When the Department of Surgery was first imagined, almost a century ago, we were a much smaller organization. Since then, we’ve grown quite rapidly, requiring many changes and challenging decisions. Now, we stand as one of the best surgical departments in the country, thanks to a fortunate abundance of riches: clinical sites that provide top-notch training, over 180 master surgeons, and a wealth of talent and dedication within our faculty and staff.

Of course, navigating the changes of an evolving department requires strong leadership. When I look back on 2023, it’s evident to me that what defines the year as both an exciting development and a challenge is the slate of new senior leadership that has taken shape across organizations. Dr. Ravi Thadhani stepped into the role as Emory’s new executive vice president for health affairs as well as the executive director of the Woodruff Health Science Center. Emory Healthcare also welcomed a new leader, Chief Executive Officer Dr. Joon Lee.

This shift in leadership has already begun a transition into a more unified approach across our departments and institutions. We are faced with the challenge of asking ourselves how we can operate as one well-functioning system, rather than a collection of operating units. This is a challenge I believe will usher us into a more efficient and impactful future, not only to ease the burden of cumbersome decision-making, but in crafting a service line around patient care to ensure that their needs are met in a convenient way.

Within the Department of Surgery, we have also been able to bring in new leaders and elevate a number of faculty members into leadership positions. Our new chief advanced practice provider, Martha Ryan, stands out as a shining example of an overall wonderful person who is doing fantastic work leading our APP team.

I constantly find myself blown away to be at the helm of such a strong department. Adapting often requires discomfort and creates some resistance, but on the other side, we find that we have broken through and achieved more than we could have imagined. Looking back over the last nearly 100 years, it’s remarkable the impact we’ve made on American surgery and healthcare.

John F. Sweeney, MD
Joseph Brown Whitehead Professor of Surgery and Chair
Department of Surgery
Emory University School of Medicine

Giving the Gift of Life While Living
Department of Surgery transplant surgeons Dr. I. Raul Badell and Dr. Octav Cristea were honored during Donate Life Month alongside two of their patients to raise awareness of the importance of living organ donation.

On April 25, 2023, the Atlanta Braves and Atlanta Braves Foundation hosted the Living Liver Foundation and the Georgia Transplant Foundation during their game against the Miami Marlins. State Senator John Albers (R-Roswell) and his son Will Albers were both recognized at the game for Senator Albers’ kidney donation to his son in 2021. The pair shared the story of this experience as a testament to the kind of life that can be made possible through the gift of organ donation.

Will Albers, then just 24 years old, was diagnosed with kidney failure in 2020. Once it was decided that he was in need of a kidney transplant, his father learned he was a match, and they were both admitted to Emory University Hospital the following summer. Dr. Badell served as Senator Albers’ surgeon, removing one of his kidneys for transplantation, and Dr. Cristea served as the transplant surgeon for
PATIENT CARE

Will. The younger Albers recalled being amazed at how much better he felt after waking up following the surgery. According to Dr. Cristea, many transplant patients report feeling increased energy levels following their procedures, even during recovery. Living kidney donations not only provide the best chance for long-term success, but when a donor steps up to donate, they can significantly reduce the time a recipient may have otherwise waited. “Kidney transplantation can dramatically improve a patient’s quality of life, in large part by eliminating their reliance on dialysis,” says Dr. Cristea.

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I hope that this becomes a book that the Emory Department of Surgery is able to foster and grow.

— BENJAMIN HAZEN

**High-Fidelity Trauma Training**

In April of 2023, Grady Hospital, along with Emory School of Medicine and Morehouse School of Medicine, opened its first Trauma Cadaver Lab. This project, multiple years in the making, was spearheaded by Dr. Elizabeth Benjamin, MD, PhD, who joined Emory’s faculty in 2020. Dr. Benjamin currently serves as the Trauma Medical Director at Grady’s Marcus Trauma Center.

“Cadaver training is not easy to come by. It’s relatively expensive and difficult to do. But for trainees, it is the best modality for training,” says Dr. Benjamin.

Since the Cadaver Lab opened, there are now monthly or twice-monthly labs, with approximately 20 trainees attending each session. The sessions are one-time only, lasting one or two days at most. As a result, lab sessions are held all day, with trainees scheduled to come in for specific simulations.

Additionally, the trainings themselves are school-agnostic, with trainees learning from a combination of Emory, Morehouse, and Grady instructors. This allows trainees to gain experience from instructors outside of their chosen schools, while also allowing them to work together as they would in hospital settings like Grady.

It should be noted that this isn’t the first cadaver simulation lab available to Emory trainees. According to Dr. Benjamin, there are many resources that Emory provides. What makes the Trauma Cadaver Lab stand out, however, is the fidelity model of the lab, which provides trainees with opportunities that would be almost impossible to come by outside of live situations.

“These are fresh cadavers. The tissues very much approximate live human tissue. It is the highest fidelity model you can use,” explains Dr. Benjamin. “It is the closest you can come to operating on a live human. As an educational opportunity, there is not a lot that’s better than that. You can create scenarios if you perforuse the cadaver, the cadaver bleeds like a person bleeds, it can quantitatively patient improvement.”

The value provided to trainees goes beyond the simulations and scenarios. The nature of the lab allows trainees to experiment, learn, and fail without the repercussions that would take place in a live setting. All of this ensures that trainees will have experience and be better prepared when the stakes become real.

“Every time we do a lab, we add something to it – a service scenario component,” says Dr. Benjamin. “Ideally, I would like it to be as open and available as possible to as many different learners as possible. It really should be a multidisciplinary environment and the more we can open it to more people and involve more learners, I think the better it becomes.”

**Comprehensive Collaboration: Creating a Resource for Future Trainees**

Emory General Surgery graduate Benjamin Hazen, MD, remembers how work on “Anatomic, Physiologic, and Therapeutic Principles of Surgical Diseases” began – as a simple study guide. During his first post-graduate year, he noticed faculty, like Jahnavi Srinivasan, MD, and Shishir Maithel, MD, keeping meticulous records of injuries and treatment.

“They had already accumulated this knowledge and algorithmic approach to surgical treatment,” says Dr. Hazen. “I looked and said, ‘That’s what I want. That’s what I need in the next five years.’”

Over three years later, with contributions from over 100 residents and Emory faculty members, the book evolved into a comprehensive resource for medical students, residents, and fellows pursuing surgical training.

The idea of expanding the project took off when Dr. Hazen presented the idea to Keith Delman, MD, his general surgery residency program director at the time. Dr. Delman suggested that Dr. Hazen bring in other residents and expand the scope of the work. With his support, Dr. Hazen began to reach out to other faculty and found eager participants.

Work began during Thanksgiving week in 2019 and took three and a half years to complete. What began as an idea to create a couple-hundred-page study guide for Dr. Hazen himself became a fully-fledged book with 795 pages, 35 chapters, and hundreds of useful medical illustrations. Contributions came from 55 residents and 50 Emory faculty members across six different departments: Anesthesiology, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Urology, ENT, and Surgery. In July 2023, the book was published by Springer.

It wasn’t easy taking this on. Striking a balance became a daunting challenge, with the combination of Dr. Hazen’s ongoing residency, demands from Springer, and family obligations, including a child on the way.

Throughout the editing process, Dr. Hazen saw unpredictable rotating seasons of extreme workloads and periods of little. This included a week in July when he was taking written boards, part of the General Surgery Qualifying Exams. Scheduled to take the exam on July 13th, Springer reached out to Dr. Hazen on July 1st with all 35 chapters, giving him a deadline of July 5th to have them back. Motivated by his desire to see the project come to fruition, and become a useful tool for future residents, Dr. Hazen rose to the challenge and saw it through.

“I have to say, as a credit to Dr. Hazen, I don’t think for any of the editors, it was as tough for us because he took the load on his shoulders,” says Dr. Srinivasan, currently the program director of the general surgery residency program. “It was his labor of love.”

Dr. Hazen hopes that residents and faculty not only find the book useful but carry on the work in the future.

“I hope that this becomes a book that the Emory Department of Surgery is able to foster and grow,” says Dr. Hazen. “I hope that they carry on the tradition, doing a second edition and a third edition and make this book better.”

Dr. Srinivasan agrees, citing the ways “Mulholland and Greenfield’s Surgery: Scientific Principles and Practice” has showcased the University of Michigan.

“Mulholland and Greenfield’s book has, for generations, been seen as a [University of] Michigan product that has touched the world of surgery and education,” says Dr. Srinivasan. “Similarly, for us, I feel like that this is an Emory product with the potential to grow.”

Finally, Dr. Hazen hopes that this book provides readers with information that this book provides. “I have to say, as a credit to Dr. Hazen, I don’t think for any of the editors, it was as tough for us because he took the load on his shoulders,” says Dr. Srinivasan, currently the program director of the general surgery residency program. “It was his labor of love.”

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## Trainee Kudos

### Award Recipients

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<tr>
<th>Trainee</th>
<th>Award Description</th>
<th>Faculty Mentor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vanessa Ariynty, MD</td>
<td>1st Place, Society of Critical Care Medicine Annual Zoom Competition for Surgical Critical Care Fellowships</td>
<td>Craig Coopersmith, MD; Jason Sciaretta, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frances Bennett, MD</td>
<td>Winship NCI T32 Training Program Position 2023 Winship Scientific Symposium Poster Competition</td>
<td>Shaish K. Mathel, MD; Crystal Paula, PhD; Gregory Lasinski, MD, MPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Chow, MD</td>
<td>2nd Place, Society of Critical Care Medicine Annual Quiz Show</td>
<td>Craig Coopersmith, MD; Jason Sciaretta, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gevto Danes, MD</td>
<td>Southeastern Surgical Congress Sharks Research Grant; Best Oral Presentation at GSACS Resident Competition</td>
<td>Allison Lindon, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mari Freedberg</td>
<td>2nd Place, Society of Critical Care Medicine Annual Quiz Show</td>
<td>Craig Coopersmith, MD; Jason Sciaretta, MD</td>
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<td>Zachary Grady, MD</td>
<td>2022 HOPE Surgery Award</td>
<td>Randi Smith, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dustin Hano, MD</td>
<td>2nd Place, Society of Critical Care Medicine Annual Quiz Show</td>
<td>Craig Coopersmith, MD; Jason Sciaretta, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lucy Hart, MD</td>
<td>T32 Training Grant, College of Health Services Research Center</td>
<td>Randi Smith, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amber Himmler, MD</td>
<td>1st Place, Society of Critical Care Medicine Annual Zoom Competition for Surgical Critical Care Fellowships</td>
<td>Craig Coopersmith, MD; Jason Sciaretta, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olivia Keane, MD</td>
<td>Leadership Award, University of Southern California Institute for Addiction Science Post-Doctoral Provost Scholars Program, University of Southern California</td>
<td>Lorraine Kelley-Quon, MD</td>
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<td>Phil Kim, MD</td>
<td>1st Place, Society of Critical Care Medicine Annual Zoom Competition for Surgical Critical Care Fellowships</td>
<td>Craig Coopersmith, MD; Jason Sciaretta, MD</td>
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<td>Matt Machowsky, MD</td>
<td>2nd Place, Society of Critical Care Medicine Annual Quiz Show</td>
<td>Craig Coopersmith, MD; Jason Sciaretta, MD</td>
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<td>Anthony Mena, MD</td>
<td>Top 3 in SAVS Moderated Poster Competition; Karmody ePoster Competition, Symposium for the Society of Clinical Vascular Surgery (SCVS)</td>
<td>Omeride Aki, MD; Razi Raja, MD; Guillermo Escobar, MD</td>
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<td>Courtney Meyer, MD</td>
<td>2nd Place, ACS Advocacy Abstract Competition</td>
<td>Elizabeth Benjamin, MD, PhD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eli Mfavey, MD</td>
<td>Georgia Quality Improvement Research Fellowship; NHYCATs Georgia Clinical and Translational Science Alliance T32 Training Award</td>
<td>Joe Sharma, MD; Jordan Kempfer, MD, MSc; S. Rob Todd, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danny Mou, MD</td>
<td>Best Critical Oral Presentation, 2023 William C. Wood Symposium</td>
<td>Edward Lin, MD; Scott Davis, MD; Elizabeth Hechenbleikner, MD</td>
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<td>Rachel Niehuis, MD</td>
<td>DEI Resident Award Winner</td>
<td>Shaili Mathel, MD; Gregory Lasinski, MD, MPH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Norton, MD</td>
<td>1st Place, SAVS Moderated Poster Competition; 1st Place in SCS Critical Care and Perioperative Management Poster Competition</td>
<td>Bradley Lashnower, MD; Brent Keeling, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kelley Opped, MD</td>
<td>Georgia CTS T1T Training Program – MSCR</td>
<td>Shaili Mathel, MD; Gregory Lasinski, MD, MPH</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Qu, MD</td>
<td>1st Place, STS Critical Care and Perioperative Management Poster Competition</td>
<td>William Keeling, MD; Joshua Chan, MD; Michael Halko, MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler Reynolds, MD</td>
<td>2nd Place, Society of Critical Care Medicine Annual Quiz Show</td>
<td>Craig Coopersmith, MD; Jason Sciaretta, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emma Rooney, MD</td>
<td>Best Basic/Translational Oral Presentation, Georgia Society of the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma Resident Paper Competition Winner, Excellence (HOPE) Award</td>
<td>Guillermo Escobar, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madeline Roebach, MD</td>
<td>Committee on Trauma Resident Paper Competition Winner, Georgia Society of the American College of Surgeons</td>
<td>John Lyons, MD</td>
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<td>Matthew Stanley, MD</td>
<td>2022 HOPE Fellows Award</td>
<td>Seth Force, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephanie Tom, MD</td>
<td>Best Basic/Translational Oral Presentation, 2023 William C. Wood Symposium</td>
<td>Robert Guyton, MD; Kendra Grubbs, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria Wagner, MD</td>
<td>1st Place, Society of Critical Care Medicine Annual Zoom Competition for Surgical Critical Care Fellowships</td>
<td>Craig Coopersmith, MD; Jason Sciaretta, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trace Walker, MD</td>
<td>1st Place, Society of Critical Care Medicine Annual Zoom Competition for Surgical Critical Care Fellowships</td>
<td>Craig Coopersmith, MD; Jason Sciaretta, MD</td>
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<td>Emillie Warren, MD</td>
<td>Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation Research Fellowship; 2023 Hall W. and William S. Elkin Fellowship in Oncology; 2023 ASCO Conquer Cancer Mentor Award; 2024 ASCO Conquer Cancer Mentor Award</td>
<td>Shaish K. Mathel, MD; Crystal Paul, PhD; Gregory B. Lasinski, MD, MPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeron Williams, MD</td>
<td>Travel Award for Conference on Shock</td>
<td>Craig Coopersmith, MD; Mandy Ford, PhD</td>
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Cracking the Cancer Code

With groundbreaking studies and critical collaborative efforts across departments, Emory leads the charge to treat and cure cancer.

COLLABORATING TO IMPROVE CHECKPOINT INHIBITION RESPONSE

In a new study published in Science Translational Medicine, a team of Emory collaborators has identified a novel molecular pathway that impacts resistance to checkpoint inhibition in patients with melanoma. The paper titled “FcγRIIB expressed on CD8+ T cells limits responsiveness to PD-1 checkpoint inhibition in cancer” used mechanistic approaches in mouse models, as well as human samples isolated from melanoma patients, and serves as a shining example of work achieved through a diverse team of basic science and clinical research.

With groundbreaking studies and critical collaborative efforts across departments, Emory leads the charge to treat and cure cancer.

COMBINING BASIC SCIENCE, LAB EXPERIENCE, AND CLINICAL PERSPECTIVES

Combining basic science, lab experience, and medical perspectives, the team leading this study demonstrated the cross-pollination made possible by Emory’s vast and talented network. Joining Department of Surgery faculty members were general surgery research residents Marvi Tariq, MD, and Kirsten Baecher, MD. Driving the project under Dr. Ford’s mentorship was Kelsey Bennion, a PhD candidate in the Emory Laney Graduate School Cancer Biology Program.

When reflecting on the challenges facing the group, Dr. Ford recalls the logistical challenges, namely obtaining samples from patients throughout their treatment schedules.

“It seems mundane, but it’s absolutely mission-critical,” she says. “It really emphasizes how important it is to have buy-in from clinical collaborators. Having Emory invest in that infrastructure really helps to drive the science forward.”

NOVEL FINDINGS IN T CELL THERAPY

The Emory 1% Award honors faculty members who have received scores in the top one percentile on a grant proposal. In 2023, Chrystal Paulos, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Surgery, was named a recipient of the award after achieving a perfect score on a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for her work studying T cell-based therapies for patients with melanoma.

Essentially, the project set out to manipulate T cells in such a way that it makes them more therapeutic. With Dr. Paulos as the leader, the team was a truly well-rounded collaboration that included faculty members across various departments and institutions, including Dr. Michael Lowe, who has collaborated with Dr. Paulos since she first arrived at Emory University in 2020.

Gregory Lesinski, PhD, MPH, a translational scientist and professor in the Department of Hematology and Medical Oncology, is another long-time collaborator with Dr. Paulos. Dr. Lesinski has also been integral in studying the relationship of T cells and other immune cells, bringing his expertise in both clinical work and mouse model systems to the study. Joining the team from the Rollins School of Public Health was Yuan Liu, PhD, a research associate professor in Biostatistics and Bioinformatics. As an expert in statistics, Dr. Liu was able to help interpret the results and how meaningful they were. Rounding out the team of Emory faculty was Mary Jo Turk, PhD, a professor of microbiology and immunology at Dartmouth University. Dr. Turk is an expert in resident memory T cells in patients with melanoma, and was able to contribute sophisticated mouse models to the study.

The study led to the team’s discovery that if they inhibit the phosphoinositide 3-kinase (PI3K) pathway, which is important for T cells to proliferate, and genetically engineer them in a way that they can better recognize tumors, they are very effective in killing tumors in mouse models.

“We wanted to understand what it is about these T cells that makes them so fabulous,” said Dr. Paulos. “We found that they have these enhanced metabolic properties and so, we have this novel transcription factor that we’re studying that’s never been studied before in T cells.”

The transcription factor, called BEX01, is able to enhance mitochondrial transcription in T cells, and when the T cells are genetically engineered to express more of it, they become much better at killing tumors.

Now, the goal is to take the discovery from the mouse models into the clinic. Dr. Lowe provided clinical samples for the grant and began working with Dr. Paulos on clinical trial to manipulate T cells from patient tumors.

“The big picture dream is to treat patients with these T cells,” says Dr. Paulos. “This is called adoptive T cell transfer therapy.”

While there is still work to be done, the NIH grant score serves as a testament to the groundbreaking nature of the research. Dr. Paulos credits the grant’s high score to the talent and expertise of the team, the novelty of the study, and her persistence.

“I had to submit six times, I didn’t give up,” she says. “Each time, I would get very close to a fundable score, but the NIH is very tough – rightfully so. Their critiques were fair. So, it took a lot of work to do all of the experiments needed to convince them that it was a ‘perfect’ score.”

Chrystal Paulos, PhD

“Want to understand what it is about these T cells that makes them so fabulous.”

— CHRYSTAL PAULOS, PHD

Mandy Ford, PhD
Emory Chosen by White House for Innovative Research Project

On August 23, 2023, President Joe Biden announced that a new federal agency in the Department of Health and Human Services has selected Emory University to be the very first recipient of funding to support transformative breakthroughs in health research.

The funding will directly support the work of primary investigator Philip Santangelo, PhD, professor in the Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering at Emory and Georgia Institute of Technology, as well as major programs run by Department of Surgery faculty members Christian Larsen, MD, PhD, and John Lyons, MD. The toolbox is applied to various disease models in which co-PIs have expertise.

Dr. Larsen, director of the Emory Transplant Center, currently runs a lab focused on transplant immunology utilizing this mRNA technology, while Dr. Lyons, assistant professor in the Division of General and GI Surgery, is using this toolbox to conduct his research in sepsis immunology.

“This is a huge collaboration between a lot of different PIs whose research might not otherwise have the chance to intersect or overlap,” says Dr. Lyons. “So much of this is new and exploratory, so many of the insights from one sub-project will prove beneficial for the others.” Each co-PI was allocated their own dedicated funds from the grant to conduct their respective experiments. Given the sizeable budget, investigators have been given a lot of freedom to invest in various possibilities and push experiments through more quickly than was possible before.

Whereas a typical grant timeline may see funds distributed a year after the initial application, the ARPA-H funding was accelerated to a two-to-three-month turnaround. For the project, the name of the game is innovation. Once funds were delivered, experiments began immediately.

“It’s been really go, go, go,” says Dr. Lyons. “The whole model of the ARPA-H program is to go forward, move fast, and try new and exciting things.”

— JOHN LYONS, MD

Uncovering the Potential of the Unconventional

A study co-authored by Mani Daneshmand, MD, an associate professor of surgery in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, seeks to explore and compare the efficacy of heart transplantations with donors following circulatory death with those conducted with hearts obtained from donors after brain death. The study was published in the New England Journal of Medicine in June 2023.

Traditionally, heart transplantations have been limited to the use of organs received from donors following brain death, which is defined as the irreversible cessation of all brain activity, in which the brain dies from a lack of blood and oxygen. This method allows for the assessment of cardiac function and the suitability for transplantation of the donor allograft (transplanted tissue) before surgically obtaining the organ. Of course, there is a far greater need for heart transplants than there are suitable donor allografts available. The use of hearts obtained from donors following circulatory death could bridge this gap. Circulatory death is defined as the irreversible cessation of all circulatory and respiratory function.

In order to preserve and assess potential donor hearts following circulatory death, extracorporeal machine perfusion was utilized to reanimate the heart and allow for its evaluation for transplantation suitability. The trial sought to assess the outcomes of these transplantation procedures compared to those of patients who received hearts that had been preserved and transported with more traditional cold storage methods, following the brain death of a donor.

At the end of the trial, risk-adjusted survival rates at six months following patient procedures were 94 percent among patients of the circulatory-death donor group and 90 percent among patients of the brain-death donor group. Dr. Daneshmand and his co-authors were able to conclude that transplantation following circulatory death was noninferior to transplantation following brain death of a donor.

Given the great need for heart transplantations across the country and the wait times that often delay treatment for patients, this study adds crucial clinical data to the potential of a less-traditional alternative for transplantation.
Perseverance in Aortic Dissection Treatment

Emory Healthcare has played a leading role in a clinical trial that could have lifesaving implications in the operating room. A team of Emory faculty led by Bradley Leshnower, MD, and including Woody Farrington, MD, and Brent Keeling, MD, began implantation of AMDS hybrid prostheses devices (formerly known as the Ascyrus Medical Dissection Stent) in patients with acute DeBakey Type I aortic dissections, a life-threatening condition with extreme mortality rates. The first device was implanted by Dr. Farrington on May 10, 2023, followed by a second implantation on May 23 by Dr. Leshnower. Emory finished the trial as one of the top enrollees, with a total of five implanted devices.

The clinical trial, known as PERSEVERE, was a Prospective, Single Arm, Multi-Center Clinical Investigation to Evaluate the Safety and Effectiveness of AMDS in the Treatment of Acute DeBakey Type I Dissection. The study was conducted by Artivion, Inc., an Atlanta-based medical device company that focuses on aortic technologies. Trials began in March 2022 and the study enrolled 93 patients by its end. AMDS devices are fabric-less stent graft implants placed in place during a Type A dissection in patients with malperfusion, an abnormality with the blood flow to the brain or any of the abdominal organs. The device is implanted at the beginning of a surgical procedure, which expands the true lumen of the dissection, allowing blood to flow through its normal pathway, improving on downstream malperfusion. Implantation is fairly easy, with minimal added time to the operation, and can be lifesaving for patients experiencing malperfusion.

“Type A dissection is a surgical emergency from the cardiac standpoint, and the mortality of a Type A dissection is about 50 percent if left untreated within the first 48 hours,” says Dr. Farrington, an assistant professor in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery. “We know, based on our data, patients with malperfusion prior to this device had a much higher likelihood of compromised organ system failure or death.”

At Emory, almost all negative outcomes related to Type A dissections were due to malperfusions at the time of surgery, further highlighting the positive impact the AMDS devices are having on patients. There are an average of 75 patients treated with acute Type A aortic dissections at Emory Healthcare hospitals. Results at Emory have been positive, although the study’s final data will not be available for several more years. However, longer term data from studies in Europe and Canada have also been favorable.

“This device has real-world applicability for all cardiac surgeons treating patients with Type A aortic dissection and malperfusion,” says Dr. Leshnower, director of Thoracic Aortic Surgery for Emory Healthcare. “It appears to be particularly helpful in select patients, particularly elderly patients, with malperfusion.”

With just 20 centers working on the PERSEVERE study nationally, Emory was the only medical center taking part in Georgia and one of four centers across the South, with other regional centers in Florida, South Carolina, and Texas.

“It’s a fairly easy device to deploy and we’ve gotten fairly good short-term results,” said Dr. Farrington. “We haven’t had any misde- ployments and patients that have come in with malperfusions have benefited. Overall, the long-term data evaluations are still very early, but I think that with the success in other countries, this is going to be a study that ultimately provides benefits to a very sick group of patients.” — WOODY FARRINGTON

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

A Historic New Lectureship Honors a Living Emory Surgery Legend

On February 2, 2023, the Department of Surgery was proud to host the inaugural Rogsbert Phillips-Reed DEI Lectureship. While the Surgical Grand Rounds program currently hosts over a dozen named lectureships, this is the first to be named after an African American.

The first lecture in the new series was presented by Dr. Rogsbert Phillips-Reed herself, a general surgeon and fellow of the American College of Surgeons with a specialization in breast surgery. After graduating from Columbia University’s School of Physicians and Surgeons in 1977, she became the second woman and first African American woman to complete Emory University’s surgical program in 1982.

“Dr. Phillips-Reed is clearly a part of the legacy of this department,” says Department of Surgery Chair John Sweeney, MD. “It was remarkable to hear her stories and consider her accomplishments, especially making it through surgery residency at a time when women, especially African American women, were not well represented in American surgery.”

Today, Dr. Phillips-Reed leads the Metro Surgical Association, a community-based surgical practice with offices in Atlanta and Lithonia, Georgia. Her work has been acknowledged with more than 60 awards and honors, including the American Society of Breast Surgeons Arnold P. Gold Foundation “Humanism in Medicine Award,” Atlanta Medical Association’s “Physician of the Year Award,” American Association for Access Equity and Diversity “Rosa Parks Award.” She has also been recognized by the Georgia House of Representative, the Georgia Senate, and the Secretary of State’s Office.

In 1989, Dr. Phillips-Reed founded Sisters by Choice, a non-profit organization that works as a support group for women and men diagnosed with breast cancer and their families. This multi-faceted organization aims to reduce the mortality and morbidity of breast cancer through awareness, educational programs, and early detection.

Dr. Phillips-Reed led her presentation on the topic, “Intraoperative Radiation Therapy for Early Breast Cancer.” The event was met with a fantastic turnout, including several women from the African American Women Collaborative (AAWC) Faculty Affinity Group. The new DEI Lectureship will now be held annually at Emory University, and will help to shine a light on surgeons and physicians from various institutions.
New Faculty

Jinu Kamdar, MD, Assistant Professor, Division of General and GI Surgery
Dr. Kamdar completed his undergraduate and medical education at the University of Wisconsin and his surgical residency training at the University of Arizona. Dr. Kamdar also served in the US Navy for 11 years as a surgeon, which included a deployment during the Iraq War. He was part of the original team that developed the trauma program at Wieland Keimets Hospital, and he also served as the Medical Director of General Surgery at Southern Regional Medical Center.

Megan Urbanski, PhD, MSW, Assistant Professor, Division of Transplantation
Dr. Megan Urbanski completed her MSW (clinical concentration) from the University of Pennsylvania and worked for nearly ten years as a clinical social worker with patients in need of a solid organ transplant. She received her PhD in Public Health (Social and Behavioral Sciences concentration) from Temple University and completed a postdoctoral research fellowship in the Health Services Research Center at Emory University.

Fred Simonton, DMD, Assistant Professor, Division of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
Dr. Simonton received his DMD degree from Washington University, School of Dental Medicine and completed an Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Residency at Henry Ford Hospital. He works as an Oral and Maxillofacial surgeon in the Department of Surgery at Grady Memorial Hospital.

Seth Concary, MD, Assistant Professor, Division of Surgical Oncology
Dr. Concary received his MD degree from Michigan State University and completed his residency in Surgery at the University of Michigan. He then completed a fellowship in Gastrointestinal Surgery at the Cleveland Clinic. Dr. Concary’s research focuses on the development of novel therapeutic strategies for patients with gastrointestinal cancers.

Katherine Fay, MD, Assistant Professor, Division of General and GI Surgery
Dr. Fay completed her MD degree at the University of Virginia and completed her General Surgery residency at the University of Virginia. She then completed a fellowship in General Surgery at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on the development of novel therapeutic strategies for patients with gastrointestinal cancers.

Suneetha Akula, MD, Assistant Professor, Division of Vascular Surgery
Dr. Akula completed her MD degree at the University of Hyderabad and completed her fellowship in Vascular Surgery at the University of California, San Francisco. She then completed a fellowship in Endovascular Therapy at Emory University. Dr. Akula’s research focuses on the development of novel therapeutic strategies for patients with vascular diseases.

Seth Concary, MD, Assistant Professor, Division of Surgical Oncology
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Anee Sophia Jackson received her MD degree from the University of Kansas School of Medicine, completed a General Surgery Residency at Morehouse Medical Center, and received her Endocrine Surgery Fellowship at the University of Michigan. Dr. Jackson serves as a General Surgeon with expertise in Thyroid and Endocrine Surgery at the Division of General and GI Surgery within the Department of Surgery at Emory University with an active inpatient and outpatient practice based at Emory University Hospital Midtown.

Alicia Bonanno, MD, Assistant Professor, Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery
Dr. Bonanno completed her medical degree at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina and her general surgery residency at Ohio State University. She then completed her cardiothoracic surgery fellowship at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on the development of novel therapeutic strategies for patients with cardiac and thoracic diseases.

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New Leaders

Olamide Alabi, MD  was appointed Assistant Section Chief for Vascular Surgery at the Atlanta VA Medical Center (VAMC). The Medical Center is dedicated to serving thousands of enrolled veterans living across Northeast Georgia and their health-care needs. Dr. Alabi is an assistant professor in the Department of Surgery Division of Vascular Surgery and Endovascular Therapy. She received her medical degree from the University of Nebraska College of Medicine, trained in general surgery at Loma Linda University Medical Center in Southern California, and completed a fellowship in vascular surgery at Oregon Health and Science University.

Yuwan Dawson, MD, MBA  has been appointed Chief of the Division of Vascular Surgery. Dr. Dawson has been with Emory since 2010 and currently serves as the medical director of the Heart and Vascular Surgery Unit at Emory University and co-director of the Emory Aortic Center. He received his medical degree from the University of Jordan, completed his surgical residency in the University of Toledo and his Vascular Surgery fellowship at Washington University in Saint Louis. He also has an MBA from Emory University Goizueta Business School.

Manuel Garcia-Toca, MD, FACS  was appointed Chief of Vascular Surgery at Grady. He joined the Emory Department of Surgery after six years at Stanford University. Dr. Garcia-Toca completed his general surgery residency at Brown University, his vascular fellowship at Northeastern University, and his master's degree in health policy at Stanford. Most recently, he was the Chief of Vascular Surgery at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center. While his clinical interests are broad, Dr. Garcia-Toca's research interests focus on cost-effective treatment strategies for the management of vascular trauma, dialysis access, and limb salvage.

Laurie Postlewait, MD  was named medical director of the Grady Breast Center, a role that she had been serving in as interim following the departure of Dr. Preeti Subhedar, MD. Dr. Postlewait is an associate of the Grady Breast Center, a role that she had been serving in as interim following the departure of Dr. Preeti Subhedar, MD. Dr. Postlewait is an assistant professor in the Department of Surgery Division of Breast, Gynecologic, and Urologic Oncology. She has been serving as medical director of the Heart and Vascular Surgery Unit at Emory University and co-director of the Emory Aortic Center. She received her medical degree from the University of Jordan, completed his surgical residency in the University of Toledo and his Vascular Surgery fellowship at Washington University in Saint Louis. He also has an MBA from Emory University Goizueta Business School.

Maria Russell, MD  has been named Chief Quality Officer for Winship Cancer Institute. Dr. Russell, who holds the Walter E. Glenn Chair of Surgery for Academic Programs, joined the Emory faculty in 2012. She completed her general surgery residency at Emory University and a two-year research fellowship in the Emory Transplant Immunology Lab. She completed a surgical oncology fellowship at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. She is the chair of the Georgia State Commission on Cancer, working with programs, providers, and organizations to improve the quality of cancer care.

Martha Ryan, FNP  has been appointed Chief Advanced Practice Provider of Emory Surgical Services. Martha Ryan is a certified family nurse practitioner practicing at Emory Healthcare since 2011. Over the past three years she has been the operations clinic lead for the Winship Head & Neck Multidisciplinary Care Clinic. In this new position, Martha will expand her leadership with Surgical Services, leading and supporting our APPs in the Divisions of General Surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Colorectal Surgery, Surgical Oncology, and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, as well as the Departments of Otolaryngology and Urology. She officially stepped into her new role on January 9, 2023.

Virgina Shaffer, MD  has been appointed Vice Chair of Faculty Affairs for Department of Surgery. In this role, she will provide guidance and oversight in faculty affairs and development as a senior advisor to the chair and chair leadership team. Currently, Dr. Shaffer serves on the Emory School of Medicine Faculty Development Advisory Committee, the General Surgery Residency Clinical Competency Committee, and as program director for the Colorectal Surgery Fellowship. She is a Woodruff Leadership Academy graduate and previously served on the Emory University Senate and Faculty Council. Dr. Shaffer is a Woodruff Leadership Academy graduate and previously served on the Emory University Senate and Faculty Council. Dr. Shaffer has received numerous awards for her research, including the Merit Award in 2015 and 2016 from the Conquer Cancer Foundation of the American Society of Clinical Oncology as well as best clinical research awards at Emory Department of Surgery Research Days in 2015 and 2017.

Katherine Hekman, MD, PhD  Association for VA Surgeons (AVAS) Faculty Research Award

Onkar Khullar, MD  Accepted to 2023 Em-ProLeAD Cohort

Steven Kim, MD  Elected member of American Society of Transplant Surgeon’s (ASTS) Grants Review Committee

William Knaus, MD  2023 Emory at Grady Best Colleague Award

Allison Linden, MD, MPH  1998 Society Grant, CHOA

Denise Lo, MD  2023 Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Award

John Lyons, MD  Elected to “Frontiers in Immunology” Editorial Board

2023 Faculty Awards and Distinctions

Olamide Alabi, MD  VSN7 RDA Award 2023 DEI Faculty Award Winner

Hanna Alemayehu, MD  1998 Society Grant, CHOA

Kenneth Cardona, MD, FACS  Elected to Southern Surgical Association

Craig CooperSmith, MD, FACS, MCCM  Off-Service Teacher of the Year Award

Christopher Dente, MD  2023 School of Medicine Mentoring Award

Heather Faulkner, MD  Associate Professor of Surgery, Emory School of Medicine

Wendy Greene, MD  Recipient of Women of Emory Circle of Impact Grant

Elizabeth Heckenbleikner  Inaugural Georgia Bariatric Excellence Award, Georgia Society of the American College of Surgeons

Shishir Matihal, MD, FACS, FSSO  Named Editor-in-Chief of Surgical Oncology Insight

Christopher Ramos, MD  Elected to “Annals of Vascular Surgery” Editorial Board

Maria Russell, MD  Selected to 2023 Women’s Leadership Development Program

Randi Smith, MD  2023 Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Award

DOJ IVYY $2 Million Grant 2023 recipient of the Emory at Grady Community Impact Award
ESTABLISH A CONNECTION
to Emory Surgery’s culture of service, innovation, education, and discovery by making a gift.

To arrange a donation, please contact Sarah E. Evans, associate vice president of development, Emory School of Medicine and Discovery Programs, at sarah.e.evans@emory.edu, 404-544-9352.

Alumni may make a donation to the Alumni Society Fund at together.emory.edu/GallowayMcKinnon.