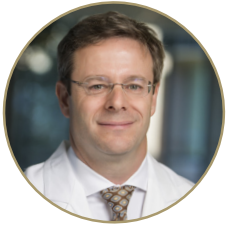


## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



## Sincere thanks to our supporters and donors of 2021

This past year the Section of Surgical Sciences received a generous amount of philanthropic support that will provide clinical research, scientific and device discovery, advanced education for our trainees, and even support for the emotional and psychosocial needs of cardiac pediatric patients' families.

Support from individuals, grateful patients, alumni and foundations are 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.

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. 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.

### Here are just a few of our generous donors who contributed to the Section in 2021 ...

❖ Ellen and Bo Boyer, founders of the Brett Boyer Foundation, made a donation in memory of their daughter Brett. The gift is to aid the hiring of a psychologist in the Department of Pediatrics aimed at supporting the Pediatric Heart and Vascular Institute at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. The cardiac surgical team provided care for Brett.

❖ Ron Duncan, a Nashville songwriter, organized "The RAD Project," donating proceeds from other songwriters and ticket sales from The Bluebird Cafe performances to directly benefit cancer research in the Division of Surgical Oncology & Endocrine Surgery.

❖ Owen Canavan and his family established an endowment that supports a Trauma fellowship enhancing training, after the doctors and nurses in the Trauma Center helped him recover after a devastating car accident.

A special thanks to our 2020-21 endowed and named lecture speakers and family sponsors, who adjusted to presenting via Zoom format. These outstanding speakers are much sought after academic professionals including top surgeons and researchers from around the globe. The list of renowned invited guest speakers continues to amaze me every year and I look forward to next year's lectures.



**Seth Karp, MD**  
Chair, Section of Surgical Sciences

[Click here to see photos and stories about these donors](#)

[To see a list of our Named and Endowed Lectures click here](#)

### Join your colleagues, alumni and patients in giving back

There are many ways to join our community of supporters — from making an outright gift to making a gift through your will. To learn more about how to help further our mission, contact Vanderbilt University Medical Center Development at [giving@vumc.org](mailto:giving@vumc.org) or 615-936-0230.

## Wagner named to lead Vanderbilt Burn Center



Dr. Wagner

**Anne Wagner, MD**, associate professor of Surgery, has joined VUMC to serve as medical director of the Vanderbilt Burn Center.

Wagner most recently served for six years as medical director of the Burn and Frostbite Center at University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, in Aurora, Colorado. The Burn and Frostbite Center has been verified by the American Burn Association since 1998 and is the only verified burn center at a Level 1 Trauma center in the Rocky Mountain region. Wagner also served as an associate professor of Surgery for the Department of Surgery at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

“Dr. Wagner is a national leader in the care of patients with thermal injury, and we are so happy to welcome her to Vanderbilt,” said **Seth Karp, MD**, H. William Scott Jr. Professor and chair of the Section of Surgical Sciences. “She comes to us with an impressive record running a large, complex program known for clinical excellence. Dr. Wagner is also an outstanding educator who has had a major impact on burn care across the United States.”

Vanderbilt’s Burn Center is a Level 1, 25-bed burn unit that serves as a regional referral center for both adult and pediatric patients. The center has more than 600 admissions a year and 3,000 outpatient visits annually. Patient care is provided through a multidisciplinary team specializing in burn care, and providers include surgeons, anesthesiologists, advance practice nurses, nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, burn technicians, psychiatrists, and pharmacists.

[Complete Story](#)



From left, **Monica Stout, MD**, **Mark Iafrati, MD**, **Dawn Masternick, DPM**, **Erin O’Sullivan, APRN, MSN**, and **Ian Seasholtz**

## Iafrati leads the new Vanderbilt Wound Center

Chronic wounds impact the quality of life for an estimated 2.5% of the U.S. population, and because successful treatment of poorly healing wounds often requires intervention by specialists in several medical fields, VUMC has established the comprehensive, multidisciplinary Vanderbilt Wound Center.

The center, whose clinicians began seeing their first patients in August, treats adults with slow-to-heal wounds not responding to conventional care. These individuals now see wound care specialists in one location with well-coordinated treatment to better promote healing.

The Vanderbilt Wound Center is directed by **Mark Iafrati, MD**, professor of Vascular Surgery, who joined the VUMC faculty in July. Iafrati most recently served as director of the Tufts Center for Vascular, Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine, as well as program director of the Vascular Surgery Fellowship and director of Vascular Surgery Research at Tufts Medical Center in Boston. He served as chief of Vascular Surgery at Tufts from 2006 until 2020.

During its first month of operation, based solely on word-of-mouth referrals, the Center had 45 outpatient visits. By September, that number had grown to 135 visits, and that volume is expected to continue to increase.

“We have the specialized skills, technology and collaborative culture here to expertly address the complex needs of these patients. The cross-specialty collaboration we’ve achieved just a few months into opening the Wound Center is truly remarkable, and I look forward to continuing to expand our services,” Iafrati said.

[Complete Story](#)

## VUMC debuts two new state-of-the-art hybrid operating rooms

VUMC has opened two next-generation hybrid operating rooms (ORs) that combine a traditional OR with advanced imaging equipment. This design simplifies procedures and allows them to be more efficient and safer for patients.

“These two rooms not only represent a huge institutional investment of capital, but it really is philosophically an investment in the future — in that we understand that Vanderbilt’s role in cardiovascular disease is to innovate, to lead and to be able to respond to future challenges,” said **Ashish Shah, MD**, professor and chair of Cardiac Surgery. “While the rooms themselves will allow us to take care of any patient today, we really believe they allow us to take care of patients in the future.”

The state-of-the-art ORs are located on the third floor of Vanderbilt University Hospital. Though VUMC has built a handful of such rooms in recent years, these are the Medical Center’s first that will be shared by a multidisciplinary cohort. Teams performing cardiology and electrophysiology procedures as well as cardiac and vascular surgery will benefit from the sophisticated technology in the room — and from each other.

[Complete Story](#)



VUMC leadership and surgical faculty cut the ribbon at the dedication of two new hybrid operating rooms



(Left) Dr. Wright Pinson delivered remarks before the ribbon cutting. (Right) Dr. Daniel Clair is interviewed by a VUMC news videographer.



## National Injury Prevention Day highlighted need for awareness

*Children’s Hospital helped shine the light of prevention for pediatric patients*

Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt is shining a light on injury prevention.

As part of National Injury Prevention Day that was Thursday, Nov. 18, Children’s Hospital joined 43 hospitals nationwide to raise awareness about the need for injury and violence prevention.

“Injury is the leading cause of death and disability for children,” said **Jeffrey Upperman, MD**, surgeon-in-chief at Children’s Hospital. “It is of paramount importance that we advocate and educate on safe practices that parents and caregivers need to follow to keep their loved ones safe.”

Nov. 18th was proclaimed Child Injury Prevention Day in Tennessee by Gov. Bill Lee, and the Metro Nashville

Courthouse was lit in green light in support of the efforts.

According to Safe Kids Worldwide, preventable injuries are the No. 1 killer of children in the United States. Throughout the world, almost 1 million children die of injuries each year, and almost every one of these tragedies is preventable.

Staff of the Children’s Hospital Emergency Department wore special green T-shirts for a ‘green out’ in support of the hospital’s commitment to safety, the theme of which is Lock It Up.



Dr. Upperman

[Complete Story](#)

## New General Surgery Clinic expands care to more patients



Dr. Geiger

*A sunny waiting room welcomes patients and a large treatment room is featured for any necessary minor procedures that add convenience for both patients and clinicians.*

VUMC's Division of General Surgery, the largest division within the Department of Surgery and one of the Medical Center's highest volume surgical practices, has moved the majority of its practice into a new space in Hillsboro Village.

Just a half mile from the main Medical Center campus, the General Surgery Clinic at 2111 Belcourt Ave., Suite 103 (Side B), is the patient care site for nearly all facets of elective general surgery. This includes consultations for the surgical treatment of abdominal wall, incisional, inguinal and hiatal hernias; gastric reflux; gallbladders; and many more conditions.

"As we have increased the number of providers, our old clinic space was holding back the number of patients we could treat daily," said **Timothy Geiger, MD, MMHC**, chief of the Division of General Surgery and executive medical director of the Surgery Patient Care Center.

"Now, with a new, larger space, we can accommodate more patients and improve flow through the system. In addition, we have room to more easily provide telemedicine visits for certain diagnoses and a treatment space."

The General Surgery Clinic shares its location with the Vanderbilt Health Hillsboro Village Walk-In Clinic, which occupies side A. This provides the shared benefit of on-site X-ray, EKG and lab services, a convenience for both patients and clinicians. There are plans to add ultrasound capability in the future.



[Complete Story](#)

## VUMC Trauma treated mass influx of recent tornado victims from Kentucky and Tennessee

VUMC has treated 28 patients injured from the tornado outbreak that struck Middle Tennessee and Western Kentucky overnight on Friday, Dec. 10 and Saturday, Dec. 11.

As reports from Kentucky detailed the severity of the storms, VUMC increased staffing and prepared space in ICU areas to care for incoming patients.



Mayfield, KY

Through combined efforts of staff in LifeFlight, Burn, Trauma Emergency Departments and ICUs, 24 adult and four pediatric patients were transferred and treated for injuries sustained from the storm. Injuries included broken bones, head and internal injuries, lacerations and burns.

In interviews with media **Oscar Guillamondegui, MD, MPH**, Chief, Division of Acute Care Surgery, **Bradley Dennis, MD**, associate professor of Surgery, Division of Acute Care Surgery, **Jared McKinney, MD**, associate professor of Emergency Medicine and director of LifeFlight Event Medicine, and **Jeffrey Upperman, MD**, Surgeon-in-Chief and Chair, Department of Pediatric Surgery at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, explained the joint process used to prepare for mass trauma events and how we were able to successfully transport and treat the sudden influx of patients and their families as well as maintain care for current patients.

Media covering the storms and VUMC's response include *CNN*, *The Louisville Courier Journal*, *WKRN Channel 2* and *WSMV Channel 4*.

[For tips on tornado safety click here](#)



Dr. Dennis



Dr. Guillamondegui



Dr. Upperman

[Complete Story](#)



Mary Marlowe holds a sign of encouragement for the future recipient of her kidney after climbing East Tennessee's Mount LeConte. Her donation set off a chain of donations that resulted in four transplants — a first for VUMC.

## Marlowe donated a kidney Four people received transplants

Mary Marlowe couldn't have known it at the time, but her decision in January 2021 to give a kidney to a total stranger would set off a chain reaction that would result in four people getting kidneys in one week in September 2021 at VUMC. The transplants — which took place on Sept. 14, 15 and 16 — became a first four-recipient kidney transplant chain.

The chain was made possible by Marlowe and three other donors who, after discovering they were not able to donate to the person they originally intended to, decided to donate to a stranger in return for their loved one being matched with an organ from another incompatible pair. The process, called paired donation, usually results in just two people getting a kidney transplant at once — two donors and two recipients, or a two-person chain.

In this case, it became a four-way chain — four donors and four recipients. Three of the recipients were waiting for a living kidney transplant with an approved but incompatible donor, and one recipient was on the wait list for a deceased kidney donor. It's the largest chain at Vanderbilt since a three-way chain that occurred in 2019.

It all started when one of Marlowe's friends on Facebook posted that someone she knew from high school needed a kidney, and he was looking for a living donor. The man's story kept tugging at her heart.

[Complete Story](#)

## Spann's minimally invasive bariatric surgery puts Metro officer Hooper back in the saddle

When Sgt. Kevin Hooper began supervising the Metro Nashville Park Police Mounted Patrol in 2013, he had one problem. The unit didn't have a horse strong enough to safely support Hooper's 419 pounds during long days on the job.

Fortunately for Hooper, Vanderbilt offers laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy and laparoscopic gastric bypass, as well as revisional surgery for patients who have had previous, less successful bariatric procedures. More than 99 percent of gastric procedures at VUMC, including revisional surgeries, are completed using a minimally invasive or laparoscopic approach, said **Matthew Spann, MD**, associate professor of Surgery and director of Vanderbilt Surgical Weight Loss.

"It's the reason I chose to specialize in bariatric surgery," Spann said.

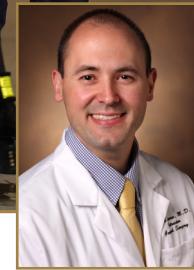
"It's rare that we can improve both quality of life and quantity of life with a single procedure; usually you can do one or the other. Seeing what happens for patients like Kevin makes our job exciting and rewarding."

Today, nearly four years after he underwent laparoscopic gastric bypass surgery at VUMC, Hooper has lost 200 pounds, and his partner as he patrols Metro Nashville's 15,000-acre parks system is a jet-black Tennessee Walking Horse named Lex.

"I'm on a horse for work downtown almost every weekend now, and it wouldn't be possible if I had not had the surgery," Hooper said. "This totally changed the course of my future."



Kevin Hooper



Dr. Spann

[Complete Story](#)



Dr. Kauffmann

## Kauffmann, Barbul and Holzman help expand surgical care for the underserved during COVID pandemic

When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down international travel necessary for overseas medical initiatives, **Rondi Kauffmann, MD, MPH**, assistant professor of Surgery, began brainstorming ways to

extend surgical care to those in need much closer to home.

"Taking care of your neighbor is something I think every person, regardless of your position, training or background, should do," Kauffmann said. "COVID, to some extent, brought that into more focus, because suddenly it was very, very apparent that the health of people on the other side of the world does have direct impact on the health in our community."



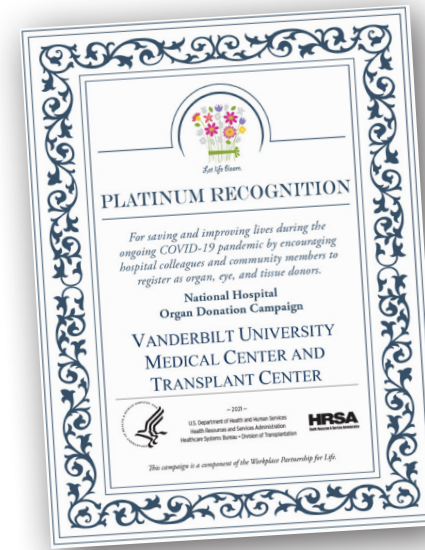
Dr. Kauffmann, seated, reviews a patient's medical history with VUSM students Natasha Hughes, (in blue) and Candace Grisham

"And likewise, the health in our community has direct impact on the health of people on the other side of the world. When COVID shut everything down, I really started to put some action behind my conviction that addressing disparities and lack of access to healthcare in our own backyard is really important."

In August, Kauffmann and fellow VUMC surgeons **Michael Holzman, MD, MPH**, and **Adrian Barbul, MD**, began working alongside VUSM students and VUMC residents, volunteering their time, knowledge and skills for monthly surgical clinics in community-based facilities in Nashville which primarily serve uninsured individuals.

[Complete Story](#)

[Global Surgery weblink](#)



## VUMC Transplant Center honored for organ donation contributions

VUMC and the Vanderbilt Transplant Center have won Platinum Recognition, the highest possible level of achievement, from the National Hospital Organ Donation Campaign of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

The recognition, part of HRSA's Workplace Partnership for Life, honors VUMC "for saving and improving lives during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by encouraging hospital colleagues and community members to register as organ, eye and tissue donors."

*Ninety-one people gave the gift of life as deceased organ donors at VUMC in 2020, more than any other hospital in the country.*

"This award is wonderful recognition of the efforts of the people throughout our institution to provide life-saving transplants to those in desperate need," said **Seth Karp, MD**, H. William Scott Jr. Professor, chair of the Section of Surgical Sciences, and director of the Vanderbilt Transplant Center.

"With COVID increasing the number of patients who require transplants, it is heartwarming to see our continued extraordinary achievement in the face of the pandemic," Karp said.

[Complete Story](#)

## Zamora used 3D modeling to guide minimally invasive surgical removal of child's tumor



Tekoa Morton



Dr. Zamora

Tekoa Morton was three years old when doctors found an inoperable mass surrounding multiple structures in her chest and abdomen. Her parents, Amanda and Colt Morton, chose to use alternative therapy to treat their daughter in hopes of avoiding the use of chemotherapies and radiation often prescribed in the treatment of cancer.

"For three years we used alternative therapies to monitor Tekoa, and things stayed relatively stable with some improvement," said Amanda.

In the summer of 2020, Tekoa began complaining and crying about her stomach hurting. She was admitted to Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital, and scans showed that the mass had moved and was putting pressure on her nerve endings.

"We asked about partial resection possibilities because we still were not interested in chemo or radiation," Colt said.

After days of examining images of Tekoa's mass and anatomy,

**Irving J. Zamora, MD, MPH**, assistant professor of Pediatric Surgery and director of Advanced Minimally Invasive Surgery at Children's Hospital, met with the Mortons. Six words started a new conversation: "I think I can get it," Zamora said. Zamora and his team explained the surgery to Tekoa's parents using the 3D model, and it made all the difference, the pair said.

"Our children are our lives. There was a huge sense of comfort because we could understand and see it," said Amanda. "Dr. Zamora was able to walk us through what he was going to do. He knew what he was dealing with down to the nerve endings and vital organs."

Today, Tekoa is vibrant, healthy, and after two sets of scans, cancer free.

[Complete Story](#)



Avid boater Art Rich sought a second opinion about his cancer treatment

## Idrees provides invaluable second opinion for pancreatic cancer patient

*Seemingly inoperable cancers can often be treated as patient Art Rich discovered*

Art Rich is a production manager who makes big events happen — big events like Broadway plays, concert tours, corporate conferences and even Nashville’s CMA Fest. He has his eyes focused on the lighting, his ears attuned to the sound, and his scheduling of logistics perfectly organized for these events. He knows that the right talent, timing and expertise are crucial for success.

That’s why he sought a second opinion at Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center in 2018. He had been dealing with a medical crisis and a delayed diagnosis. It had taken three biopsies and two months for him to be told he had inoperable pancreatic cancer.

He came to Vanderbilt-Ingram after a friend told him about **Kamran Idrees, MD, MSCI, MMHC**, Ingram Associate Professor of Cancer Research and chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology and Endocrine Surgery, who specializes in treating complex cancers of the pancreas, liver and bile ducts that may involve major blood vessels and adjacent organs. Rich’s case was complex, but he was able to get the surgery he needed at Vanderbilt.

“These complex surgeries are not usually performed at private hospitals,” said Idrees, who also serves as director of Pancreatic and Gastro-Intestinal Surgical Oncology. “They require highly specialized centers, high-volume pancreas centers, such as ours. These are cases that are deemed unresectable by some surgeons. That’s where the importance of a second opinion comes in.”



Dr. Idrees

[Complete Story](#)

## Clair named inaugural chair of the new Department of Vascular Surgery



Dr. Clair

After an extensive national search, **Daniel Clair, MD**, has been named the inaugural chair of the newly formed Department of Vascular Surgery and professor of Vascular Surgery in the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine (VUSM).

A world-renowned leader, innovator and pioneer in minimally invasive vascular techniques, Clair comes to VUMC after serving as professor of Surgery at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine and chair of the Department of Surgery at Palmetto Health-USC Medical Group in Columbia, South Carolina.

**Thomas Naslund, MD**, professor of Surgery, previously served as chief of the Division of Vascular Surgery, a role he performed with distinction for 21 years. Under his leadership, the division grew exponentially, both in terms of services provided to patients and in top-ranking faculty hired to advance the group’s mission. In large part due to the strength of the division under his leadership, it was decided to transition the Division of Vascular Surgery to a fully integrated department within the Section of Surgical Sciences.

“We look forward to Dr. Clair joining our faculty, and focusing on expanding state-of-the-art and innovative therapies to patients with vascular disease,” said **Seth Karp, MD**, H. William Scott Jr. professor of Surgery and chair of the Section of Surgical Sciences.

“My career has primarily focused on trying to reduce the impact of vascular procedures on the patients we care for, and I value the ability to bring new technologies and procedures to the facility and the community,” said Clair.

*“I truly believe that with the reputation, facilities and strength of this organization working collaboratively with the physicians in the Vanderbilt Heart and Vascular Institute, we can create the best place in the country to go for vascular care.”*

[Complete Story](#)

## Bradley speeds patient recovery through robot-assisted hernia repair



Dr. Bradley

When Antioch resident Diane Ray felt a large bulge in her abdomen, she was worried it might be cancer. Finding out it was a hernia was a huge relief.

Because she had experienced a tough recovery from a previous emergency gallstone surgery with a large, open incision, learning the hernia repair could be made using a minimally invasive, robot-assisted procedure reduced her anxiety even more.

“After they open up your belly and use 15 staples to close it, you definitely want to hear that there is a less-in-

vasive way to get a repair done,” Ray said. “I may be 75, but when Dr. Bradley told me he could use a robot in a minimally invasive surgery, I was all for it.”

Ray’s surgeon, **Joel Bradley III, MD**, assistant professor of Surgery, is a member of the Vanderbilt Hernia Center, a regional center for hernia repairs. Surgical faculty at the center — including co-directors **Joseph Broucek, MD**, and **Richard Pierce, MD, PhD**, both assistant professors of Surgery — have specialized training and experience to perform minimally invasive and robot-assisted hernia repair for the most complex cases, including patients with multiple and occult (hidden) hernias.

[Complete Story](#)



Diane Ray

“With robotics, we’re able to stay out of the abdominal cavity entirely and just work within the abdominal wall to repair the muscle,” Bradley said.

## Wellons and teen ballplayer bond after high-risk neurosurgery

*Unrelated scan from basketball game injury revealed brain stem abnormality since birth*

When 15-year-old Jordan Johnson was struck by a ball during his baseball game in June 2020, he never imagined the hit would end up saving his life.

After the injury, Jordan’s parents, Jeff and Ivette, took him to Children’s Hospital to make sure everything was OK. They were shocked when a scan revealed that Jordan had a giant cerebral cavernous malformation, an abnormality of blood vessels inside his brain stem. The lesion had likely been there since birth, gradually growing over time. By the time Jordan suffered the hit, the lesion had reached a critical size. The options were to continue to let it grow, with the possibility of life-threatening rupture, or to remove it with a high-risk surgery.

Immediately, the Johnsons began exploring the best programs in the country. After much research and prayer, they decided that the neurosurgery team at Children’s Hospital, led by **Jay Wellons III, MD, MSPH**, was the right choice. The Johnsons scheduled the

procedure for July 21, 2020, as “21” is the number Jordan wears on his baseball uniform. Throughout the healing process, Jordan grew especially close to Wellons.

“Jordan is an inspiring young man,” said Wellons, chief of the Division of Pediatric Neurosurgery. “He has handled a very challenging diagnosis and recovery with grit and determination. His parents and his older brother, Jalen, have been incredible advocates for him during every aspect of his care. When the opportunity came for my own son, Jack, to meet him, I jumped on it. To no surprise at all, Jordan had a profound impact on him too.”



Dr. Wellons



Jordan Johnson, second from left, underwent a complex eight-hour brain surgery. Pictured with his parents, Ivette and Jeff, and his older brother, Jalen.

“We are so thankful that we had this world-class hospital and surgeon right in our backyard,” said Jordan’s mom, Ivette.

[Complete Story](#)

## McKenna used 3D virtual planning for jaw reconstruction for father and son both suffering from extreme underbite and crossbite

A middle school basketball game set off a long, painful journey for Mt. Juliet resident Jeremy Kerr, 49. It ended in 2019 when he had orthognathic, or corrective, jaw surgery at VUMC to address both an underbite and crossbite.

“After someone shot the ball, another player jumped first and got the rebound but elbowed me in the jaw as I was jumping up,” he said. “There was a loud pop, and everybody heard it. The next morning, my jaw was stuck halfway open. It was alarming.”

The incident marked the beginning of more than three decades of popping, accidental cheek-biting, periodic jaw locking, and ultimately pain. The hoops injury likely contributed to one side of his lower jaw growing longer than the other, but genetics also played a role in his underbite and crossbite. Ironically, it was his



Jeremy Kerr, left, and his son Tyler, right, pose with Sam McKenna, MD, DDS, who performed corrective jaw surgery to repair their underbites and crossbites.

[Complete Story](#)

son Tyler, who struggled with an even more pronounced underbite and crossbite, who got his jaw malformations corrected first.

The Kerrs were referred to **Sam McKenna, MD, DDS**, chair of the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, as candidates for orthognathic surgery. “With the ability to do this virtually using the 3D CT scan, it really satisfied our long-standing desire to do this as analytically as possible, but with much greater accuracy,” McKenna said.

As for the elder Kerr, he’s grateful that the right technology in the hands of a skilled surgical team came together to finally give him a jaw that no longer malfunctions.

## Zuckerman, Yengo-Kahn explore concussion recovery by race in new study

A study comparing sports-related concussion recovery in young black and white athletes found that black athletes reported faster resolution of their symptoms and earlier return to school than their white counterparts.

**Aaron Yengo-Kahn, MD**, VUMC neurosurgery resident and co-director of Research at the Vanderbilt Sports Concussion Center, is the first author of the paper, joined by fellow Center co-director, **Scott Zuckerman, MD**, and other authors from Vanderbilt.

The study, “Exploring the outcomes and experiences of Black and White athletes following a sports-related concussion (SRC): a retrospective cohort study,” was a collaboration between VUMC’s Sports Concussion Center and the University of

Alabama, Tuscaloosa. It appeared recently in the [Journal of Neurosurgery: Pediatrics](#).

The idea for the study came about during early conversations between Vanderbilt investigators and Jessica Wallace, PhD, MPH, from the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, who was working with the Center on a Southeastern Conference Collaboration Grant.

“Jessica had done a significant amount of work in the space of racial disparities in concussion education and knowledge, but had not yet had enough data to really analyze recovery in younger athletes. In 2020, mid



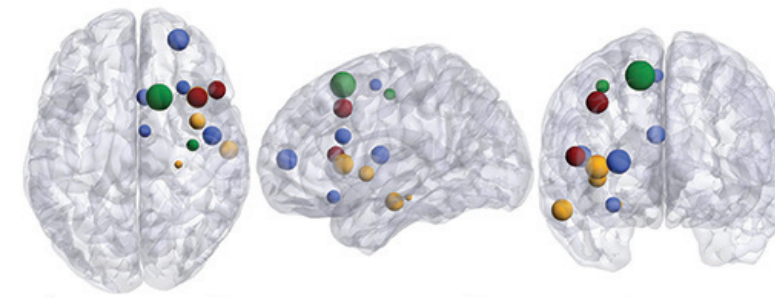
Drs. Zuckerman and Yengo-Kahn

pandemic, it dawned on us, independently, that hardly anyone was looking at race in concussion studies, so it was fortuitous that Jessica reached out to us to collaborate at that time,” said Yengo-Kahn.

[Complete Story](#)

[Journal Link](#)

## Englot cites strides in epilepsy surgery that expand patient options



● Ictogenic ● Early Propagation ● Irritative ● Uninvolved

For the past decade, the options in treatment for epilepsy surgery have been resection through craniotomy, brain stimulation implants, and laser ablation. Yet there is an evolution underway. Improved outcomes are being observed in both resection and minimally invasive procedures, and a parallel expansion of the candidate pool for each.

“About half of our patients still

undergo some kind of surgical resection, and the other half have a less invasive surgery, such as laser ablation or neurostimulator implantation. But the whole pie is expanding as we improve our hypotheses and success rates in these categories,” said **Dario Englot, MD, PhD**, assistant professor of Neurological Surgery and director of Functional Neurosurgery.

“Particularly with poorly localized seizures, we can now use improved stereotactic electroencephalograms (SEEGs) to obtain recordings from

multiple regions bilaterally, allowing many people who would have once had few treatment options to become surgical candidates,” Englot said.

Not only are more patients eligible for epilepsy surgery, but Englot says technologies such as deep brain stimulation make treatment more palatable to many who would not otherwise move forward with surgery. “Patients with seizures that are localized to a critical area for memory, language or motor function - areas that can’t be removed - are now in the candidate pool.”

Dr. Englot

[Complete Story](#)

## Baregamian team takes first place in research competition



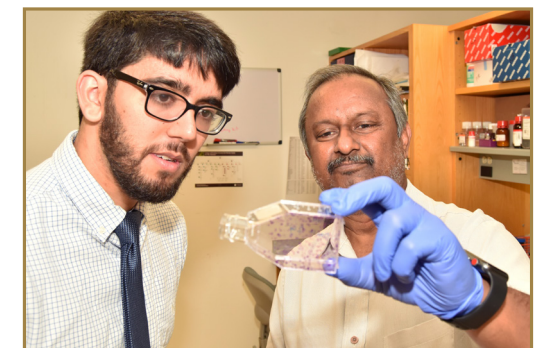
Left to right: Cyr, Drs. Baregamian, Konjeti, Hanna

A group of investigators in the Endocrine Neoplasia Research Laboratory at VUMC has received national recognition for their work to discover better treatments for thyroid cancer.

A paper describing their lab work was awarded first place in the Basic Science category at the 2021 Cancer Research Paper Competition, which promotes the achievements of oncologic physicians in training. The annual competition is hosted by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer and the American Cancer Society.

**David Hanna, MD**, a surgical resident at VUMC, presented the paper “RSL3 Induces Ferroptosis via GPX4 Inhibition in Papillary Thyroid Cancer.” He was one of two first-place winners in the category. The research was published in the *Journal of American College of Surgeons* after the Commission on Cancer Plenary Session on Oct. 20.

The research team is led by **Naira Baregamian, MD, MMS**, assistant professor of Surgery in the Division of Surgical Oncology and Endocrine Surgery. Other team members include **Sekhar Konjeti, PhD**, staff scientist, and Sriram Cyr, medical student. The Baregamian research lab focuses on metastatic papillary thyroid carcinomas, more specifically the metabolic rewiring of tumor microenvironment that drives tumor aggressiveness.



[Complete Story](#)



Dr. Guillamondegui

## Treating severe trauma requires a robust blood supply

*VUMC employees and public urged to donate blood now; shortages of O positive and negative urgent*

To understand the implications of the current, ongoing national blood shortage, which acutely deteriorated after the Thanksgiving holiday, VUMC employees need only to consider what the shortfall means to their own Level 1 Trauma Center...and potentially to them or their loved ones, said **Oscar Guillamondegui, MD, MPH**, Chief, Division of Acute Care Surgery.

“In any major trauma that injures solid organs (e.g., liver, spleen) or causes musculoskeletal damage such as the pelvis or the femur bones there is a need for large volume resuscitation with blood products,” he said.

VUMC is experiencing severe shortages of O positive and O negative red blood cell units, which are expected to continue.

To address this, the VUMC Blood Bank is auditing every order of O positive and O negative red blood cells for appropriateness and canceling or limiting orders that don’t meet VUMC guidelines, among other measures.

“Although brain injury remains the No. 1 cause of death in the trauma population, the second leading cause is exsanguination (blood loss). Without blood products early in the management of our trauma patients, there is an increased risk of succumbing to injury by hemorrhagic shock,” Guillamondegui said.

*“Everyone is a moment away from becoming a trauma patient, and it affects all equally. By donating blood, you have the opportunity to save a life and, it may even be your own,” Guillamondegui said.*

[Complete Story](#)

[Schedule your blood donation](#)

## VUMC Transplant Center reaches FY 2021 record for solid organ transplants, performing 637

The Vanderbilt Transplant Center performed a record number of solid organ transplants in fiscal year 2021 (FY21) — 637 life-saving procedures among its adult and pediatric programs — despite occurring entirely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The total number of transplants from FY21, the period between July 2020 and the end of June 2021, are up 10 percent from the 578 transplants during the same period in FY20. In FY21, VUMC performed 590 adult transplants and 47 pediatric transplants, records for both age groups.



“This outstanding, sustained effort is the result of the collaborative work of a huge team of uncompromising professionals,” said **Seth Karp, MD**, H. William Scott Jr. Professor, chair of the Section of Surgical Sciences and director of the Vanderbilt Transplant Center.

In the Adult Transplant program in FY21, teams performed 298 kidney transplants (including simultaneous pancreas-kidney transplants and pancreas-after-kidney transplants), 129 heart transplants, 120 liver transplants, and 43 lung transplants. Pediatric transplant teams with Children’s Hospital performed 18 kidney transplants, 20 heart transplants, and 9 liver transplants.

[Complete Story](#)

## Chitale leads “smart” catheter efforts to refine thrombectomy and other endovascular procedures

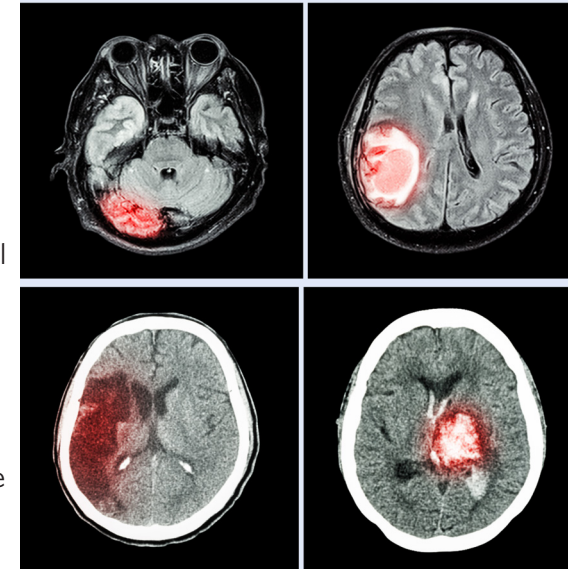
*Collaboration with VISE engineers explores self-navigating technology*

New assistive technologies supporting high-risk interventional procedures are being developed by an interdisciplinary team of surgeons and engineers at VUMC, including **Rohan Chitale, MD**, associate professor of Neurological Surgery. While prototypes center around neurointervention and stroke treatment, the work could apply across endovascular procedures.

“There are two things that we hope to do. One is to make the catheters ‘smart’ so that they can steer themselves, or at least help steer. The second goal is to create a path that the catheter can follow autonomously in a safe way,” said Chitale.

Chitale is leading the efforts in close partnership with Nabil Simaan, PhD, professor of Mechanical Engineering, Computer Science and Otolaryngology at Vanderbilt. The work falls within the Vanderbilt Institute for Surgery and Engineering (VISE).

Self-navigating catheters could improve the ability to move through complex twists and bends in blood vessels



during procedures such as thrombectomies in the brain. Interventionalists can robotically bend the tips of the “smart” catheters to enhance steering capabilities. The technology could make thrombectomy for acute stroke treatment much more available by reducing the technical burden of the procedure, Chitale says.

Additionally, such a system might allow training or novice interventionalists to perform procedures more safely. Future iterations might even support remote proctoring, enabling a Van-

derbilt neurosurgeon, for example, to operate on a patient in a more rural area, Chitale explained. He appreciates that his research tests the limits of his abilities and places him at the frontiers of what some call a “golden age” of acute stroke treatment.



Dr. Chitale

[Complete Story](#)

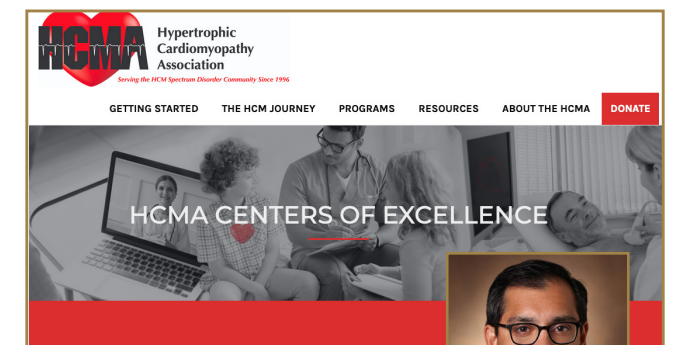
## VUMC named Center of Excellence for Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy

*Adult Cardiac Surgery, Pediatric Cardiac Surgery and Cardiology receive the distinction*

VUMC is one of only 43 care sites in the U.S. to be named a Center of Excellence (COE) by the Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Association (HCMA). It is also one of the few to receive the highest distinction of “Comprehensive COE.” To be recognized as a COE, programs must provide patients with high-quality care based on HCM guidelines and demonstrate commitment to HCM treatment and research. Specific evaluation areas include HCM expertise; volume of care; quality of research; patient communication and responsiveness; patient and medical education; and facilities.

[Complete Story](#)

[HCMA Website](#)



*“This designation will set us above and apart from other cardiac care programs in the region,” said **Ashish Shah, MD**, professor and chair, Department of Cardiac Surgery.*



Dr. Shah

# CONGRATULATIONS

## to our 2021 Excellence in Patient Experience Award Recipients

### CARDIAC SURGERY

Ashish Shah, MD

### NEUROLOGICAL SURGERY

Karen Brown, MSN  
Lola Chambless, MD  
Trisha Conwell, PA  
Ross Dawkins, MD  
Angela Hatchett, MSW,  
MSN  
Natalie Hall, MSN, FNP-C,  
RN, RD  
Robert Naftel, MD  
Reid Thompson, MD  
John (Jay) Wellons III, MD,  
MSPH

### ORAL & MAXILLOFACIAL SURGERY

Samuel McKenna, MD, DDS  
Luis Vega, DDS

### PLASTIC SURGERY

Kent (Kye) Higdon, MD  
J. Bradford Hill, MD  
Brianna McKenney, PA  
Galen Perdakis, MD  
Brinkley Sandvall, MD  
J. Blair Summitt, MD  
Julian Winocour, MD

### SURGERY

Chetan Aher, MD  
Naira Baregamian, MD, MMS  
R. Daniel Beauchamp, MD  
Cynthia Blalock, MSN, APRN  
Tracey DeWire, MSN, ACNP  
Madalene Drummond,  
FNP-C  
Meredith Duke, MD, MBA  
Wayne English, MD  
Molly Ford, MD  
Sunil Geevarghese, MD,  
MSCI  
Ana Grau, MD

Crystal Hawkins, APRN  
Michael Holzman, MD, MPH  
Mary Hooks, MD, MBA  
M. Benjamin Hopkins, MD  
Ashley Johnson, MSN, NP-C  
Rondi Kauffmann, MD, MPH  
Mark Kelley, MD  
Ralph LaNeve, MD  
Tonna McCutcheon, MSN,  
DNP  
Roberta Muldoon, MD  
Anna Prestwich, MSN,  
ACNP-BC  
Katherine Sibling, MSN,  
ACNP  
Matthew Spann, MD  
Derrick Stratton, APRN  
Marcus Tan, MBBS  
D. Brandon Williams, MD

### THORACIC SURGERY

Erin Gillaspie, MD, MPH  
Eric Lambricht, MD  
Jonathan Nesbitt, MD

### CLINICS

Pain Interventional  
Spring Hill  
Surgery Colorectal MAB 2  
Surgery Cosmetics  
Brentwood  
Surgery General Belcourt  
Surgery General ECL  
Surgery Plastics Brentwood  
Surgery Thoracic ECL  
Surgery Thoracic TVC B  
Weight Loss Brentwood  
Weight Loss Clarksville  
Weight Loss Lebanon  
Weight Loss OHO

## Commemorative bell on transplant unit rings to honor patients

*It rings in celebration — and memory. Coleen Leszczynski's family dedicated the bell, to be rung every time a transplant patient leaves the hospital*

All Coleen Leszczynski ever wanted was to be normal. Born with a congenital heart disease (CHD), she labored to breathe, having only three-quarters the oxygen capacity of a normal person. Still, she fought and fought to live, serving as a cardiac nurse in her native Philadelphia area for more than 16 years. She wanted to help people like her.

Coleen's journey led her to VUMC, where in July 2020 she received a new heart. For two weeks, she reveled in being, well, normal. Unfortunately, she had complications and died in August, 2020. She was 43.

On Aug. 4, 2021, Coleen's husband, Mark, and a caravan of more than a dozen family members traveled from the Philadelphia area to Vanderbilt to celebrate her life with the Vanderbilt Heart Transplant team. They donated a special plaque with Coleen's picture on it and a bell, which was installed on the seventh floor of Medical Center East. Transplant patients will be invited to ring the bell in celebration as they leave the hospital with their new organs.



Alice Devlin, Mark Leszczynski, center, husband of Coleen Leszczynski, and James Devlin

[Complete Story](#)

## Vanderbilt Transplant Center was focus of national TV series

*For months, film crews followed six very sick patients who were each waiting for a life-saving organ, either a liver, kidney, heart or lungs; or in some cases, multiple organs*

A new documentary television series followed the life-saving stories of organ transplant patients at the Vanderbilt Transplant Center.

Robin Roberts, anchor of ABC's *Good Morning America* and a double stem-cell transplant patient who is passionate about the topic, announced the series, *Last Chance Transplant*. Roberts' production company, Rock'n Robin Productions, is a partner in the series which consists of three, two-hour episodes that premiered in September on the discovery+ streaming platform.

Each episode of *Last Chance Transplant* features two patients and includes a message from Roberts encouraging viewers to register to become organ donors. The project provides the opportunity to educate a national audience about how being an organ donor can impact the lives of others.

*"We are so proud to be part of this project to raise awareness of the importance of organ donation and the life-saving opportunity provided by each transplant,"*

*said Seth Karp, MD, chair of the Section of Surgical Sciences, H. William Scott Jr. Professor and director of the Vanderbilt Transplant Center*

[Complete Story](#)

## Where Do Broken Hearts Go?

*Hear 3 VUMC heart experts on the podcast DNA Discoveries in Action*

Modern medicine doesn't have a tonic for lovesick hearts, but an astounding number of people get heart transplantations in Nashville, TN. The path to transplantation is as much of an emotional rollercoaster as an exhibit of advances, courage and despair.

The Vanderbilt Transplant Center was featured this fall in a three-part documentary on discovery+ called *Last Chance Transplant*. The number of people who have received organ transplants is growing, and there's a chance you know someone who is a donor or recipient.

This episode spotlights heart transplants, for which the demand outpaces the supply. That imbalance is a ral-



lying cry for the transplant team at VUMC to find ways to get more people with broken hearts on the path to home.

We hear from, **Ashish Shah, MD**, professor of Cardiac Surgery, Alfred Blalock Endowed Directorship in Cardiac Surgery, and chair of the Department of Cardiac Surgery, Dr. Kelly Schlendorf, Associate Professor and Medical Director of the Heart Transplant Program, and Dr. Lesley Omary, Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Director of the Transplant Psychiatry Service.



Dr. Shah

[Complete Story](#)



## AI predicts 24-hour hospital discharge in NIH study

Artificial intelligence might prove useful for predicting which hospital patients will soon be discharged, aiding hospital efficiency and patient throughput.

Electronic health record audit logs capture user interactions with patients' records at a granular level. A first demonstration of how these logs can help power machine learning for 24-hour discharge predictions is reported in the [Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association](#) by Ximeng Zhang, Chao Yan, You Chen, PhD, and colleagues.

The project used data from more than 26,000 adult hospital stays. The team's machine learning algorithm used information available as of 2 p.m. to predict with 88% accuracy who would and would not be discharged over the next 24 hours (AUC 92%).

Of the 20 predictive factors identified through machine learning as most influential, half were derived from EHR audit logs. The algorithm also used admission diagnoses, historical diagnoses, age, heart rate, BMI, length of stay at prediction point and day of the week, among other factors.

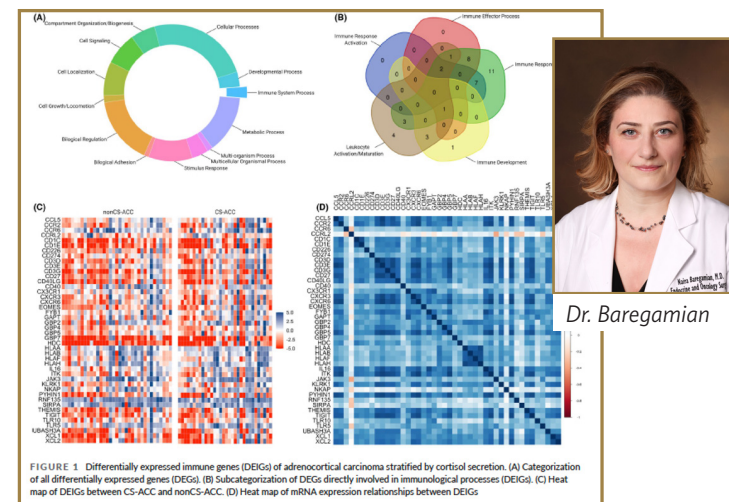


Also on the study were Bradley Malin, PhD, and **Mayur Patel, MD, MPH**. The study was supported by the National Institutes of Health.

[Complete Story](#)

[Journal Link](#)

## Baregamian lab profiles immune landscape in adrenocortical cancer



Adrenocortical carcinoma (ACC) — a rare cancer of the outer layer of the adrenal gland — is one of the most aggressive cancers and has limited therapeutic options when it cannot be surgically removed. About half of ACC patients have excess steroid hormone secretion, primarily cortisol, which has immunosuppressive effects and appears to contribute to failure of immunotherapies.

[Complete Story](#)

[Journal Link](#)

To gain insights for therapeutic development, **Naira Baregamian, MD, MMS**, and colleagues profiled immune-related gene expression in the ACC tumor microenvironment. They compared patients with cortisol-secreting or non-secreting ACC using The Cancer Genome Atlas database.

The findings, reported in the [Journal of Cellular and Molecular Medicine](#), demonstrate differentially expressed immune genes and tumor-infiltrating immune cell profiles in the two types of ACC and identified elevated expression levels of CCRL2 encoding a chemokine scavenging receptor in cortisol-secreting ACC.

The immunosuppressive profile in cortisol-secreting ACC has a direct impact on patient survival, the researchers report. They identified prognostic indicators and potential targets in the ACC tumor microenvironment that may guide strategies to treat poorly responsive cortisol-secreting ACC.

Joining Baregamian on the study were Jordan Baechle, MD, **David Hanna, MD**, Konjeti Sekhar, PhD, Jeffrey Rathmell, PhD, and W. Kimryn Rathmell, MD, PhD.

## Concepcion named medical director of the Vanderbilt Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Program

Beatrice Concepcion, MD, associate professor of Medicine, has been appointed medical director of the Vanderbilt Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Program.

In the position, Concepcion reports to T. Alp Ikizler, MD, Catherine McLaughlin Hakim Professor of Vascular Biology, professor of Medicine and director of the Division of Nephrology and Hypertension.

Concepcion succeeds J. Harold Helderman, MD, professor of Medicine and Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology, who served as medical director from 1995 to 2018 and under whose tutelage Concepcion received her training at VUMC.

More than 6,500 kidney transplants have been performed at Vanderbilt since 1962, including 298 transplants in fiscal year 2021, a record year for the program.

Working as a clinician at Vanderbilt since 2013, Concepcion has cared for numerous kidney transplant recipients and candidates. For the past six years, she has led the kidney program's outreach efforts to increase access to transplantation for patients living in rural areas.



Rachel Forbes, MD, left, and Beatrice Concepcion, MD, evaluate kidney transplant patients from West Tennessee using the telemedicine assessment model.

"Dr. Concepcion has demonstrated outstanding leadership, particularly using telemedicine to reach patients who need a kidney transplant but have difficulty accessing a center due to distance or lack of resources," said **Seth Karp, MD**, H. William Scott Jr. Professor, chair of the Section of Surgical Sciences and director of the Vanderbilt Transplant Center.

"We are so excited to have her take on this new role and look forward to furthering our academic and community missions."

[Complete Story](#)

## New marker for metaplasia to precancerous cells

Cellular changes in the stomach lining, called metaplasia, increase the risk for gastric cancer, the third leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide.

Two types of metaplasia are observed in the human stomach: pyloric metaplasia, initiated from spasmolytic polypeptide-expressing metaplasia (SPEM) cells, and intestinal metaplasia, which can represent a more advanced type of metaplasia.

**James Goldenring, MD, PhD**, and colleagues have identified markers of the transition from metaplasia to dysplasia, the appearance of precancerous cells. Now they report that aquaporin 5 (AQP5), a water transporter protein, is a lineage-specific marker for SPEM cells in both mice and humans.

With other markers of cell lineages in the metaplastic stomach, AQP5 may help define how metaplasias develop and progress, and potentially may improve the assessment and treatment of patients at highest risk for gastric cancer, the researchers concluded.

**Su-Hyung Lee, DVM, PhD, Bogun Jang, MD, PhD**, and **Jimin Min, PhD**, are co-first authors of the paper published in the journal [Cellular and Molecular Gastroenterology and Hepatology](#). Also included in the study was **Eunyoung Choi, PhD**.

This research was supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs, National Institutes of Health, Cancer UK Grand Challenge, and National Research Foundation of Korea.



Dr. Goldenring

[Complete Story](#)

[Journal Link](#)

## Research team study “supermeres” that may carry clues to cancer, Alzheimer’s disease and COVID-19



Members of the supermere discovery team include (front row from left) Qi Liu, PhD, Robert Coffey, MD, Qin Zhang, PhD, and (back row from left) James Higginbotham, PhD, Dennis Jeppesen, PhD, and Jeffrey Franklin, PhD

“We’ve identified a number of biomarkers and therapeutic targets in cancer and potentially in a number of other disease states that are cargo in these supermeres,” said the paper’s senior author, Robert Coffey, MD. “What is left to do now is to figure out how these things get released.”

In 2019 Dennis Jeppesen, PhD, a former research fellow in Coffey’s lab who is now a research instructor in Medicine, used advanced techniques to isolate and analyze small membrane-enclosed extracellular vesicles called “exosomes.”

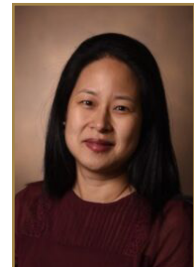
Other VUMC co-authors: Ramona Graves-Deal, **Vincent Q. Trinh, MD**, Marisol Ramirez, MS, Yoojin Sohn, Abigail Neinger, Nilay Taneja, PhD, Eliot McKinley, PhD, Hiroaki Niitsu, MD, PhD, Zheng Cao, MD, PhD, Rachel Evans, Sarah E. Glass, **Kevin Ray**, William Fissell, MD, Salisha Hill, MS, Kristie Rose, PhD, Mary Kay Washington, MD, PhD, Gregory Ayers, MS, Dylan Burnette, PhD, Jeffrey Franklin, PhD, **Youngmin Lee, MD, PhD**, and Qi Liu, PhD.

Researchers at VUMC have discovered a nanoparticle released from cells, called a “supermere,” which contains enzymes, proteins and RNA associated with multiple cancers, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer’s disease and even COVID-19.

The discovery, reported in *Nature Cell Biology*, is a significant advance in understanding the role extracellular vesicles and nanoparticles play in shuttling important chemical “messages” between cells, both in health and disease.

[Journal Link](#) [Complete Story](#)

## Lee receives American Cancer Society grant for pilot project



Dr. Lee

**Youngmin Lee, MD, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Surgery, was notified by the Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center (VICC) that the American Cancer Society-Institutional Research Grant (ACS-IRG) pilot project proposal entitled “Na<sup>+</sup>/I<sup>-</sup> symporter (NIS)-mediated radioiodide administration as an adjuvant therapy for intrahe-

patic cholangiocarcinoma” has been funded. Lee will receive \$30,000 for her project for the period of December 1, 2021 to November 30, 2022.

## House staff education includes focus on health equity

Last summer’s annual orientation for new interns, residents and fellows included a bold new discussion about the history of racism in Nashville and at Vanderbilt University Medical Center as well as topics on health equity and anti-racism in medical practice.

“Health equity is appropriately in the forefront of medical education right now, and faculty members involved in this year’s graduate medical edu-

cation orientation agreed that we had an opportunity to boldly expand the conversation with new doctors,” said **Kyla Terhune, MD, MBA**, vice president for Educational Affairs and associate dean for Graduate Medical Education.

“Our residents and fellows are recruited to Nashville based on Vanderbilt’s academic reputation and on Nashville’s reputation as a cos-

mopolitan city with a thriving country music scene — a fun place to live. But we don’t talk much about the more difficult aspects of the history of Nashville, which profoundly impact our patients and their health,” Terhune said.



Dr. Terhune

[Complete Story](#)

## Kaji and colleagues publish paper showing motor protein linked to intestinal cell differentiation

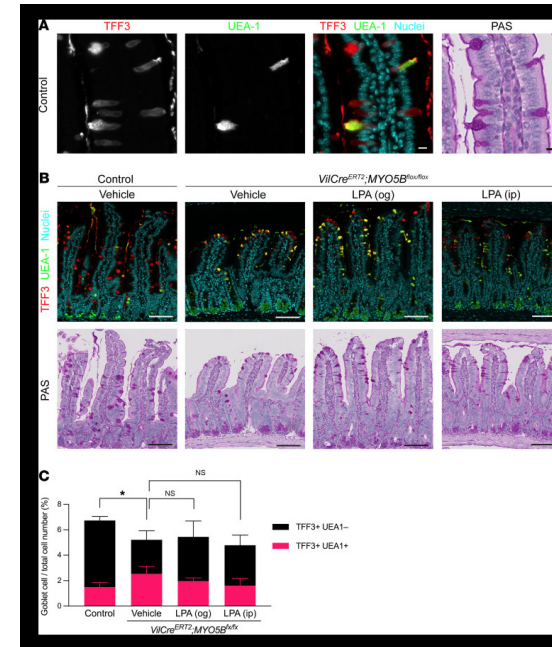


Figure 3. Decrease in frequency of goblet cells in MYO5B-deficient mouse small intestine

Microvillus inclusion disease (MVID) is a congenital intestinal disorder resulting in malabsorption and diarrhea. MVID can be caused by the loss of function in MYO5B, a motor protein that moves enzymes and transporters to the intestinal surface for nutrient uptake.

In a paper published last month in the journal *JCI Insight*, **Izumi Kaji, PhD**, and colleagues report that MYO5B does more than move proteins. It alters the differentiation of cell populations that are essential for normal intestinal function. Loss of MYO5B in a mouse model led to an increase in immature Paneth cells, which regulate intestinal stem cell function, and a decrease in tuft cells, which sense luminal contents. This highlights the importance of MYO5B in

[Complete Story](#)

maturation of stem cells in the intestine.

The researchers found that treatment with the signaling molecule LPA (lysophosphatidic acid) or inhibition of the Notch signaling pathway increased tuft cell populations and promoted cell differentiation.

This research was supported by National Institutes of Health grants DK048370, DK118640, DK070856, and a pilot grant from the Vanderbilt Digestive Diseases Research Center.

Izumi Kaji, PhD, **James Goldenring, MD, PhD**, **Joseph Roland, PhD**, Amy Engevik, PhD, and **Anna Goldstein** are among the VUMC investigators on this study.

[Journal Link](#)

## VUMC employees partner with community agency providing Thanksgiving meals



Dr. Sweeting

Dr. Raeshell Sweeting, Section Vice Chair for Diversity & Inclusion, rallied the Section of Surgical Sciences faculty and staff to give back to the community and represent our contribution to the VUMC effort spearheaded by Kristy Sinkfield.



One hundred and twelve food boxes packed with all the essentials for a complete Thanksgiving dinner were provided to Nashville families this year, the result of a collaboration between Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) and VUMC employees.

Established in Davidson County just this year, YAP is a national nonprofit that partners with youth justice, child welfare and other systems to provide community-based services as an alternative to youth detention. A local YAP participant, a 16-year-old named Xavier, knew many in Nashville’s Edgemoor community could not afford or would not have access to a table loaded with turkey and all the side dishes, so he approached YAP’s Nashville program director Marcel Hernandez about organizing a holiday food drive.

[Complete Story](#)

## We're grateful to our donors

Here are just a few

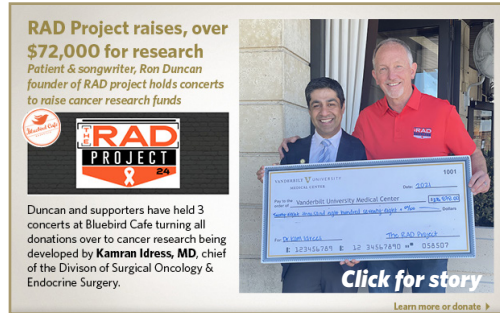
### Grateful Eitl family dedicates plaque to 5 North VUH care team



Joe Eitl (center), a patient with Down syndrome, received a heart and liver transplant at Vanderbilt one year ago. Joe and his parents, Craig and Peg, (to his left) attended a brief ceremony on 5 North VUH, and donated a plaque to honor the care team that has taken care of Joe

[Click for story](#)

### Duncan's RAD Project benefits cancer research directly



RAD Project raises, over \$72,000 for research  
Patient & songwriter, Ron Duncan founder of RAD project holds concerts to raise cancer research funds

Duncan and supporters have held 3 concerts at Bluebird Cafe turning all donations over to cancer research being developed by Kamran Idress, MD, chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology & Endocrine Surgery.

[Click for story](#)

Patient Ron Duncan founded The RAD Project, a foundation that raises money for cancer research and awareness. Duncan and supporters hold concerts at The Bluebird Cafe, giving all donations to the Division of Surgical Oncology & Endocrine Surgery

### Parton \$1M gift to COVID-19 research



Legendary country music singer-songwriter Dolly Parton made a generous gift to VUMC that increased scientific knowledge and advanced the battle against COVID-19

[Click for story](#)

### The Brett Boyer Foundation



Ellen and Bo Boyer's first child, Brett, was diagnosed with a congenital heart defect (CHD). Requiring open heart surgery, sadly the child did not survive. Her parents began The Brett Boyer Foundation in Brett's memory. The gifts support the hiring of a psychologist in the Department of Pediatrics to help prepare families for life events such as theirs

[Click for story](#)

### Canavan Family Endowment



After a devastating accident, Owen Canavan was treated by the VUMC Trauma Team. Grateful for his care, the Canavan family established an endowment in his name that benefits VUMC Trauma education

[Click for story](#)

## Named Lectures in 2021

### Thuss Family Lecture

The Department of Plastic Surgery presented a plaque to the Thuss Family Lecture guest speaker Dr. Patrick Maxwell, founder of Maxwell Aesthetics, Nashville, TN, and Clinical Professor of Plastic Surgery, Vanderbilt University Medical Center.



Right to left: Thuss family member Jim Terrell with Drs. Galen Perdakis and Pat Maxwell

### Rollin Daniel Lecture

The Division of Pediatric Cardiac Surgery, the Department of Cardiac Surgery, and the Department of Thoracic Surgery welcomed guest speaker Dr. Charles Fraser, Jr. Fraser is the Chief of Pediatric and Congenital Heart Surgery, Director of Texas Center for Pediatric and Congenital Heart Surgery, and Professor of Surgery and Perioperative Care at the University of Texas - Dell Medical School.



Right to left: Drs. Ashish Shah, guest speaker Charles Fraser, Jr., and David Bichell

## Series of lectures detail legacies of Levi Watkins, Vivien Thomas

Guest speaker Tarpley delivers SBAS Claude Organ Lecture

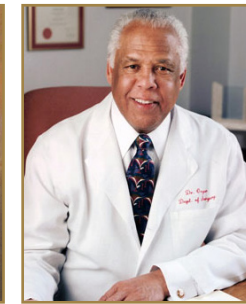


Drs. John Tarpley and Ken Sharp. Sharp was responsible for organizing this historic lecture

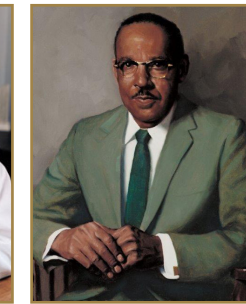
In October, a series of lectures were held to recall and recognize the contributions of two historic and trailblazing VUMC icons. At the first



Dr. Watkins



Dr. Organ



Mr. Thomas

lecture George Hill, PhD, presented the keynote address "Dr. Levi Watkins and Mr. Vivien Thomas: Memories and Lessons Learned from Two Outstanding Lives of Service."

In another recent lecture honoring Watkins, **John Tarpley, MD**, professor emeritus of Surgery and Anesthesiology and academic dean of the Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons, shared his reflections about the remarkable impact of his friend and colleague, both on the medical profession and on the lives of others.

Tarpley focused on Watkins' legacy as a surgeon, mentor and advocate with a legacy of civil rights

activities for underrepresented populations. He added that Watkins was also a skilled administrator, and that made him a rare "quadruple threat" who was focused on serving others.

Tarpley attended VUSM with Watkins. The two went on to Johns Hopkins Hospital to complete surgical residencies together. Watkins stayed on to join the faculty at Johns Hopkins, building a career as a renowned cardiac surgeon.

Tarpley's Claude Organ Lecture was sponsored by the Society of Black Academic Surgeons and the Southern Surgical Association and is a competitively awarded, traveling lectureship in honor of Claude Organ, MD, a pioneering black academic surgeon.

[Complete Story](#)

## Guillamondegui one of ten new holders of Directorships honored by VUMC philanthropic partners

**Oscar Guillamondegui, MD, MPH**, is among the ten new leaders from across the enterprise in clinical care, research, education and administration who have been named as holders of endowed directorships.

Guillamondegui will be the holder of the Carol Ann Gavin Directorship in Trauma and Surgical Critical Care — established through support from Charles E. Gavin III in honor of his late wife, Carol Ann Gavin.

"Endowed directorships are an investment in high-quality leadership, allowing us to honor individuals from across our organization who are making significant contributions to the Medical Center and advancing their fields of expertise," said Jeff Balser, MD, PhD, President and Chief Executive Officer of Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Dean of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.

"Individuals, families and foundations who support our mission were important philanthropic partners for several of these directorships, and I want to express my appreciation for their generosity."

"We are delighted to be able to honor these outstanding colleagues through endowed directorships," said David Raiford, MD, chief of clinical staff for VUMC and senior associate dean for Faculty Affairs in the School of Medicine.

[Complete Story](#)



Dr. Guillamondegui

## Terhune earns VUMC Five Pillar Leader Award

Among VUMC's biggest challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic has been how to continue offering top-notch training to its more than 1,000 residents and fellows. Each had to pivot in their training to help care for very sick patients suffering the often-devastating effects of the virus.

Leading the Medical Center's training efforts with what one nominator calls "a truly unmatched amount of planning, coordination and communication" has been **Kyla Terhune, MD, MBA**, vice president for Educational Affairs and associate dean for Graduate Medical Education (GME).

For Terhune's "compassion and extraordinary commitment to ensuring all residents, regardless of specialty, had a safe and nurturing training environment," she was awarded the Five Pillar Leader Award. The award recognizes exceptional leaders who consistently model a balanced approach to leadership across the five pillars of excellence and the Credo. These leaders sustain a focus

on people, service, quality, innovation, growth and finance that supports VUMC's service and operational excellence.

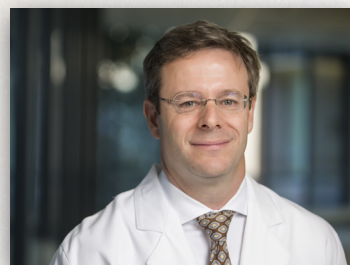
"Communication is key to everything," Terhune said. "Intelligent, conscientious people do amazing things when they have the information they need to make good decisions. (Our trainees) needed to know what we knew, what we didn't know, and we also needed house staff input in how best to walk forward as an institution."



Dr. Terhune

[Complete Story](#)

## Join me in Congratulating our 2021 Service Award Recipients



**Seth J. Karp, MD**  
Chair, Section of Surgical Sciences  
Surgeon-in-Chief, Vanderbilt University Medical Center

I would like to thank members of our faculty and staff for helping the Section achieve our goals throughout the years with their dedication, years of service and support. It is an honor to recognize these members of our team for their many years of service to Vanderbilt and the Section.

The Section has many moving parts that come together to accomplish the goal of improving patients' lives through innovation in surgical techniques, research discoveries and shaping future leaders in surgery.

### 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

Wallace (Skip) Neblett

### 35 YEARS OF SERVICE

Nancy Cardwell  
John Pietsch  
Jerrie Smith

### 30 YEARS OF SERVICE

Debi Andrews  
Connie Weaver

### 25 YEARS OF SERVICE

L. Alan Bradshaw  
Michael Holzman  
Kevin Ray  
Sam Warren

### 20 YEARS OF SERVICE

D. Lee Gorden  
Changqing Kao  
David Shaffer  
J. Blair Summitt  
Angelene Timbs

### 15 YEARS OF SERVICE

Dottie Aeberle  
David Bichell  
Christopher Brown  
Dane Fornero  
Connie Head  
Gretchen Jackson  
Tonna McCutcheon  
Harry Moneypenny  
Vera Phelan  
Tammy Tankersley  
Matthew War Hoover

### 10 YEARS OF SERVICE

Martin Blakely  
Bradley Dennis  
Shannon Eastham  
Janie Falkenberg  
Mary Hooks  
Seth Karp  
Diana Russell  
Richard Russell  
Suseela Somarajan

### 5 YEARS OF SERVICE

Richard Berkman  
Brian Drolet  
Dario Englot  
Elizabeth Fischer  
Mary Fultz  
Erin Gillaspie  
Alexander Hawkins

M. Benjamin Hopkins  
Salam Kassis  
Susie Lin  
Michael Longo  
Jessica McAllister  
Jennifer Orosco  
Allan Peetz  
Niki Reese  
Laura Schaefer  
Jacob Schwarz  
Hamid Shah  
Sallie Walker  
Amanda Wright

## Department and Division New Faculty and Promotions

### New Faculty

#### DEPARTMENT OF CARDIAC SURGERY

Assistant Professor of Cardiac Surgery

**John Trahanas, MD**

Research Assistant Professor

**Rei Ukita, PhD**

#### DEPARTMENT OF NEUROLOGICAL SURGERY

Assistant Professor of Neurological Surgery

**Scott Zuckerman, MD, MPH**

**Douglas Terry, PhD, MS**

#### DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRIC SURGERY

Assistant Professor of Pediatric Surgery

**Joseph Fusco, MD**

#### DEPARTMENT OF PLASTIC SURGERY

Assistant Professor of Plastic Surgery

**Lauren Connor, MD**

**Izabela Galdyn, MD**

#### DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

#### DIVISION OF SURGICAL ONCOLOGY & ENDOCRINE SURGERY

Assistant Professor of Surgery

**Chandrasekhar (Sekhar) Padmanabhan, MD**

**Kelly Hewitt, MD**

**Rachel McCaffrey, MD**

#### DIVISION OF ACUTE CARE SURGERY

Associate Professor of Surgery & Burn Director

**Anne Wagner, MD**

Assistant Professor of Clinical Surgery

**H. Andrew Hopper IV, MD**

#### DEPARTMENT OF THORACIC SURGERY

Assistant Professor of Thoracic Surgery

**Caitlin Demarest, MD, PhD**

#### DEPARTMENT OF VASCULAR SURGERY

Professor of Vascular Surgery & Department Chair

**Daniel Clair, MD**

Professor of Vascular Surgery & Wound Center Director

**Mark Iafrazi, MD, RVT, RPVI**

### Faculty Promotions

#### DEPARTMENT OF CARDIAC SURGERY

Professor of Cardiac Surgery, Thoracic Surgery, and Biomedical Engineering

**Matthew Bacchetta, MD, MBA, MA**

#### DEPARTMENT OF NEUROLOGICAL SURGERY

Associate Professor of Neurological Surgery and Radiology & Radiological Sciences

**Rohan Chitale, MD**

#### DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

Research Professor of Surgery and Cell & Developmental Biology

**Anna Means, PhD**

#### DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

Associate Professor of Surgery

**Alexander Hawkins, MD, MPH**

#### DIVISION OF HEPATOBIILIARY SURGERY & LIVER TRANSPLANTATION

Assistant Professor of Surgery

**Laura Hickman, MD**

#### DIVISION OF SURGICAL ONCOLOGY & ENDOCRINE SURGERY

Associate Professor of Surgery

**Christina Bailey, MD, MSCI**

#### DIVISION OF ACUTE CARE SURGERY

Assistant Professor of Clinical Surgery

**Joshua Smith, DO**

#### DEPARTMENT OF VASCULAR SURGERY

Assistant Professor of Clinical Vascular Surgery

**Christy Guth, MD**

## Thank you to our recent Section retirees

### Jerrie Smith, Division of Surgical Oncology & Endocrine Surgery



**Jerrie Smith** joined Vanderbilt University Medical Center in 1986. She spent her entire 35-year career within the Department of Surgery, and joined the Division of Surgical Oncology and Endocrine Surgery when it became an independent division as a Surgery Scheduler. She retired November 15, 2021.

Drs. Solórzano and Idrees presented Jerrie with an Honorary Faculty Member Certificate for great appreciation for her 35 years of dedication and service to our patients and the Vanderbilt University Medical Center community.

### Sam Warren, Section of Surgical Sciences

**Sam Warren** joined the Section of Surgical Sciences IT staff in October 1996 just when the World Wide Web was beginning to take shape. For the past 25 years he ushered us through numerous IT changes and provided our faculty and staff devoted IT support.

Warren was part of the three-man IT team that maintained and provided approximately 325 desktop computers, 200 laptops and other devices for the entire Section faculty, residents and staff. He and his team have overseen software and system updates. They have also executed all VUMC security initiatives and troubleshooted updates on phones, iPads, and computers, hopefully preventing phishing scams and hacking attempts.

Warren, a die-hard Harley Davidson enthusiast, retired December 31, 2021.



## Slaughter joins the Section of Surgical Sciences



*Mr. Slaughter*

We welcome **Howard Slaughter**, our new Senior Financial Manager, to the Section of Surgical Sciences. Slaughter has an extensive accounting background and transferred to the Section from the VUMC Treasury department, where he was an Accounting Manager. Prior to coming to VUMC, he worked 22 years for AT&T (formerly BellSouth) and held various finance management and director positions. Howard will support the Section Finance department with reporting, budgeting and variance analysis.

Howard and his wife, Julie, have two adult children, Eddie and Annie. In his spare time, he enjoys the rewards of gardening and beekeeping.