety and Long-term Outcomes.”

Our current residents and recent resident graduates are similarly a great source of pride for our faculty and alumni. In fact, our recent graduates have recorded a rather remarkable record of achievement over the last several years. Over the past three years, our 17 residents have averaged 3.3 peer reviewed publications per resident per year. During the same time period, top national resident research awards were garnered by residents. 

Alumni are welcome and encouraged to attend our annual Neurosurgery Resident Research Symposium and Honored Guest Dinner held each year in May. The 4th annual Resident Research Symposium is scheduled for Friday, May 12, 2017. The Honored Guest will be Edward H. Oldfield, M.D., and the Honored Guest Dinner will be Thursday, May 11 in the evening. Alumni may also contribute to the Neurosurgery Resident Research fund by contacting Mark Veich at 734-763-1402 or mveich@umich.edu.

Go Blue!

Medical Education Awards 2015 & 2016

Julian T. Hoff Teaching Award

The Julian T. Hoff Teaching Award is given each year to a faculty member within the department who is instrumental in teaching our neurosurgical residents. 

2015 Recipient Lynda Yang, M.D., Ph.D.
2016 Recipient Stephen Sullivan, M.D.

Max Peet Resident Teaching Award

The Max Peet Teaching Award is given annually to a resident who has distinguished himself/herself in the arena of teaching other residents and medical students.

2015 Recipient William Stebler, Jr., M.D.
2016 Recipient Luis Savastano, M.D.

Friend of Neurosurgery Award

The Friend of Neurosurgery Teaching Award is given each year to a faculty member outside of our department who is instrumental in teaching our neurosurgical residents.

2015 Recipient Magnus Teig, MBChB
2016 Recipient Erin McKeen, M.D.

McGillicuddy Resident Leadership Award

This award recognizes a resident who exhibits exemplary leadership in maintaining the highest standards of professionalism.

2015 Recipient Osama Kashlan, M.D.
2016 Recipient Thomas J. Wilson, M.D.

Resident Honors & Awards

U-M Neurosurgery residents received many awards and honors in 2015 and 2016. These include but are not limited to those listed below.

Wajd Al-Holou

Received the Presses Research Award, given annually at the AANS and CNS meetings to the resident who has submitted the best basic science research paper, January, 2015.

Nicole Bentley, M.D.

Received the Best Basic Science Research Poster Award given by the American Society of Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery Society, June, 2016.

Todd Hollon, M.D.

Leadership Fellow, Congress of Neurological Surgeons, CNS Quarterly Committee Member

Jacob Joseph, M.D.

AANS/CNS-Codman Fellowship in Neurotrauma and Critical Care, 2016-2017
Received the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation Physician-Investigator Grant, which will begin in January, 2017.

Elyne Kahn, M.D.

Socioeconomic Fellowship, Council of State Neurosurgical Societies, 2015-2015
Leadership Fellow, Congress of Neurological Surgeons, Fellowship Committee Member, 2015-2017
Best Neurosurgery Resident Poster, Neurosurgery Day 2016, University of Michigan
Elected by co-residents as resident liaison to the department’s Program Evaluation Committee/Education Committee, 2015.

Osama Kashlan, M.D.

Consultant Award by Department of Emergency Medicine, July, 2015
Nomination and selection to AANS Leadership Development Course for Residents, April, 2016
MANS best abstract award, May, 2016

Luis Savastano, M.D.

Galbraith Award for the best cerebrovascular abstract submission by a resident to the CNS Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA., 2016
Project Award for Early Tech Development, Fast Forward Medical Innovation, University of Michigan, 2016
Best Platform Presentation, Neuroscience Day 2016, University of Michigan
Academic Excellence Award for written board score > 90th percentile nationally, Department of Neurosurgery, University of Michigan
Robert J. Dempsey Cerebrovascular Research Award, Joint Section on Cerebrovascular Surgery of the AANS/CNS, 2015
Best Neurosurgery Resident Poster, Neuroscience Day 2015, University of Michigan
Innovation Fellowship Award, Congress of Neurological Surgeons, 2015
Technology Innovation Award, International Meeting on Simulation in Healthcare, 2015

Brandon Smith, M.D.

American Association of Neurological Surgeons Student Group Resident Liaison, University of Michigan, 2015-present

Drew Wilkinson, M.D.

T32 National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke Post-Doctoral Training Grant 2016-2017: $51,120. PI of training grant Dr. Ewa Feldman, PI of project Dr. Guohua Xi for project: Investigation of Early Brain Injury in Experimental Subarachnoid Hemorrhage Using Diffusion-Weighted and T2* MRI
MANS best abstract award, May, 2016

Timothy Yee, M.D.

Received the Edgar Kahn Award for Excellence in Neurosurgery, University of Michigan, March, 2016
The Charles and Phyllis Lowes Scholarship. awarded to the two 54th of highest academic standing, University of Michigan, September, 2015
Clinical Skills Award, awarded to top 10% of graduating class based on performance in M3 clerkships and the M4 Comprehensive Clinical Assessment, University of Michigan, September, 2015

The Department of Neurosurgery held its second and third annual Neurosurgery Resident Research Symposiums in 2015 and 2016, respectively. The Resident Research Symposium was established in 2014 to stimulate and promote the academic productivity of our residents, and to bring together research and colleagues in neurosurgery. This annual symposium supports our educational mission of training exemplary neurosurgeons who have a strong background in both clinical neurosurgery and research. Each year, residents present their research at this gathering and awards are given to those with the best clinical and basic science presentations. Additionally, a nationally-renowned neurosurgeon is invited each year to deliver the keynote address and to help judge the presentations.

The 2015 symposium was held on Friday, May 29. Dr. Dade Lunsford from the University of Pittsburgh was the honored guest, in conjunction with being the 2015 James Taren Visiting Professor. Dr. William Stellner was chosen as the recipient of the Chandler Clinical Research Award, which is awarded for the best clinical research presentation, while Dr. Wajd Al-Holou received the Crosby Basic Science Research Award. Faculty and residents in attendance at the 2016 symposium, which was held on Friday, May 13, welcomed honored speaker and Michigan Neurosurgery alumnus Dr. Nathan Selden, anterior from the Oregon Health & Science University. In addition to being the honored guest at the 2016 Resident Research Symposium, Dr. Selden was also the 2016 Julian T. Hoff Visiting Professor. The 2016 Chandler Clinical Research Award was given to both Drs. Wajd Al-Holou and TF Wilson. Dr. Edward Oldfield from the University of Virginia will be our honored guest as well as the Julian T. Hoff Visiting Professor.

Visiting Professors 2015 & 2016

Julian T. Hoff Visiting Professor
2015 Kevin Lilehei, M.D., Professor and Osbourn-Kindl Chair, Department of Neurosurgery, University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine Titles: 1) Craniovascular disorders: a changing paradigm in therapy; 2) Malakat Africans. Neurosurgery in Tanzania
2016 Nathan Selden, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Neurosurgery, Campaign Chair of Pediatric Neurosurgery, Oregon Health & Science University Title: Neural stem cell transplantation: safety and long-term outcomes

Edgar Kahn Visiting Professor
2015 Fredric Meyer, M.D., Enterprise Chair, Department of Neurological Surgery, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota Titles: 1) 16 Rules of Neurosurgery; 2) Triple Threat
2016 Howard Riina, M.D., Professor and Vice Chairman, Director Neurosurgery Residency Program, Department of Neurosurgery, New York University Langone Medical Center. Titles: 1) Hybrid cerebrovascular neurosurgery and its implications for training cerebrovascular surgeons of the future; 2) Medical device innovation

James Taren Visiting Professor
2015 Dade Lunsford, M.D., Lars Lekander Professor of Neurological Surgery, Director, Center for Image Guided Neurosurgery, Director, Neurosurgery Residency Program, The University of Pittsburgh. Titles: Radiosurgery for brain vascular malformations: lessons learned over twenty-five years
2016 Jamie Henderson, M.D., John and June Blume- Roberts and Ruth Halperin Professor, Department of Neurosurgery, Director, Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery, Stanford University Title: 1) Intracranial brain-machine interfaces for people with paralysis; 2) From space ships to maize: ups and downs of data visualization

Joan Venes Visiting Professor
2015 Douglas Brockmeyer, M.D., Chief, Division of Pediatric Neurosurgery, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin Hospital. Titles: Complex Chiari, Complex Spine... and back again; Is the head bone connected to the neck bone?
2016 Jeffrey Ojemann, M.D., Professor of Neurosurgery and Radiology, University of Washington School of Medicine Richard G. Elbergen Chair in Pediatric Neurological Surgery, Seattle Children's Hospital. Titles: 1) Motor plasticity-electrocoagulation studies; 2) Toward less invasive epilepsy surgery

Saeed Farhat Visiting Professor
2015 Stephen Ondra, M.D., Senior Vice President and Enterprise Chief Medical Officer, Health Care Service Corporation. Titles: 1) Understanding sagittal balance to improve spine assessment and treatment; 2) Health reform beyond the affordable care act
2016 Katie Orrico, J.D., Director, Washington Office, American Association of Neurological Surgeons/Congress of Neurological Surgeons. Titles: 1) Health care reform: is the affordable care act living up to its promises?

Elizabeth Crosby Visiting Professor
2015 Matthew Howard, III, M.D., John C. VanGilder Chair, Department of Neurosurgery, University of Iowa College of Medicine. Titles: 1) Neurosurgical studies in normal human brain physiology; 2) Medical device inventions and technology transfer
2016 Christopher Shaffrey, M.D., John A. Jane Professor of Neurosurgery, Spine Division Director, University of Virginia School of Medicine. Title: Why should a neurosurgeon care about spinal deformity?

FACULTY UPDATE

Welcome Faculty

Mark Oppenlander, M.D.
Mark Oppenlander was appointed Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Neurosurgery in September, 2015. Dr. Oppenlander returns to the University of Michigan, where he completed both his undergraduate studies and medical school, to begin his neurosurgical career. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Cellular and Molecular Biology at U-M in 2004 and then went on to earn his medical degree in 2008. Dr. Oppenlander then moved to Phoenix, Arizona where he completed his neurosurgical residency in 2015 at Barrow Neurological Institute. He also completed a fellowship training in complex spine surgery at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia. In addition, Dr. Oppenlander was awarded the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh Overseas Training Sponsorship which allowed him to travel to London, England for further fellowship training in complex spine surgery and spinal oncology at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery at Queen Square. Dr. Oppenlander’s research is focused on outcomes studies. His neurosurgical spine practice is primarily embedded at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor.

Martin Buckingham, M.D.
Dr. Buckingham was appointed Clinical Instructor in the Department of Neurosurgery in May, 2015. He was born in Oak Park, Illinois, and received his medical degree from the University of Illinois. He completed his residency at the University of Cincinnati in 1990 and became board-certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery (ABNS) in 1993. He practiced in Rockford, Illinois for seven years and then moved to the Ann Arbor area where he was a neurosurgeon in private practice and at St. Joseph Mercy for the last 16 years. Since joining the U-M Department of Neurosurgery, Dr. Buckingham has been extremely active with his practice, which is focused on basic cervical and lumbar spine. He also has a strong interest in resident education and has recently developed instructional videos for the residents regarding basic spine procedures.

Martin Buckingham, M.D.
Dr. Buckingham was appointed Clinical Instructor in the Department of Neurosurgery in May, 2015. He was born in Oak Park, Illinois, and received his medical degree from the University of Illinois. He completed his residency at the University of Cincinnati in 1990 and became board-certified by the American Board of Neurological Surgery (ABNS) in 1993. He practiced in Rockford, Illinois for seven years and then moved to the Ann Arbor area where he was a neurosurgeon in private practice and at St. Joseph Mercy for the last 16 years. Since joining the U-M Department of Neurosurgery, Dr. Buckingham has been extremely active with his practice, which is focused on basic cervical and lumbar spine. He also has a strong interest in resident education and has recently developed instructional videos for the residents regarding basic spine procedures.

Nicholas Szerlip, M.D.
Dr. Szerlip was appointed Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Neurosurgery with a joint appointment at the Ann Arbor Veterans Administration Medical Center in August, 2015. Dr. Szerlip obtained his medical degree from Tulane University in 2002 and did his postgraduate training at the University of Maryland in Baltimore. He also completed several fellowships in Neuropathology: one at the National Institutes of Health in 2003, and one at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in 2011. Following his fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering, he began practicing at Wayne State University. Dr. Szerlip’s primary focus is on spine tumors; he examines their molecular fingerprints and also works to develop surgical techniques for resection of patients with spinal disorders. His research is focused on neuro-oncology, having already completed some molecular analysis on brain tumors. He also has a strong interest in resident education and is actively involved in training both medical students and residents on the basic biomechanics of the spine.

Craig Williamson, M.D.
Dr. Williamson was appointed Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Neurosurgery and Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Neurology in July, 2015. He performs the duties of a neurointensivist as well as a member of the neurointensive care team.

Dr. Williamson completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Illinois. He was then chosen as a Truman Fellow and completed a year-long fellowship in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, working in the Office of Rural Health Policy in Rockville, Maryland. In 2009, he received his medical degree from the University of California San Francisco and then completed an internship at Alameda County Medical Center in Oakland, California. In 2010 he began his neurology residency at Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston, after which Dr. Williamson came to the University of Michigan for a neurocritical care fellowship.

Dr. Williamson works focuses on the care of neurosurgical patients, neuro-otolaryngology patients, and neurology patients in the Neurointensive Care Unit, as well as interventional neuro-vascular patients. He focuses on various outcomes studies, and he is currently working toward obtaining a master's degree from the U-M School of Public Health.

Edward Oldfield Visiting Professor
2015 El-Holou received the Crosby Basic Science Research Award. The 2017 Neurosurgery Resident Research Symposium will be held on Friday, May 12, 2017 in the Danto Auditorium at the Cardiovascular Center. Dr. Edward Oldfield from the University of Virginia will be our honored guest as well as the Julian T. Hoff Visiting Professor.

Dr. William Stellner was chosen as the recipient of the Chandler Clinical Research Award, which is awarded for the best clinical research presentation, while Dr. Wajd Al-Holou received the Crosby Basic Science Research Award. Faculty and residents in attendance at the 2016 symposium, which was held on Friday, May 13, welcomed honored speaker and Michigan Neurosurgery alumnus Dr. Nathan Selden, anterior from the Oregon Health & Science University. In addition to being the honored guest at the 2016 Resident Research Symposium, Dr. Selden was also the 2016 Julian T. Hoff Visiting Professor.
Faculty News & Notes

Promotions & Appointments

2015 Promotions Effective 9/1/15
Aditya Pandey, M.D., promoted from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of Neurosurgery, with tenure, and Associate Professor of Radiology, without tenure.

Parag Patil, M.D., Ph.D., promoted from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of Neurosurgery, with tenure, and Associate Professor of Anesthesiology, Biomedical Engineering and Neurology, without tenure.

2016 Promotions Effective 9/1/16
Ya Hua, M.D., promoted from Research Associate Professor to Research Professor, Department of Neurosurgery

Frank La Marca, M.D., promoted from Clinical Associate Professor to Clinical Professor, Department of Neurosurgery & Department of Orthopaedic Surgery

Cormac Maher, M.D., promoted from Associate Professor to Professor, Department of Neurosurgery

Kelvin Chou, M.D., promoted from Clinical Associate Professor to Clinical Professor, Department of Neurosurgery

Laurel Moore, M.D., Associate Professor of Anesthesiology was granted a joint appointment as Associate Professor in Neurosurgery.

Awards & Accomplishments

Maria Castro, Ph.D., R.C., was appointed to the U-M President’s Advisory Commission on Women’s Issues (PACW) for a two-year term. The Commission aims to assure that women achieve equal participation in all aspects of leadership at U-M. Dr. Castro was also appointed to the 2015 Editorial Board of Neuro-Oncology in recognition of her continuing support. This journal is the leader in the field of neuro-oncology. In 2016, Dr. Castro received the prestigious Jarvis Neuroscience Investigator Award from the National Institutes of Health. “The Jarvis Award recognizes extraordinary research that has the potential to better thousands of lives,” said Story C. Landis, Ph.D., NINDS director. Dr. Castro was also awarded the 2016 John Osbost Memorial Lecture Award by the University of Minnesota Comprehensive Cancer Center for excellence in the field of neuro-oncology. Xing Fan, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor, was asked to participate as a grant reviewer for the 2016 Tumor Microenvironment (TME) Study Section meeting at NIH. The TME Study Section reviews grant applications that deal with basic mechanisms of interactions between tumor and host system including stromal cells, extracellular matrix (ECM) and extracellular molecules.

Hugh Garton, M.D., M.H.Sc., Richard C. Schneider Professor of Neurosurgery, was inducted into The League of Clinical Excellence, which was established by the Medical School to honor faculty who have distinguished themselves in providing the finest care to U-M patients and their families. Shawn Hervey-Jumper, M.D., Assistant Professor, was selected as the Frances and Kenneth Einberg Emerging Scholar by the Taubman Institute. The Emerging Scholars Program provides support for clinician-scientists on the U-M faculty who are in the early stages of their research careers.

Teresa Jacobs, M.D., Clinical Associate Professor, was selected as a member of U-M’s 2015 League of Educational Excelence. Members are selected based on their contributions to the Medical School research and clinical missions.

Pedro Lowenstein, M.D., Ph.D., Richard Schneider Collegiate Professor of Neurosurgery, received the American Society for Cell Biology Honor Status Award for the presentation, “Stemns, swirls, and neurophysies: in vivo self-organization of brain tumors revealed by mathematical and biological modeling,” as well as the Society for Neuro-Oncology Best Oral Presentation Award for his research on the innate immune system in GBM progression.

He and Dr. Castro also received an invitation to the 21st International Conference on Brain Tumor Research and Therapy (IUCRT). Invitations are based on a scientific’s significant contributions to neuro-oncology research and/or clinical practice.

George A. Mauas, M.D., Ph.D., was appointed Associate Dean for Clinical and Translational Research and Director of the Michigan Institute for Clinical & Health Research (MICHR) effective October 1, 2015. Dr. Mauas is the Bert N. Lu Du Professor and Associate Chair for Research in the Department of Anesthesiology and founding director of the Center for Consciousness Science. He also holds faculty appointments in the Department of Neurosurgery and the Neuroscience Graduate Program.

Karim Muraszko, M.D., Julieta T. Hoff Professor and Chair, received the 2015 Congress of Neurological Surgeons Distinguished Service Award, as well as the 2016 American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) Humanitarian Award. One of the highest honors bestowed by the AANS, the Humanitarian Award recognizes the extraordinary work done for those in need, here and abroad, for many years. She also received the 2016 Spina Bifida Alliance Timothy J. Brei, M.D., Outstanding Medical Professional Award and was an honored guest lecturer for the 2016 NIH “Great Teachers” lecture. Dr. Muraszko was selected as the 2016 UMMS faculty member to receive the American Medical Women’s Association Gender Equity Award, which honors faculty members who promote a gender fair environment for the education and training of physicians, and who assure equal opportunities for women and men to study and practice medicine.

Daniel Orringer, M.D., Assistant Professor, was named to UMMS Office of Research’s Fast Forward Medical Innovation (FFMI) group in which he will act as the medical device specialist and will work with the FFMI team to create strategies for driving innovation and commercialization at the Medical School.

CNN spotlights Dr. Karin Muraszko

When CNN’s chief medical correspondent had to think of the person who changed his life, Dr. Sanjay Gupta came up with two: his mother and Dr. Karin Muraszko, U-M’s Chair of Neurosurgery.

Gupta, a U-M alumnus and practicing neurosurgeon, visited UMHS in the fall of 2015 to interview Dr. Muraszko in preparation for a story that chronicled how both Dr. Muraszko and his mother shaped him into the man and surgeon he is today. The story aired multiple times on CNN’s Anderson Cooper 360° in January 2016. Then, in April, CNN again honored Dr. Muraszko by featuring her on the series “Turning Points,” which highlights the stories of people who have overcome obstacles to achieve incredible things. On Turning Points, CNN shared Dr. Muraszko’s journey, from a newborn with spina bifida to the first female chair of a neurosurgery department. Below is an excerpt from Dr. Gupta’s testimonial about the impact Dr. Muraszko had on his life and his career as a surgeon.

Excerpt from Dr. Sanjay Gupta’s CNN article

Dr. Karin Muraszko hates that word [impossible] as well. Born with spina bifida, an abnormality of the spinal cord, Karin had enormous difficulty walking her whole life and is now in a wheelchair. While she couldn’t hide her spinal cord abnormality, she never spent a lot of time talking about it. Instead, she came into the hospital earlier, stayed later, and worked harder than everyone else. And that is saying something, because Karin is a pediatrics neurosurgeon, a profession that required 100-hour work weeks during her training.

When people introduce me and say I have only overcome, but flourished — and did it on the conventional playground of men. Neurosurgeons all over the world know Karin is the first woman to ever become a chair of neurosurgery in the United States, at the University of Michigan. What they may not know, however, is that she decided to get her ears pierced on the same day she decided to become a neurosurgeon. No joke. Karin told me she didn’t want to lose sight of the fact that she was a woman first, and a neurosurgeon second.

I know her story so well because I was one of the lucky ones to be trained by her. For seven years, during some of the most formative years of my life, Karin Muraszko was a mentor to me. At the time I dedicated my life training to be a brain surgeon, Karin was right there by my side. For a time, there was likely no one in the world who spent more time with me and knew me better than Karin Muraszko. She was the only one who noticed the subtle signs my blood sugar might be dropping while I was operating — and opened a jelly Rancher candy and placed it behind my mask. It was Karin who gave me a pureed apple over watermelon.

We operated together for days on end. We saw hundreds of patients together, and all along, she taught me judgment, technique, and compassion. She was the person I called when my confidence had been shattered, and my fortitude dissolved. She had no patience for whining, but she did take the time to remind me what my purpose was — a surgeon, but also as a human. We all need someone like Karin in our lives — someone who tells you what you need to hear, not just what you want to hear, and with a smile. Like my mother, Karin was always willing to share the lessons she had learned with a healthy dose of humility, while allowing me to earn her trust and feel truly valued. Both inspired simply by being who they were, sincerely and authentically. There is not enough of that in the world today, and I was fortunate to be surrounded by it.

Yes, when asked who changed my life, the answer is women — strong, powerful, women. They have shaped me. They have challenged me. They have reminded me that sometimes it takes seemingly insurmountable obstacles to unleash the very best of ourselves. Perhaps most importantly, they have made me a better father to my own three daughters. I now remind my girls every day that there are no rules. There are no molds.

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Those are both made to be shuttered. I tell my girls they can be whatever they want to be. No, nothing is really impossible. It is an audacious message, but achievable as well. And if they want proof, I just pick up the phone and call the women who changed my life.

References:
ALUMNI UPDATE

U-M Neurosurgery Graduates: Where are they now?

U-M Neurosurgery alumni can be found practicing at various institutions throughout the country. Our last seven consecutive graduates have gone on to academic faculty positions at a number of renowned institutions.

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Carole Miller, M.D.
Former U-M neurosurgical faculty member Dr. Carole Miller passed away in 2015. Dr. Miller spent three years (1972-1974) as Assistant Professor on the neurosurgical faculty at the University of Michigan; she was the first woman on the surgical faculty at U-M. While here, Dr. Miller worked closely with Dr. Richard Schneider as well as in the laboratory with Dr. Elizabeth Crosby. Dr. Miller paved the way for many other women in neurosurgery, as she was the first woman to chair the joint spine section of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS). She was also the first female president of the Neurosurgical Society of America.

IN MEMORIAM

Carl Brinkman, M.D.
U-M Neurosurgery alumni Dr. Carl Brinkman passed away on July 26, 2014 in Bluffton, South Carolina. Dr. Brinkman completed his internship and neurosurgical residency at the University of Michigan (1960-1963). After training at U-M, Dr. Brinkman practiced at the Maine Medical Center, where he served as the Chief of Neurosurgery from 1980 to 1993. He was also the founder of the Southern Maine Neurosurgical Associates and Maine Magnetic Imaging, as well as a Diplomat of the American Board of Neurosurgeons and a member of the Culler Surgical Society.

Emily Levin, M.D.
Clinical Assistant Professor, Neurosurgery
University of Michigan

Shawn Hervey Jumper, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Neurosurgery
University of Michigan

Jennifer Strahle, M.D.
Assistant Professor of Neurological Surgery
University of California at Los Angeles

Anthony Wang, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Neurosurgery
University of California at Los Angeles

Carole Miller, M.D.
Former U-M neurosurgical faculty member

STAFF UPDATE

Welcome to U-M Neurosurgery

A warm welcome (and a few fun facts) about your new colleagues.

2015

Cathy Butler, Administrative Assistant to Dr. Thompson

Nicole Goguen, Inpatient Nurse Practitioner

Khoi Than, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Neurosurgery
Oregon Health & Science University

Sara Castillo – Patient Services Assistant, Pediatric Clinic

Jennifer Reynolds, Inpatient Nurse Practitioner

Emily Schmid, Administrative Assistant to

2016

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Samantha Emanuel, Administrative Assistant to

Jana Barkman, Inpatient Nurse Practitioner

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Neurosurgery’s Advanced Practice Providers Write and Publish Cranial Nerves for the Clinician

In June 2016, Cranial Nerves for the Clinician—a book authored primarily by the advanced practice providers on U-M’s inpatient Neurosurgery service—was published. The publication of this book represents the culmination of a year-long collaborative effort among the Department of Neurosurgery’s advanced practice professionals, residents, and faculty. The book provides a summary of the 12 cranial nerves, devoting one chapter to each nerve, including its functional anatomy, clinical examination, common pathologies and neurosurgical interventions. It is intended to serve as a portable, ready reference for the clinician interested in a particular cranial nerve, or the clinician who wishes to review all of the cranial nerves in a concise format. A copy of this book is now included in the materials given to all who wish to review all of the cranial nerves in a concise format. Though the mid-level providers on our Neurosurgery service are highly engaged in and often occupied by their clinical responsibilities, Teresa Jacobs, M.D., Director of the Neurosurgical ICU, saw the written work of this book as an opportunity for these providers to channel their academic interests into a scholarly work, and to make a great contribution to the academic mission of the department.

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“Cranial Nerves for the Clinician is now included in the materials given to all who wish to review all of the cranial nerves in a concise format. A copy of this book is now included in the materials given to all who wish to review all of the cranial nerves in a concise format. In addition, the book provides a summary of the 12 cranial nerves, devoting one chapter to each nerve, including its functional anatomy, clinical examination, common pathologies and neurosurgical interventions. It is intended to serve as a portable, ready reference for the clinician interested in a particular cranial nerve, or for the clinician who wishes to review all of the cranial nerves in a concise format. A copy of this book is now included in the materials given to all who wish to review all of the cranial nerves in a concise format.”

In addition to providing exemplary patient care, the many individuals who comprise the Department of Neurosurgery have shown their heart for giving through their recent participation in various community benefit activities and fundraisers. In 2016, to help organize and orchestrate the department’s participation in these activities, Melissa Matthews was named Community Benefit Coordinator. In addition to her role as Administrative Assistant to Dr. Parag Patel, Melissa, who has a background in family counseling, serves as the department’s point person for any community benefit-related activities and helps to inform staff about upcoming opportunities to give and to get involved.

“After only a few months as the Community Benefit Coordinator, I have seen an overwhelming response of generosity and joy in supporting our community,” said Melissa.

In July 2016, the department participated in a week-long food drive to support Food Gatherers, an organization in Ann Arbor that supports 150 non-profit agencies geared toward providing food assistance in Washtenaw County. Altogether, our department donated more than 145 pounds of food and $300 in monetary donations. Food Gatherers is able to provide 600 meals from our department's monetary donations alone. In September, school supplies were collected for the Education Project, a joint project of the Washtenaw Intermediate School District and Ozone House, that works to ensure that students experiencing homelessness and temporary living situations in the ten school districts comprising Washtenaw County enroll, regularly attend, and succeed in school. The Department of Neurosurgery has made a large and generous contribution, donating 37 backpacks and an overflowing cart full of school supplies and personal items.

The school supply drive for the Education Project was a hospital-wide effort led by Tony Denton and the entire UMHS Team. A record donation of 745 backpacks and 130 boxes of supplies were received, more than double the amount as compared to last year, which not only provided a record donation to the Education Project, but allowed these items to be disseminated to other local community agencies as well.

Staff members are not only donating money and supplies to important causes, but also their time by volunteering together in the community. At the end of November, a small group went to the Robert J. Delonis Center to help prepare dinner for the homeless, and in early December, a larger group went to the Food Gatherers warehouse to assist with sorting, stock, and distributing food.

“These opportunities are truly a group effort, not only for those who are volunteering, but also for those team members who keep things running smoothly in the office, allowing others to go out and volunteer,” said Melissa.

Steve Napolitan named Chief Department Administrator in 2015

Steve Napolitan was named the Chief Department Administrator for the Department of Neurosurgery in September 2015. Steve joined the department in 2006 and, collectively, has more than 20 years of management experience in the health care industry including health insurance, hospitals, and physician practices. Steve completed his undergraduate studies at Michigan State University and holds a Master in Business Administration (MBA) from Penn State University. In 1995 he received a direct commission into the Medical Service Corp of the United States Air Force where he served for three years at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas with a final rank of Captain. Steve began his work for the University of Michigan Health System in 1999 for M-CARE Health Plan. He then became the Associate Department Administrator for the Department of Neurosurgery in December of 2006. For over eight years, Steve partnered with the department’s former CDA, Don Tomford, to manage departmental operations and strategic planning. Don served as the lead administrator in Neurosurgery for 22 years. In July 2015, Don sought a new opportunity and challenge by becoming the Chief Department Administrator for the Department of Radiation Oncology here at U-M.

Steven Napolitano served for over eight years as the Department of Neurosurgery’s CDA, overseeing departmental operations and strategic planning. In July 2015, he sought a new opportunity and challenge by becoming the Chief Department Administrator for the Department of Radiation Oncology here at U-M.

The Department of Neurosurgery has a tremendous amount of gratitude for Don’s service and accomplishments, as he was integral to the growth and stability of the department during his time here. The department looks into the Medical Service Corp of the United States Air Force where he served for three years at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas with a final rank of Captain. Steve began his work for the University of Michigan Health System in 1999 for M-CARE Health Plan. He then became the Department’s new Chief Department Administrator, Teresa L. Jacobs, MD, U-M Contributor: 1. Teresa L. Jacobs, MD, Clinical Associate Professor of Neurosurgery & Neurology
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4. Victoria A. Latick, PA-C
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14. Elyse N. Kato, MD, MPH
15. Donald J. Tomford
**DEPARTMENT FEATURES**

The Functional Wellness Initiative: Survival & Beyond

For patients diagnosed with brain tumors and the physicians treating them, survival is the primary goal. For some patients, however, the quest for survival comes at the cost of quality of life. When survival is the sole focus of treatment, patients can be left to grapple with significant functional, cognitive, or psychological impairments, as is the case with about 90 percent of brain tumor patients. Through treating many brain tumor patients, Dr. Shawn Hervey-Jumper realized that, for many patients, it is not only the quantity of life that matters, but also the quality. For some patients, quality can even supersede quantity. Out of this realization, the idea for the Functional Wellness Initiative was born.

The Functional Wellness Initiative is a first-of-its kind clinical model that brings together the latest medical and surgical therapies to improve survival and the portfolio of rehabilitation services patients need to help them maximize the quality of their lives. This model addresses functional and cognitive deficits while treating brain tumors medically and surgically. It also helps to streamline cross-discipline collaboration so that patients have a more seamless, coordinated experience of care.

In August 2014, Dr. Hervey-Jumper proposed the Functional Wellness Initiative to the Department of Neurosurgery’s Chair, Dr. Kari Muraszko, and the administrative team. The vision was to create a unique, multi-disciplinary clinic that would work to identify and treat adult and pediatric patients with brain tumors affecting language, motor, psychological, and neurocognitive outcomes.

The Functional Wellness Initiative clinic hosted its first clinic in May 2015. The team is anchored by Dr. Hervey-Jumper, whose clinical and research focus is on brain mapping and functional reorganization, Sean Smith, M.D., a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician specializing in improving the quality of life of cancer patients, Nicolette Gabel, Ph.D., a clinical neuro-psychologist who specializes in neurocognitive remediation, and Karen Khan, M.S., a speech pathologist who specializes in perioperative language testing and rehabilitation.

Thomas Ferguson, N.P. is the program’s clinical coordinator. Other faculty of the U-M Brain Tumor Program include Oren Sagher, M.D., Jason Heith, M.D., Daniel Orringer, M.D., and Larry Honig, M.D.

“Many patients face a complex mix of challenges as the result of their tumors,” says Hervey-Jumper. “In the past, separate evaluations were needed from each discipline before arriving at a treatment strategy. That meant burdening patients with multiple appointments, and making it more challenging for providers to coordinate their efforts. Here at Michigan, we’re now able to bring the experts together for the patient right from the start.”

During their first appointment, patients interact with a team of clinicians collaborating to provide individualized care plans. The initial visit includes a baseline assessment of neurocognitive and motor functions, social structure, and language capabilities and a review of imaging and prior oncologic history. In consultation with a neurosurgeon and/or neuro-oncologist, patients can discuss treatment options including surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, anti-angiogenic options, and clinical trials offered through the U-M Brain Tumor Program. On the same day, experts in a range of rehabilitative therapies will work with the patient to devise strategies to maximize and improve existing motor, language, and cognitive function. Every aspect of the care plan is based on the unique needs of the patient.

Throughout the year and a half that the clinic has been operational, the Functional Wellness Initiative team has provided coordinated care to nearly 100 patients. The clinic meets once a month in the Taubman Center and is currently accepting new patients from within U-M, as well as from outside clinics and providers. For more information, please contact Emily Schmid at 734-647-5434.

**PATIENT STORIES**

Former boxer gives brain tumor a counterpunch

Retired professional boxer Kat Brauer Rice knew she always had to leave it all in the ring. “Krackin’ Kat” never gave up.

Rice, now a wife and mother of two, used those hard-fighting lessons from her boxing career, and her time as a college basketball player, in recent years to battle a brain tumor…twice. For a take-no-prisoners athlete who went 5-1 in the boxing ring, this medical fight was a deeply personal rematch. “The second time, when I came to the University of Michigan, I said: ‘We’re going the distance,’” says Rice, a former boxer at the legendary Kronk Gym who now lives in metro Detroit. “Round two needed to go down at U-M.”

Round one

The trouble started in 2008. Rice was frustrated with the difficulty she was having during a graduate school admissions test but didn’t think much of it. By chance, she got an MRI of her head after falling off a ladder. Results showed something far more severe than bruising: a large tumor in the back of her brain. It turned out to be a ganglioglioma (a rare, slow-growing kind of brain tumor). Rice had a successful surgery that same year to remove it. And, always the athlete, she celebrated her five-year checkup by riding her bike to the doctor’s office. “I did get hit by a car on the way, but I made it!” she says, noting that the injury was minor.

Round two

Seven years after her initial diagnosis, Rice again felt like something just wasn’t right. She was having headaches, and her arm was going numb. Rice asked U-M neurosurgeon Shawn Hervey-Jumper, M.D., and U-M neuro-oncologist Aaron Mammoser, M.D., to take a look. A follow-up MRI confirmed Rice’s fears. Her brain tumor was back. “When we found her recurrent tumor, we sat down with Kat to talk about what was important to her and created a plan of action,” says Rice, now focuses on making sure she and her family do everything they can to lead healthy and fulfilled lives. She stays active (a bike ride for charity is one recent adventure) and encourages her family to join her in eating healthy food.

Despite her victory, the fight continues.

“When gliomas are life time dilemmas, Kat is the poster child for somebody who has a diagnosis and should live for many years at a high level,” Hervey-Jumper says. Rice is also committed to furthering medical knowledge. She saw the advances in brain tumor research between her first and second experiences. U-M researchers are currently growing cells from her tumor in the lab so they can learn more about the genetics of low-grade gliomas.

For more patient stories, please visit [michiganhealthblog.org](http://michiganhealthblog.org).
Marathon-running mom faces rare spinal cord tumor

In her third trimester, Aimee Garrison finally became convinced the soreness and tension across her shoulder blades and into her back had to be more than just part of being pregnant. “I had been running and lifting weights all the way up to 26 weeks,” the marathoner from Kalamazoo says, “so I slowed down, but it didn’t get better. Soon I was having trouble sleeping and keeping up with my toddler.”

Eventually, an MRI revealed that Aimee was one of the less than 2,000 adults each year who find out they have a spinal cord ependymoma. A tumor the size of a baby carrot had been slowly growing in Aimee’s spinal cord, pushing her spinal cord against her vertebrae. “It was a really scary moment,” Aimee says. “I was the most worried about the baby.” Aimee and her husband Mark wanted to learn more about what they were dealing with, but quickly grew frustrated about the lack of information available. “I was just trying to learn about what was going on, but there aren’t a lot of resources available about such a rare condition,” Mark says. “It’s a weird feeling to type something into a search engine and get almost no results.”

The Garrisons came to the University of Michigan, where the neurosurgeons see 5-10 cases per year, to figure out what to do next. “One challenging decision was whether to operate while Aimee was still pregnant or whether to wait for the delivery of the baby,” says U-M neurosurgeon Daniel Orringer, M.D. “Operating while pregnant would put the fetus at risk of stress, exposure to toxic medications, and possibly risk of death.” Dr. Orringer gathered a team of neurosurgeons, anesthesiologists and an obstetrician to care for Aimee and her unborn child, a second girl to be named Sloane. They decided it was safest for Aimee to carry her baby to term, have a C-section, and then return for surgery. “Things started to calm down, and a plan developed,” says Aimee’s husband Mark. “We learned it had probably been there forever and just growing slowly, and it was benign, so it would be okay to wait a little longer.”

On Dec. 22, 2015, Aimee delivered baby Sloane at U-M. Two weeks later, Aimee returned for 20 hours of surgeries over two days to remove the tumor, and then walked to her wheelchair when it was over. “What struck Dr. Orringer with her recovery, celebrating the ease with which she can do the simple things again, like walking down a hallway. She’s only struggling with some weakness in one hand. “Her resilience was a major factor in her outstanding progress,” Dr. Orringer says. “Her recovery was amazingly fast and she has the potential to return to full function – even running marathons again.”

Mark’s goal is to keep taking great care of Aimee and the children so mom can face up those running shoes as soon as possible. Aimee says, first, though, she’s most eager to hold Sloane and Vivienne and take care of them without help, which she’s lucky to have a lot of right now. “It’s crazy how many people reach out to offer help and assistance. Our family and friends are awesome”, Aimee says. Looking back, the mom of two is glad she advocated for herself when she knew something was wrong, so she could start on the path to being well.

Looking for pain relief

A CT myelogram, which uses dye, revealed that he had very serious spinal stenosis—a condition caused by a narrowing of the space surrounding the spinal cord or nerves. Jones’s primary care physician referred him to a local surgeon who wasn’t available to do the surgery. Instead, that surgeon referred Jones to U-M Department of Neurosurgery’s Dr. Frank La Marca. “I’m so glad he did,” Jones said. “I had been treated by four different specialists without any relief. When Dr. La Marca saw the original myelogram he said, ‘I think there are more problems in the upper back, and I think you need to have another myelogram.’”

Spine surgery was needed to avoid paralysis

Dr. La Marca says, “Mr. Jones was found to have two large anterior masses compressing his spinal cord at two different levels. Although pain was his major complaint, his degree of spinal cord compression and neurologic deficit put him at an impending risk for irreversible paralysis. The repeat CT myelogram at U-M allowed us to better assess the extent of his lesion and plan the urgent surgery appropriately.” Jones says, “He took one look at the X-rays, and said, ‘We’ll operate tomorrow.’” Dr. La Marca realized that the spinal stenosis allowed the discs to rub on my spinal cord. He got in and cleared all that stuff up. After surgery, he told my wife, ‘I’ve gotten rid of his problem.’”

The results

Today, Jones has four vertebrae that are fused together. And he has mobility. “I can do a lot more than I ever thought I would. I walk anywhere. I go up and down stairs. I drive. I do most of the things I used to do, like traveling with my wife of 57 years, visiting with my children and seeing my grandchildren. “What I love about Dr. La Marca is that he loves challenges, and I gave him one. I have a lot of respect for him and everyone at U of M.”

Jones’s rehabilitation entailed about three weeks of physical therapy on site. He also credits U-M with having the Med Inn, an onsite hotel, which enabled his wife and family to be close to him while he was in surgery and during the holidays. After four months of transporting her husband in a wheelchair while he was in pain, Jones’s wife says that Dr. La Marca and the University of Michigan “saved our life!” In December 2015, Samuel Jones and his wife Betty celebrated the one-year anniversary of his surgery and his 80th birthday — pain free.

For more patient stories, please visit michiganhealthblog.org.
Clinical Research Updates

Clinical research activities continue to flourish within the Department of Neurosurgery. With 85 approved IRB projects, the clinical research team plays an integral role in the success of the many research studies and trials being led by our faculty. Karen Fried, who was recently promoted to Administrative Manager of the Clinical Research Unit, Molly Dahlgren joined the research team in August 2016 as a Grants and Contracts Specialist. Molly assists faculty and residents with securing vital research funding. Ron Ball and Heidi Zayan are invaluable assets to the team as well, bringing experience and knowledge to our research endeavors. An often unrecognized but important element of research is service on the study sections that help determine grant funding for NIH and various foundations.

- For NIH, Dr. Xi recently rotated off the Acute Neural Injury and Epilepsy (ANIE) study section.
- Dr. Oren Sagher is a member of the Neurological Sciences and Disorders (NSD)-K study section.
- Dr. Xing Fan has been an ad hoc reviewer for the Tumor Microenvironment (TME) and Cancer Molecular Pathobiology (CAMP) study sections.
- Dr. Richard Keck is a member of the Brain Injury and Neurovascular Pathologies (BINP) study section. He also co-chairs the Brain 1 study section for the American Heart Association.

Clinical and Translational Research: Neuro-Oncology Focus

A new organizational structure implemented to achieve this goal includes the establishment of a central Clinical Trials Support Office (CTSO) and seven trans-departmental Clinical Trials Support Units (CTSU). The CTSU will be open to any faculty within the Neuroscience and Sensory CTSU, with primary focus on neurosurgical and spine surgery. Now in our second year of participation, we are collaborative – and the Quality Outcomes Database (QOD) – a national improvement programs, including the Michigan Spine Surgery Improvement Collaborative (MSSIC) – a statewide spine surgery improvement program with an increasing emphasis on risk-calculation and long-term outcomes.

MSSIC and QOD Update

The Department of Neurosurgery demonstrates its commitment to providing high quality care through participation in various quality improvement programs, including the Michigan Spine Surgery Improvement Collaborative (MSSIC) – a statewide spine surgery collaborative, and the Quality Outcomes Database (QOD) – a national quality outcomes database. August 2016 marked one year of participation in MSSIC, which aims to improve outcomes for patients who undergo spine surgery. Now in our second year of participation, we are approaching the point at which various quality improvement projects, based on registry data, will begin. In May 2016, the Department hit its two-year mark in the Lumbar Module within QOD, we have, more recently, begun participating in the Deformity and Cervical modules as well. QOD serves as a national registry for neurological procedures and practice patterns, with a focus on improving the quality, efficiency, and value of care with an increasing emphasis on risk-adjustment and long-term outcomes.

Dr. Pedro Lowenstein also served as a member of several NIH Center for Scientific Review Study Sections, including Gene and Drug Delivery (GDD) Study Section; NINDS Research Program Award (R35) Study Section; Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE) in Human Cancers Study Section; NCI, and Cancer Diagnostics and Therapeutics (CDT) BRBI/NIH Panel.

The Castro-Lowenstein team is investigating the mechanisms that mediate brain tumor progression and developing novel therapies for pediatric and adult gliomas (GBMs). The team has developed genetically engineered GBM mouse models, using the Sleeping Beauty (SB) system, which enables the investigation of the role played by specific genetic lesions on tumor development and response to therapies. The model is generated in a mouse with a normal immune system, allowing the testing of immunotherapies. The team also developed a genetic therapy that increases antigen presenting cells in the tumor microenvironment (TME), which has been FDA approved for a phase 1 clinical trial in adult patients. The potential of immunotherapy will be assessed in the pediatric GBM model, including diffuse intrinsic pontine gliomas (DIPG), before translation into the clinic.

The team is studying GBM induced immune suppression, mediated by accumulation of immature myeloid cells, immunosuppressive macrophages, Tregs and immunosuppressive chemokines and cytokines, which hampers the efficacy of immunotherapies. The team is also examining the effect of GBM produced chemokines on the permeability of the blood brain barrier (BBB), in collaboration with Dr. Andjelkovic, Pathology. This work opens the possibility of precision immunotherapies for adult and pediatric GBMs.

The team is also studying GBMs structures compatible with self-organization, named “oncostreams,” which mediate tumor invasion. The team hypothesizes that by disrupting oncostreams, novel treatments will be uncovered. Bioinformatics network analysis based on next generation sequencing revealed that a Src tyrosine kinase family member is one of the most connected nodes, suggesting that this is a critical signaling pathway regulating oncostream formation and GBM malignancy. This could represent a novel glioma biomarker for diagnostic and therapeutic development.

The Castro-Lowenstein Lab promotes collaborative research by sharing its plasmids and other resources, which led to its selection as the recipient of the Addgene Blue Flame Award. Addgene, a nonprofit organization dedicated to making it easier for researchers to share plasmids, reports that the Castro-Lowenstein plasmids have been shared many times with researchers worldwide facilitating scientific progress and biomedical discoveries. New federally funded NIH grants awarded include: R37-N0994804 Immune Suppressive Myeloid Cells in the Tumor Microenvironment: Implications for Therapeutics. R01-EB022563 Tuning Biomaterials-Immune-Cell Interactions for the Treatment of GBM (collaboration with Dr. James Moon, School of Pharmacy), and R01-NS09756 Immunonuromodology of Malignant Brain Tumors.

Dr. Castro participated in the grants review process as a member of several NIH Center for Scientific Review Study Sections, including National Cancer Institute (NCI) Specialized Programs of Cancer Research Excellence and National Cancer Institute (NCI) Provocative Questions Initiative (PQI and PQ). Recently, Dr. Castro also became a permanent member of the NIH Clinical Neuroimmunology and Brain Tumors Study Section (CNBRT).

The Castro-Lowenstein team is investigating the mechanisms that mediate brain tumor progression and developing novel therapies for pediatric and adult gliomas (GBMs). The team has developed genetically engineered GBM mouse models, using the Sleeping Beauty (SB) system, which enables the investigation of the role played by specific genetic lesions on tumor development and response to therapies. The model is generated in a mouse with a normal immune system, allowing the testing of immunotherapies. The team also developed a genetic therapy that increases antigen presenting cells in the tumor microenvironment (TME), which has been FDA approved for a phase 1 clinical trial in adult patients. The potential of immunotherapy will be assessed in the pediatric GBM model, including diffuse intrinsic pontine gliomas (DIPG), before translation into the clinic.

The team is studying GBM induced immune suppression, mediated by accumulation of immature myeloid cells, immunosuppressive macrophages, Tregs and immunosuppressive chemokines and cytokines, which hampers the efficacy of immunotherapies. The team is also examining the effect of GBM produced chemokines on the permeability of the blood brain barrier (BBB), in collaboration with Dr. Andjelkovic, Pathology. This work opens the possibility of precision immunotherapies for adult and pediatric GBMs.

The team is also studying GBMs structures compatible with self-organization, named “oncostreams,” which mediate tumor invasion. The team hypothesizes that by disrupting oncostreams, novel treatments will be uncovered. Bioinformatics network analysis based on next generation sequencing revealed that a Src tyrosine kinase family member is one of the most connected nodes, suggesting that this is a critical signaling pathway regulating oncostream formation and GBM malignancy. This could represent a novel glioma biomarker for diagnostic and therapeutic development.

The Castro/Lowenstein Basic and Translational Neuro-Oncology Research Laboratories

Dr. Pedro Lowenstein also served as a member of several NIH Center for Scientific Review Study Sections, including Gene and Drug Delivery (GDD) Study Section; NINDS Research Program Award (R35) Study Section; Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE) in Human Cancers Study Section; NCI, and Cancer Diagnostics and Therapeutics (CDT) BRBI/NIH Panel.
Groundbreaking Brain Tumor Research Made Possible by the Victor’s Whole Brain Donation Bank

U-M strives to be the Leader and Best in research and medicine; the Department of Neurosurgery has been recognized multiple times for its high-quality care and outcomes. The Department of Neurosurgery has helped raise the bar on patient care and safety. The neurosurgical team has worked tirelessly to improve outcomes and ensure that patients receive the best care possible.

In 2015, the 4A Neurosurgery/Neurology/Stroke Unit received the "365 Days of Safety" Award for going more than 365 days without a central-line blood stream infection (CLABSI). The neurosurgical team has been recognized multiple times for its high-quality care and outcomes.

Patient safety is paramount at UMHS to ensure that patients receive the highest quality care and obtain the best possible outcomes. The Department of Neurosurgery has been recognized multiple times for its commitment to patient safety.

In 2015, the 4A Neurosurgery/Neurology/Stroke Unit received the "365 Days of Safety Award" for going more than 365 days without a central-line blood stream infection (CLABSI). The 365 Days of Safety Award recognizes the tremendous efforts made by our teams in decreasing or eliminating hospital acquired infections, said Dr. Jeff Desmond, U-M Chief Medical Officer. It also provides an opportunity for teams to share improvement practices and opportunities.

Safeguards have been put in place to prevent common conditions among patients such as pressure ulcers and CLABSI, the Department of Neurosurgery has helped raise the bar on patient care and safety.

Safety & Quality Updates

Neuro ICU Receives “365 Days of Safety” Award

The University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) has announced that the Neuro ICU has received the “365 Days of Safety” Award.

The award is given to facilities that go more than 365 days without a central-line blood stream infection (CLABSI). The neurosurgical team has been recognized multiple times for its high-quality care and outcomes.

The U-M Brain Tumor Program would like to honor those patients who have so bravely and selflessly donated to the Victor's Brain Donation Bank and thank them and their families for helping to ensure that we find a cure for the most devastating brain diagnoses.

For more information on the Victor's Brain Donation Bank, please email Kait McMurray at um-brainstemprogram@med.umich.edu.
Establishing a statewide network of affiliates that support UMHS’s clinical, research, and educational priorities promotes long-term alignment for its clinical enterprise. In today’s healthcare environment where new insurance payment models are requiring high-quality care for large populations of people at an appropriate cost, health system affiliations are essential for success. Moreover, academic medical centers are faced with the challenge of maintaining a sufficient patient base that supports all three missions. UMHS continues to create clinical and business relationships that focus on the strategic missions embedded in the clinical enterprise: education, research, and patient care.

In 2013, UMHS and MidMichigan Health entered into an affiliation agreement with the aim of expanding access to quality, and the level of care provided to patients who live in the regional counties served by MidMichigan Health. “Partnering for better care, partnering for Michigan” is the focus of the affiliation, which means better care for patients at MidMichigan Health’s locations and better access to specialty care at UMHS locations. Under this new affiliation, the two health systems have a wide range of options for designing new models of care to better serve patients. MidMichigan Health is a non-profit health system, headquartered in Midland, Michigan, and was recently named one of the nation’s 15 Top Health Systems by Truven Health Analytics. MidMichigan Health covers a 22-county region with medical centers in Midland, Alma, Clare, Gladwin, and Alpena. The agreement gave UMHS a small minority equity interest in MidMichigan Health and two seats on the MidMichigan Health board of directors.

In September 2016, Metro Health Corporation’s board of directors and the regents of the University of Michigan each approved a definitive affiliation agreement setting the stage for Metro Health to join UMHS. This deal was finalized in December. Metro Health and UMHS will create a clinical care network that builds upon the strengths of the world-class U-M academic medical center and a very successful community-based health system. Together the two organizations will focus on bringing increased health care innovation to west Michigan and beyond.

One guiding principle of the U-M clinical enterprise is to “enable local care locally.” UMHS remains committed to this principle as it plans for future years. Local care efforts include:

- The U-M Northville Health Center was opened in July of 2014. This state-of-the-art health center brought routine and complex specialty services to the community.
- The new West Ann Arbor Health Center – Parkland Plaza. This new 75,000 square-foot facility will increase ambulatory care capacity and improve access to serve the health care needs of Ann Arbor and surrounding communities.
- UMHS has also joined Together Health Network as a referral provider for complex quaternary healthcare services. Quaternary services are those complex inpatient and outpatient services that generally are provided only in select settings such as UMHS. Together Health is a statewide physician-led clinical network of healthcare providers, formed in 2014 by a partnership between the Michigan ministries of Ascension and Trinity Health and thousands of physicians partners. The agreement allows for UMHS to provide services that are not generally available in the communities served by Ascension and Trinity Health. This partnership with UMHS helps Together Health round out its clinical integration strategy to provide patients comprehensive care across the continuum. It also paves the way for broader clinical collaboration efforts between UMHS and Together Health.

UMHS plans to build a new 320,000-square-foot health center to provide expanded primary and specialty care in the Brighton area as well. Similarly, around the end of 2017 the doors will be opening to the new West Ann Arbor Health Center – Parkland Plaza. This new 75,000 square-foot facility will increase ambulatory care capacity and improve access to serve the health care needs of Ann Arbor and surrounding communities.

Leaders Gather to Launch New UMHS Diversity Initiative

More than 400 leaders across the health system came together in April, 2016 to officially kick off a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategic planning process for the health system. The theme of the April DEI summit was “Invisible Diversity: Do What You Can’t.See What You Can’t Hear. Use What You Can’t Use.” Dr. Mark Schlissel delivered kick-off remarks promising a “bottom up” approach that involves input from team members at all levels and across all departments. "We're empowering everyone to get involved and help shape this process," said President Schlissel. “If we succeed, it’s not just UMHS that benefits, it’s all academic medical centers nationally. We're creating a model diversity, equity and inclusivity initiative in healthcare across the U.S.”

EVPM and Medical School Dean Marshall Rungel set expectations and charged the leaders in attendance to get their own teams involved in developing DEI initiatives tailored to their specific departments and areas of operation. "We're strongest when we work together. When we better understand our patients, we can provide far better healthcare and a much more productive work environment for faculty and staff and our trainees," Dr. Rungel said. UMHS faces an increasing array of opportunities and challenges as the landscape of academic healthcare continues to change. In order to realize its vision of performance excellence in all three areas of the mission, a talented and diverse workforce is needed. Six vital strategies were outlined to help leaders integrate diversity, equity and inclusion into operations, ultimately supporting the institution’s goal to create an inclusive environment where everyone, including students, patients, faculty and staff, feels valued.

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-U-M Named a Top Performing Hospital by U.S. News & World Report

The University of Michigan’s hospitals and health centers are among the top 20 hospitals in the nation, according to the 2016-2017 U.S. News & World Report rankings. Today’s “Best Hospitals” list names U-M to the Honor Roll, ranking it No. 18 in the U.S. and first in Michigan. The Honor Roll includes 20 hospitals nationwide. “It is an honor to be recognized as one of the leading hospitals in the nation,” said Marshall S. Runge, M.D., Ph.D., executive vice president for medical affairs and CEO of UMHS.

-U-M is recognized in 15 of the 16 adult specialty areas rated, and ranked in the top 50 nationwide in 12 areas. Only 3 percent, or 153 hospitals out of approximately 5,000, earned even one ranked spot. Nine specialty areas, including Cancer, Cardiology & Heart Surgery, and Neurology and Neurosurgery, improved in rank from last year. Ear, Nose & Throat placed highest at No. 8, with ophthalmology also earning a Top 10 honor at No. 9. Additionally, C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital received national rankings in the U.S. News & World Report list of “Best Children’s Hospitals.” C.S. Mott was ranked in more pediatric specialty areas than any other Michigan children’s hospital.
FOCUS ON PHILANTHROPY & OUTREACH

Department of Neurosurgery Co-hosts Neurofibromatosis Conference with NF Michigan

The U-M Department of Neurosurgery co-hosted a conference with the Neurofibromatosis Foundation of Michigan entitled “What’s New in Research and Treatment for Neurofibromatosis?” on April 23, 2016 at the Biomedical Science Research Building. Neurofibromatosis, also known as NF, is a genetic disorder of the nervous system that causes tumors to form on nerves anywhere in the body at any time. It is a progressive disorder that affects all races, all ethnic groups, and both sexes. Equally, NF is the single most common genetic disorder of the nervous system, occurring in one in every 2,500 to 3,000 births. Despite its frequency, few people are familiar with NF.

The conference was geared toward NF patients, advocates, and patients’ family members. U-M faculty from several departments, including Dr. Greg Thompson from the Department of Neurosurgery gave educational lectures at this event. Approximately 75 people attended the conference, with the majority coming from the Detroit and Grand Rapids area. However, some guests traveled from as far as Gaylord, MI, St. Louis, MO, and Buffalo, NY.

The conference was well-received by those in attendance. Said one anonymous conference attendee: “The quality of presentations was superb. I didn’t expect such scientific depth and left the conference with a long list of topics for further reading.” The Department of Neurosurgery was proud to co-host this event and play a small role in the great work that NF Michigan does for the NF community throughout the state.

Leah’s Happy Hearts

Leah’s Happy Hearts... Making little hearts happy!

Leah’s Happy Hearts was founded by Karen & Phil James after their daughter, Leah, passed away at five years old from Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG), a rare pediatric brain cancer. For the last ten years, Karen, Phil, and their daughter, Kylee, along with their dedicated board members have been wonderful friends and supporters of the Department of Neurosurgery to fund pediatric causes in memory of Leah. To date, they’ve donated over $100,000 to U-M through their fundraising efforts. Following are some of the neat projects that Leah’s Happy Hearts supports:

WINGS OF COURAGE: In May, 2015, the Department of Neurosurgery published a children’s book called “Wings of Courage.” It is a story aimed to inspire and aid children being seen at C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital to find courage in themselves when they’re battling a scary disease or diagnosis. The main character’s name is Leah and this story demonstrates the strength Leah showed when she was battling her brain tumor.

FUNDING RESEARCH FOR PEDIATRIC BRAIN CANCER: For the past several years, Leah’s Happy Hearts has been funding research in the Castro/Lowenstein Lab aimed at finding treatment options for young patients diagnosed with DIPG. Through their support, Drs. Maria Castro and Pedro Lowenstein have created a model which will help them to better understand the disease; their funding also provides scientists with the opportunity to test novel therapies.

Making little hearts happy during the holidays:

Leah’s Happy Hearts holds a holiday event the Sunday before Christmas each year; they set up gift stations on various floors at Mott so that patients can “shop” for their loved ones. Their goal is to make being in the hospital during the holidays just a little more enjoyable.

Pay it Forward for Neurosciences

When Natalie Tallon and John Dohr married in April of 2010, John was a healthy man who was full of life and was ready to enjoy many happy and exciting new experiences with his wife, Natalie. This all came to a screeching halt in July of 2013 when John suffered a seizure that landed him in the emergency room in the Toledo, OH area. It was then that Natalie and John learned that John had a brain tumor. They decided to come to U-M for his care, and they have been extremely grateful about their decision. They say that every physician, nurse, and caregiver has provided them with prompt, compassionate attention when they’ve had questions or concerns, and they have consistently been treated with respect and kindness.

They are forever grateful to the team at UMHCS for providing such wonderful care, and as a result Natalie has made a very generous gift to U-M through her estate to further the great work happening here. During her life, Natalie has benefited from others’ “paying it forward” and because of it, she has become a strong believer in this philosophy. Natalie hopes that this gift will provide seed-funding for physicians and researchers who aspire to find better solutions for complicated medical diagnoses such as brain tumors and epilepsy. Natalie’s gift will establish two endowed, named funds: 1) Natalie L. Tallon and John S. Dohr Brain Tumor Research Fund in Neurosurgery, and 2) Natalie L. Tallon and John S. Dohr Epilepsy Research Fund in Neurology.

Natalie and John are especially grateful to the Department of Neurosurgery’s own Dr. Oren Sagher, as well as Dr. Simon Glynn (neurology) for their humor and kindness during an especially difficult time.

To learn more about NF Michigan, please visit nfsupport.org.
MEDICINE NEEDS VICTORS — BECOME A VICTOR.

Today, at the University of Michigan Health System, we are working toward solutions that bring hope to patients with devastating neurosurgical diseases. With your support, we can advance treatments and accelerate health care toward a better future.

For more information on making a gift to the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Michigan, please contact:
Mark Veich at 734-763-1402 or mveich@umich.edu.