

Maggie Diller receives first Department of Surgery Pilot Research Award

Maggie Diller, MD, has been selected as the first recipient of the Department of Surgery Pilot Research Award. The department established the pilot grant/seed funding award to support faculty as they develop a new line of research to further their academic careers, with the ultimate goal of generating preliminary data to support larger grant proposals in the future. Dr. Diller's study will investigate the feasibility of a novel, digital mindfulness intervention for pain control following oncologic surgery.

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Craig Coopersmith named a 2021 Health Care Heroes finalist

Craig Coopersmith, MD, was a finalist in the Physician/Physician Practice Group Category of the *Atlanta Business Chronicle's* 2021 Health Care Heroes awards for his work in caring for critically ill patients with COVID-19. He was also honored for sharing critical care guidance with providers across the U.S. and globally.

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Katie Ross-Driscoll and Megan Urbanski receive Georgia CTSA grants

The awards received by Katherine Ross-Driscoll, PhD, MPH, and Megan Urbanski, PhD, MSW, LCSW, support mentored career development in clinical and/or translational research. Rachel Patzer, PhD, MPH, Director of the Health Services Research (HSR) Center, will be the primary mentor for both of their research projects.

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Nader Massarweh named new Chief of Surgery at the Atlanta VA

Nader Massarweh, MD, MPH, has been named the new Chief of Surgery at the Atlanta VA Healthcare System, Vice Chair of Veterans Affairs for the Emory Department of Surgery, and Associate Professor of Surgery for the Emory Division of Surgical Oncology. He comes to Emory from Baylor College of Medicine and the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, where he held several positions including investigator for the Health Policy, Quality & Informatics Program at the Center for Innovations in Quality, Effectiveness and Safety. His research has received funding from the NIH/NCI, the VA's Health Services Research and Development Service, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and he has been recognized with a variety of honors, including the Cancer Foundation Merit Award from the American Society of Clinical Oncology.

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Allan Pickens and other Emory doctors answer COVID-19 vaccine questions

Bariatric Midtown team's study featured on GHA's Power Hour Series

Allan Pickens, MD, Associate Professor of Surgery and Director of Thoracic Oncology, is one of several Emory physicians who provides honest answers to frequently asked questions about COVID-19 vaccines in an online video series produced by Emory Healthcare. All of the physicians address these common concerns with empathy and assured knowledge. Dr. Pickens responds to the question: "[Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?](#)" The complete series [can be watched here](#).

Elizabeth Hechenbleikner, MD, and Melissa Majumdar, MS, RD, CSOWM, LDN, were featured on the Georgia Hospital Association's 2021 Award Winner Power Hour Series presenting their research team's GHA Patient Safety & Quality Award-winning study. They describe why they undertook the study of venous thromboembolism (VTE) prophylaxis compliance among bariatric surgery patients at Emory University Hospital Midtown, the measures they designed to increase compliance, and other key points. [Watch the presentation here](#).

Robotic surgery debuts at the Atlanta VA Healthcare System

The years-long process of obtaining approval for instituting robotic surgery at the Atlanta VA Healthcare System culminated in mid-April 2021 with the installation of the hospital's first da Vinci robotic surgical platform. Shortly thereafter, Jackson Slappy, MD, Associate Chief of Surgery at the VA, performed the first robotic procedure to be done at the facility, a cholecystectomy. Established robotics practitioner and advocate Ankit Patel, MD, advised the effort and assisted with training, and Jonathan Pollock, MD, Chief of General Surgery at the VA, served on the working group that planned and prepared for accommodating the new technology. "I was particularly inspired by Dr. Slappy's tireless leadership as he worked the robot initiative through the VA approval process," Dr. Pollock says.

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Emory Surgery faculty honored as top educators

Emory School of Medicine faculty nominated by students and peers for special recognition on Educator Appreciation Day included Department of Surgery members Olamide Alabi, Angela Cheng, Christopher Dente, Robert Fang, and Mark Walsh. The SOM Recognitions Committee acknowledged that this honor was particularly meaningful this year due to the pandemic, as Emory faculty had to expend extraordinary effort to maintain their responsibilities as educators and mentors in the face of the conditions created by COVID-19. [View all of the honorees here](#).

Theresa Gillespie named to new Winship position

Theresa W. Gillespie, PhD, MA, BSN, has been named Winship Cancer Institute's new Associate Director for Community Outreach and Engagement. In this position, Dr. Gillespie will provide vision and oversight for Winship's community-facing priorities. These include efforts in cancer health disparities, recruitment of underserved populations to clinical trials, cancer risk mitigation, cancer prevention, and cancer control interventions focused on Winship's catchment area, the state of Georgia. Dr. Gillespie has 30 years of experience in clinical oncology, including direct patient care.

1,000th heart transplant performed at Emory University Hospital

Tyrone Baldwin (above, with his wife) became the 1,000th heart transplant patient at Emory University Hospital, making Emory Healthcare the first health care system in

Georgia to reach this milestone. After a four-month stay, Tyrone Baldwin left the hospital last month with a new heart.

"We, at Emory, are committed to providing all Georgians access to the highest quality of care across the spectrum. Our heart transplant program provides the most advanced therapies for heart failure available anywhere," says Mani Daneshmand, MD, Director of the Emory Heart & Lung Transplantation, Mechanical Circulatory Support and Emory ECMO Programs.

In 2020, Mr. Baldwin had bariatric surgery to help him lose weight so he could be listed for a heart transplant. Emory Bariatric Center surgeon Ankit Patel, MD, performed the complex sleeve gastrectomy, which was successful. "The combination of Mr. Baldwin's willpower with the quality of the surgery performed by Dr. Patel contributed to an optimal BMI for good long-term results of transplantation," says Edward Lin, DO, the center's Surgical Director.

David Vega, MD, Professor of Surgery in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, is estimated to have performed nearly half of these 1,000 heart transplants. He attributes the program's successes to support by hospital leadership and a focus on patient care. "For 36 years, we have been supported by excellent institutional commitment, which has assisted us in caring for numerous patients who have exhausted all options for end-stage heart disease," he says.

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Randi Smith earns EM teaching award

Trauma and acute care general surgeon Randi Smith, MD, MPH, was selected for Emergency Medicine's Off Service Teacher of the Year Award by all 60+ emergency medicine residents. "Dr. Smith's ability to teach under pressure, remain patient-focused, and provide an outstanding clinical environment is commendable and does not go unnoticed," says Melissa White, MD, MPH, Program Director for the Emory Emergency Medicine Residency.

Michael Lowe throws perfect pitch for skin cancer awareness

In honor of Winship Cancer Institute and the Atlanta Braves teaming up to promote sun safety this summer, surgical oncologist and melanoma specialist Michael Lowe, MD, threw out the ceremonial first pitch to highlight skin cancer awareness at the Braves game on Friday, July 2nd. Dr. Lowe specializes in the treatment of cutaneous malignancies, including melanoma, basal cell carcinoma, and Merkel cell carcinoma.

Welcome new faculty

Amalia A. Jonsson, MD, is an adult cardiac surgeon who specializes in minimally invasive and robotically assisted cardiac surgery. Her clinical focus is on coronary and valvular heart disease with an emphasis on robotically assisted mitral valve and coronary artery bypass procedures. During her integrated general surgery-cardiothoracic surgery residency at Emory, she received outstanding resident awards in 2017, 2018, and 2020, and was Administrative Chief.

Alison F. Ward, MD, did her general surgery residency, cardiothoracic surgery research fellowship, and integrated general surgery-cardiothoracic surgery residency at NYU Langone Health. She will primarily be based at Grady Memorial Hospital, where she will practice general adult cardiac surgery with a clinical and research interest in hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. Prior to joining Emory, Dr. Ward was an Assistant Professor of Surgery at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University.

Caroline Medin and Jessica Keilson receive prestigious support for their research sabbaticals

General surgery residents Caroline Medin, MD, and Jessica Keilson, MD, have received awards that will assist in funding their respective sabbaticals involving cancer research. Dr. Medin has been accepted into the Georgia Clinical & Translational Science Alliance (Georgia CTSA) TL1 Program, and Dr. Keilson was awarded the Chester P. Rochfort Scholarship of Winship Cancer Institute.

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ASTS Foundation awards Wairimu Magua her first grant

The American Society of Transplant Surgeons Foundation has awarded Wairimu Magua, PhD, MS, academic research scientist at the Emory Transplant Center, the 2021 ASTS-Natera Socioeconomic and Racial Disparities in Transplantation Grant. Her study will evaluate the distribution and impact of human leukocyte antigen mismatches at high resolution on graft failure in heart transplant recipients.

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Aileen Johnson wins Grady Research Day Poster Competition

Aileen Johnson, MD, general surgery resident in the first year of her two-year research sabbatical, won Resident Research Day's poster competition at Grady Memorial Hospital. Her poster was entitled "hlaR: A Streamlined Tool for Eplet Analysis," and described technology she developed with her mentor Christian Larsen, MD, DPhil, and research informatics analyst Joan Zhang, MS.

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