Digestive Digest

Emory University
Division of Digestive Diseases

This Issue

Message from Division Director
Faculty Research Highlights
Faculty Achievements and Awards
DEI Activities
Event Highlights
DDW Presentations
Fellows Corner

Follow us on social media!
@emorygastrohep

Compiled and edited by Dr. Lisa Cassani and Carla Fairclough
Dear colleagues:

I wanted to share the achievements of my colleagues in Emory’s Division of Digestive Diseases. Emory is known for its excellence in clinical care, teaching, and research! Over the past three years, we have expanded to fifty-three faculty members in the division. I am proud of our divisional achievements and would like to highlight a few below.

Our GI motility program is one of the largest in the Southeast region. The GI motility program at TEC/Emory Saint Joseph’s Hospital has continued to grow over the last several years and has become a major referral center for patients with different complicated GI motility disorders, including esophageal diseases, pelvic floor disorders, gastroparesis, and small bowel dysmotility. This program provides patients with advanced diagnostic tests, including EndoFLIP, anorectal manometry, PH study and esophageal manometry, and has acted as a main gateway for patients to receive state-of-the-art therapeutic procedures like POEM or G-POEM at the Emory Clinic. Many of these services are also offered at the Atlanta VAMC and Grady Memorial Hospital. Academically, the GI motility program at Emory has been actively involved in the training of Emory’s GI fellows, hosted monthly multidisciplinary dysphagia conferences, and published several original research manuscripts in the last two to three years.

In our IBD program, we have partnered with the Georgia Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation to provide IBD-related education for healthcare providers and patients including topics related to COVID and women’s health. We have onboarded an IBD pharmacist to help provide specialty medication assistance and education to our IBD patients. We have close partnership with our colorectal surgeons in regular multidisciplinary meetings and have enlisted a GI dietician for nutritional support for our IBD patients. We have multiple clinical trials offering new therapies to our refractory IBD patients with Crohn’s, UC, and perianal fistulas. We are partnering with our basic science colleagues to further knowledge about IBD in African Americans. At the VA, we have special IBD clinics offering all of the services listed above. Recently, a special IBD clinic was opened at Grady also.

Our basic science portfolio is expanding with new NIH grants and VA Merit awards this past year. Our basic science research focuses on epithelial biology, enteric neuronal biology, fatty liver disease, stem cell biopsy, and hepatocyte iron metabolism. We are dedicated to excellent teaching, with several faculty winning teaching awards and participating in national training committees in different GI societies.

In transplant hepatology, we continue to rank as one the top liver transplant programs in the nation. We have performed more than 2,700 liver transplants since our first liver transplant operation in 1987. More than 60 percent of our waiting list patients are transplanted within a year. Most notably, 95 percent of our patients survive their first year of transplant. We provide comprehensive multidisciplinary care with specialty clinics focusing on NASH and liver tumors. Our living liver donor program has taken a major step forward and is actively and successfully performing liver donor transplants.

Our advanced endoscopy program is one of the largest and most comprehensive in the country. The program has seen continued growth and is a major referral center for patients in the Southeast and nationally. The program provides endoscopic therapies such as ERCP, EUS, single and double balloon enteroscopy, POEM and GPOEM, endoscopic bariatics and suture, fiducial placement, radiofrequency ablation and endoscopic cryotherapy for Barrett’s esophagus, endoscopic mucosal resection, and ESD. A new program in endoscopic ultrasound guided radiofrequency ablation stands to revolutionize the treatment for patients with unresectable pancreatic tumors. There is now a sophisticated program for pediatric patients requiring advanced therapeutic endoscopic procedures with comprehensive services being offered on the campus of Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta. Experienced full-time faculty perform therapeutic procedures on all of our campuses – Emory Saint Joseph’s Hospital, Grady, VA, The Emory Clinic, and Emory University Hospital. There is a thriving fourth-year PGY-7 fellowship for fellows seeking subspecialized training in therapeutic endoscopy. The program is conducting multiple prospective NIH, industry, and investigator initiated clinical trials in areas such as pancreatitis, pancreatic cancer, cholangiocarcinoma, and advanced endoscopy.

Please reach out to us with any questions about our programs in gastroenterology and hepatology.

- Shanthi Srinivasan, MD
Dr. Jason Brown continues the tradition of teaching excellence at Grady, winning his second Educator Appreciation Day honors since joining the faculty. He was recently selected for the ACG Training Committee. Additionally, he was invited to lecture to the Piedmont Athens Internal Medicine Residency program, giving a series of four lectures to their trainees. He partnered with Dr. Vaishali Patel to mentor fellows for the monthly Emoroid Digest. Over the past academic years, Jason have given a total of 17 formal, hour-long lectures to medical students, residents, and fellows. He is also once again in charge of our division’s efforts for the Emory Internal Medicine Residency GI Core Lecture series. This is his fourth year designing and creating the curriculum.

Dr. Adam Gracz joined the Division of Digestive Diseases August 1, 2020. Research in the Gracz Lab seeks to expand fundamental understanding of stem cell and regenerative biology in the intestine and liver, with a focus on genetic regulation of cell identity. Recent work in the lab has established computational approaches to quantify chromatin dynamics during intestinal epithelial stem cell (ISC) differentiation and demonstrated that dynamic chromatin accessibility and DNA hydroxymethylation underlie ISC specification into mature cell types. Ongoing work on ISC biology is focused on understanding interactions between transcription factors and chromatin modifying enzymes that drive ISC differentiation. The lab also recently applied a Sox9EGFP transgenic mouse model to dissect cellular heterogeneity among intrahepatic biliary epithelial cells (BECs), identifying distinct populations based on EGFP expression levels. Trainees in the Gracz Lab are developing patient-derived transgenic organoids and applying single cell and spatial transcriptomic assays to further dissect BEC heterogeneity during homeostasis and injury and translate these findings to human tissues. By “mapping” cellular and genomic differences between BEC subpopulations, the lab hopes to identify cell types and gene regulatory networks that contribute to liver regeneration and better understand how these mechanisms fail in end stage liver disease. The long-term goal of the Gracz Lab is to delineate basic mechanisms regulating cell fate decisions in gastrointestinal tissues in order to identify new therapeutic targets for regenerative medicine.
Dr. Julia Massaad was recently named ACG Governor. The most important role of the Governor is to provide a two-way channel between the College and the individual members in the state or region which he/she represents. The governor also advises the Board of Trustees regarding the College’s activities and can influence the College policy through interaction with the Board of Trustees. Governors have the unique ability to advise the ACG officers and the Board of Trustees about the effectiveness of College programs and to suggest new programs. The following are additional activities of the Board of Governors:

- The Board of Governors elects two of the five members who serve on the Nominating Committee, which each year selects a slate of officers and trustees for the following year.
- Two members of the Board of Governors serve on the Credentials Committee which evaluates the qualifications of candidates for Membership and Fellowship in the College.
- Governors have the ability to serve on all other ACG Committees.
- Governors serve as Regional Councilor or as Chair or Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors.

Dr. Anand Shah is the Director of Liver Clinics at the Atlanta VA Medical Center. His focus is on improving the quality of liver care delivered at the VA. He mentors residents and fellows on quality improvement projects focused on HCC screening and variceal screening rates as well as preventive health with vaccination rates among patients with advanced liver disease. He has collaborated with radiology and oncology in HCC tumor board to improve documentation of the treatment plan and radiology order and protocol for HCC screening and surveillance. He hopes to grow the Atlanta VA into a regional center for HCC treatment. Additionally, he has created a clinic dedicated to Fibroscan testing to further risk stratify and enhance the care of liver patients. He hopes to grow the Fibroscan clinic into a multidiscipline clinic focused on fatty liver disease and management.
Faculty Achievements and Awards

**Jason Brown, MD**  
Assistant Professor  
Recognition - 2021 Educator Appreciation Day

**Mary Flynn, MD**  
Assistant Professor  
Recognition - Doctors Day

**Lisa Cassani, MD**  
Assistant Professor  
Recognition - 2021 Educator Appreciation Day

**Adam Gracz, PhD**  
Assistant Professor  
- NIH-R35 Grant - "Chromatin regulation of epithelial stem cell function"
- CMGH Publication - Sox9EGFP defines biliary epithelial heterogeneity downstream of Yap activity
- URC Grant funding - “Biliary epithelial heterogeneity in cholestatic liver injury”

**Jennifer Christie, MD**  
Professor  
- Vice President of the ASGE
- GI Mentor of the Year Award - 2020

**Saurabh Chawla, MD**  
Associate Professor  
Digestive Diseases Distinguished Educator Award

**Stephan Goebel, MD**  
Associate Professor  
Recognition - 2021 Educator Appreciation Day

**Peijian He, PhD**  
Assistant Professor  
Recognition - 2021 Researcher Appreciation Day

**Mark Czaja, MD**  
Professor  
- Outstanding Gastroenterology Research Award
- R. Wayne Alexander Excellence in Research Award - 2021

**Heba Iskandar, MD**  
Associate Professor  
DOM Clinical Distinction honoree - Distinguished Physician

**Tanvi Dhere, MD**  
Associate Professor  
Emory SOM Dean's Teaching Award, 2020 - 2021

Continued on next page
Faculty Achievements and Awards

Elnaz Jafarimehr, MD  
Assistant Professor  
DOM Clinical Distinction honoree - Senior Physician

Shreya Raja, MD  
Assistant Professor  
2021 Ironwood ANMS Diversity Award

Steven Keilin, MD  
Associate Professor  
- DOM Clinical Distinction honoree - Master Clinician  
- Digestive Diseases Quality Achievement Award - 2020

Preeti Reshamwala, MD  
Associate Professor  
- Promotion to Associate Professor of Medicine  
- Digestive Diseases Attending of the Year  
- Recognition - Doctors Day

Harini Naidu, MD  
Assistant Professor  
DOM Clinical Distinction honoree - Senior Physician

Giorgio Roccaro, MD  
Assistant Professor  
- Internal Medicine residents - Laurence Sperling Outstanding Research Mentor Award  
- Recognition - Doctors Day

Sri Patnana, MD  
Assistant Professor  
Digestive Diseases Attending of the Year

Anand Shah, MD  
Assistant Professor  
- Director of Hepatology  
- DOM Hidden Gem Award

Meena Prasad, MD  
Assistant Professor  
- Recognition - 2021 Educator Day  
- Clinical Excellence in Gastroenterology - 2020

Nikrad Shahnavaz, MD  
Associate Professor  
Promotion to Associate Professor of Medicine

Emad Qayed, MD  
Associate Professor  
Core Curriculum publications in Gastrointestinal Endoscopy  
- Co-Editor-in-Chief: American Gastroenterological Association’s (AGA) newest journal, “Gastro Hep Advances”  
- Veterans Affairs Biomedical Laboratory R&D Senior Clinician Scientist Investigator Award - “Mechanism of GDNF regulation of Hepatic Steatosis”

Continued on next page
SARS-CoV-2 induces diarrhea through epithelial neuronal crosstalk involving vasoactive intestinal peptide release as a potential mechanism of Covid-19 associated diarrhea. Peijian He, Philip Tedbury, Adam Gracz, Simon Musyoka Mwangi, Ge Li, Didier Merlin, Stefan Sarafianos, Shanthi Srinivasan

Single Center Study on Vaccination Rates in Patients with Advanced Liver Disease in Liver & Gastroenterology Clinics. Thuy-Van P. Hang, MD, Kevin P. Shah, MD, Lucie F. Calderon, MD, Anand S. Shah, MD

Duodenal neuroendocrine tumors and lymph node metastasis. David M Roth, Theresa Wicklin Gillespie, Vaishali Patel, Ambreen A Merchant, Saurabh Chawla, Steven Keilin, Qiang Cai, Field F. Willingham

Endoscopy. Qiang Cai

Glia1 cell-derived neurotrophic factor prevents palmitate-induced oxidative stress and suppression of mitophagy in hepatocytes by increasing sirt3 levels. Simon Musyoka Mwangi, Ge Li, Pavithra Chandramowlishwaran, Yunshan Liu, C. Michael Hart, Didier Merlin, Mark J. Czaja, Shanthi Srinivasan

Feasibility of quantifying lower esophageal sphincter muscle layer fibrosis in achalasia. Vachaparambil, Cicily; Mahdi, Zaid; Srinivasan, Shanthi; Jain, Anand S.

Mortality with small duodenal neuroendocrine tumors. David M Roth, Theresa Wicklin Gillespie, Vaishali Patel, Ambreen A Merchant, Saurabh Chawla, Steven Keilin, Qiang Cai, Field F. Willingham

Twitter-based educational activities #mondaynightibd and #scopingsundays enhance engagement in learning, improve clinical practice, and facilitate networking and collaboration among members of the gastroenterology community. Aline Charabaty, Mohammad Bilal, Allison Kickel, Waseem Ahmed, Ahmad N. Bazarbashi, Sobia Mujtaba, Ramzi Mulki, Malorie Simons, Majdoline Jayouse

Multifactorial and Non-Specific Esophageal Pathology Causes Symptoms in a Large Portion of Patients Referred to Tertiary Esophageal Center. Kevin Pankaj Shah, Meredith Rachel Kline, Lucie Frances Calderon, John Bloch, Marc Alexandre Hersh, Joyce Juhee Kim, Marie Godiers, Anand S. Jain

Improving colorectal cancer screening and polyp surveillance during the covid-19 pandemic. Sobia Mujtaba, Deannys Batista, Raj Dalsania, Angela Ward, Heba Iskandar, Jennifer A. Christie

Long term outcomes of redo poes in patients with refractory or recurrent achalasia: A single center experience. Lucie Frances Calderon, Hima Veeramachaneni, Salih Samo, Ahmed Aly Messallam, Rushikesh Shah, Steven Keilin, Qiang Cai

Third space endoscopy after formal endoscopy advanced fellowship training the US: One year linear follow-up of independent practice. Mohamed Abdelfattah Magdy, Ali M. Ahmed, Shajan Peter, Douglas R Morgan, Qiang Cai

A novel technique, contrast-infused functional lumen imaging probe, can distinguish multiple lower esophageal sphincter morphologies in esophagogastric junction outflow obstruction. Meredith Rachel Kline, Cicily Vachaparambil, Chaitanya Allamneni, Anand S Jain

The Esophageal Muscular ‘A’ Ring – Treatment Outcome after Botulinum Toxin Injection. Anand S Jain, Rena Yadiapati

A pilot study on patients with focal incontinence reveals disease-associated alterations in microbiome that may contribute to disease pathophysiology. Shreya M. Raja, Adam Hamilton, Ge Li, Simon Musyoka Mwangi, Benoit Chassaing, Andrew T. Gewirtz, Camille Vaughan, Timothy R. Sampson, Shanthi Srinivasan

J. Edward Berk Lecture: Improving diversity and inclusion in Gastroenterology-the path ahead. Jennifer Christie


Microbiome alterations lead to impaired gastrointestinal motility following spinal cord injury. Adam Michael Hamilton, Jiangun Chang, Sandra M Garraway, Shanthi Srinivasan, Timothy Robertson Sampson
The Division of Digestive Diseases Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee was established to promote an environment of cultural awareness within the division. The committee is comprised of faculty, fellows, and staff across the department.

The mission of the DEI committee is to support the division’s efforts to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for individuals of all ethnicities. The committee shall accomplish this by increasing underrepresented minority representation amongst the faculty and fellows through various recruitment and retention efforts. It also strives to incorporate education around the importance of cultural diversity within its academic curriculum.

Additionally, the committee collaborates with hospital leadership on university-wide initiatives focused on diversity and inclusion, and has established partnerships with the Emory Churchwell Diversity and Inclusion Collective (CDIC) and the Department of Medicine DEI committee.
Emory’s Division of Digestive Diseases Fellowship Program offers a comprehensive training of digestive diseases, designed to produce competent, independent, board-certified subspecialists and clinical investigators after a three-year tenure. It also offers the opportunity to obtain further training in the exciting fields of advanced endoscopy and transplant hepatology. The division continues to strive to improve the care of patients with digestive diseases by training outstanding clinicians, high quality researchers, as well as resilient leaders and educators. The fellowship is a three-year, fully ACGME accredited training program, and accepts five to six fellows each year.

**Best of luck to our 2021 Digestive Diseases Fellowship Program graduates!**
Fellows Corner

Third-Year Fellows

- Chaitanya Allamneni, MD
- Tina Hang, MD
  Co-Chief 2021-2022
- Amneet Hans, MD
  Co-Chief 2021-2022

Second-Year Fellows

- Chuma Obineme, MD
- Cynthia Tran, MD
- Cindy Ye, MD
- Michael Yu, MD
- Cicily Vachaparambil, MD

2021-2022 Incoming GI First-Year Fellows

- Abubaker Abdalla, MD
- Fiyinfoluwa Abraham, MD
- Steven Chang, MD
- Mechu “Mey” Narayanan, MD

2021-2022 Transplant Hepatology Fellow

2021-2022 Advanced Endoscopy Fellow

- Ikenna Emelogu, MD
- Anshika Khare, MD
- Hima Veeramachameni, MD
- Raj Dalsania, MD
The Emoroid Digest is a fellow-driven monthly newsletter reviewing key guidelines and articles through development of visual abstracts. It was founded in January 2021 by Tina Hang, Cesar Taborda, Chaitanya Allamneni, Amneet Hans, Chuma Obineme, Cindy Ye, and Andrew Yu, with the guidance of faculty mentors, Drs. Jason Brown and Vaishali Patel. Dr. Anudeep Neelam, an Emory internal medicine resident, also helps with creating the informative and concise visual summaries.
Identifying the Treatment Gap for Non-Metastatic Pancreatic Cancer in the United States; **Ahmed Messallam, MD**, Ambreen A. Merchant, MBBS, Saurabh Chawla, MD, FACC, Vaishali Patel, MD, MHS, Steven Keilin, MD, Qiang Cai, MD, PhD, FACC, Field Willingham, MD, MPH

Recurrent Acute Pancreatitits in Tangier’s Disease: A New Variant?; **Farah Abdulhai, MD**, **Amneet K. Hans, MD**, Saurabh Chawla, MD, FACC

Effect of Dysphagia on Hospitalization Outcomes and Readmissions in Patients With Human Immunodeficiency Virus; **Rosemary Nustas, MD**, **Raj M. Dalsania, MD**, Jason M. Brown, MD, Srikrishna Patnana, MBBS, MPH, Emad S. Qayed, MD, MPH

Complication of HIV-Related Esophageal Ulcer Treated With Hemostatic Clip-Guided Transcatheter Arterial Embolization; Amol S. Koldhekar, MD; **Dharma Sunjaya, MD**, Emad S. Qayed, MD, MPH, Anand S. Shah

Utilization of Endoluminal Vacuum Therapy for a Challenging Lesser Curve Leak; **Raj M. Dalsania, MD**, Nakul Valsangkar, MBBS, Salih Samo, MD, MSci, Felix Fernandez, MD, Stephan Goebel, MD, Anand S. Shah, MD, Lisa S. Cassani, MD

Feasibility of quantifying lower esophageal sphincter muscle layer fibrosis in achalasia. **Vachaparambil, Cicily**; Mahdi, Zaid; Srinivasan, Shanthi; Jain, Anand S.

Twitter-based educational activities #mondaynightibd and #scopingsundays enhance engagement in learning, improve clinical practice, and facilitate networking and collaboration among members of the gastroenterology community. Aline Charabaty, Mohammad Bilal, Allison Kickel, Waseem Ahmed, Ahmad N. Bazarbashi, **Sobia Mujtaba**, Ramzi Mulki, Malorie Simons, Majdoline Jayoushe

Single Center Study on Vaccination Rates in Patients with Advanced Liver Disease in Liver & Gastroenterology Clinics. **Thuy-Van P. Hang, MD**, Kevin P. Shah, MD, Lucie F. Calderon, MD, Anand S. Shah, MD

Improving colorectal cancer screening and polyp surveillance during the covid-19 pandemic. **Sobia Mujtaba**, Deannys Batista, **Raj Dalsania**, Angela Ward, Heba Iskandar, Jennifer A. Christie

Safety and feasibility of same day discharge after per oral endoscopic pyloromyotomy in refractory gastroparesis: a pilot study. Rush Shaw, Lucie F. Calderon, Kara Alceguire, Menddan Xie, **Ahmed Messallam**, Steve Keilin, Qiang Cai

Fellow Publications

AASLD November 2020

- Hang, T., Avadhani, V., and Brown, J.. When There’s a Zebra of a Zebra” A Case of Severe Steatohepatitis from Subacute Presentation of Hemophagocytic Lymphohistiocytosis.


- Taborda, C., Sherif H, Lee F, Stedge B, and Roccaro G. Sociodemographic and disease related variables associated with willingness to receive an HCV positive graft.

Emory Quality Conference April 2021


- Amneet Hans, MD, Vian Farino, PharmD, Blessing Nwafor, RN, Laisamma Jacob, RN, Meena Prasad, MD. A Quality Improvement Project to Improve Lab Safety Monitoring in IBD Patients on Immunomodulators Using the Veterans Affairs IBD Dashboard and a Multidisciplinary Team.
Fellow Accomplishments

- Emory University House Staff Organization Professionalism Excellence (HOPE) Award 2020-2021 Winner: Andrew Yu, MD

- American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) 2021 Gold Scope Competition 3rd Place: Amneet Hans, MD and Chaitanya Allamneni, MD

- American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) Young Physician Leadership Scholars Program 2021 Awardee: Tina Hang, MD

Congratulating Chaitanya and Amneet for their extraordinary performance at the ASGE Golden Scope Competition. They won the Virtual Endoscopy Competition and were the third-place winners in the Overall Jeopardy Competition! Shout out to Tina for anchoring the team to get through the finals!

2021 Division Orientation at the VA