This past year our Surgical Services received a record amount of philanthropic support that will provide clinical research programs, scientific and device discovery, and advanced education for our trainees

I continue to be encouraged by the outstanding innovation and patient-centered care within the Section of Surgical Sciences. While we must take pride in the work we have accomplished together, we must also recognize that all of these advances would not be possible without our robust philanthropy program.

Support from individuals, businesses and foundations is critical to advancing the mission of the Section of Surgical Sciences in patient care, research and clinical training. I want to express my sincere gratitude to all of the generous donors who have contributed to the success of the Section of Surgical Sciences.

These kind gifts enable us to continue making advances in patient care to improve the safety of surgical treatment and to improve the short and long-term outcomes of surgical care. The gifts also enable our surgical departments to provide the very best in surgical education and training in order to develop the next generation of outstanding surgical leaders.

In recent months, we have received gifts to support a range of activities and endeavors: research in urologic surgery; faculty support and research in trauma and surgical critical care; research in general surgery, neurosurgery, cardiac surgery and pediatric cardiac surgery, and resident training in general surgery.

Some donors choose to support current work, others establish endowed funds to provide income over the long term, and some make a commitment through their wills. Every gift, regardless of type or size, is appreciated, and every gift helps patients today and in the future.

The demand for our services remains strong and the future of Vanderbilt University Medical Center is bright. With the support of our many generous donors, we will continue to expand services and our geographic reach in order to better serve our community.

The Medical Center’s Development office works with donors to help them realize their charitable goals. For additional information, call the Development office at (615) 936-0230.
Geiger named Medical Director of Surgery PCC

In order to allow him to focus on his research, Dr. Naji Abumrad decided to step down from his role as Medical Director of the Surgery Patient Care Center. Please join me in thanking Dr. Abumrad for his steady leadership and significant contributions to the Surgery PCC. We also congratulate him for a job well done and wish him ongoing success and happiness.

Timothy Geiger, M.D., MMHC, assumed the role as Medical Director of the Surgery Patient Care Center January 1, 2017. He has done outstanding work as Associate Medical Director of the Surgery PCC. His contributions to the PCC, Department of Surgery, and Section of Surgical Sciences are incredibly valuable and he continues to demonstrate remarkable leadership abilities.

In this role, in addition to continuing as Division Chief of General Surgery, Dr. Geiger will serve as the physician leader of the Surgery PCC, partnering with Bess Wildman, Associate Operating Officer, and Dave Wyatt, Associate Nursing Officer, to set the strategic and operational direction of the PCC. This will include helping to achieve our goals related to service delivery, financial health, and quality of care, among others. Dr. Geiger will be a resource for the department chairs and faculty members in support of the overall success of our programs across the PCC, and will also require development of partnerships with other institutional leaders towards this end.

Urologic Surgery's Edna Johnson is the Section Credo winner

We are pleased to announce that Edna Johnson, Executive Secretary Senior, is the Section’s Credo Award recipient for the quarter ending October 31, 2016. Edna began her career 12 years ago working in the Department of Urologic Surgery and quickly became the “lead” administrative assistant.

Edna consistently demonstrates excellent Credo behaviors and came highly recommended by several faculty and staff for the Credo award. She is well liked and is respectful to her colleagues. She is fully committed to the faculty she serves – always giving freely of her time to complete just-in-time duties and meet deadlines from many demanding sources. She always steps outside of the box to assist others, demonstrating her commitment not only to Urology, but also to VUMC. Edna is known to be the “go to” person for others in the department when it comes to learning new processes and tasks.

Congratulations Edna for being our quarterly Section Credo winner. We look forward to receiving other outstanding nominations before next quarter’s deadline of April 30, 2017.
Vanderbilt mourns loss of former Bariatric Surgery director Clements

Ronald Clements, M.D., professor of Surgery and the past director of Bariatric Surgery at Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC), died Jan. 19 at home surrounded by his family. He was 50.

A distinguished professor in the field of bariatric surgery, Clements first came to Vanderbilt University to complete the Laparoscopic Fellowship program, a program he later directed. Prior to his current position, Clements was professor of Surgery and the director of Bariatric Surgery at the University of Alabama-Birmingham. He stepped down last year from his director’s role at Vanderbilt due to health concerns.

“We are all saddened by the loss of Dr. Clements, just as we were so honored to be in his presence in life,” said C. Wright Pinson, MBA, M.D., Deputy CEO and Chief Health Systems Officer for VUMC. “Ronnie was compassionate and also appropriately driven, always pushing for his center to be the very best in terms of clinical excellence and on the leading edge as far as new treatment options for his patients. I admired him for obtaining recently his Master in Management in Health Care, with his goal to be an even better physician leader. We will all remember his passion for helping those he cared for achieve better lives. He was one of the very best doctors. On behalf of the Medical Center, I want to express our sincere condolences to Kim and his sons.”

“Ronnie was an outstanding surgeon and a complete physician in every way,” said R. Daniel Beauchamp, M.D., chair of the Section of Surgical Sciences and the John Clinton Foshee Distinguished Professor of Surgery. “He had a deep well of compassion for his patients and took personal responsibility for their overall well-being. In addition, he was a wonderful mentor, educator and colleague and was always willing to give his time and support to others. He led the Bariatric service by example and encouraged everyone to share his vision of excellence. He will be missed by his related family and by his Vanderbilt family.”

“Dr. Clements dedicated his life to the service of his patients and those around him,” said Seth Karp, M.D., H. William Scott Jr. Professor and chair of the Department of Surgery. “Even as he dealt with his terminal illness, he gave of his time and energy to support the department and its patients. Memories of his warm personality, clinical excellence and indomitable spirit will continue as an inspiration to all of us.”

Clements was a graduate of the University of Alabama School of Medicine and the general surgical residency program at Carraway Methodist Medical Center in Birmingham, Alabama. He was a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, the Southern Surgical Association, and the Southeastern Surgical Congress. He was also a member of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons and the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract. He served on a number of committees in these organizations.

Clements’ research interests included nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, metabolic changes associated with bariatric surgery and clinical outcomes of bariatric surgery. In 2015, the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery honored Clements for his accomplishments in metabolic and bariatric surgery by naming their annual Patient Safety & Quality Award in his name.

Clements was a member of Judson Baptist Church in Nashville, where he served on many committees and boards. He is survived by his wife, Kimberly, and sons, Ronald Hanson Clements Jr. and Blake Austin Clements.
Kelly helps cancer patient rebuild his self-esteem

Looking over his chickens at his home in Tompkinsville, Kentucky, Jerry Ford says taking care of this energetic brood is what kept his spirits up after he had facial reconstructive surgery at Vanderbilt two years ago.

As an HVAC technician, Ford often crawled through cobwebbed spaces, so he thought an irritated spot on his right cheek was a spider bite. He went to a physician for treatment, but the spot just got worse. After multiple biopsies, excisions and changing diagnoses, Ford, who by then had a quarter-size hole in his cheek, was referred to a Bowling Green, Kentucky, plastic surgeon.

The diagnosis was squamous cell carcinoma. Realizing the cancer was now extensive, the doctor referred Ford to Vanderbilt plastic surgeon Kevin Kelly, M.D., D.D.S., director of the Craniofacial Surgery Center.

A plastic surgeon might simply close a wound so deftly that only the faintest whisper of an incision remains. Or they might meticulously rebuild and shape structures that have been devastated by cancer, as in Ford’s case.

When squamous cell carcinomas are detected and removed early, they are usually curable and cause minimal damage. However, if left untreated, they can penetrate underlying tissues and become disfiguring. A small percentage even metastasize to local lymph nodes, distant tissues and organs.

The squamous cell carcinoma had spread through Ford’s cheek and into his cheekbone and lower part of his eye socket.

“When I had my surgery with Dr. Kelly, he told me afterward, ‘Mr. Ford, if you hadn’t come in to see me when you did, I don’t think I could’ve done anything for you,’” Ford remembered. “It was that bad. But I look fine.”

Addison K. May, M.D., FACS, FCCM, professor of Surgery and Anesthesiology, was honored recently with the Barry Shapiro Memorial Award at the 46th Critical Care Congress of the Society of Critical Care Medicine in Honolulu, HI.

The award recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to the design and/or implementation of evidence-based practice which has significantly impacted clinical, operational, or fiscal outcomes within their area of responsibility.

This award recognizes May’s contributions in the creation of the Multidisciplinary Surgical Critical Care Service, advancement of quality and process improvement within the SICU, and history of the unit achieving firsts within the institution. During his tenure, the SICU has dramatically expanded, introduced greater than 50 evidence-based guidelines and protocols, and was the first to introduce clinical PharmDs and ACNPs within the ICUs at Vanderbilt. May’s team constructed the computer assisted IV insulin protocol used by the institution and introduced infection reduction and antibiotic stewardship initiatives that have had dramatic impact on reducing resistant infections within the unit. He also introduced airway safety processes that have significantly reduced airway loss.

Dr. Todd Doorman, President of the the SCCM 2016-17, presents Dr. Addison May the Shapiro Award for his contributions to Surgical Critical Care

Addison K. May, M.D., FACS, FCCM, professor of Surgery and Anesthesiology, was honored recently with the Barry Shapiro Memorial Award at the 46th Critical Care Congress of the Society of Critical Care Medicine in Honolulu, HI.

The award recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to the design and/or implementation of evidence-based practice which has significantly impacted clinical, operational, or fiscal outcomes within their area of responsibility.

This award recognizes May’s contributions in the creation of the Multidisciplinary Surgical Critical Care Service, advancement of quality and process improvement within the SICU, and history of the unit achieving firsts within the institution. During his tenure, the SICU has dramatically expanded, introduced greater than 50 evidence-based guidelines and protocols, and was the first to introduce clinical PharmDs and ACNPs within the ICUs at Vanderbilt. May’s team constructed the computer assisted IV insulin protocol used by the institution and introduced infection reduction and antibiotic stewardship initiatives that have had dramatic impact on reducing resistant infections within the unit. He also introduced airway safety processes that have significantly reduced airway loss.

Dr. Addison May receives the Barry Shapiro Memorial Award for Excellence in Critical Care Management

Kelly helps cancer patient rebuild his self-esteem

Looking over his chickens at his home in Tompkinsville, Kentucky, Jerry Ford says taking care of this energetic brood is what kept his spirits up after he had facial reconstructive surgery at Vanderbilt two years ago.

As an HVAC technician, Ford often crawled through cobwebbed spaces, so he thought an irritated spot on his right cheek was a spider bite. He went to a physician for treatment, but the spot just got worse. After multiple biopsies, excisions and changing diagnoses, Ford, who by then had a quarter-size hole in his cheek, was referred to a Bowling Green, Kentucky, plastic surgeon.

The diagnosis was squamous cell carcinoma. Realizing the cancer was now extensive, the doctor referred Ford to Vanderbilt plastic surgeon Kevin Kelly, M.D., D.D.S., director of the Craniofacial Surgery Center.

A plastic surgeon might simply close a wound so deftly that only the faintest whisper of an incision remains. Or they might meticulously rebuild and shape structures that have been devastated by cancer, as in Ford’s case.

When squamous cell carcinomas are detected and removed early, they are usually curable and cause minimal damage. However, if left untreated, they can penetrate underlying tissues and become disfiguring. A small percentage even metastasize to local lymph nodes, distant tissues and organs.

The squamous cell carcinoma had spread through Ford’s cheek and into his cheekbone and lower part of his eye socket.

“When I had my surgery with Dr. Kelly, he told me afterward, ‘Mr. Ford, if you hadn’t come in to see me when you did, I don’t think I could’ve done anything for you,’” Ford remembered. “It was that bad. But I look fine.”

Complete story link
Burney family establishes “Hope Grows Here” fundraising event to honor the PICU and neurosurgical team experience

Two years ago, Laura and Justin Burney faced the unthinkable: almost losing their infant daughter, Brooklyn. Now a spirited, loving 2½ year old, Brooklyn Burney survived a perinatal stroke at birth, followed by a ruptured brain aneurysm at 1 month old, and has since battled a form of epilepsy that involves periodic involuntary jerking motions.

Through it all, the Burneys have put Brooklyn and their faith in the hands of care teams at Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt. The couple has graciously given back by sharing their daughter’s success story, stressing to people in the community that having access to a comprehensive pediatric health care facility like Children’s Hospital is the reason their daughter survived.

Laura Burney said they knew, even before Brooklyn left the hospital, that they would give back to the people and place that made it possible for her daughter to be alive — those who made it possible for her daughter to have a future.

“As life went on we knew we needed to give back, and specifically to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit,” Laura Burney said. “We have a passion for the department, the staff and everything everyone has done. “If you had to depict our experience there and what that place is to us, they essentially gave us hope in an extremely scary time, and they continue to give us hope on a daily basis. Brooklyn was facing some very serious odds.”

Working with Medical Center staff members, the Burneys launched “Hope Grows Here,” a fundraising event to raise awareness in the community about the expert, personalized care that Children’s Hospital provides to children from Tennessee, the region and across the nation. Proceeds from “Hope Grows Here” will benefit the Growing to New Heights Campaign, which supports the four-floor expansion atop Children’s Hospital.

On hand at the Burney family’s inaugural ‘Hope Grows Here’ fundraising event in Clarksville were (seated, from left) Truc Le, M.D., Hong Yu, M.D., Jay Wellons, M.D., Melissa Wellons, M.D., (standing from left) Crystal Carlisle, R.N., Haley Vance, DNP, Justin Burney and Laura Burney.

VUMC named best in U.S. for patient safety in trauma care

Vanderbilt has been ranked the No. 1 hospital in the nation for patient safety in Trauma care by CareChex 2017 Hospital Quality Ratings Analysis. The award is based on patient safety performance derived from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s patient safety indicators.

“Our entire Trauma team has put forth an incredible effort over the last several years as we worked toward becoming the state’s only American College of Surgeons-verified Level 1 Adult Trauma Center, a status we achieved two years ago. This latest honor from CareChex underscores our focus on patient safety, performance improvement, quality and multidisciplinary care of the critically injured patient,” said Richard Miller, M.D., chief of the Division of Trauma and Surgical Critical Care and professor of Surgery. “I am incredibly proud of the entire Trauma team and our institution for giving us the resources necessary to rank as the safest trauma center in the United States.”
Kaiser is co-surgical director of new center focusing on Marfan syndrome, aortic disease

With the recent opening of the Vanderbilt Marfan Syndrome and Aortic Disorders Center, the state’s only comprehensive clinic serving entire families, hundreds of patients with connective tissue disorders now have a one-stop shop for health care.

Located within the Vanderbilt Heart and Vascular Institute, the center offers a multidisciplinary approach to caring for patients with aortic disease, with an added focus on Marfan syndrome.

“We have been treating this group of patients for years,” said Clayton Kaiser, M.D., assistant professor of Cardiac Surgery and co-surgical director of the new center. “But we had never put together a real center working with the Marfan Foundation to create a multidisciplinary operation.

“ACS Level I pediatric trauma center verification means that our Pediatric Trauma Program provides the highest standard of patient care for injured children at Children’s Hospital, benchmarked by evidence-based clinical pathways, outstanding quality, and patient outcomes,” said Dai Chung, M.D., director of Pediatric Trauma, and chair of the Department of Pediatric Surgery. “As one of the busiest pediatric trauma programs in the country, this designation puts us as one of the very best in caring for injured children. This recognition also reflects how everyone works together to support a multidisciplinary program such as Pediatric Trauma at our children’s hospital.”

Complete story link

Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt receives American College of Surgeons Level I Trauma verification

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) Committee on Trauma has verified Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt as a Level I pediatric trauma center, recognizing the hospital’s commitment to provide the highest level of care for injured pediatric patients.

As a regional comprehensive pediatric facility, Children’s Hospital is the only Level I pediatric trauma center within 150 miles, providing specialty services for children from Alabama to Kentucky and all over Tennessee. There are fewer than 50 ACS verified Level I pediatric trauma centers in the country.

“Attaining the American College of Surgeons’ verification as a Level I pediatric trauma center is a true testament to the commitment and hard work of our team of trauma experts who care for critically injured children; and it is a true team effort, including pediatric surgeons, emergen—

Children’s Hospital’s Pediatric Trauma service admits about 1,100 pediatric trauma patients each year

“Our team is able to provide comprehensive care that offers entire families the opportunity to receive world-class care in one place. This is an entirely new concept in Tennessee.”

Specialists from Cardiology, Cardiac Surgery, Vascular Medicine, Vascular Surgery, Anesthesiology, Radiology and Radiological Sciences, Genetics, congenital disease programs, Orthopaedics, Ophthalmology, Neurosurgery and pain management collaborate to provide state-of-the-art diagnostic testing, genetic screenings, innovative therapies for medical and surgical management as well as ongoing research and education.

Marfan syndrome is a genetic disorder that affects the body’s connective tissue. The disorder can impact the heart, blood vessels, bones, joints and eyes. Problems with the heart and vascular system are common in Marfan patients.

Complete story link
Movers & Thinkers podcast #9
How crisis responders keep calm under pressure:
Trauma’s Nuñez interviewed

When there’s a crisis, these are the people who get called in the middle of the night to address it. They’ve learned how to jump into action at any time and make life-altering decisions on a moment’s notice.

What kind of personality do they need for a job like that? And after they’ve handled an emergency, how do they handle the inevitable stress on themselves? This NPR Podcast features trauma surgeon Timothy Nuñez, M.D., police chaplain James Duke and crisis communications expert Rosemary Plorin.

Radio interview story link

Section Coat Drive a success

Donations of 75 warm coats, and dozens of gloves, hats, scarves and socks poured in from across the Section, Department of Finance, Cardiopulmonary Perfusion, VICC, CTRC, and others in support of VUMC’s Homeless Health Services Program. Donations will be distributed to homeless men living on Nashville streets.

Thanks to everyone for your generous support!

The Section of Surgical Sciences’ Dan Ott, Associate Director, Finance Operations, Dr. Dan Beauchamp, Section Chair, Bess Wildman, Chief Business Officer, Finance & Operations and Yvonne Snyder, Manager, Projects packed the donated items for delivery to VUMC Homeless Health Services on Friday, December 2, 2016.

Reconstructive plastic surgeon Summitt helped cancer patient preserve use of his ankle

In January 2015, Nashville attorney Jay Smith decided it was time to get a bothersome cyst removed that had appeared on his right ankle a few years before. He was surprised when a biopsy revealed it was actually a rare form of cancer known as a soft tissue sarcoma.

Smith was referred to Vanderbilt orthopaedic oncologist Ginger Holt, M.D., who laid out her plan to remove a larger area of tissue from his ankle in order to ensure all cancer was gone and to reduce the risk of a recurrence. Holt sent him to Vanderbilt reconstructive plastic surgeon Blair Summitt, M.D., so they could discuss how to best preserve the function of his foot and leg.

“It was a very uncertain time, to be honest,” Smith said. “There were big unknowns going into the surgery—whether, because this was in such a sensitive area, I would be able to wear normal shoes again and whether I would get the range of motion in my ankle back.”

He worried about how more surgery might limit his ability to be active with his children’s sports and other events.

“It’s overwhelming when someone gets that cancer diagnosis, so you need to just sit back, talk, and answer questions,” said Summitt. “Patients and their families need to get to know you. I draw diagrams a lot, too.”

Because there is limited tissue on the extremities, especially in bony areas such as a wrist or ankle, reconstruction in these areas poses unique challenges. Bones that can become exposed when cancer is removed must be re-covered and nerves meticulously salvaged to preserve sensation and movement. Summitt’s solution for Smith’s situation was to cut a flap of connective tissue, fat and skin from his calf, and, leaving the blood vessels intact, rotate the flap down to cover his ankle. Doppler ultrasound confirmed there was adequate blood flow into the flap before it was secured into place.

Complete story link
VUMC’s Heart Transplant program hits a new annual milestone

VUMC is home to the second busiest heart transplant program in the country, according to the most recent data released by the Organ Procurement and Transplant Network (OPTN).

Ranked No. 1 in the Southeast region for volume for its combined adult and pediatric procedures, this marks the second consecutive year that VUMC’s program held its national ranking.

In 2016, the program performed a record number of adult heart transplants at 77. The overall program, which includes pediatric cases, saw a record 92 transplantations in 2016.

“There is a significant theme here,” said Ashish Shah, M.D., professor of Cardiac Surgery and surgical director of the adult heart transplant program at VUMC. “The institutional commitment to our program, coupled with the extraordinary people that make up our heart transplant program, have proven to be critical in our ability to deliver high-quality patient care while sustaining these volumes.”

Shah applauded not only the heart transplant team, but also commended the left ventricular assist device (LVAD) team as well as those in the operating rooms and intensive care units for being an integral part of the program’s success.

Complete story link
One size does not fit all

When faced with a breast cancer diagnosis, patients are not only confronted with critical choices about their treatment, many must also decide what to do about breast reconstruction.

That’s when Vanderbilt reconstructive plastic surgeons specializing in breast reconstruction step in, and their role extends far beyond aesthetics. They listen closely to patients, working with them and their oncology teams to determine the type of surgery that is both the safest choice and the one that best meets the patient’s expectations.

The oncology team refers patients to plastic surgery soon after their diagnosis, and they are often apprehensive and uncertain, said Vanderbilt plastic surgeon Stephane Braun, M.D.

At Vanderbilt, plastic surgeons Braun and Kye Higdon, M.D., work in tandem to perform DIEP flap surgeries, in concert with a team of anesthesia specialists, nurses and surgical technologists. Using the team approach decreases the time a patient is under anesthesia, improving their overall recovery and experience.

Now, four years after her DIEP flap surgery, Grossman said she couldn’t be happier. “Vanderbilt saved my life. I give several doctors there the credit for me still being here. This is clearly the silver lining of breast cancer for me. I had no lymph node involvement, I didn’t have to have radiation or chemotherapy, and I have new breasts that were made from the belly that my babies gave me.”

Another woman’s choice

Tina Shumate had recently retired from her job as an administrative assistant with the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System when in 2016 she was diagnosed with breast cancer — ductal carcinoma with lymph node involvement. She was overwhelmed.

She worked with her Vanderbilt Breast Center team, medical oncologist Vandana Abramson, M.D., and surgical oncologist Ingrid Meszoely, M.D., to determine a surgery and treatment plan, which included something she was really dreading, post-surgery chemotherapy. Then, she met with Kye Higdon, M.D. her plastic surgeon, to come up with a plan for reconstructing her breast after the tumor removal.

Shumate said Higdon’s recommendation to rebuild her breast using her existing breast tissue, a technique called oncoplastic surgery, eliminated a worry that she didn’t think she could live with—a mastectomy. Oncoplastic surgery is a breast-conserving procedure where cancerous tissue is removed by a surgical oncologist with enough clear breast tissue remaining for a plastic surgeon to reconstruct a breast.

“Everyone handles things differently, but I just think it would have been hard for me personally to accept a mastectomy,” she said. “I’m thankful that Dr. Higdon was here to handle this aspect for me and help me find a solution I would be happy with. I don’t know how much more bad news I could have taken.”

Complete story link
Testicular cancer can affect young men too

If testicular cancers were like other cancers, Mike Janowski would be the unlikely young patient who got a cancer that normally affects much older people. However, testicular cancer is the rare kind of cancer that mostly affects the young—it is the most common tumor for American men in their 20s and 30s, David Penson, M.D., MPH, chair of Urologic Surgery said.

“While it still doesn’t happen really often, if you’re 25 years old and you’re a guy, this is the cancer you should be worrying about,” Penson said.

He recommends that men examine their testicles at least once a month, and if they feel a lump, bump or bruise, they should see their doctor for simple ultrasound and blood tests.

“The test to see if there’s anything there is just an ultrasound, so it’s non-invasive, doesn’t hurt,” Penson said. “It’s easy. The problem is a lot of guys feel something down there and they sort of go into denial. Like, ‘oh, it’ll go away.’ Then they come in six months later and they have a football-sized tumor. I’ve seen that, and their cancer has spread everywhere.”

Testicular cancer is highly treatable and curable. When caught early, a simple outpatient operation to remove one testicle is often the course of action, Penson said. A prosthesis can be implanted to replace the lost testicle, if requested. Most men go on to live normal lives after surgery.

“There’s enough testosterone made by one testicle and enough sperm made by one testicle for men to have normal hormone production, normal fertility with one testicle,” he said. “The reality of it is, and if I was the patient, I’d rather have it out than leave it in. Leaving it in is not really an option.”

Family history has very little to do with whether a man is at risk for testicular cancer, Penson said. One of the biggest risk factors is whether a man has an undescended testicle.

Complete story link

Ranking lauds VUMC’s Cardiac Surgery program

Vanderbilt was recognized as the No. 1 hospital in Tennessee for Medical Excellence in Major Cardiac Surgery by CareChex 2017 Hospital Quality Ratings Analysis.

Although cardiac surgery received the recognition, Michael Petracek, M.D., chair of Cardiac Surgery said Vanderbilt Heart and Vascular Institute as a whole played a key role in the recent acknowledgement.

“What this No. 1 status in the state tells me is that what we are doing is working — our collaborative efforts are really paying off for us and our patients,” Petracek said. “This ranking branches from a commitment that Vanderbilt made about 10 years ago to elevate our cardiology care to the best in the country.

“Being recognized as the top hospital in the state is a true testament to our dedication to providing the absolute best care to every single patient.”

Complete story link

Plastic Surgery Sock Drive

The Department of Plastic Surgery administrative and research staff recently had a sock drive for the 140 residents at Bethany Health and Rehab Center. Their goal of purchasing a new pair of warm non-slip socks for each of the residents of the center was reached and delivered to them just in time for the holidays. To brighten the residents spirits even more, Jammie Baber hand made 140 Christmas cards that were distributed along with the socks.

Complete story link
If you’ve got excess pounds to lose but don’t qualify for bariatric surgery, a new non-surgical, fully reversible weight loss option will soon be offered at Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC). The Obalon balloon system — three swallowable balloons that remain inside the stomach during treatment — was approved in September by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration following a national clinical trial at 15 sites, including VUMC. The treatment will be offered at the Vanderbilt Center for Surgical Weight Loss by early 2017.

Typically, an individual with a body mass index (BMI) of more than 35 with two comorbidities, such as high blood pressure and diabetes, or a BMI of more than 40 without comorbidities, is eligible for bariatric surgery. The balloon system is available to individuals with a lower BMI of 30-40, so it is an earlier intervention for treating obesity.

“After gaining weight to a BMI of 30 or greater, there is a significant increase in the number of medical problems that develop — such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol — and there are significant costs associated with taking care of those medical problems,” said Wayne English, M.D., director of the Vanderbilt Center for Surgical Weight Loss and principal investigator for the clinical trial at Vanderbilt.
El-Rifai among nine Vanderbilt faculty members elected as AAAS fellows

These new fellows are among a group of 391 fellows from around the country selected by their peers “because of their efforts toward advancing science applications that are deemed scientifically or socially distinguished.”

“It is a tremendous honor for our faculty to be nominated and elected by their peers as AAAS fellows, a group that includes the most esteemed scientists in their fields,” said Susan R. Wente, Ph.D., provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. “These nine faculty members individually have made significant contributions to advancing our understanding through basic and applied research and also by serving as mentors to the next generation of scholars. Collectively, they contribute greatly to our One Vanderbilt community of discovery.”

The new fellows were recognized Feb. 18, 2017, at the AAAS annual meeting in Boston.

Vanderbilt now has 119 AAAS fellows among its current and emeritus faculty and staff. More than half of them — 64 — were elected during the past five years, reflecting remarkable momentum and growth of the institution’s academic standing.

As an AAAS fellow, Wael El-Rifai, M.D., Ph.D., H. William Scott Jr. professor of Surgery and professor of Cancer Biology, is recognized for distinguished contributions to the field of molecular and translational oncology, particularly pioneering work supporting recent clinical trials to treat gastrointestinal cancers.

“I want to congratulate our faculty on this career distinction. Each has contributed significantly to Vanderbilt’s reputation on the world stage while advancing scientific knowledge within their field. Beyond this acknowledgement are the lives positively impacted through their work, through important new discoveries in science, medicine and engineering,” said Jeff Balser, M.D., Ph.D., president and CEO of Vanderbilt University Medical Center and dean of the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.

Complete story link

Beauchamp laboratory and collaborators land journal cover

Transforming Growth Factor (b) Superfamily Signaling in Development of Colorectal Cancer

Daniel Beauchamp, M.D., chair of the Section of Surgical Sciences and colleagues recently published a paper and cover illustration to Gastroenterology. The paper explores how the signals from outside the cells are integral for maintaining healthy, homeostatic functions inside the cells. One such signaling pathway is the TGF-β pathway that consists of secreted proteins that interact with receptors at the cell surface. This interaction sends an intracellular signal through multiple intermediates that eventually regulate gene expression and protein functions. The review by Jung, Staudacher, and Beauchamp describes the many levels of regulation that cells employ to regulate the TGF-β pathway in normal colon and how colorectal cancer cells can mutate or otherwise inactivate many of these steps to allow inappropriate proliferation, invasion, escape from immune surveillance, and other functions that allow tumors to grow and spread.

Section of Surgical Sciences Partners with Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital

The Section of Surgical Sciences partnered with the Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital’s Annual Champ’s Toy Chest drive to help fulfill the Holiday Wish List for the Children and Families at MCJCH. Donations from across the Section were delivered to the Stallworth Hospital Gym to be added to the numerous donations given by so many around VUMC and our community.
Guelcher, Nanney journal report: “Improving wound healing”

An injectable, biodegradable polyurethane (PUR) material facilitates wound healing, Vanderbilt investigators have demonstrated.

The findings, reported in the November issue of the *Journal of Biomedical Materials Research*, support the potential utility of injectable PUR scaffolds for filling large skin wounds that result from traumatic injury or chronic skin ulcers in patients with diabetes.

Scott Guelcher, Ph.D., Lillian Nanney, Ph.D., and colleagues previously reported that preformed PUR scaffolds improve wound repair processes. Now, they show in a clinically relevant animal model that a new flowable, injected formulation of PUR scaffolding supported tissue infiltration and matrix production, delayed wound contraction, and reduced scarring.

**Complete story link**

Smith honored at Society annual meeting for a lifetime of leadership and humanitarian contributions

Joseph A. Smith, Jr., M.D., chairman of the Department of Urologic Surgery from 1991 to 2015, was honored at the Vanderbilt Urology Society’s annual Rhamy-Shelley lectureship in November.

Over 180 faculty, staff and alumni from around the country gathered for the 2-day event. Guest speakers gave educational lectures, and lauded Dr. Smith for his extensive contributions to urology, his surgical skills, his leadership of the department, his mentorship, his volunteerism and his character.

Roxy Baumgartner, MS, RN, ANP-BC, was also honored as she retired after 23 years at Vanderbilt and 20 years in the Urology Department. Pam Steele received the Maggie McReynolds Award.

Fire and burns experienced by E-Cig users: Summit and Thompson interviewed

WKRN News 2 reporter Stephanie Langston interviewed burn surgeon Callie Thompson, M.D., assistant professor of Surgery, about the rise in burns from electronic cigarettes.

MedPage Today reporter Salynn Boyles interviewed Blair Summitt, M.D., medical director of the Burn Unit and assistant professor in the Department of Plastic Surgery, following the release of a *New England Journal of Medicine* study that shows a recent increase in e-cigarette burns.

**Complete story link**

Dr. Nanney

Dr. Thompson
Study reveals plasmin prevents muscle ‘hardening’ after injury: Summitt and Rae recruited to join the research team

Severe burn, blast and neurologic injuries, and certain orthopaedic surgeries, can cause muscle and other soft tissues to “calcify” — harden from deposits of calcium-phosphate crystals, the same crystals found in bone. Pathologic calcification, which can induce bone formation (heterotopic ossification), has been poorly understood, and treatments for it are lacking, said Jonathan Schoenecker, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of Orthopaedic Surgery and Rehabilitation.

Now, Schoenecker and his colleagues have made the surprising discovery that the protease plasmin, known for its clot-busting role in the blood, also protects soft tissue from pathologic calcification. The findings, reported in the Journal of Bone and Mineral Research, could lead to new treatments to protect soft tissue from calcification after severe injury or surgery.

To explore the clinical importance of these findings, Schoenecker and his colleagues are now examining the systemic changes that happen in conditions most associated with muscle becoming calcified — burn, blast, head and spinal cord injuries.

They have teamed with Edward Sherwood, M.D., Ph.D., Blair Summitt, M.D., and Lisa Rae, M.D., in the burn unit. In preliminary work, they found that burn patients commonly experience a reduction in fibrinolysis — the process that dissolves fibrin clots. Plasmin is the main protease responsible for fibrinolysis, and levels of plasmin fall after severe injury. The researchers hope the current findings will lead to clinical trials designed to improve tissue repair and prevent calcification in these patients, Schoenecker said.

Goldenring part of new Basic Science Research Advisory Committee

Vanderbilt University School of Medicine (VUSM) has formed a new Basic Science Research Advisory Committee.

The committee, which is inclusive across all VUSM departments, will hold quarterly meetings that will serve as a forum for generating ideas and opportunities. The committee’s first meeting took place in December.

The committee’s formation is in response to feedback from this summer’s Strategic Direction planning process, which identified the importance of continuing to incorporate the institution’s academic capabilities into Vanderbilt University Medical Center’s (VUMC) strategic initiatives.

Contributions from the Basic Science Research Advisory Committee’s members are intended to help guide how the basic sciences will continue to develop, expand and innovate.

“The committee’s purpose is to offer input into new and ongoing research and educational operations and initiatives for faculty across the School of Medicine,” said Lawrence Marnett, Ph.D., Mary Geddess Stahlman Professor of Cancer Research and Dean of Basic Sciences for VUSM.

“We believe the committee will also help maintain a sense of unity and shared purpose for the basic science departments.”
School of Medicine’s newest teaching award honors Nanney

Vanderbilt University School of Medicine (VUSM) recently established the Academy for Excellence in Education Lillian B. Nanney Award for Outstanding Service to the VUSM/VUMC Community of Educators.

Lillian Nanney, Ph.D., is the founding director of the Academy for Excellence in Education, established in 2007 by VUSM to reinvigorate the education enterprise and give educators a forum to voice and implement their collective ideas for achieving excellence in teaching and learning. Under her leadership its membership has grown to 110.

“Lillian was the inaugural director of the academy and faithfully led it for its first decade,” Neil Osheroff, Ph.D. said. “In so doing, she was the driving force behind much of the structure and “ecology” of the academy and she played an essential role in establishing a tight and interactive community of educators in VUSM/VUMC.”

Clinical trial seeks to extend stroke treatment time window: Neurosurgeon Chitale works closely with site PI Froehler

The Vanderbilt Stroke Center will participate in a national clinical trial to investigate whether thrombectomies can benefit stroke patients when performed beyond the currently recommended window of time for intervention.

A thrombectomy, which entails threading a catheter with a stent retriever through a main artery and directing it to the brain to remove a blood clot, is most commonly performed up to six hours after the onset of a stroke. DEFUSE 3, a multicenter trial launched this year, seeks to determine if the intervention benefits patients up to 16 hours afterward.

In many cases, such as “wakeup” strokes that actually occur while people are sleeping, the time of symptom onset cannot be determined. Nor can the time be determined when people are found alone.

“What the study is really asking is whether opening a blockage can still be effective for certain people even if the symptoms have been present for an extended period of time,” said Rohan Chitale, M.D., assistant professor of Neurological Surgery.

Chitale, a neurosurgeon, is working closely with Michael Froehler, M.D., Ph.D., a neurologist who is the site principal investigator, other colleagues at the Vanderbilt Stroke Center and imaging specialists to begin enrolling patients in the trial by January 1, 2017. The trial relies heavily on computed tomography (CT) perfusion imaging to detail what areas of the brain are salvageable.

“We want to find answers to these important questions to advance the way we care for our stroke patients,” said Jessica Collins, manager of Surgical Core of Research Resources.

The multicenter study will randomize up to 476 patients over four years with acute ischemic anterior circulation strokes due to large artery occlusions.
Jackson honored by election as member of the Southern Surgical Association

Gretchen Jackson, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of Pediatric Surgery, was recently elected as a member of the Southern Surgical Association (SSA). The SSA holds a fellowship of more than 700 accomplished professionals actively practicing in surgery or one of its subspecialties. Since 1887, the association has hosted an annual venue dedicated to the dissemination of research and discovery of superior surgical techniques, better outcomes and applicable knowledge.

Fire and smoke-related injuries on the rise this winter

Over the last few months, Vanderbilt has seen multiple admissions and a few tragic deaths due to fire and smoke inhalation injuries. Physicians and safety experts with the Vanderbilt Regional Burn Center and Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt say they treat more burn patients during cold-weather months, and the home is where these fires are most likely to occur.

“Home is the place where you feel safest but is also where you are most likely to die in a fire,” said Purnima Unni, MPH, Pediatric Trauma Injury Prevention Program manager at Children’s Hospital. “Eighty-seven percent of all fire-related deaths are due to home fires, which spread rapidly and can leave families with as little as two minutes to escape once an alarm sounds.”

Blair Summitt, M.D., Vanderbilt Burn Center medical director, said “While space heaters, fireplaces and wood-burning stoves can help people warm their homes during the colder months, it is critical that they be used properly.”

Eskind family makes $6 million gift to keep library on leading edge of health education innovation

The Eskind family gathers with Vanderbilt officials to celebrate the signing of the $6 million gift to the Eskind Biomedical Library. From left are Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Relations Susie Stalcup, Donna Eskind, Dr. Jeffrey Eskind, Annette Eskind, Dean of the School of Medicine and President and CEO of VUMC Dr. Jeff Balser, Dr. Steven Eskind and Laurie Eskind.

A visionary $6 million gift to Vanderbilt University from the Eskind family will ensure that the Annette and Irwin Eskind Biomedical Library, the institution’s hub of medical information services and resources since 1994, will continue to support the next generation of scientists, physicians, students and patients. A planned $12.9 million renovation will provide infrastructure for the implementation of the innovative Curriculum 2.0 in the School of Medicine while accommodating the diverse needs of the Biomedical Library’s audiences from all 10 of Vanderbilt’s schools and colleges.

“Medical and health education are continually advancing and evolving, and this foundational gift ensures that Vanderbilt and the Eskind Biomedical Library will continue to be at the forefront of that education,” said Susan R. Wente, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. “This generous gift from the Eskind family allows us to be bold and develop a library model that incorporates the research, learning and teaching goals of the entire university. Classrooms, services, collections, resources, meeting rooms, exhibitions, research assistance, training and more will have a home there.”

In an effort to enhance the broad functions of the award-winning library building, longtime Vanderbilt benefactor Annette S. Eskind and her two sons and their wives, Dr. and Mrs. Steven J. Eskind and Dr. and Mrs. Jeffrey B. Eskind, are making the gift to continue the vision of the late Dr. Irwin Eskind. “This library, and Vanderbilt as a whole, meant a great deal to Irwin. The training of the next generation of physicians and researchers was his passion,” said Annette Eskind. The renovation project is expected to be completed within 18 months, and the library will be renamed the Annette and Irwin Eskind Family Biomedical Library and Learning Center.
Bueno performs complex facial reanimation surgery to help bring back patients’ smiles

Kelly Davis is one of four Vanderbilt patients who have had cutting-edge facial reanimation surgery performed by Reuben Bueno Jr., M.D., associate professor and interim chair of the Department of Plastic Surgery.

Bueno completed a fellowship at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, recognized as the world’s leader in facial reanimation surgery, just so he could learn the surgical techniques to restore movement to paralyzed faces. Bueno, a Nashvillian who received his M.D. from Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, returned to VUMC in 2014, eager to introduce this specialized surgery in his hometown.

There are only a handful of medical centers in the United States that offer this type of facial reanimation surgery, and, thanks to Bueno’s expertise, Vanderbilt is the only facility in the Southeast that offers it for both adults and children.

“We all interact socially by using our faces,” said Bueno. “What patients who have facial paralysis on one side tell me is that, because of the asymmetry, when they’re smiling, they look like they’re scowling or they’re angry. I want to offer reanimation surgery for patients so that in their day-to-day interactions, they can express the normal emotion of being happy or laughing without looking like they are upset.”

Urologic surgeon Kaufman discusses “7 Surprising Causes of Bladder Problems”

A mortifying leak during yoga class. A “gotta go” feeling that won’t stop. Sleepless nights from too many bathroom visits. These are just a few of the bladder problems many Americans struggle with—often silently.

“These are very personal and often times embarrassing situations that patients are reluctant to bring up to their physicians,” says Melissa Kaufman, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of Urologic Surgery. “But there are many treatments that can give you back your quality of life.”

The causes of bladder problems can be as varied as the symptoms. Here are seven that might surprise you:

1. **E. coli** - the common bacteria, a cause of food-borne illness, can also cause painful urinary tract infections (UTIs)
2. **Obesity** - extra weight puts stress on bones, joints and the heart; it also affects the bladder
3. **Heart disease** - blood vessels leading to the bladder are subject to the same stresses as the cardiac vessels
4. **Neurological diseases** - night time urination is a common non-motor symptom for Parkinson’s patients
5. **Medications** - sedatives, antipsychotics, antidepressants, narcotics, high-blood-pressure meds are culprits
6. **Pelvic floor injury** - childbirth complications, radiation treatment, surgery around the pelvic organs, and even extreme exercise can cause stress incontinence or an overactive bladder
7. **Aging** - prostate enlargement in men, and post-menopausal urinary leakage in women are common issues as we age; this incontinence is easily treatable
Jeremiah Bevis, 4, hops around the performance stage area of Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt, burning off some energy before his clinic visit with his team of doctors. He’s an active, lovable boy who will offer a hug within a few minutes of meeting a new person.

For Jeremiah, Children’s Hospital is like a personal playground, a place where he feels comfortable enough to have fun, despite dealing with health issues. It’s a credit to his mother and his care team. Born with one kidney, an imperforate anus and a narrow urethra, Jeremiah has dealt with urinary and bowel issues since birth. He also was born with velocardiofacial syndrome (VCFS), a deletion of the 22nd chromosome, which varies from child to child but can involve kidney, heart, speech and development issues.

On this particular day, Jeremiah came to Children’s Hospital with his mother, Ashley, and his two sisters, Brionna, 8, and Karrington, 5, to go to the Complex Urinary and Bowel Issues (CUBI) Clinic. It’s a new multidisciplinary clinic — the first of its kind for Tennessee — designed to serve as a one-stop appointment for patients like Jeremiah who have complex intestinal and urinary issues.

The clinic allows patients to see multiple doctors at one time and to receive a coordinated and comprehensive care plan, instead of scheduling multiple appointments on different days. Jeremiah has had surgery to repair his imperforate anus, which involves creating a normal connection between the anal opening and the rectum. His one kidney works well, and doctors are monitoring the narrow urethra.

“This clinic arose from the idea that Children’s Hospital is a national leader in managing complex pediatric medical and surgical problems and we want to continue to be both a regional and national leader,” said Thomas. “Our continued growth and success is due to the collegiality of our providers, an extremely well organized clinic coordinator in Samantha Absar, valuable input from the parents of our patients, and the initial and continued support of the leadership and colleagues in our respective divisions. We feel humbled and privileged to care for these wonderful patients and their families and look forward to future growth.”

“We really strive to make life a little easier on the patients and their families who are dealing with complicated issues by coordinating their care both in clinic and in the operating room,” Speck said.

CUBI Clinic focuses on children’s complex urinary, bowel issues

Specialty surgeons Danko, Speck and Thomas are an integral part of the team

The CUBI Clinic team leaders include medical and surgical pediatric specialists (L to R) Melissa Danko, M.D., assistant professor of Pediatric Surgery; Kirk Thame, M.D., associate professor of Pediatric Gastroenterology; Elizabeth Speck, M.D., assistant professor of Pediatric Surgery; and John Thomas, M.D., associate professor of Urologic Surgery. The team also includes nurses trained to care for children with intestinal and urinary problems.

Elizabeth Speck, M.D., holds patient Jeremiah Bevis while talking with the boy’s mother, Ashley Bevis, during a recent appointment at Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt’s Complex Urinary and Bowel Issues (CUBI) Clinic.
Barney Brooks Lecture
Guest Speaker, Melinda Kibbe, M.D.
March 17, 2017, 7:00 a.m., 208 Light Hall

Dale Lecture
Guest Speaker, Carlos Timaran, M.D.
April 21, 2017, 7:00 a.m., 208 Light Hall

David Hall Lecture
Guest Speaker, Alberto Garcia-Perla, M.D.
April 22, 2017, 7:00 a.m., 208 Light Hall

McCleery Lecture
Guest Speaker, Ara A. Vaporciyan, M.D., F.A.C.S., MHPE
May 12, 2017, 7:00 a.m., 208 Light Hall

Thuss Lecture
Guest Speaker, Joseph Serletti, M.D.
April 14, 2017, 7:00 a.m., 208 Light Hall

Holcomb Lecture
Guest Speaker, TBD
October 27, 2017, 7:00 a.m., 208 Light Hall

Rollin Daniels Lecture
Guest Speaker, TBD
November 17, 2017, 7:00 a.m., 208 Light Hall

Get ready for EpicLeap by loading Hubbl on your phones

Kevin Johnson, M.D., Chief Information Officer, is encouraging physicians and staff to load the Hubbl app that was created to keep people informed about ongoing work that will result in EpicLeap going Live. This will include training. Initially, this app will be “quiet” while we get it on everyone’s devices. But within the month, we will begin populating it with key information and soon thereafter using it to communicate BACK to our team. Scan the attached QR codes for Android and Apple devices. If you could forward this through your organizations and encourage people to install it, it will make communication and notification go more smoothly.

Complete story link

M&M Conference Schedule 2017
- June 2, 2017
- September 8, 2017
- December 8, 2017

ANNUAL AND ENDOWED LECTURE SERIES FOR 2017

Hubbl provides Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) members with secure access to news and tasks. Hubbl will soon include schedules, training, status information, and a message board for frequently asked questions.