Chairman’s Message

The mid point of 2015 is an exciting time at UTMB. We celebrated the completion of training for 11 chief residents who finished training in General Surgery, Plastic Surgery, Urology, Neurosurgery, and Oral Surgery. We also honored two critical care fellows who completed their training.

We have also celebrated the retirement of Dr. Mainous who at the age of 82 is stepping away from clinical practice after an impressive career as a leading academic oral surgeon that spanned almost 60 years.

We also welcome many new faces in our various training programs and fellowships. This new group of trainees will join us for an exciting time at UTMB, as we embark on the new 2015-2016 academic year. This year will be marked by not only the completion of several major construction projects for the health system but also several major milestones for the Department of Surgery. We continue to be on pace to have our most productive year ever for the Department of Surgery where we are currently projected to exceed 8,000 surgical procedures performed by Departmental surgeons for the first time ever. This year we will also celebrate our 125th anniversary as a Department of Surgery. We will celebrate by not only highlighting our past but by also embracing our future. We will be moving into two new hospital facilities during this year. The League City hospital campus will be open in the fall of 2015 and the Jennie Sealy replacement hospital is slated to be open in the late spring of 2016. As we expand into these new facilities we are also initiating a large renovation project to redo the resident workspaces and attending offices in the John Sealy Annex and the McCullough Building. We are also welcoming several new faculty in General Surgery, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Urology, and Vascular Surgery. We still have active recruitments going on in Cardiac, Pediatric Surgery, Transplant Surgery, Trauma Surgery, and Plastic Surgery. We are currently initiating new recruitments in Neurosurgery and General Surgery. With this growth in our faculty and expansion of our physical plant, we are targeting to perform over 9,000 cases for the next fiscal year. I look forward to continuing to work with everyone from students and trainees, our new and established faculty, and our clinic and office staff to facilitate the growth of the Department in what should be one of the most exciting times for our Department in the Institution’s long history.

Sincerely,

Douglas Tyler
John Woods Harris Distinguished Chair
Professor and Chairman
Department of Surgery, University of Texas Medical Branch
Celis Receives School of Health Professions Distinguished Alumni Award

Mario M. Celis, MS, PA-C, Class of ’94, received the UTMB School of Health Professions Distinguished Alumni Award March 27 at the school’s Dean’s Reception and Alumni Association’s Annual Meeting and Awards Presentation at the San Luis. The School of Health Professions Distinguished Alumni Award is intended to honor alumni who have made major contributions to the health profession through commitment of excellence in patient care, research, publications, education, community service and leadership roles. This award is the highest alumni honor bestowed by the School of Health Professions Alumni Association. The event is sponsored by the UTMB School of Health Professions and School of Health Professions Alumni Association. Celis has been a physician assistant (PA) in the Department of Surgery at Shriners Hospitals for Children since 1997.

With more than 20 years of experience as a PA, Mr. Celis has become a well-rounded and highly respected health care provider. Because of his knowledge, skills and qualifications and his outstanding patient care, Mr. Celis has become a true leader in his profession.

Born in Mexico, Mr. Celis moved to Chicago at the age of eight and has always had a passion for education. He earned an associate’s degree in respiratory care in 1984 and moved to Texas in 1989 to work as a clinical specialist and instructor in the UTMB Department of Respiratory Care.

In an effort to enhance his training and education, Mr. Celis attended night school while working full-time and acquired his Bachelor of Science degree in PA studies from UTMB in August 1994.

Always seeking higher knowledge, Mr. Celis then completed an educational program for Musculoskeletal Evaluation and Rehabilitation from the University of Florida, Gainesville in March of 1995. In 2004, he obtained a Master of Science degree in Health Education and Promotion from the UTMB School of Health Professions.

Mr. Celis was recruited in 1997 by Dr. David Herndon, chief of staff and director of research at Shriners Hospitals for Children in Galveston, to work on his team in the department of general surgery. Today, Mr. Celis continues to flourish both personally and professionally under Dr. Herndon’s guidance.

Mr. Celis has served at the state and national level as a delegate to the Texas Academy of Physician Assistants and to the American Academy of Physician Assistants; he was also a multi-term president of the Physician Assistants for Latino Health organization. To his credit, Mr. Celis has produced over ten publications, has been cited more than 1,000 times in multiple medical journal publications and has made over 20 presentations at national and international conferences. Mr. Celis’ honors include UTMB Respiratory Therapist of the Year award (1989); Outstanding Achievement Award/Department of Respiratory Care (2001); UTMB’s Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Distinguished Service Award (2001); Texas Academy of Physician Assistant’s PA of the Year Award (2003); Most Valuable Performer Service and Excellence Award, Shriners Hospitals for Children (2007) and National Hispanic Medical Association, National Hispanic Health Professionals Leadership award (2012).
Vascular Lab Receives Award from Alvin Community College

The UTMB Vascular Lab was chosen as the Clinical Site of the Year by Alvin Community College for the third time. The lab was chosen out of all the different facilities within the Texas Medical Center. In addition, the Vascular Lab was the highlighted lab in the quarterly newsletter from the college.

The award is given by Alvin Community College each year to a clinical site based on nominations by the students and faculty of ACC which they feel provides the best opportunities for their students based on the learning opportunities, support by both the medical and technical staff, the amount of time devoted to each student, the complexity of the pathology and the intervention required to treat these complex cases. During their rotation here at UTMB the students are exposed to diagnostic procedures which may not currently be performed in other vascular labs throughout the Medical Center such as transcranial Doppler, renal duplex, mesenteric duplex and renal transplant evaluations. Jeanne Patton, RVT, Director of Vascular Services says: “We as clinical preceptors take a very active role in providing supporting material for their case studies, reviewing interventional therapies and outcomes. The medical staff of the Vascular Lab make themselves available to the students as well as graduates from the Vascular Technology program.” Dr. Dr. Michael B. Silva Jr. and his staff have lectured to both the students and graduates from the ACC program during the Houston Vascular Association meeting to further demonstrate UTMB’s commitment to expanding the field of vascular diagnostic technology and interventional procedures.

This is quite an honor for UTMB since the other clinical sites which ACC utilizes are Methodist and St. Lukes among other facilities throughout the Medical Center. This will be UTMB’s third award since we renewed our affiliation with Alvin in 2010. In addition to best clinical site UTMB has also received two awards for best clinical preceptors. The Vascular Lab at UTMB continues to evolve under the direction of Dr. Silva and in a small way we here at UTMB have left our carbon footprint of the future of vascular technology through our dedication to education.

Breast Health Center Receives Accreditation from the ACS

The UTMB Health Breast Health Center has been granted a three-year/full accreditation designation by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers (NAPBC), a program administered by the American College of Surgeons. Accreditation by the NAPBC is only given to those centers that have voluntarily committed to provide the highest level of quality breast care and that undergo a rigorous evaluation process and review of their performance. During the survey process, the center must demonstrate compliance with standards established by the NAPBC for treating women who are diagnosed with the full spectrum of breast disease. The standards include proficiency in the areas of: center leadership, clinical management, research, community outreach, professional education, and quality improvement. A breast center that achieves NAPBC accreditation has demonstrated a firm commitment to offer its patients every significant advantage in their battle against breast disease.

The NAPBC is a consortium of professional organizations dedicated to the improvement of the quality of care and monitoring of outcomes of patients with diseases of the breast. This mission is pursued through standard-setting, scientific validation, and patient and professional education. Its board membership includes professionals from 20 national organizations that reflect the full spectrum of breast care.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimated that there would be 232,340 patients diagnosed with invasive breast cancer in the United States in 2013. In addition, hundreds of thousands of women who will deal with benign breast disease this year will require medical evaluation for treatment options.

Receiving care at a NAPBC-accredited center ensures that a patient will have access to:

- Comprehensive care, including a full range of state-of-the-art services
- A multidisciplinary team approach to coordinate the best treatment options
- Information about ongoing clinical trials and new treatment options
And, most importantly,
- Quality breast care close to home.

For more information about the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers, visit their web site at www.accreditedbreastcenters.org.
New Urology Clinic Opens in Texas City

UTMB Health is pleased to introduce the UTMB Health Primary and Specialty Care Clinic in Texas City. The clinic, which includes Urology services, is now open.

This new space has been designed to provide the latest state-of-the-art care in a peaceful and healing setting to serve patients in the area. Below is a list of services provided at the clinic.

- Audiology – (409) 986-9686
- Cardiology – (409) 762-2328
- Ear, Nose and Throat – (409) 986-9686
- Family Medicine / Internal Medicine – (409) 986-9686
- Ophthalmology – (409) 978-4321
- Pediatric Primary Care – (409) 938-8466
- Urology – (409) 986-9686

The address of the clinic is: UTMB Health Primary and Specialty Care Clinic, 10121 Emmett F. Lowry Expressway, Texas City, TX 77591. Hours for the clinic are 7:30 am – 5:00 pm, Monday–Friday.

Residency Coordinators Attend Conference


This year’s meeting was packed full of information about NAS (New Accreditation System) and it’s many components along with several other useful professional development and personal growth lectures.

Two of our residency coordinators (Debbie Turney & Dana Wyatt) returned back home as winners of the many giveaway prizes.
Congratulations to Dr. Taylor Riall, Recent Graduate and Fellow of ELAM and ELATE

Three of our faculty members recently completed one-year fellowships in national leadership development programs for women faculty members. Drs. Nisha Garg and Taylor Riall recently completed fellowships in the Hedwig van Ameringen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine (ELAM) program, a part-time fellowship for women faculty in schools of medicine, dentistry and public health. Dr. Vicki Freeman graduated from the Executive Leadership in Academic Technology and Engineering (ELATE) program. Both programs are sponsored through Drexel University.

ELAM is dedicated to preparing women for senior leadership roles at academic health science institutions; the program enhances institutional leadership diversity, while contributing to organizational strategy and innovation. More than 800 ELAM alumnae hold vital roles at institutions around the world, including department chairs, research center directors, deans and college presidents, as well as chief executives in health care and accrediting organizations.

Dr. Nisha Garg, Professor in our Departments of Microbiology & Immunology and Pathology and internationally recognized expert in parasitology, says that the ELAM program allowed her to develop a large network of colleagues from various medical schools around the country, which she can reach out to for advice. ELAM also gave her a new perspective on UTMB. “I developed a deeper appreciation for my colleagues at UTMB who gave me time, support and feedback; and importantly, the opportunity to develop programs that are aligned with institutional priorities in research. ELAM also helped me develop a broader vision of my professional role within the organization.”

Dr. Taylor Riall, Professor of Surgery and Director of the Center for Comparative Effectiveness and Cancer Outcomes also mentions the rich network of diverse contacts as an important benefit of the program, adding, “ELAM was a very powerful and worthwhile experience. It stretched me both professionally and personally and contributed to my academic progress.”

ELATE is a national leadership development program designed to advance senior women faculty in academic engineering, computer science and related fields into effective institutional leadership roles within their schools and universities. Dr. Vicki Freeman, Professor and Chair of the Clinical Laboratory Science Department and Associate Dean for Faculty Development in the School of Health Professions, was invited to participate in the program because of her background in biochemistry and laboratory sciences.

Dr. Freeman says that the experience allowed her learn about differences between traditional campuses across the country and academic health science centers, such as UTMB. She also gained valuable knowledge about budgeting and strategic planning, which helped her put UTMB’s processes into perspective. “One of the best experiences was meeting with different leaders on the UTMB campus to learn about their pathways to leadership and some of their challenges,” Dr. Freeman says. “I would highly recommend this program for other individuals who are looking at or are in leadership positions.”
Brown Receives Regents’ Outstanding Teacher Award

Dr. Kimberly Brown, Associate Professor and holder of the James Edwin Thompson, MD Family Distinguished Professorship for Surgical Simulation, has been selected as a recipient of the prestigious Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Award. Only a select number of faculty members from across the University of Texas System were chosen for this significant honor. After a rigorous campus-level review, the president of each U. T. System health institution forwarded the names of the most qualified candidates for consideration. An external peer review committee comprised of experts from across the U. T. health science disciplines, who are members of the U. T. Academy of Health Science Education, evaluated the nominations. Dr. Brown will formally receive her award on Wednesday, August 19 at a special dinner honoring all the recipients.

Patterson Q&A Featured in Galveston County Daily News

Dr. Joel Patterson, Associate Professor of Neurosurgery and Otolaryngology and Chief of the Division of Neurosurgery, was recently interviewed by John Wayne Ferguson of the Galveston County Daily News. In the Question and Answer article, Dr. Patterson answered questions about his profession and what life is like in the operating room. The interview was the first in an irregular series Ferguson is doing with medical professionals. Included in the interview were Dr. Patterson’s thoughts on operating on the brain, skull, spine, spinal cord, peripheral nerves and pituitary gland. He explained what a typical day was like in the operating room and what influenced him to become a neurosurgeon. The interview was aimed at a lay audience, answering questions a common person may have about surgery on the brain and the atmosphere around the profession of surgery. When asked what his favorite part of his job was, Patterson answered: “It’s intervening in patients who are desperately ill and on the verge of death or profound disability and being able to reverse whatever process is going on and bring them back from the edge to wellness or close to wellness.”

Urology Residency Program Receives Accreditation

The Division of Urology residency program was recently accredited with no citations by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. The Residency Review Committee for Urology, functioning in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), reviewed the information submitted regarding the program and granted the accreditation until March 1, 2022. This is the first time in more than 15 years that the program has received accreditation with no citations.
Faculty Notes

New Faculty

I had the best surgeons ever! My hat is off to Dr. Guillermo Gomez. (Medical)

My surgeon Dr. Aakash Gajjar and his team gave me the best possible treatment. Dr. Gajjar gave me honesty and good explanations. He is a great surgeon! (Surgical)

Dr. Obonoruma Ekhaese and his staff were awesome! I have never had a doctor or their staff check on me so often! (Surgical)

Dr. Tom Kimbrough was wonderful. After my surgery he went out and spoke to my family and checked on me early every morning. Great doctor! (Surgical)

Dr. Aaron Mohanty and his team were great! (Neurosurgery)

Dr. Ravi Radhakrishnan and staff were amazing. My stay was wonderful. Doctors, nurses and all staff I was in contact with helped and I just can't express my gratitude for the care I received. I tell everyone about the wonderful care I received UTMB. I love your hospital and staff. I am grateful that Dr. Gurinder Luthra (Gastroenterology) placed my surgery in the hands of Dr. Aakash Gajjar and his staff.

I am so very grateful. I can't say that about my care in the past years in other places. Thank you so very much!

I am very confident in Dr. Susan Tarry’s expertise. I am very thankful to have a wonderful doctor like her. (Surgery-Urology)

I am so pleased with Brenda Rush (transplant coordinator, Kidney Acquisition) and Bertha Garcia (transplant coordinator, Kidney Acquisition). Dr. Luca Cicales, is a dream for a doctor. I love, love, love this hospital. (Surgical)

Dr. Obos Ekhaese and his staff were awesome! I have never had a doctor or their staff check on me so often! (Surgical)

Dr. Wissam Halabi (Resident Pgl-4) is a great man. This is the second time he's been my doctor at UTMB. He is direct, looks at you in the eye and does what he says going to do. I was so glad to see him while in the ER; I knew that I was in good hands. (Surgical)

My surgeon, Dr. Aakash Gajjar, and his team gave me the best possible treatment. Dr. Gajjar was honest and gave good explanations. He is a great surgeon! (Surgical)
Resident Notes

Rashidi and Osasona Inducted into Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society

Laila Rashidi, M.D. (General Surgery Resident PGY-5) and Ayodele Osasona, M.D. (General Surgery Resident PGY-2) were recently inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society. They were chosen for their continued commitment to teaching, academic achievement, leadership, professionalism, service, and research. The Texas AOA Chapter’s annual banquet was held May 30, 2015 at the Hotel Galvez with Charles D. Fraser, Jr., M.D. as the Visiting Professor. Dr. Fraser is Chief of Congenital Heart Surgery and Cardiac Surgeon In-Charge at Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston.

Zatarain Has Poster of Distinction at DDW

John Zatarain, M.D., research fellow in the lab of Dr. Mark Hellmich, was awarded a poster of distinction at the 2015 Digestive Disease Week Conference in Washington, DC May 16-19.

Below is a summary of the research. Metastasis occurs in 25% of colon cancer patients, and half of those patients do not respond to the current chemotherapeutic treatment options, highlighting the need to identify new targeted therapeutics. Our group identified Cystathionine Beta Synthase (CBS) produced Hydrogen Sulfide within the transsulfuration pathway to be important in colon cancer growth. The known inhibitor Aminooxyacetic Acid (AOAA) of CBS is toxic to humans, so we have developed a new prodrug which inhibits CBS and thus colon cancer in mice with more efficacy and less toxicity than AOAA. Future directions are underway to identify a molecular mechanism of the new prodrug.

Tamirisa Wins Second Place for CIRWH Poster

Nina Tamirisa, M.D., research fellow in the lab of Dr. Taylor Riall, recently won second place in the Clinical Category in the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women’s Health (CIRWH) poster session held in late March. The title of her poster was “Surgeon and Facility Variation in the Use of Minimally Invasive Breast Biopsy in Texas.”
Resident Notes

Urology Abstracts Accepted at the AUA South Central Conference

The Division of Urology had two abstracts accepted at the AUA South Central Conference that will be held in October. The presentations are:

Poster Session III-Kidney Stones, BPH, Female Urology
Poster# 57 REDUCING FLUOROSCOPY TIMES IN THE CYSTOSCOPY SUITE: A SIMPLE, COST EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION
Cameron Ghaffary¹, Rafay Soleja BS², Nancy Brownlee NP² and Joseph Sonstein MD²
¹UTMB; ²University Of Texas Medical Branch
(Presented by: Cameron Ghaffary)

T-Leon Howard Imaging Session
Case # 8 A MAN WITH HEMATURIA
Kyle Keyes and Joseph Sonstein MD
UTMB
(Presented by: Kyle Keyes)

Student Notes

Forbes Wins Green Solutions Grant from the Association of Women Surgeons
Abigail Forbes, MS II, has won a grant from the Association of Women Surgeons to collect opened but unused suture material, gowns, and gloves for student teaching sessions. Below is a summary of her proposal.

Many students have little or no experience in proper OR etiquette, which leads to last minute on the job training from operating room staff, wasted valuable time, and possibly contaminated materials. Material costs alone take up more than half of the total budget for an OR and are responsible for up to one third of a hospital’s waste production, so it is crucial to utilize these supplies efficiently. The proposed solution includes properly identified bins for opened but unused gowns, gloves, sutures, draping, and anything that would usually be thrown away after an operation because they cannot be resterilized for reuse. The Association of Women Surgeons (AWS) would provide properly identified bins located in the supply hall between the operating room for these unused items. With the collected items, we would contribute to surgery teaching labs for students. These labs could include learning how to suture as well as simpler tasks such as properly putting on gloves without breaching sterilization. The expected outcomes are waste reduction and cost effectiveness for the hospital, educational benefits, and lower risk of contamination by medical students who mishandle items. A medical student who is familiar with the proper OR procedures will help the medical professionals in the OR use their time and tools more efficiently.

Students Win First Place Awards at 2015 NSRF
Three medical students in Plastic Surgery won first place awards at the 56th Annual National Student Research Forum held April 23-24 at UTMB. Pablo Padilla, MS III, won Best Oral Presentation in Surgery for his talk on the Fleur De Lis Project. Julie Amthor, MS III, won Best Oral Presentation in Medical Humanities for her talk entitled “Implications of Ethnicity, Patient Preferences, and Demographics in Post-Mastectomy Breast Reconstruction Decisions.” She worked on the project with Drs. Karen Powers and Mariela Lopez. Ellen Tran, MS III, won Best Oral Presentation in Internal Medicine for her project entitled “The Impact of Severe Burn Trauma With or Without Sepsis on Skeletal Muscle Bioenergetics.”
Staff Notes

New Staff

Kirti Singh
Senior Clinical Research Coordinator
Photo Gallery – Department of Surgery Resident Graduation

Dr. Casey Duncan
Dr. Sam Hsieh
Dr. Jeff Luh
Dr. Daniel Maoz-Metzl
Dr. Laila Rashidi
Dr. James Muns
Plastic Surgery graduating residents Brentley Taylor, M.D., Zachary Hurwitz, M.D., and Oscar Masters, M.D. (seated) with other Plastic Surgery residents in the background.

Stephanie Nemir, M.D., Ph.D. (second from the left) won the 2015 Resident of the Year Award. Pictured with Nemir are the 2015 graduates (left to right): Oscar Masters, M.D., Brentley Taylor, M.D., and Zachary Hurwitz, M.D.

John D. Bauer, M.D. (far left) won the 2015 Outstanding Teacher Award. Pictured with Bauer are the 2015 graduates (left to right): Oscar Masters, M.D., Brentley Taylor, M.D., and Zachary Hurwitz, M.D.
Photo Gallery – Resident Picnic and Pool Party