



SCHOOL OF
MEDICINE

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

Newsletter

Term: Winter | Issue 5 | December 15, 2021

[CHAIR UPDATE](#)

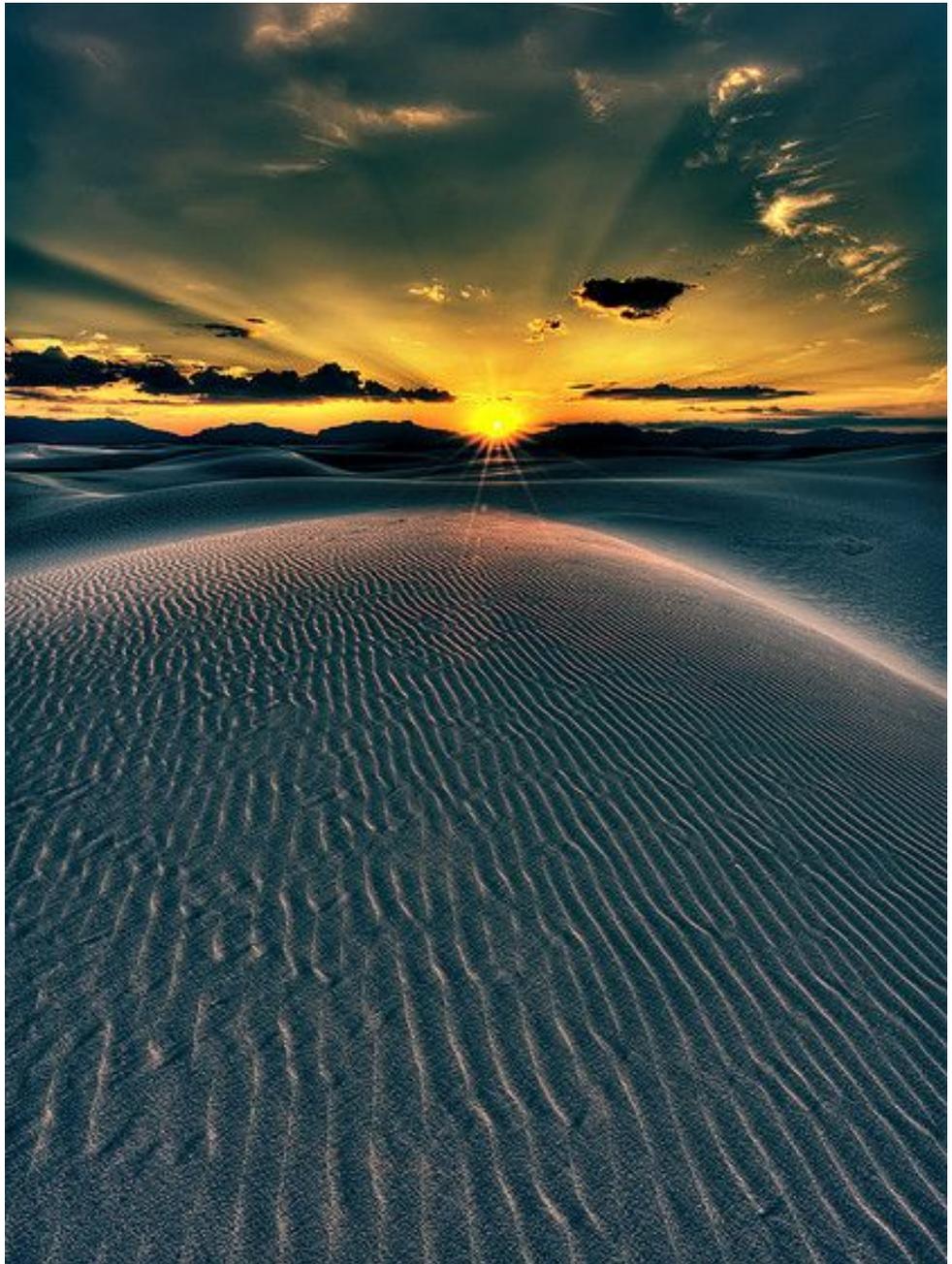
[DEPARTMENT UPDATES](#)

[EDUCATION](#)

[RECOGNITION](#)

[GIVING BACK](#)

[CONTACT US](#)





MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Hello and welcome to the UNM School of Medicine Department of Surgery Winter 2021 Newsletter.

This past 2 years have brought great challenges to all of us personally and professionally. We have seen multiple waves of the COVID-19 global pandemic impact our patients, friends, family and ourselves as health care providers.

It has been now 22 months since the first reported case of COVID-19 in the United States and 20 months since the first case in New Mexico. There have been 47 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States with over 750,000 deaths in the US and 5 million deaths worldwide.

After early success with vaccinations and restrictions, New Mexico saw very low new cases with decreased hospitalizations and deaths during April through early July of 2021. Unfortunately, we have again seen rising new COVID-19 cases in New Mexico and nationally. Vaccination boosters, and vaccinations now approved for the 5-11 age group, will hopefully impact this rising case count. Although the etiology of this rise is not completely clear, it likely is a combination of reopening businesses and schools, decreased immunity from vaccines and fatigue from adherence to guidelines.

Unfortunately, our state's and nation's hospital systems have again reached or exceeded capacity, often scrambling to find beds and staffing to care for critically ill COVID and non-COVID patients. UNM Hospital (UNMH) is operating at record patient census levels (140-150% of our normal census) with over 600 inpatients (only 8-10% COVID patients) which is a level that is not sustainable for prolonged periods. This has now resulted in UNM Health and Presbyterian Health Systems publicly announcing the implementation of Crisis Standards of Care. This declaration will not provide additional resources but will communicate with New Mexicans the unsustainable capacity and strain our health care system is under. With the continued pandemic, provider and hospital staff well-being and peer support remain more important than ever to helping each other through this difficult period.

Particular to the Department of Surgery, surgical case volumes rapidly rebounded as the main OR, OSIS, BBRP and SRMC completely reopened their operating rooms this past March. Case volumes for the surgery department increased from a low of less than 600 combined cases at UNMH and SRMC in December 2020, to today's average of approximately 900-1000 cases per month. Unfortunately, with our increased capacity challenges, we are again discussing delaying surgeries that can safely wait 90 days.

Good news is that the New Hospital Tower continues to be on budget and on time with first patients admitted to the new tower in October, 2024. This will add 18 new operating rooms, 96 ICU beds, new imaging systems and a new adult emergency room. The current 16 main hospital operating rooms will then be completely remodeled to 12 modern full-size operating rooms. Recognizing the shortage of hospital beds in NM, discussions surrounding the feasibility of adding additional inpatient beds are also ongoing.

The department of surgery continues to grow with 14 new faculty members, recruited across many of our department divisions. New faculty now starting their practice include **Dr. Alissa Greenbaum** who is returning to UNM in surgical oncology. **Dr. Jay Zhu**, **Dr. Lauren McClain** and **Dr. Lara McKean** are joining general and GI surgery, **Dr. Jen Nishimura** is joining cardiothoracic surgery, and **Dr. Brandon Behrens** is joining acute care surgery.

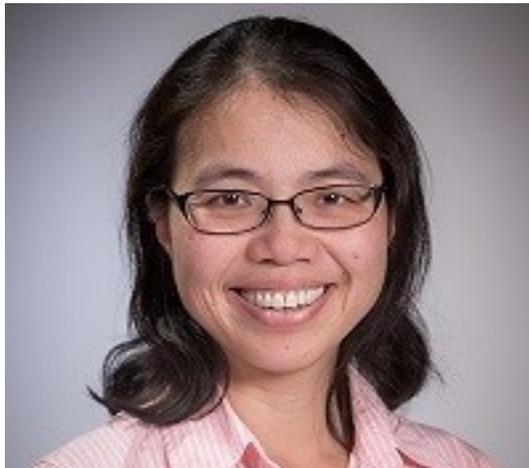
Recruitment continues, with excellent candidates in pediatric ENT, transplant, neurotology, urology, plastic surgery and acute care surgery. Our training programs in surgery, otolaryngology, urology and plastics, as well as our fellowships in complex general surgical oncology, surgical critical care and acute care surgery are all fully accredited with several programs looking to expand resident compliment.

Building on last years very successful research symposium, the 8th Annual Surgical and Ophthalmology Research Symposium will be held in person on June 24th, 2022. Our keynote speaker for the Donald E. Fry lectureship is **Dr. Melina Kibbe**. Dr Kibbe is a pioneering surgeon and physician leader who recently was appointed as dean of the University of Virginia School of Medicine.

I hope that you all enjoy this quarterly newsletter and the articles highlighting department activities, our training programs and research and education missions. Please continue to take care of yourself and your loved ones.

Sincerely,

John Marek, MD
Interim Chair, Department of Surgery
The University of New Mexico School of Medicine



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Vice Chair of
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Ming-Li Wang, MD

Thanks to work of **Dr. Lindsay Smart**, Associate Vice Chancellor for Leadership and Faculty Equity and Inclusion, we now have surgery faculty and resident demographics data from 2016-2019 (and soon, 2020). Shared at the November division chiefs' meeting, the data identified a diversity gap in the surgery department, not only in numbers of women and ethnic minorities, but also in the proportion of minorities with higher academic rank.

For example, over the past four years, our faculty is made up of 70% men and 30% women, and mostly, white at 65%. 2019 New Mexico demographics show that as a state, the population is about 35% white, 50% Hispanic, 10% American Indian and less than 5% Asian, Black or two or more races.

Our ACGME residents are closer in reflecting the demographics of New Mexico with less than 50% white, 25% Asian, 10% Hispanic and 1% American Indian. In addition, whites were found to be proportionally greater in higher rank. For example, 89% of the faculty at the rank of professor are white.

As we consider this faculty and resident data, we can identify opportunities for growth in our DEI training. We are partnering with groups that have been working on themes of diversity, equity and inclusive excellence.

Moving forward, we have DEI and educational training workshops planned for faculty to mentor diverse junior faculty and trainees within the Department. Hopefully, we can start building habits in our organization that hold us accountable to change and implement best practices in DEI in which we can all engage.



PHYSICIAN ADVISORY GROUP

PAG Rep

Richard Miskimins, MD

October had significant focus on surgical services and OR operations and efficiencies. The SSOC presented on several metrics. Important highlights are increased staffing which has resulted in a decrease in rollover and bumped cases. Those that are bumped and rolled are now tracked with specific reasons to help prevent this in the future. There is also an effort to become more transparent with OR capital requests so surgeons know how much is spent, where it is spent and how this is allocated.

The new “orders to scheduling” process was introduced and the work surrounding improvements to assure accurate preference cards and correct supplies and equipment for each surgical case was shown. The complexity of this process with our current system does not allow for it to be successful and a new system for scheduling and preference cards will need to be introduced. This process is being led by surgeons in different divisions and departments to assure ease of use and practice. It will take time to get it right. However, for what it is worth, this is the first time I have felt hopeful that we can have a real solution to this problem.

An update on the New Tower was provided by Mike Chicarelli. There is not a whole lot of new news here but I figured I would pass it on.

The New Tower will have:

- 4 new ICUs with 24 beds in each
- 4 Cath Labs
- 6 IR suites
- 18 Operating Rooms
- 73 PACU beds
- 1401 Parking spots (500 currently)



There is a lot happening in the IT department at UNMH. Single sign-on is on track for sometime in 2022. This seemed like a simple ask, however, it required a lot of upgrades across the system to become a reality. This is HUGE. I have been dreaming of only signing in to a computer once instead of the current 5 or 6 different times since I was an intern here. Additionally, work is being done on cloud-based dictation. I had the opportunity to use this and it was pretty impressive. I dictated just as fast and in exactly the same way as I would on the phone and it made 1 mistake for the document. There is A LOT happening right now in IT to improve the provider experience and increase efficacy.

EDUCATION UPDATES



Vice Chair of Education
John C. Russell, MD

As faculty we all spend considerable time teaching our residents and medical students, and yet most of us have received little formal training in how to do this best. We see our evaluations from learners (what they like, what they don't like), and try to make adjustments for the future. We hope that with minor tweaks to our teaching methods we can become more effective in transmitting surgical knowledge, skills and values to our trainees.

Several years ago Edward Auyang and Jasmeet Paul, with the help of Gary Smith, PhD, Director of the School of Medicine's Office of Continuous Professional Learning, gave an evening seminar at the UNM Faculty Club to interested Surgery faculty on "Teaching in the OR". It was an evening of great discussion, with active participation by all in attendance. My impression was that even the most experienced faculty there took away some tips on how to be more effective intra-operative teachers. Everyone there agreed we should hold such sessions more regularly in the future, to cover topics such as giving (and receiving) feedback, effective evaluation of residents and medical students, and teaching in the clinic and on the wards. Unfortunately, once COVID struck, such plans ground to a halt.

Recently, Jasmeet Paul and Ming-Li Wang reminded me that we needed to resurrect and expand this project. Based upon discussion and feedback from other faculty as well, and with the support of our Chair, John Marek, and of Renee Pepin and her team in the Surgery Office of Education, we plan to hold several such seminars in the next year, starting in March, 2022. These will once again be evening events at the UNM Faculty Club, with a light dinner (and cash bar). Attendance will be limited to 20, and the format will be interactive.

In addition to the topics listed above, we plan to cover topics such as mentorship (how to be a good mentor, and how to be a good mentee), conflict resolution and leadership training, the advancement of diversity, equity and inclusion in Surgery, preparation for promotion, surgical scholarship and research. With 3-4 sessions each year, I would envision this faculty development series would extend over several years.

We know that the HSC already provides a number of these faculty development resources, but by bringing the resources to our faculty and targeting our sessions to the specific needs of surgeons, we hope to increase faculty buy-in.

This is a work in progress, and you can expect to hear more in upcoming months. Stay tuned!

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

iCARE AWARDS

Garth Olson, MD

Thank you for your patience and choice to teach rather than get frustrated while doing a mandible ORIF a few weeks ago. I appreciate your time and kindness.

- Amy K Moya

Nathan Boyd, MD

Nate, thank you for how you recognized the informatics team for the dynamic dyad award today at MEC. You were incredibly kind and generous and really honored their work. It meant a lot to me and to them.

- Dusadee Sarangarm

Edward Auyang, MD

Wish I could give you more icares. Thanks for being not only a great surgeon to our patients but just a kind person in general.

- Alejandra Fuentes

Edward Auyang, MD

Thank you so much for your help with a tough situation!

-Elizabeth K Fresquez

Jason Wilson, MD

Patient parent said via Press Ganey survey: Dr. Wilson always treats my son with dignity and respect.

- Carlos Baca

Sonlee West, MD

For always giving constructive feedback and excellent teaching inside and out of the OR.

-Kaysey M Llorente

Vinay Rai, MD

Patient AG wanted you to know that he had the greatest healthcare experience ever when he had surgery on 10/19. He wanted to thank you for taking the time to make sure he understood everything. He also said you made him feel like you would respect his wishes, no matter what happened. Thank you for all you do for our patients, Dr. Rai!

- Alexis Rollinger

Erica C Bennett, MD

I appreciate you for jumping in and covering the Aerodigestive clinic this month. It was a lifesaver to have you participate so that we could give our patients the best care. Thank you for taking the time to do it.

- Whitney Brennan

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE SRIA GRANT AWARDEES

Jasmeet Paul, MD

"Defining Personality of a Surgical residency using Artificial Intelligence"

awarded an SRIA grant of \$2030

Bridget Fahy, MD

"Clinical Outcomes of Total Neo adjuvant Treatment for Rectal Cancer"

awarded the SRIA grant of \$4125



Paper Published

Congratulations to **Bridget Fahy, MD**, on publication of the paper " Adherence to surveillance colonoscopy guidelines in patients following curative-intent colorectal cancer resection: in Cancer Research and Treatment Communications. A link to the paper:

[**Adherence to surveillance colonoscopy guidelines in patients following curative-intent colorectal cancer resection -ScienceDirect**](#)

Background. Current guidelines recommend that patients who have undergone curative-intent resection for colorectal cancer (CRC) should undergo colonoscopy one year following their surgery or at six months post - operatively if a pre-operative colonoscopy was not performed due to an obstructing lesion.

Prabhakaran Earns Distinction from Commission on Cancer

The UNM Comprehensive Cancer Center's **Sangeetha Prabhakaran, MD**, was recognized by the Commission of Cancer (CoC) for her outstanding performance as a Cancer Liaison Physician.

The Cancer Liaison Program Launched a new award program earlier this year to recognize outstanding performance by Cancer Liaison Physicians (CLPs) in their role as the physician quality leaders of their cancer programs.

CLPs are integral and required members of a CoC-accredited cancer program's cancer committee. According to the CoC Optimal Resources for Cancer Care (2020 Standards), the CLP is expected to fulfill the responsibilities of Standards 2.2, 7.1 and 7.3 including identifying , analyzing, and presenting National Cancer Database data, monitoring quality measure performance, and contributing to quality improvement efforts. Additionally, they serve as a liaison with the local American Cancer Society staff and facilitate their participation on the cancer committee as well as communicate with their state/regional CoC State Chair.

More than 80 nominations were submitted and after careful review of each submission by the CoC State Chair Education Advisory Group, Prabhakaran was among 10 Cancer Liaison Physicians chosen to receive this award.



DIVISION CHIEFS UPDATES

Acute Care Surgery

ACS has a new hire - Dr Brandon Behrens, our former fellow.

"Dr. Behrens is excited to be joining the faculty of the University of New Mexico and starting his career in Acute Care Surgery. Originally from the cornfields of small town Iowa, Dr. Behrens obtained his Doctor of Medicine from the University of Iowa before traveling to Portland, Oregon where he completed his surgical residency at the Oregon Health & Sciences University. During residency he was heavily involved in Trauma research pertaining to hemorrhage, trauma resuscitation, and coagulopathy. After residency, Dr. Behrens came to New Mexico and completed a Surgical Critical Care Fellowship before deciding to become a permanent member of the UNM family. When not at the hospital you can find Dr. Behrens and his partner Kirk somewhere in the great outdoors hiking, cycling, rock climbing, trail running, snowshoeing, or traveling to new areas of the world." - Sonlee West, MD

General & Gastrointestinal Surgery

We have hired **3 new faculty members** for our division: **Dr. Jay Zhu** and **Dr. Lauren McClain** for our general surgery and **Dr. Lara McKean Baste** for our colorectal surgery positions. - **Edward Auyang, MD**

Dr. McKean Basté is originally from Barcelona and earned her medical degree from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. She completed an Internship at Yale New Haven Hospital and her general surgery residency at Ochsner Medical Center in New Orleans. Following this she completed a fellowship in colon and rectal surgery at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, OR
- **Lara McKean Baste, MD**

I am excited to be joining the Department of Surgery and Division of General and GI surgery at UNM. My focus while here is to build the hernia program with complex minimally invasive and robotic techniques. Additionally, I look forward to joining the Bariatric team at SRMC to help expand and improve access to Bariatric care for New Mexicans. After medical school at the University of Mississippi I completed my surgical residency at MUSC in Charleston, SC. I then completed a Pediatric Trauma Fellowship at UT Southwestern/Dallas Children's Hospital and an Advanced GI and Minimally Invasive Surgery Fellowship at UC San Diego. After training I spent a year in private practice in Washington. As I make the transition to academics I look forward to helping the education mission of the department and improving access to clinical care.
- **Lauren McClain, MD**

My family and I are thrilled to be joining the UNM family. I'm the proud father of twin daughters who are 3.5 yrs old. We enjoy hiking, swimming, cycling, cars, dinosaurs, and Magic School Bus. I once amputated a trauma patient through the lumbar spine (hemikorpectomy), and constructed a mesh basket for his organs. He miraculously survived and became famous on TikTok.

I no longer do amputations.

- **Jay Zhu, MD**



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW MEXICO
FOUNDATION

Please Give to Honor Dr. Horn

The mission of our Surgery Department is to promote compassionate surgical care, innovative research and the training of our future leaders in surgical sciences.

The Dr. Karl Horn Lectureship Series was established to honor Dr. Horn's tremendous contributions to the field of otolaryngology.

Honoring Dr. Horn with your gift will support an annual event educating audiologists, speech pathologists, and otolaryngology residents in his name.

Invest Today in New Mexico's Healthy Future



6th Annual Karl Horn, MD Endowed Lecture Series

Dr. Karl Horn is the longest standing otologist in New Mexico, dating back to his arrival in 1985.

He has been an innovator, highly productive clinician, teacher and nationally recognized scholar.

Establishing a school for hearing impaired and deaf children implanted with cochlear implants has perhaps had the greatest impact on individual patients.

Dr. Horn successfully integrated hundreds of children into regular classrooms in New Mexico.

Dr. Horn has also taken an active role in educating audiologists, speech pathologists and otolaryngology residents from The University of New Mexico School of Medicine for over 14 years.

This experience greatly enhances our trainees' educational experience and professional development.

The 6th annual Horn Lecture, made possible by generous donors, featured Eric Dierks, DMD, MD, FACS, FRCS (Ed), a dual-boarded Oral Maxillofacial Surgery & Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.

Dr. Dierks is an affiliated Professor at Oregon Health & Science University.

The lecture series continues Dr. Horn's more than 14-year commitment to teaching and enriches the educational experience of our surgery residents at The University of New Mexico.

**Contact: Amanda Baca,
UNM Foundation**

amanda.baca@unmfund.org

505.313.7636

www.unmfund.org

UNM Foundation,
Two Woodward Circle,
700 Lomas Blvd, Suite 108
Albuquerque, NM 87102