

# DIVISION OF NEPHROLOGY

## WELLER SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

October 2018 (Issue 3)



### Welcome from the Chief



Sub Pennathur

The University of Michigan recently celebrated its bicentennial which gave us an opportunity to reflect upon our past. The Michigan Nephrology division was **established in 1964** and has grown impressively in the past 50+ years. The division's success today has been built on a tradition of excellence which first started when **Dr. John M. Weller** became Nephrology's first division chief. Incidentally, 1964 is also the year when the first organ transplant—a living related kidney transplant between identical twins—was performed at the University of Michigan Hospital. Over the next several decades, the Division saw substantial growth and gained national prominence under the able stewardship of **Drs. Tannen, Port, Wiggins and Brosius**. Recently, we were recognized by US News and World Report as the **#8 center for nephrology in the country**, and Michigan Medicine as a whole was the **#5 medical center**.



Please come to the ASN Weller Society meeting to get your commemorative pin highlighting the founding of the Division in 1964! Looking forward to the next 50 years of exciting discoveries by our faculty, alumni and trainees which will meaningfully impact patients with kidney disease!

### Annual Weller Society Meeting



We continue the tradition of a Michigan Weller Society meeting at ASN Kidney Week. Come catch up with faculty, fellows, and friends of Michigan Nephrology In San Diego. This year's wine and cheese reception will take place at the Manchester Grand Hyatt hotel (Harbor Ballroom A) on Friday October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018, beginning at 7pm.

To the left: Guests gather at the 2017 Weller Society meeting in New Orleans.

### Fellowship Update

This past June we celebrated another graduating class of fellows – the newest members of the Weller Society! Our 2017-18 chief fellow, **Ahmad Masood**, joined Nephrology Associates of Ann Arbor where he now works with fellow Michigan nephrology alumni **Vidooshi Maru ('08)**, **George Behrend ('04)**, and **Ahmed Rehan ('84)**. **Ilka Decker** and **Doug Atchison** are continuing their budding basic science research careers as Michigan nephrology faculty members. **Assem Sherieh** is now in a practice in the Tampa area, while **Gunjan Garg** embarks on her academic career at the University of Louisville.



To the right: Proud Fellowship Program Directors Pandu Rao and Laura Mariani congratulate the fellowship graduating class of 2018 (seated from L to R): Gunjan, Ilka, Assem, Ahmad and Doug.

And of course, we continued the fellowship cycle in July by welcoming a brand new group of fellows with our annual picnic by the Huron River. Here we continued a fine Michigan nephrology tradition: fresh burgers grilled by the fellowship program director Pandu Rao. Never mind that he is vegetarian!



While some things may stay (gloriously!) the same, one new thing this year was the welcoming of our **first interventional nephrology fellow, Shaker Qaqish**. Under the watchful guidance of **Alex Yevzlin** and **Matt McGuire ('16)**, Shaker is quickly learning how to perform a variety of vascular access procedures. We are thrilled to provide this additional training opportunity for nephrology fellows, and will soon begin recruiting for our 2019-2020 interventional fellow.



## Division Happenings



At the end of 2017, longtime transplant nephrology faculty member **Alan Leichtman** retired and transitioned to Emeritus Professor. Alan was the Medical Director of our Kidney and Pancreas Transplantation Program for over 25 years, and holds numerous other national leadership positions in the transplant field. He remains active as a senior research scientist at Arbor Research Collaborative. In addition, each year since 2010 we have hosted the Alan Leichtman Lectureship in Transplantation. In 2017 we were pleased to welcome back **Rulan Parekh ('99)** from the University of Toronto. This past September, **Daniel Brennan** visited from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and gave a wonderful medicine grand rounds on "Management of Immunosuppression with Infection and/or Malignancy in Renal Transplantation".



Top: Alan and Dan after the Leichtman Lecture.

Right: Our fellows enjoy professor rounds with Dan Brennan.

## Research Accomplishments

With over \$16 million in annual funding, we continue to move nephrology forward through innovative research programs, including the USRDS, Kidney Precision Medicine Program, CRIC, CDC CKD Surveillance Program, NEPTUNE, CureGN, and APOLLO. And we are continuing to grow! Some recent successful grant applications include the following:

- Under the leadership of **Subramaniam Pennathur**, the George M. O'Brien Kidney Translational Core Center (<https://kidneycenter.med.umich.edu/>) was recently renewed for another 5 years – one of only 8 O'Brien kidney centers in the U.S. and continuously funded at Michigan since 1987!
- Our funding for the Chronic Renal Insufficiency Cohort (CRIC) study was also renewed this summer, and we are thrilled to continue participation in this landmark observational study. Originally helmed by alumnus and former faculty member **Akinlolu Ojo ('95)**, this project is now led locally by **Pandu Rao**.

- **Joe Messina ('87)** continues to lead a highly productive group at UM-KECC. His team just received notice that they successfully renewed their project Kidney Disease Quality Measure Development, Maintenance, and Support – a \$20.4 million contract over the next 5 years!
- This past year **Julie Wright** received her first RO1 grant, a recognition of her important work in educating patients with CKD and ESRD health coaching. She is also doing tremendous outreach work to educate middle and high school students on healthy habits to reduce the risk of kidney disease.
- Two faculty members were just awarded grants from the VA Center for Innovations to study kidney disease in the U.S. Veteran population. **Michael Heung ('05)** will work to reduce the risk of CKD by targeting prevention of AKI, while **Rajiv Saran** will apply novel geospatial analytical approaches to VA data to identify patients at highest risk for CKD and CKD progression.
- **Laura Mariani** was awarded a KO8 grant which seeks to improve clinical care of patients with Nephrotic Syndrome by enhanced understanding of the underlying biology, identifying novel biomarkers and potential therapeutic targets.

## Clinical Updates: Growing!

In September 2018 the brand new UM **Brighton Center for Specialty Care** opened. Our division continues to expand our footprint beyond Ann Arbor, and we currently have 5 faculty members providing outpatient care at this beautiful new facility. Also in September, a few UM nephrology faculty members joined developers, investors and Chamber of Commerce members in a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new **UM Canton Dialysis Center** that is under construction. This will be our third free-standing dialysis facility, and we expect to be ready for patients starting in spring 2019. Both in-center and home dialysis services will be provided from this venue in the heart of Canton.

To the right: After years of planning, (from L to R) Sub Pennathur, Jon Segal, Leo Yessayan and Michael Heung can see the end in sight!



## Michigan Presence at ASN

In addition to the annual Weller Society get-together, here are some of the many chances to catch up with Michigan friends and colleagues at ASN in San Diego:

- **Michael Heung ('05)** is in his second year serving as Co-Director of the Critical Care Nephrology precourse on 10/23 and 10/24. He will also be giving 2 talks: "Promoting Kidney Function Recovery After AKI" (Wed 10/24, 11:30a-12p), and "AKI and Subsequent Risk of CKD" (Sat 10/27, 4:30-5p).
- **Laura Mariani** will present "A kidney atlas to guide patients, providers, and scientists" (Fri 10/26, 3:30-4p) and "Machine learning-based data integration for molecular disease stratification in glomerular disease" (Thu 10/25, 5:30-6p).
- **Andrea Oliverio ('17)** will be presenting 2 posters on her important work on pregnancy in women with ESRD (TH-PO366 and TH-PO367).
- **Anna Mathew** will be presenting a poster "Macrophage myeloperoxidase deficiency attenuates CKD accelerated atherosclerosis" (FR-PO334).

- **Jennifer Harder ('10)** will moderate "Emerging Technologies and Molecular Blueprint of Kidney Cells and Segments in Health and Disease" (Fri 10/26, 2-4p).
- **David Humes** will present poster "Immunomodulation therapy improves cardiac function in CHF" (THPO755)
- **Julie Wright** has 3 posters: "Quantitative analysis: Patient experiences and preferences about being informed of a CKD diagnosis" (FR-PO187); "Improving Health Behavior and Supporting Kidney Health Literacy in Kids to Prevent Kidney Disease" (SA-PO200); and "Targeted primary prevention pilot for high school students living in high-risk areas for ESRD" (SA-PO199)
- **Nidhi Sukul ('16)** will present her USRDS-related research ""International Trends in Mortality Soon after Switch from Peritoneal Dialysis to In-center Hemodialysis: Results from the INTEGRATED Study Group" on Fri 10/26 at 5:42pm (FR-OR007)
- **Farsad Afshinnia ('12)** will present a poster "Plasma lipidomic analysis reveals differential mitochondrial fatty acid metabolism in diabetic and non-diabetic CKD associated heart failure" (SAPO998)
- **Markus Bitzer's** research will be presented as a poster "Identification of disease-relevant microRNA target gene interactions" (TH-PO780). He will also moderate "Glomerular diseases: spotlighting immunology and inflammation (Sat 10/27, 4:30-6:30p).
- **Margaret Hicken** will discuss her work as an oral presentation entitled "APOL1, Racial Residential Segregation, and CKD Inequalities as Interacting Factors of CKD Risk" (Sat 10/27, 5:30-6p)
- **Wenjun Ju** will give an oral presentation entitled "Transcriptome-Based Identification of Dynamic Biomarkers of DKD" (Thu 10/25, 2:30-3p) and she will moderate a session entitled "Tissue Remodeling by tubular epithelia" (Thu 10/25, 4:30-6:30p)
- **Bruce Robinson** will be give a presentation entitled ""Steady as She Goes...": Limiting Complications and Improving Survival in the Early Dialysis Period" (Sat 10/27, 3-3:30p)
- **Sub Pennathur** will speak about "Lipid Metabolism and the Pathogenesis of DKD" (Fri 10/26 2-2:30p)
- **Susan Steigerwalt** will be moderating "Resistant Hypertension: Taming the Beast" (Sun 10/28, 10a-12p).
- **Jeffrey Hodgin** will moderate a session entitled "Finding Hidden Treasures: Computational Analysis in Digital Pathology" (Thu 10/25; 2-4p) and give several talks and laboratory sessions in the Early Program "Fundamentals of Renal Pathology" (Tue 10/23)
- **Matt Sampson** will present "Learning from Rare Genetic Diseases: New Molecules Relevant for Podocyte Homeostasis" (Sat 10/27, 6-6:30p)
- **Rajiv Saran** will give a presentation entitled "US Surveillance Efforts for Kidney Disease" (Fri 10/26, 10:30-11a)

## Brosius Professorship

We are continuing to solicit donations to help establish the **Frank C. Brosius M.D. Collegiate Professorship in Nephrology**. After many years as the Fellowship Program Director, Chip went on to serve as Division Chief from 2004 until 2016, all while maintaining a highly successful research career. We hope to permanently honor his many achievements and contributions to the University through this professorship.

If you haven't already, please consider making a contribution.

<https://leadersandbest.umich.edu/fnd/#!/give/basket/fund/799814>



## Keep In Touch!

Please be on the lookout for future Weller Society updates! And you can also get more real-time updates by following the division's Twitter account: [@umickidney](https://twitter.com/umickidney).

In future issues, we would like to continue spotlighting some of the current activities of our alumni and friends. If you wish to share any information, or have suggestions for other future content, please contact Michael Heung (mheung@med.umich.edu; @keepingitrenal on Twitter).

The Weller Society brings together alumni, faculty and friends of the University of Michigan Division of Nephrology. The Society is named after Dr. John Weller, who served as the first Chief of Nephrology at University of Michigan from 1964-1977.



**#8 for Nephrology**



**#5 Medical Center**