



Penn Surgery Society NEWS

GRADUATION 2024

Special Edition to Honor the Department of Surgery Graduates

Messages from



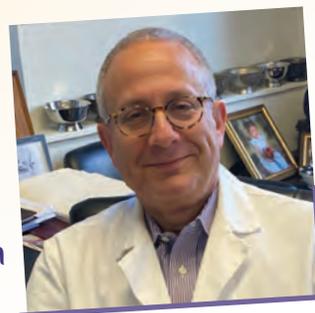
Ronald P. DeMatteo, MD

*Chair, Department of Surgery
John Rhea Barton Professor of Surgery*

The graduating residents have accomplished much during their time at Penn. Yet so much more is to come. Congratulations! Carry the Penn Surgery stamp well and proceed to influence the world.

Jon B. Morris, MD

*Vice Chair of Education, The Ernest F. Rosato-William
Maul Measey Professor in Surgical Education*



In the 2023–2024 academic year, 15 Program Directors and 11 Educational Staff from 20 Penn Surgical programs oversaw the training of 177 top notch residents and fellows. A primary endpoint for superb training programs is to prepare their graduates to deliver outstanding and safe patient care and lead the next generation of academic surgeons. This year, 49 such individuals will have the “Penn trained” imprimatur on their resume. Our residents and fellows remain the Crown Jewels of the Department of Surgery.

Please join me in congratulating the Penn Surgery Class of 2024!

Aortic Surgery Fellowship



Contributed by
Nimesh D. Desai, MD, PhD
Program Director

Ming Guo is a graduate of the Aortic Surgery fellowship program at Penn Surgery. He immigrated from China to Vancouver for high school, and completed residency training in an integrated cardiac surgery program in Ottawa, Canada while obtaining a Master of Epidemiology. After graduating from Penn, he moved back to Canada to work as a Cardiac and Aortic surgeon at University of Ottawa Heart Institute.

Ed Percy is graduating from the Aortic Surgery fellowship program at Penn Surgery. He was born in eastern Canada and completed residency training in an integrated cardiac surgery program in Vancouver, Canada before joining the team at Penn. He has moved back to Canada to work as a Cardiac and Aortic surgeon at Vancouver General Hospital.



Ming Hao Guo, MD

Post Graduate Position: Attending Cardiac Surgeon
 University of Ottawa Heart Institute, Ottawa, Canada

I have only had the privilege of spending 6 months at Penn for aortic fellowship and I enjoyed every minute of it, and I wished that I could spend longer. From the variety of endovascular and open aortic interventions to the varying complexity of patients and the innovation that occur here on a daily basis, there was so much to learn. In addition, the people, including all the surgeons, nurses, OR and clinical staff, as well as my

co-fellow made the experience even more enjoyable. The 6 months flew by in a blur, and I will always remember the passion and excitement with which we discussed and performed each case. I would recommend this fellowship to any trainees interested in aortic surgery in a heartbeat!

Edward Percy, MD

Post Graduate Position: Attending Cardiac Surgeon
 Vancouver General Hospital, Vancouver, Canada

My aortic fellowship at Penn exceeded all of my expectations. The volume of complex cases, coupled with the concentrated, world-leading expertise create an experience that I believe is unparalleled. The skills and experience that I gained at Penn have allowed me to launch my career with so much more confidence than I had expected. There is a level of passion within the cardiac surgery group that permeates all aspects of the training. It is infectious. I worked harder here than anywhere I have previously been and I loved every minute of it. I will always consider myself fortunate to have trained in this environment. Finally, I knew I would be exposed to world-class training but the one thing I did not expect is the incredible connections that I would form. I will remain forever thankful to the incredible teachers at this institution and will always treasure the connections that I made along the way.



Breast Surgery Fellowship

Contributed by
Julia Tchou, MD, PhD
Program Director



Dr. Rachel Berger was our FY2023-2024 Breast Surgery Fellow. Dr. Berger is a New York City native. She received her BA degree from Barnard College of Columbia University and a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology at SUNY Downstate School of Public Health. She received her MD degree from the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in 2018. She then matched in the General Surgery Program at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Newark, New Jersey. We were excited to have Dr. Berger matched as our Fellow. During her year with us, Dr. Berger was an invaluable member of our team in the OR and in the clinic. Dr. Berger is now practicing as a breast surgical oncologist at Jefferson Health Breast Center in Sewell, New Jersey.



Rachel L. Berger, MD, MPH

Post Graduate Position: Jefferson Health, Breast Surgical Oncology

Residency: Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Newark, New Jersey

Medical School: University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine

Cardiothoracic Surgical Residency

Contributed by
Marisa Cevalco, MD, MPH
Program Director



Mark Helmers, MD

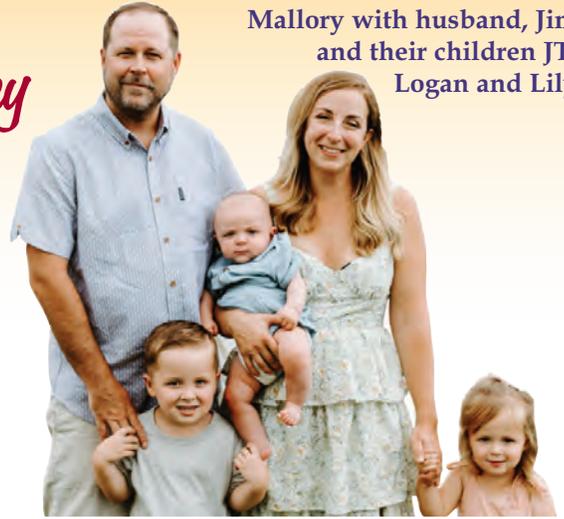
Post Graduate Position: Piedmont Heart Institute, Atlanta, Georgia

Contributed by Dr. Cevalco: Mark Helmers is another star graduate from the integrated training program for cardiac surgery here at Penn. A native of Arizona, he excelled at the University of Arizona as an undergraduate, and then he went on to Johns Hopkins for medical school. He continued to garner awards throughout his time at Hopkins, both clinically and academically, and we were fortunate to recruit him to Penn. He won the GME Teaching Award for his amazing

teaching skills, and is a star surgeon. He has moved to Atlanta, Georgia, for his faculty position at Piedmont Heart as a cardiac surgeon.

Cardiothoracic Surgical Residency

Mallory with husband, Jim and their children JT, Logan and Lily



Mallory Hunt, MD

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor of Surgery
Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

It is difficult to summarize how it feels to have completed 12 years of training at Penn in a few short paragraphs, but I will try. After three months in practice as an attending, I have never been more grateful for the training and mentorship I received at Penn. It happens not infrequently that I find myself in the operating room or seeing a patient in the hospital and think, "What would Drs. Singhal, Kucharczuk, or Bermudez do?" I find myself repeating familiar sayings to my own trainees, truly understanding for the first time what it is like to stand on the other side of the table with the roles reversed, and thankful for the opportunities that my Penn mentors gave me to learn under their direction. I have found comfort in knowing that they are just a phone call away, having already shared in my early celebrations with difficult cases gone well, and offering advice to me when I needed it most.

I feel an immense amount of gratitude to everyone in the Penn surgery family who helped make me the surgeon that I am today. In addition to the attendings who gave me the confidence to begin practice knowing that I have been trained by the best, thank you to the residents who I had the privilege of working alongside, particularly during the last year of my training. Working with all of you made even the hardest days the most fun! Thank you to my family for supporting me on this decade-long journey, and especially to my husband and kids for reminding me what is most important at the end of every day.

Penn is a truly special place, and I miss it dearly. Please keep in touch and if you ever find yourself in Milwaukee, stop by to say hello!

Colon and Rectal Surgery Fellowship

Contributed by **Joshua Bleier, MD, Program Director**



This past year, we had the pleasure of training Dr. Kerri Lopez. She came to us from the University of Maryland, and her temporary transplant to Philly was an amazing gift to us! For the entire year she shone, her personality and clinical skills made her a star. She was loved by the residents for her amazing ability to teach, and loved by the faculty for her skill, reliability, and magical ability to always keep us smiling! Being recruited back to Maryland, despite her busy schedule, FaceTime with her kids every day, AND the birth of her son/nephew (she's an identical twin), she managed to submit multiple grant proposals and set up a lab for herself! She is currently doing great back home, so happy to be back with her family, but we miss her, and know she is going to continue her march towards an amazing career!

Kerri E. Lopez, MD

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor of Surgery,
University of Maryland Medical Center, Baltimore, Maryland

Residency: University of Maryland Medical Center

Medical School: University of Michigan

Kerri with husband, Micah and their two boys James (left) and Jack (right)



General Surgery Residency

Contributed by
Major Kenneth Lee, IV, MD, PhD
Program Director



This newsletter provides us with yet another opportunity to congratulate and thank a spectacular group of chief residents. This was a relatively small class for us at this point. As I said at their graduation dinner, I viewed this as the “zero delta” class. One after the other had the same philosophy and approach. They were excellent clinicians, relentless teachers, and head-down, no-nonsense workers. The consistency was remarkable and all the more extraordinary considering their performance.

A Program Director’s dream scenario would be to recruit a class like this each year. They were an absolute pleasure to train and provided ideal role models for all of the residents below them. Each stands as a reminder of why we do what we do—so that we have the opportunity to contribute to the development of surgeons like these. I am quite certain that we will continue to be proud to call them all Penn trained.

Feredun S. Azari, MD

Post Graduate Fellow, Thoracic Surgery,
Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio

Feredun with his wife Jalia
and daughter Zara

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard." - A.A. Milne

The past seven years at Penn Surgery have been filled with profound happiness and immense joy. When I first arrived in Philadelphia, I didn't know what to expect, but within days, I knew I had become part of a big family where everyone wants you to succeed both technically and personally. While I'm now in a fellowship with other bright colleagues, I miss the privilege of training with my good friends Greg, Andrew, Jason, Omar, Alan, Ricky, and Jacqui.



It's hard to grasp how excellent the surgical training is as a Penn resident when you're constantly surrounded by greatness, but it becomes clear when you leave this magical place. These past seven years have prepared me for any moment, both technically and clinically. I came to my fellowship well-prepared, especially after an amazing chief year. There's nothing you haven't seen at Penn, and you'll hit the ground running wherever you go.

I'm forever grateful to all the faculty who have been instrumental in my journey and continue to support me even today. While I can't fit them all on one page, I'd like to thank Drs. Singhal, Kucharczuk, Jarrar, Pechet, and Predina in the thoracic surgery department who have always been supportive and continue to be there to this day. I also can't forget to thank Drs. Roses, JoMo, Braslow, Rosato, Vollmer, DeMatteo, Lee, Brooks, Karakousis, Kelz, Kim, Raza, Williams, Dumon, Fraker, Mantell, Bleier, Mahmoud, Harbison, Yelon, Cannon, Seamon, Hashimoto, Wachtel, and countless others who have played an instrumental role in my training and molding me into a Penn surgeon. Every day, I look fondly back on those memories and am thankful for such an opportunity.

Special thanks to all the DSE staff including Laura, Kara, Jenna, Gabi, and Andrea who, over the past seven years, have put up with all of our shenanigans and made sure we actually graduated on time.

To the junior residents: You are honestly in the best training program in the world. Thank you for being there no matter what, even putting an IV in me between cases. To my interns Charles, Jimmy, Nate, Melodie, Nithya, Kate, Julie, Yash, and Iulia: It was amazing to see your transformation over the past year. Thank you for making our chief year a joy.

My last few months at Penn have been nothing short of magical. Jalia and I welcomed our daughter Zara, which was the ultimate icing on the cake to my time in Philadelphia. If you're ever in Cleveland, come say hi. Thank you again to my Penn Surgery family.

General Surgery Residency

Alan Herbst, Jr.

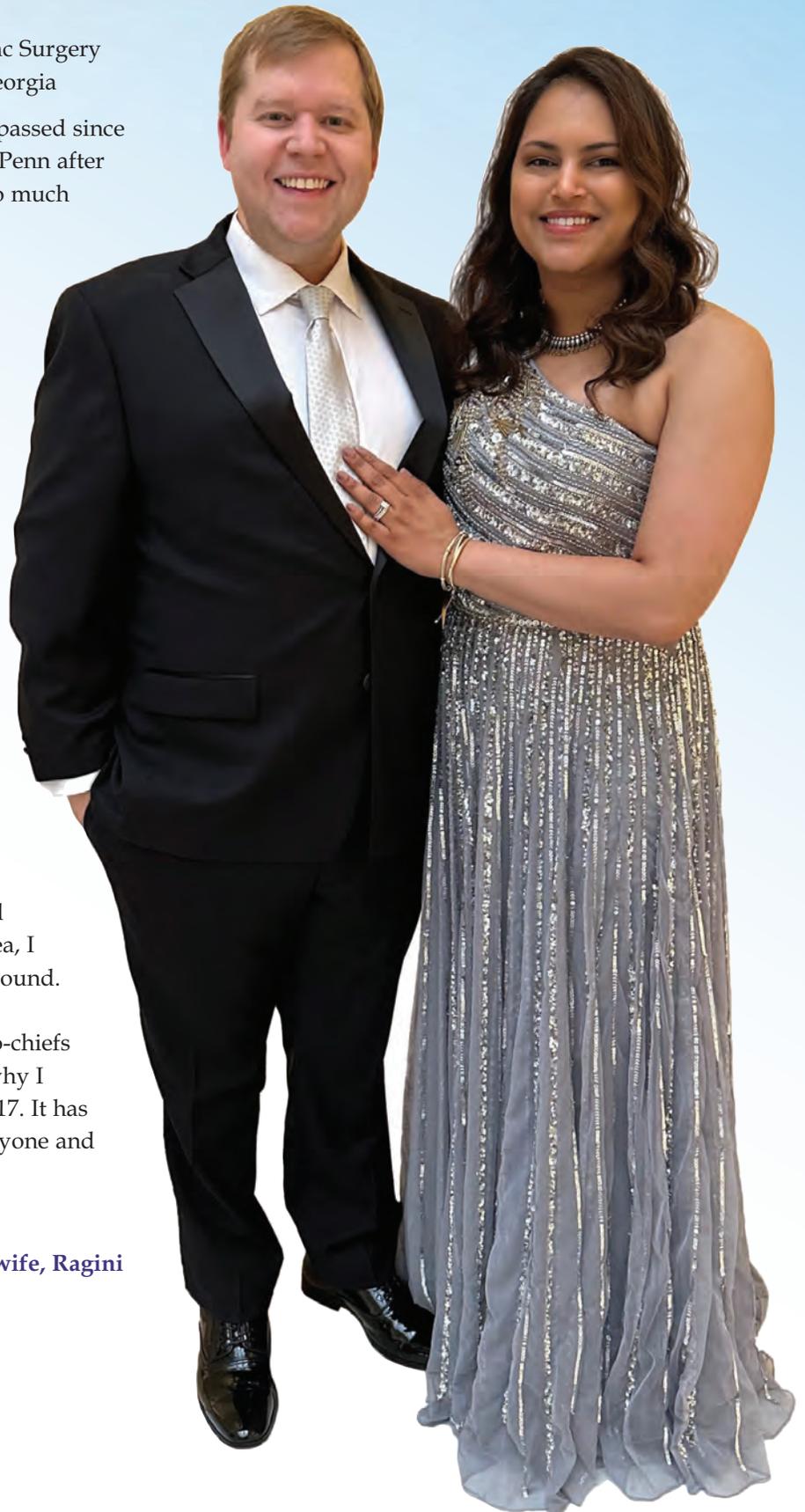
Post Graduate Position: Fellow, Cardiac Surgery
Emory University Hospital, Atlanta, Georgia

It's hard to believe that 4 months have passed since graduation. I already miss everyone at Penn after having been there for 11 years. I owe so much to everyone and cannot thank you all enough for how you have prepared me for my next steps. Emory has been a fantastic experience, and I'm happy to report that I've run into a lot of people with connections to Penn Surgery. Everyone, including me, reminisces about the people and situations we encountered at HUP and this bonding has made me feel more comfortable in my new home.

My wife, Ragini, and I have settled in Atlanta well. For the first time in over a decade, I have been living in the suburbs and drive a car to work every day. It has been an adjustment but we are quickly getting used to the conveniences of space. The only negative is that I knew Atlanta would be hot and yet I was still unprepared. If anyone is ever in the area, I would love to find time to show you around.

I want to give a special thanks to my co-chiefs and the residents. The family there is why I chose Penn Surgery for residency in 2017. It has been a true privilege to work with everyone and I wish you all the best.

Alan with wife, Ragini



General Surgery Residency

Gregory T. Kennedy, MD

Post Graduate Position: Fellow, Thoracic Surgery
Stanford University, Stanford, California

Over the last seven years at Penn, I've read this newsletter cover-to-cover with each new issue. I always looked forward to this particular section to learn about how the chief residents were doing and the great things they were accomplishing beyond the halls of HUP. I am extraordinarily thankful for the training I received at Penn, and am humbled to have joined the distinguished group of Penn Surgery graduates.

As I've started my thoracic surgery fellowship at Stanford, I am even more grateful for the surgical foundation I received in training at Penn. The faculty at Penn exemplify excellence in every facet of academic surgery. They instilled in me an uncompromising drive for technical and clinical skill, a passion for solving complex problems and advancing the field, and an endless pursuit to know more and do better for our patients. Training under the faculty and alongside such a distinguished group of co-chiefs and junior residents was inspiring. I sincerely believe that this is the finest residency program in the country.

While I miss Penn and the people of Penn Surgery, I'm fortunate that the training environment at Stanford ("Penn West") is imbued with a very similar ethos, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Woo, Dr. Shrager, and Dr. Berry. It's a vibrant and exciting community to be a part of, and I have learned much in the first few months of fellowship.

My family is settling in well in California. My wife, Kanak, is thriving in her faculty position within the Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology at Stanford's Lucile Packard Children's Hospital. She has already built a busy clinical practice and is expanding the research efforts of the Division in the field of eosinophilic esophagitis. Our daughter Leena, now 18 months old, enjoys the perpetual sunshine in Palo Alto and has had a blast exploring Stanford's beautiful campus. In our rare weekends off together, we've been able to take advantage of Stanford's proximity to Yosemite National Park and Big Sur.

Thank you again to everyone in the Department for your friendship, mentorship, and terrific surgical training over the past seven years. I am incredibly proud and humbled to be a Penn Surgery graduate, and I will carry the Penn legacy throughout my surgical career.



Greg with his wife, Kanak, and daughter, Leena

General Surgery Residency

Omar I. Ramadan, MD, MSc

Post Graduate Position:

Fellow, Vascular Surgery, Massachusetts General Hospital,
Boston Massachusetts

Knee deep in fellowship now, I still think back to my Penn Surgery training every day. My former attendings' voices ring through my head. Many notice my dedication to JoMo's "full Brazilian" shaving technique for femoral cutdowns.

Dr. Braslow's "go go go" pushes me to keep making progress, and I've accidentally pronounced "babcock" in the Braslow slang. Dr. Roses' and Dr. Lee's strategies to navigate hostile dissections by defining anatomy clearly and chipping away from different angles help guide me through fused planes and plastered structures. I channel my inner Dr. Karakousis by predicting impossibly ambitious "skin to skin" times and my inner Dr. Fraker by calling for the next patient as soon as we identify our target vessel. Dr. Wachtel's advice on how to steal cases from attendings has borne fruit. I have even accused an attending of "gilding the lily" a la Dr. Williams.



Omar with his wife Julia, threenager Zayn, and daughter Salma

I have also come to appreciate many things about HUP that I took for granted. For instance, here at "Man's Greatest Hospital," radiologists do not read CT scans overnight. The ICU care can leave something to be desired. There are no outpatient APPs. The turnover is somehow slower. And, just like Dr. Lee warned me, I've had to work hard to rebuild a bit of the sweat equity I accrued over seven years at HUP, PAH, and PPMC.

More than anything, though, while the faculty and trainees at MGH are excellent and have been great to me – and I've been extremely lucky to have Jordan Stoecker as my senior fellow – I have never believed more strongly that the Penn Surgery program is the best in the country. Penn's fantastic faculty, residents, and staff pushed and guided me to be better every day, and I owe any and all success I've had to them. Moreover, I was blessed to train with the best chief class I could've asked for – Feredun, Alan, Greg, Ricky, Drew, and Jason – and am eternally grateful for it. I'm so excited to witness their inevitable successes and to follow the amazing careers of all the Penn residents I trained with. Thank you all so much for getting me to where I am today!

General Surgery Residency

Richard J. Straker, III, MD

Post Graduate Position: Fellow, Colon and Rectal Surgery
University of California Irvine Medical Center, Irvine, California

Richard J. Straker III was born and grew up in Orlando, Florida. He studied Microbiology with a minor in Business at The Ohio State University, and then moved back to Florida where he completed medical school at the University of Miami. He initially planned to follow in his father's footsteps and pursue a career in gastroenterology, but upon starting his general surgery rotations, he immediately fell in love with the anatomy, physiology, technical aspects, and all-inclusive patient care that a career in surgery affords. During his fourth year of medical school, he was fortunate to be put in contact with Dr. Daniel Dempsey, and subsequently completed a sub-internship with Dr. Dempsey at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. During that rotation, he had the opportunity to work closely with Dr. Noel Williams as well. He was blown away by the technical excellence, the uncompromising patient care, and the down-to-earth nature of Dr. Dempsey, Dr. Williams, the rest of the faculty, and all of the residents at Penn. He was privileged to have been offered a spot in the general surgery training program. After his first several years of training, he realized that gastrointestinal surgery, and more specifically colon and rectal surgery, was the correct field for him. During his two years of research, he had the opportunity to work with Dr. Giorgos Karakousis studying soft tissue and GI malignancies. After completion of residency, he will be going Irvine, California, to continue his training in colon and rectal surgery. He is extremely grateful to all of the faculty, his co-residents, the coordinators, and most importantly his family, for teaching and supporting him throughout his training.



General Surgery Residency

Andrew D. Tieniber, MD

Post Graduate Position:

Fellow, Complex General Surgical Oncology, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York, New York

Moving from Philadelphia to New York City has been an exciting journey for us. We're having a great time exploring all that NYC has to offer from concerts and restaurants to child favorites like the Central Park Zoo and the Museum of Natural History. We're also discovering the other fun aspects of NYC like navigating midtown with a baby and carrying a stroller down 6 flights of stairs to catch the subway.

As many before me have said, the training at Penn is truly outstanding. I feel incredibly fortunate to have been part of this program, working alongside the best residents in the country and learning from faculty and staff who are dedicated to our success. You don't fully appreciate how exceptional the education and mentorship at Penn are until it's over. However, at the end of your 7+ years, you will be well prepared to excel in whatever field you choose to pursue. The skills and experiences I gained have been invaluable, providing a strong foundation as I take on new challenges at MSK.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the faculty, mentors, and colleagues at Penn who played a pivotal role in my development. Your commitment to excellence and your unwavering support have been invaluable. As I move forward in my career, I carry with me the lessons learned and the standards set at Penn, ready to continue growing and advancing in the field of surgery. Thank you for everything.

**Drew with wife,
Samantha and
daughter, Nora
and Vanderslice**



General Surgery Residency

Jason Tong, MD

Post Graduate Position: Fellow, Colon and Rectal Surgery, Weill Cornell Medicine

After spending the last 11 years at Penn for medical school and then surgical residency, I still find it difficult to believe that my days of wandering the halls of HUP are finally over. When I started as a medical student, I could think of nothing less attractive than a surgical residency. However, by the time I finished, there was nothing else I'd rather be than a Penn general surgery resident. I remember my time as a sub-i and watching my chiefs Kay Lee, Matt Boelig, and Lindsay Kuo work in the operating room, and thinking to myself that I could never be like them. They were all cool, collected, and seemed so at home in the operating room and in the hospital. I still don't think I'm anywhere close to achieving what they have, but at least now I can say I own the same black engraved wooden chair that they do.



Jason and wife, Jen, proudly repping Penn and the Birds on the top of Jungfrauoch Switzerland.

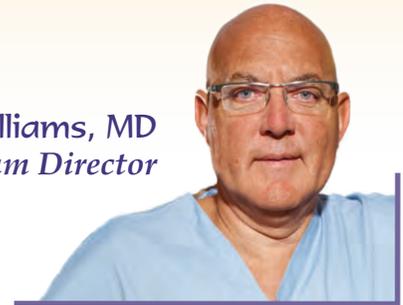
Arriving at a new institution as a fellow in New York has made me only appreciate my own training at Penn even more. The tight knit family of Penn Surgery is perhaps one of the greatest things that I miss on a day-to-day basis (second only of course, to my incredibly supportive and amazing wife Jen). The chicken tenders and fries, remain a close third.

Although I've been lucky enough to travel to New York with one of my co-residents, I still miss the days when my class would all assemble in the front of the Flyer's auditorium for M&M; if only to marvel at our own ongoing incomplete understanding of a biologic process. To the junior residents, I can honestly say that you are all a cut above the rest. To the current chief class, remember to soak it in while you can.

I will forever be indebted to the enduring mentorship and tutelage of the entire Colorectal and EOS divisions, Dr. Lee and Dr. Morris, Dr. Dempsey, and of course Dr. DeMatteo. Thank you to the OR staff for forever being our greatest supporters, for draping that warm blanket over us after a long night, for feeding us in between cases with secret snacks, and for the countless laughs we all shared. Thank you, Penn Surgery, for everything you've done for me, I hope to do you proud.

General Surgery - Preliminary Residency

Contributed by **Noel N. Williams, MD**
Program Director



I would like to congratulate and thank all the preliminary Surgical residents who have completed their training here at Penn Surgery in June 2024. Everyone is a credit to our program and performed at a high level. They have all secured amazing positions in their careers, which proves testimony to their hard work. It gives me great pleasure to say the following residents have continued their careers in other institutions: Abimbola Abiola is categorical CY2 General Surgery resident in Chapel Hill at the University of North Carolina; Fasih Ahmed is a CY1 General Surgery resident at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California; Sotonye Douglas is a CY1 General Surgery resident at Montefiore Medical Center in Bronx, New York; Argyrios Gyftopoulos is a CY1 General Surgery resident at Stony Brook University, in Stony Brook, New York; Ayesha Noor is a CY1 General Surgery resident at Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, New York; Mohamed Salem is a CY1 Neurosurgery resident at the University of Colorado in Aurora, Colorado; Ali Ali is a CY2 General Surgery resident at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, Oregon; Mickel Attia is a CY2 General Surgery resident at NYU in New York, New York; Sameer Khan is a CY3 General Surgery resident at University of Rochester in New York. Lastly, Loukas Stoupis is a CY3 General Surgery resident at Lankenau Medical Center in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. I know they will all do excellent work and wish them success as they continue their careers in surgery. It gives me great pleasure to welcome preliminary interns to Penn Surgery and see them advance their careers thereafter.



Abimbola Joy Abiola, MD

Post Graduate Position: PGY2 General Surgery Residency
 University of North Carolina Hospitals Program, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Medical School: Obafemi Awolowo University College of Health Sciences

Fasih Ali Ahmed, MD

Post Graduate Position: PGY1 General Surgery Residency,
 Stanford University, Palo Alto, California

Medical School: Aga Khan University Medical College



General Surgery - Preliminary Residency



Ali Basil Ali, MD

Post Graduate Position: PGY2 General Surgery Residency,
Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, Oregon

Medical School: Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland School of Medicine

Mickel Tarek Attia, MD

Post Graduate Position: PGY2 General Surgery Residency,
New York University - Langone Health, New York, New York

Medical School: University College Cork School of Medicine



Sotonye Carolyn Douglas, MD, MS

Post Graduate Position: PGY1 General Surgery Residency,
Montefiore Medical Center/ Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, New York

Medical School: Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine



Argyrios Gyftopoulos, MD

Post Graduate Position: PGY1 General Surgery Residency,
Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York

Medical School: University of Athens School of Health Sciences



General Surgery - Preliminary Residency



Sameer Ahmad Khan, MD

Post Graduate Position: Categorical PGY3 General Surgery Residency, University of Rochester Program, Rochester, New York

Medical School: Aga Khan University Medical College

Ayesha Noor, MD

Post Graduate Position: PGY1 General Surgery Residency, Westchester Medical Center, Valhalla, New York

Medical School: Aga Khan University Medical College



Mohamed M. Salem, MD, MPH

Post Graduate Position: PGY1 Neurosurgery Residency, University of Colorado, Aurora, Colorado

Medical School: Alexandria University Faculty of Medicine



Loukas Stoupis, MD

Post Graduate Position: PGY3 General Surgery Residency, Main Line Health System/Lankenau Medical Center Program, Wynnewood, Pennsylvania

Medical School: University of Athens School of Health Sciences



Plastic Surgery - Integrated Residency

Joshua Fosnot, MD
Program Director



Dan Mazzaferro, MD, MBA

Post Graduate Position: Aesthetic Fellowship with Louis Bucky, MD
Washington Square, Pennsylvania

Medical School: Drexel University College of Medicine

Undergraduate School: Auburn University

Natalie Plana, MD

Post Graduate Position: Craniofacial Surgery Fellowship
New York University, New York, New York

Medical School: New York University School of Medicine

Undergraduate School: Fordham University



Ari M. Wes, MD

Post Graduate Position: Private Practice, Burlingame, California

Medical School: Perelman School of Medicine
at the University of Pennsylvania

Undergraduate School: Claremont McKenna College

Plastic Surgery - Independent Residency



Geoffrey Kozak, MD

Post Graduate Position: Private Practice - Capital Health, Trenton, New Jersey

Residency: Thomas Jefferson University Hospital

Medical School: Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University

Undergraduate School: Carnegie Mellon University

Craniofacial Surgery Fellowship



Jordan W. Swanson, MD, MSc
Program Director



Benjamin B. Massenburg, V, MD

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor of Surgery, UC San Diego Health

Residency: University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle

Medical School: Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York

Undergraduate School: Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts

Microvascular Reconstructive Surgery Fellowship



Stephen J. Kovach, III, MD
Program Director



Nicholas J. Albano, MD

Post Graduate Position:

St. Luke's University Health Network, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Residency: University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics

Medical School: New York University School of Medicine

Undergraduate School: Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania

Microvascular Reconstructive Surgery Fellowship



Sterling Braun, MD

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor, Plastic, Burn and Wound Surgery, University of Kansas Medical Center, Kansas City, Kansas

Residency: University of Kansas Medical Center

Medical School: University of Kansas Medical Center

Undergraduate School: Kansas State University

Christopher R. Howell, MD

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor of Surgery, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky

Residency: University of Kentucky, Lexington

Medical School: University of Kentucky, College of Medicine

Undergraduate School: Wake Forest University



Tyler Merceron, MD

Post Graduate Position: Private Practice, San Antonio, Texas

Residency: Emory University

Medical School: Vanderbilt University

Undergraduate School: University of Texas at Austin



Kishan Thadikonda, MD

Post Graduate Position: University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

Residency: University of Wisconsin

Medical School: University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Undergraduate School: University of Maryland



Thoracic Surgery Fellowship - Cardiac Track

Contributed by
Marisa Cevasco, MD, MPH
Program Director



Cecillia Chin, MD

Post Graduate Position: Aortic Surgery Fellowship,
 Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Contributed by Dr. Cevasco: Cecillia Chin has graduated from our Cardiac Surgery fellowship program. She is a Massachusetts native, and graduated from Harvard University for her undergraduate degree. She then moved to Johns Hopkins for her medical degree, and excelled both in research and clinical endeavors.

She graduated from Hopkins Medical School and stayed there for general surgery training, garnering teaching awards and awards for her clinical acumen. Fortunately, we were able to convince Cecillia to join us for her Cardiac Surgery Fellowship at Penn. She is interested in aortic surgery and is completing her aortic surgery fellowship here under the guidance of Dr. Nimesh Desai.

Transplant Surgery Fellowship

Contributed by
Peter L. Abt, MD
Program Director



The Division of Transplant Surgery is saying a heartfelt goodbye to Jessica Friedman after her two years at Penn. After completing her undergraduate degrees at Bard College and the University of New Mexico, Jessica attended medical school at the University of Southern California. General surgery residency was completed at Tulane where she developed a profound love of New Orleans. Jessica will be joining her husband at the University of New Mexico as a multi-organ transplant surgeon. We look forward to watching Jessica's career flourish and seeing more pictures of her pet tarantulas.



Jessica K. Friedman, MD

Post Graduate Position: University of New Mexico

Residency: Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana

Medical School: Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California

Trauma and Surgical Critical Care Fellowship

Contributed by **Niels D. Martin, MD**
Program Director



The Traumatology/Acute Care Surgery & Surgical Critical Care Fellowship programs finished another spectacular eight fellows this year. All finished with a certificate in Surgical Critical Care and four fellows received an added certificate from the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma (AAST) in Acute Care Surgery. This year's graduates, and as a group, have saved countless lives at the trauma center, on our ESS services and in our ICUs. This invaluable clinical experience, compounded with their academic, educational, and leadership experiences, make them primed to become the academic leaders of tomorrow. They have each been recruited to some of the very best positions around the country. We could not be prouder of our graduates and look forward to their many future accolades in patient care, education, science, and leadership.



Sriharsha Gummadi, MD

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor of Surgery,
Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

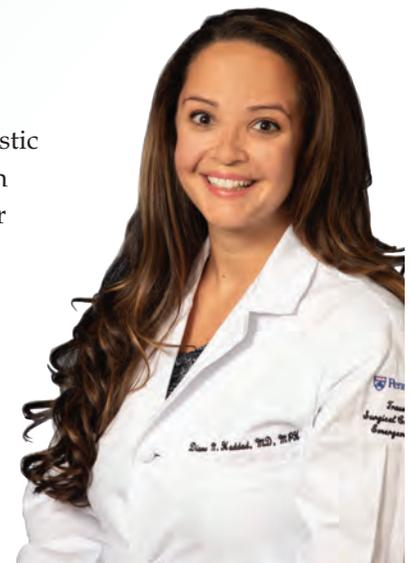
These last two years have been the most formative years of my training (having spent over 14 years in Philadelphia training). Words can't express the significance of the education, mentorship, and friendship I've received. Thank you to the whole Penn family!

Diane Haddad, MD, MPH

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor, Acute Care Surgery,
University of Chicago Medicine, Chicago, Illinois

I am proud to be part of the Penn Trauma family. I want to thank all of the fantastic faculty who shaped this unique part of my journey--specifically Elinore Kaufman for being a brilliant research muse and a snarky lifelong friend, Mark Seamon for teaching us to laugh and not sweat the small stuff, Niels Martin for his visionary leadership and Ben Braslow, who taught us how to get in and out of any predicament.

I am honored to have worked with the trauma program/PI team and an army of APPs who continue to set the standards for excellence in patient care and friendship. Thank you to the Penn residents who welcomed me into their family. Finally, to my rock star co-fellows who are brilliant surgeons and even more phenomenal humans, you're stuck with me.



Trauma and Surgical Critical Care Fellowship



Justin S. Hatchimonji, MD, MBE, MSCE

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor of Surgery, University of Chicago Medicine, Chicago, Illinois

I cannot thank the faculty, fellow trainees, APPs, nurses, OR staff, administrative staff, and patients enough for the 13 years of education and training I received at Penn. In particular, I am indebted to JoMo for giving me a residency spot and Drs. Martin, Reilly, and Schwab for my fellowship. Frankly, it feels weird to finally leave, but I am already enjoying being able to apply what I've learned in West Philly to the South Side of Chicago. It is truly one of my greatest privileges to call myself Penn-trained.

Jeremy M. Kaswer, MD

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor, Jefferson University Hospital Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dr. Jeremy Kaswer joined the faculty at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital where he will work as a surgical intensivist in the CTICU. He also will split time in the Emergency Department and continue involvement in teaching and scholarly activities focused on trauma resuscitation and ECMO. Dr. Kaswer also will continue to serve in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard as a flight surgeon for the 28th ECAB and ongoing work with TEMS.



Deacon Lile, MD

Post Graduate Position: Trauma Surgeon, Christiana Hospital Newark, Delaware

The year at Penn was a highlight of my surgical career. I am immensely grateful to all of the faculty, their brilliance and generosity were a constant source of inspiration. Penn's commitment to excellence is built into every level of the institution, and a large number of staff members played a major role in my training. In particular, I would like to mention the critical care APPs, the trauma APPs, the Trauma Program staff, the surgical ICU nurses and all of the trauma bay personnel. I feel immensely honored to have been a small part of this institution. Lastly, this year was made exceptional by my talented, accomplished and big-hearted class of co-fellows. It was a privilege to be a member of the fellowship class of 2024. I am humbled to have been your teammate, and I am so excited to see what the future holds.



Deacon with his wife, Megan and daughter, Nora

Perhaps the greatest joy in coming to Penn was the ability to come home. I returned to Philadelphia after 4 years of active duty in the United States Air Force, and I was surrounded by family and friends. I am a better physician and surgeon because of my remarkable parents, Paul and Meg Lile, as well as my remarkable in-laws, namely Felice Stack and Mary Theresa Donnelly. Above all, I am forever grateful to Megan and Nora for their constant love and support.

Trauma and Surgical Critical Care Fellowship

Nikia R. McFadden, MD, MAS

Post Graduate Position: Jamaica Hospital Medical Center, Queens, New York

Thanks so much to Penn Trauma, especially to Drs. Martin and Reilly. This program is truly set up for education and I'm so grateful to be graduating from it. I'd like to thank my co-fellows who I've learned so much from. They have been an amazing group to go through this crazy experience with. I'm sincerely appreciative to our patients - it was truly a privilege to take care of the people of West Philadelphia.

I'd like to thank my family - my parents Betty and Bernard, and my brother Matthew. They will never know how much I appreciate their support through these very long years of training and schooling. It truly takes a village. And finally I'd like to thank my husband, Thomas, for always encouraging me to follow my dreams.



(left to right) Nikia, holding Albus, Thomas, Betty, Matthew and Bernard



Rachel Niehuus, MD, PhD

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

I feel really grateful to Penn, and especially the Division of Trauma, for all of the learning, conversations, and connections made during my fellowship. Thank you for opening doors to new opportunities! We enjoyed our time in Philly, and we are so excited about the life we have started in Durham.

Rachel with children Aster and Zora

Patricia Martinez Quiñones, MD, PhD

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor of Surgery Duke University Hospital, Durham, North Carolina

Thank you to the Penn Trauma and Penn Surgery family. It has been a great privilege to learn and work alongside outstanding faculty, residents, providers and staff. I am honored to be your colleague. Penn will always be my trauma home.



Urology Residency

Contributed by
R. Caleb Kovell, MD
Program Director



Victor E. Otaño-Rivera, MD

Post Graduate Position: Private Practice, Puerto Rico

Contributed by Dr. Kovell: There are few individuals we have ever seen with the drive and passion for urology as we have found in Victor. The whole division loved watching him develop into a first class surgeon and tremendous clinician during his residency. Everyone here at Penn Urology will miss Victor tremendously (except for those of us on faculty on the days of the annual softball game), and we all were privileged to work with him over the last five years.

Fueled by a desire to give back to and enrich his community, Victor started his own independent practice, Borinquen Urology, in his native Puerto Rico. Even though he did not end up using the banana and two coconuts (placed in a urologically appropriate arrangement) logo that he was considering for the practice, we all know that “El Dedo” will be wildly successful in everything he does. A true gem of Penn Urology who will not be soon forgotten in these hallowed halls.

Daniel Roberson, MD

Post Graduate Position:

Urologic Oncology Fellowship, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota

Contributed by Dr. Kovell: We can safely say that Penn Urology will never quite be the same after the last five years with Dan Roberson in the program. A one of a kind talent (often described by his peers lovingly as “weird...but you know, in the best possible way”), Dan developed into absolutely superb clinician, dedicated researcher, model educator and gifted surgeon over the course of his 5 year residency. Fueled by dino egg oatmeal and a well timed meme, Dan seemed to handle the most herculean task with ease, never once looking a single gift horse in the mouth.

After graduation, Dan has departed the East Coast to pursue a fellowship in urologic oncology at the Mayo Clinic. He has promised that after he finishes he won't look down on those of us who cannot accurately quote every SWOG, EORTC and KEYNOTE STUDY, but we all have our doubts. That said, during his time in Rochester, Dan will undoubtedly continue his journey to becoming a world class academician and oncologic surgeon. From what I am told, every business goose from across the globe agrees.



Urology Residency

Colin D. Sperling, MD

Post Graduate Position: Deaconess Clinic, Evansville, Indiana

Contributed by Dr. Kovell: With a pre-residency background in commercial aviation, Colin managed to handle his five years here at Penn Urology with a confidence that would be the envy of any top gun aviator. His relentless positivity and ability to figure out the best path forward, even amidst the toughest cases and most challenging situations, will never be forgotten. Colin leaves Penn Urology beloved by all, having developed a true gift for teaching medical students and guiding junior residents through the challenges of a busy urologic service.

With no ties to the area (other than a profound love of egg based condiments), Colin joined the Deaconess practice in Indiana, taking the reins as their go-to robotic surgeon. The entire team there is extremely lucky to have recruited such a talent, and we here at Penn all know that he will make us all proud with his ability to handle any case that comes his way. We are so proud of all that he has accomplished and what he will undoubtedly continue to do in the future.



Urology Robotics Fellowship

Contributed by
Justin B. Ziembra, MD, MEd
Program Director



Anthony T. Tokarski, MD

Post Graduate Position: Private Practice - MidLantic Urology
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

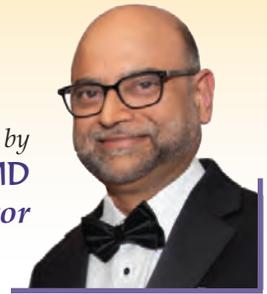


Contributed by Dr. Ziembra: We want to congratulate Dr. Anthony Tokarski on the completion of his 1-year endourology fellowship, which encompassed all aspects of minimally invasive urology, including robotic surgery on the upper and lower urinary tract for benign and malignant conditions and percutaneous upper urinary tract surgery for kidney stones. He is a technically gifted surgeon and clinical problem solver.

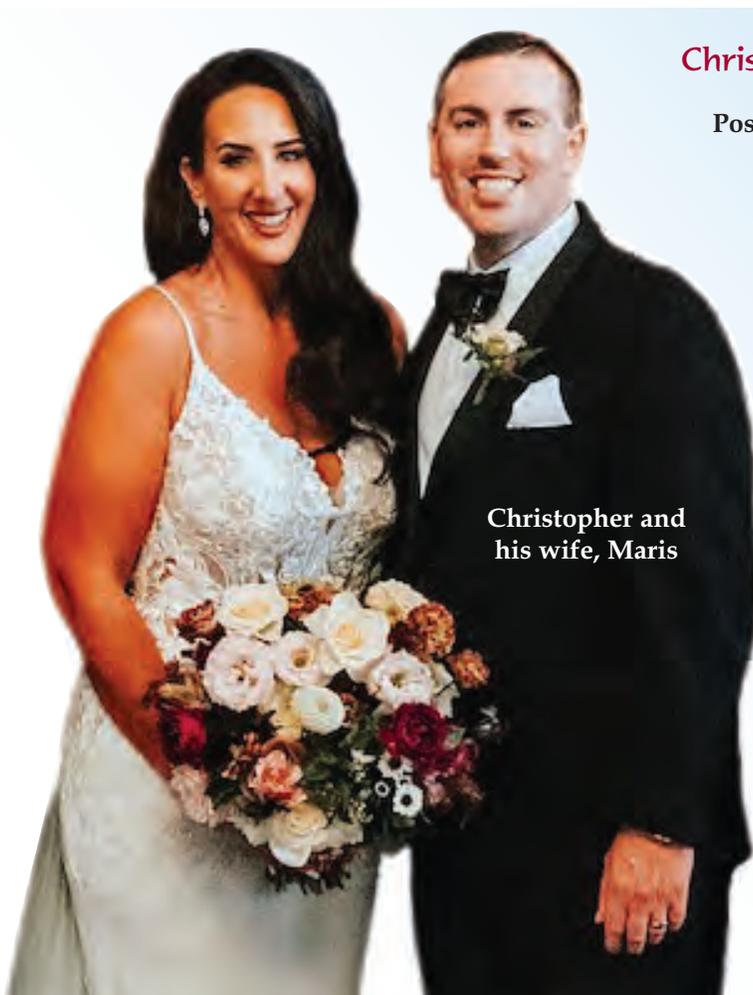
Equally as important is his energetic spirit and infectious personality, which uplifts his patients. It is with this same attitude that he is able to create an environment that allows our students and residents to flourish and staff to want to work with him in the clinic and operating room. He is also a selfless individual willing to help with the clinical care of the faculty's patients, but also staff cases and consults when urgent or emergent needs arise as the primary attending surgeon. This devotion to teamwork is characteristic of all of us in Penn Surgery, but certainly in the Division of Urology, and Dr. Tokarski is no exception. We are fortunate he will be remaining in the area. He will be responsible for complex minimally invasive and robotic surgery within the Mainline Health System. We look forward to watching his continued success and career.

Vascular Surgery Fellowship

Contributed by
Venkat R. Kalapatapu, MD
Program Director



I am excited to announce the graduation of two outstanding fellows from the Vascular Surgery fellowship program. Christopher Cappellini completed his general surgery residency from the Philadelphia Osteopathic School of Medicine. He has joined the faculty at JFK University Medical Center in Edison, New Jersey. Kathleen Marulanda completed her general surgery residency from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. She has joined the faculty at the Penn State Hershey Medical Center in Hershey, PA. Both our graduating fellows were outstanding and have left us with many delightful memories. We will miss them and wish them the very best in their future!



**Christopher and
 his wife, Maris**

Christopher Cappellini, DO

Post Graduate Position: Private Practice
 JFK Medical Center, New Jersey

I was born and raised in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. I majored in Chemistry at Washington & Jefferson College in Washington, Pennsylvania. I graduated with a BA in Chemistry in 2011 and earned a MS degree in Biomedical Sciences at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM) in 2013. I attended medical school at PCOM and am thankful to have matched my first choice of general surgery residency at PCOM and subsequently vascular surgery fellowship at Penn. During my chief year of residency, I was awarded the General Surgery Resident of The Year Award and won 3rd place ACOS 2022 Robert C. Erwin Literary Award for my vascular publication "Outcomes of Transcarotid Artery Revascularization and Carotid Endarterectomy at a Single Institution." My first impactful experience with vascular surgery was early in residen-

cy when a young female sustained a gunshot wound to her leg, requiring an emergent femoral artery cutdown and saphenous vein interposition graft. I admire the technical skill involved in vascular surgery and the ability of a vascular surgeon to save life and limb. In residency and fellowship I have been active in societies, serving on the AOA Council on Postdoctoral Training, ACS Resident Board of Governors Newsletter Workgroup, ACS Communications Workgroup, ACOS Membership Committee, Eastern Vascular Society Membership Committee, and the Society for Vascular Surgery Social Media Ambassador Program. Following graduation I will be an attending vascular surgeon in private practice at JFK Medical Center in New Jersey. I am forever humbled and grateful to have trained at Penn and for the support of faculty, staff, friends, and family.

Vascular Surgery Fellowship

Kathy Marulanda, MD, MS

Post Graduate Position: Assistant Professor of Surgery
Pennsylvania State University, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Dr. Kathy Marulanda received her medical degree from the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University. She completed her general surgery training at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, during which she completed a 2-year postgraduate research fellowship in Dr. Melina Kibbe's basic science lab. She was awarded a T32 NIH grant and US patent for her investigative research. During fellowship, Dr. Marulanda presented at national and international academic conferences, published multiple manuscripts and served as administrative chief. After graduation, Dr. Marulanda will be joining the faculty at Pennsylvania State University as an assistant professor in the department of vascular surgery.

Kathy and her husband,
Aaron Melcher



Cardiothoracic Surgery Award

Teaching Award to Resident or Fellow from Integrated and Fellowship Program – Mark Helmers, MD

Awarded to the resident or fellow that contributed the most to the medical students education in Cardiothoracic Surgery - selected by the medical students



General Surgery Awards

Jonathan E. Rhoads Research Awardees - Sara Palazzo Ginzberg, MD, MSHP

Awarded to the surgical resident whose surgical investigation approaches an ideal epitomized by the Harrison Department of Surgical Research - selected by surgical research award committee.



Leonard J. Perloff Chief Resident Awardee - Richard Straker, MD

Awarded to the chief resident who contributed the most to the education of the junior surgical residents - selected by the junior surgical residents (PGY1-PGY4).

William Y. Inouye Faculty Awardee - Robert E. Roses, MD

Awarded to the Surgical Faculty whose leadership, caring attitude and surgical judgment has been a model for the Surgeon-In-Training and with whom a bond of mutual respect and friendship has been established - selected by the chief residents.



General Surgery Awards

Ernest F. Rosato Faculty Teaching Awardee - Major Kenneth Lee, IV, MD, PhD

Awarded to the faculty member who has had the greatest impact on the education of the surgical residents – selected by the surgical residents.



Keith Reemtsma Surgical Resident of the Year Awardee - Gregory T. Kennedy, MD

Awarded to the surgical resident who based on clinical evaluations, academic performance, and resident votes, in the opinion of the chair and program director is the top resident in the program.

William Y. Inouye Resident Awardee - Amanda L. Bader, MD

Awarded to a Surgical Resident for Excellence in Teaching Medical Students in the Surgery 200 Core Curriculum – selected by medical student evaluation scores.



Leonard D. Miller Awardee - Andrew D. Tieniber, MD

Awarded to the surgical resident whose clinical instruction of medical students most nearly approaches the standard of excellence set by Surgery's Master Educator, Leonard D. Miller – selected by medical student vote.

Allen H. Bar Endowed Humanity in Medicine Residency Awardee - Richard J. Straker, III, MD

Awarded to a surgical resident who shows exceptional clinical promise with an interest in gastrointestinal surgery, and demonstrates respect and compassion for patients – selected by award committee.



General Surgery Awards

Penn Center of Surgical Excellence

The Penn Center of Surgical Excellence is given to the surgical resident achieving highest honors on the annual American Board of Surgery In-Training Exam.



Sarah I. Landau, MD



Jesse Passman, MD, MPH



Jon B. Morris Faculty Teaching Awardee - John T. Miura, MD

Awarded to the surgical faculty member whose clinical instruction and mentorship has been most instrumental in enriching the learning environment and development of junior surgical residents - selected by the junior surgical residents (PGY1-PGY2).

Donald C. Liu Humanism Hero in Surgery Awardee - Carrie Zimmerman Morales, MD

Awarded to a member of the surgical housestaff who exhibits compassion and sensitivity in the care of the surgical patient in a collegial, collaborative, selfless and ethical manner - selected by the chair and the vice chair of education based on peer and faculty nominations.



Cary B. Aarons Equity and Inclusion Award - Ariel Nehemiah, MD, MS

This annual award is given to a member of the surgical housestaff or faculty member who demonstrates commitment to creating an equitable and inclusive learning environment for the surgical residents at Penn. - selected by Surgical Residents and Faculty

Gordon Buzby Surgical Leadership Awardee - Jeffrey L. Roberson, MD

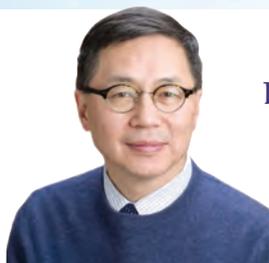
Awarded to a Faculty or Resident member of the Department who has demonstrated leadership, interest and aptitude in surgical administration and management - selected by award committee.



Plastic Surgery Awards

Don LaRossa Teaching Award - *Jesse Taylor, MD*

Awarded to a plastic surgery faculty member for excellence in teaching residents - selected by the chief residents.



Benjamin Chang Teaching Award - *David Low, MD*

Awarded to a plastic surgery faculty member for excellence in teaching residents - selected by the junior residents.

Penn Plastic Surgery Teaching Award - *Dustin Crystal, MD*

Awarded to a plastic surgery resident for excellence in teaching medical students.



Chief Resident Teaching Award - *Erica Pregler, CRNP*

Awarded to a non-faculty member for excellence in teaching residents.

Urology Awards

Linda and Joel Appel Award - *Zoe S. Gan, MD*

Award for research in prostate cancer.



Paul Rodin Leberman Teaching Award - *Trinity J. Bivalacqua, MD, PhD*

Awarded in recognition of overall excellence in resident education - selected by the chief residents.

Howard Pollack Award - *Katharine F. Michel, MD, MSPH*

Highest ISE Absolute Score and Highest ISE Rank.



Urology Awards

Keith Van Arsdalen Teaching Award – Benjamin T. Schurhamer, MD

Award for excellence in operating room teaching - selected by the PGY4's.



Alan J. Wein Mentorship Award – Ariana L. Smith, MD

Awarded to the faculty member who has been the most instrumental in mentorship for residents both individually and collectively - selected by the chief residents.

Douglas A. Canning Award for Achievement in Pediatric Urology Award

– Clare E. Mallahan, MD

It is awarded to the resident who during their training, best embodies the qualities so valued and practiced by Dr. Douglas Canning including clinical excellence, scholarship, technical mastery, grit, determination, and most of all, putting the patient and family first.



Outstanding Robotic/Laparoendoscopic Surgeon Award

– Clare E. Mallahan, MD



Urology Resident Medical Student Teaching Award

– John A. Sobieski, MD

Awarded to the resident that contributed the most to the medical students' education in Urology - selected by the medical students.

Outstanding Clinical Excellence in Urology – Colin D. Sperling, MD



Outstanding Scholar in Urology – Daniel S. Roberson, MD

Outstanding Technical Excellence in Urology

– Victor E. Otaño-Rivera, MD



Vascular Surgery Awards

Ronald M. Fairman, MD Faculty Teaching Award - Douglas Troutman, MD

Awarded to a member of the surgical faculty whose leadership, caring attitude and surgical judgment has been a model for the surgeon-in-training and with whom a bond of mutual respect and friendship has been established – selected by the residents and fellows.



Clyde F. Barker Chief Resident and Fellow Teaching Award

- Kathleen Marulanda, MD

Awarded to the chief resident or fellow who contributed the most to their education during their residency years - selected by residents and fellows.

Penn Center of Surgical Excellence - Ciaran O'Brien, MD

Awarded to the surgical resident achieving highest honors on the annual vascular surgery in-training exam - selected by award committee.



Education Staff

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Manager
Medical Education



Jenna Countie
Program Administrator
General Surgery



Kris Gallagher
Program Administrator
Plastic Surgery



Gretchen Harz
Program Administrator
Urology



Kimberly Klepesky
Program Administrator
Vascular and Transplant Surgery



Kim Moore
Program Administrator,
Trauma/Surgical Critical Care



Emmy Munroe
Program Administrator
Colon and Rectal Surgery,
Breast Surgery, Simulation



Robin Noel
Graphic Artist and
Web Administrator



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Cardiothoracic



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Penn Surgery

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2024 General Surgery Graduating Chiefs

with Ken Lee, Program Director and Ron DeMatteo, Chair, Department of Surger
(front row) Ken Lee, Drew Tieniber, Greg Kennedy, Omar Ramadan, Ron DeMatteo
(back row) Ricky Straker, Jason Tong, Alan Herbst and Feredun Azari