OPEN SKIES

Department of Surgery Newsletter

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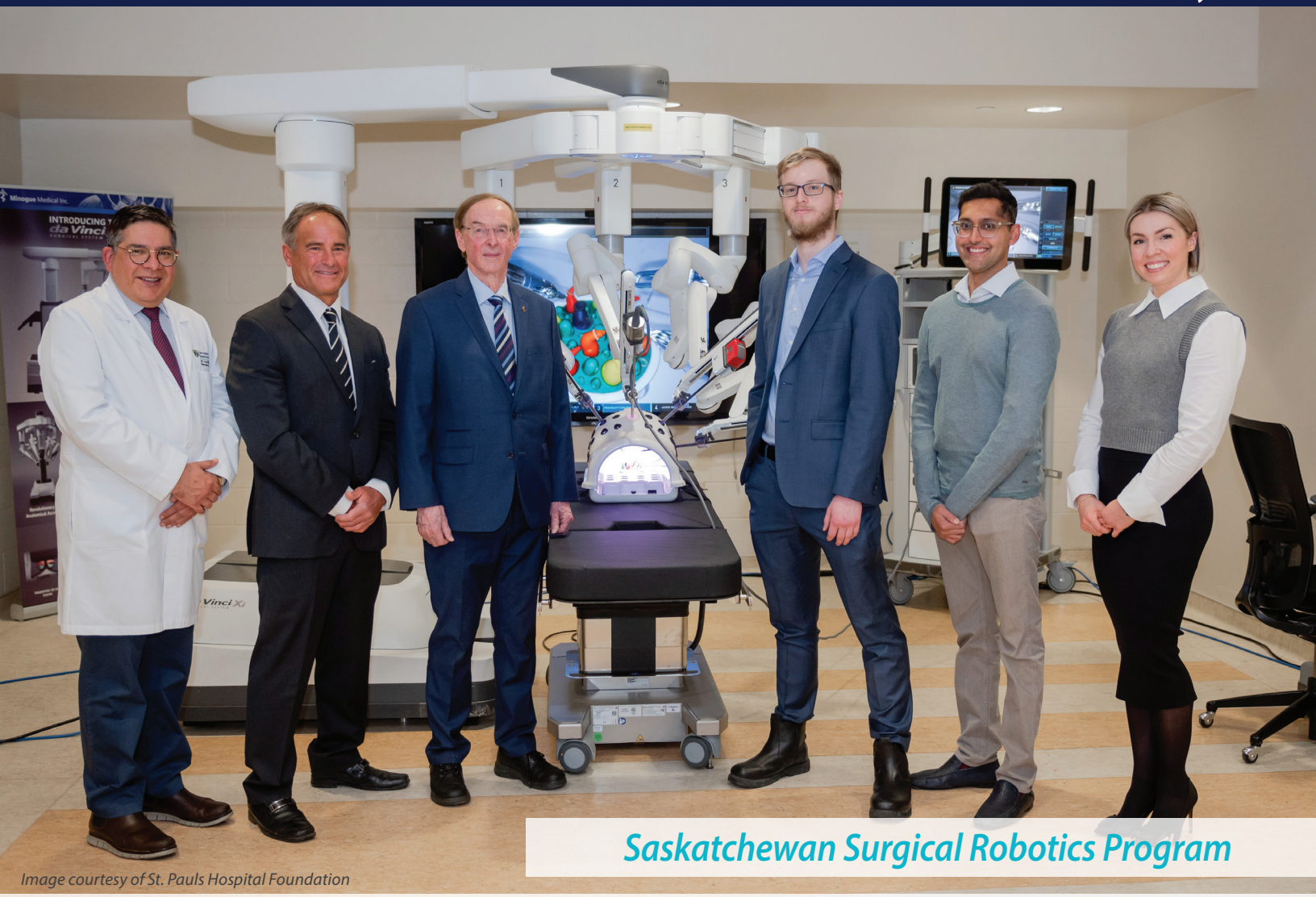

Image courtesy of St. Pauls Hospital Foundation

Saskatchewan Surgical Robotics Program

WHAT'S INSIDE

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan Health Authority

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

"The Department continues to grow at an unprecedented rate. We have more than doubled the number of surgeons across the province."

Spring is in the air in Saskatchewan and as the days get longer a new sense of optimism is present. Although COVID is not over, our academic programs are slowly returning to in-person activities. Hybrid events such as the Trauma Lecture in honor of the Humboldt Broncos and Faculty Research Day have been a success. The Keynote Speaker for the Trauma Lecture was Dr. David Mulder, Chief Surgeon of the Montreal Canadiens Organization, and former Surgeon-in-chief of the Montreal General Hospital.

The Department continues to grow at an unprecedented rate. We have more than doubled the number of surgeons across the province in the past 8 years. In the first five months of this year alone, we have hired seven new surgeons whose biographical sketches are featured in this issue of Open Skies. All our new recruits are fellowship-trained and certified specialists covering all surgical fields.

The Saskatchewan Surgical Robotic Program was officially announced last month. This key initiative was kickstarted with the acquisition of a da Vinci Surgical Robot to be deployed at St Paul's Hospital. This program is the result of a successful partnership of the Ministry of Health, St. Paul's Hospital Foundation, the Department of Surgery and a visionary donation from philanthropist Merlis Belsher and his family. The Surgical Robotic Program will be multidisciplinary and will expand to new applications and locations as our experience and the technology evolves.

The new state-of-the-art surgical skills laboratory expected to be opened in November of 2022 and will complement the Surgical Robotic Program. The laboratory will have a major role in the onboarding of new surgical procedures to clinical practice and facilitating the advent of disruptive technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Remote Presence Robotics for virtual care.

As we emerge from two years dealing with the COVID pandemic, I am happy to report that the Department is thriving and we indeed have a future of open skies.

Sincerely,

Ivar Mendez, MD, PhD, FRCSC, FACS, FCAHS
F.H. Wigmore Professor of Surgery
Saskatchewan Provincial Head of Surgery

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It is distributed to all surgical faculty, residents and collaborators of the Department of Surgery, as well as surgical teaching centres in Canada and abroad.

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NEW PRACTICES IN COLORECTAL SURGERY

(left to right) Drs. Dilip Gill & Nathan Ginther, Division of General Surgery

Improving Access to Ileostomy Closure

Surgical access and wait times have been a challenge for many years but became acutely worse during the pandemic. In a busy colorectal surgery practice, ileostomy formation is common (and usually temporary) while awaiting healing of a low pelvic anastomosis. Time to reversal of the ileostomy is a predictor of severity of low anterior resection syndrome, a common and morbid functional disturbance after rectal resection, with long delays contributing to worse long-term bowel function.

During the pandemic, surgeons and patients faced severe restriction to in-patient surgery access due to hospital capacity, necessitating creativity in improving access to surgery. To improve access, Dr. Nathan Ginther and Dr. Dilip Gill, colorectal surgeons, began performing out-patient ileostomy closures in mid-2020. Typically, patients would stay in hospital for 2-3 days following this procedure, which is now being performed with no in-patient stay.

To date, 13 out-patient ileostomy closures have been performed with good success. Only one patient has required admission to hospital, for reasons not related to the surgery. The surgeons conduct daily telephone rounds for the first several days after surgery. The approach has been so successful that both surgeons anticipate out-patient colon resection becoming a local reality in the near future.

Bidirectional referrals have also been established with general surgeons in secondary hospitals (Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Yorkton, Lloydminster) throughout Saskatchewan. These partnerships have allowed patients to have ileostomy reversal performed in other centres much sooner than would have been possible in Saskatoon.

SASKATCHEWAN ROBOTICS PROGRAM

Da Vinci Surgical Robotic System

Saskatchewan is on the brink of introducing new and innovative medical technology to the province. We are well on the way to establishing a Surgical Robotics Program in the province, set to debut on arrival of the da Vinci Surgical Robot at St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon. The da Vinci robot is a specialized piece of equipment that assists surgeons to perform minimally invasive surgery. This surgical approach has already been widely adopted by multiple surgical specialties around the world and can be used to perform a broad range of primarily oncologic surgeries. Access to this technology will allow our center to once again become one of the leaders in minimally invasive surgery in Canada and be on par with major surgical centers internationally. At St. Paul's Hospital the robot will primarily be used by the Departments of Urology, Otolaryngology, Thoracic Surgery and Gyne Oncology. Once fully implemented, the da Vinci robot will help decrease post-operative length of stay, morbidity, and overall provide an even higher-level care for patients in this province.

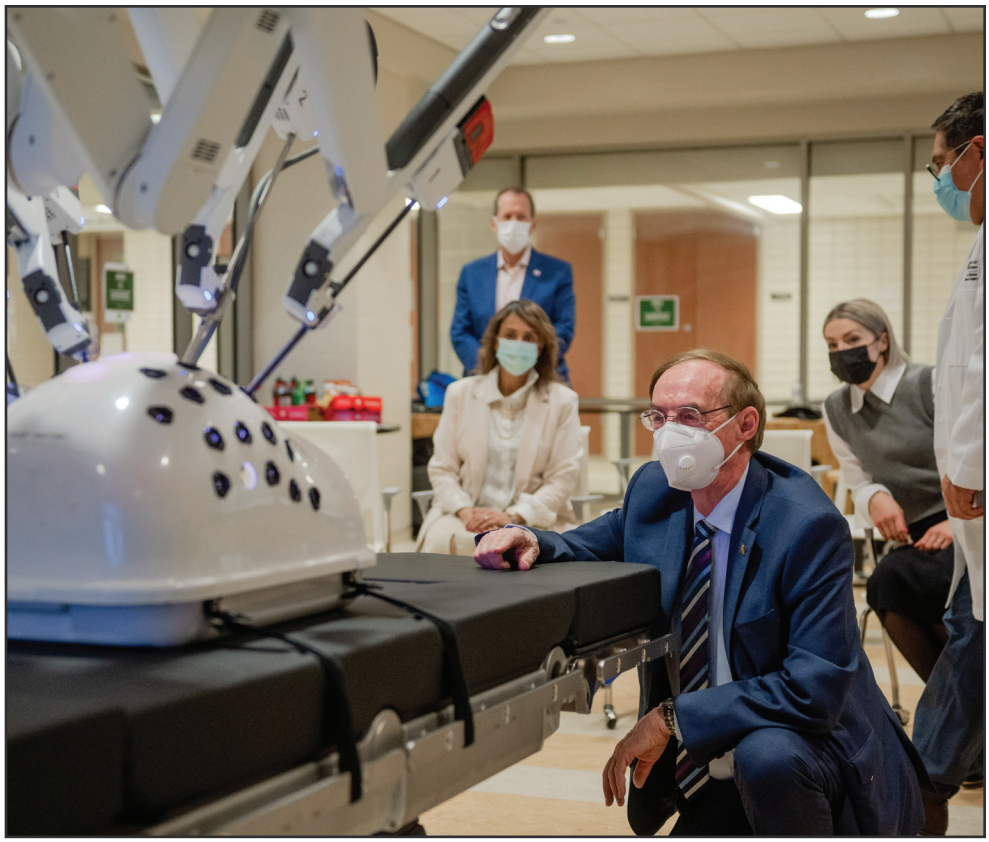
This initiative has come to fruition after several years of comprehensive cost/benefit analysis using data from our own center and from studying the experience of other Canadian sites using the da Vinci System. Our Surgeons and OR Managers have conducted site visits to learn from established robotics programs, and we have facilitated hands-on exposure using a robot simulator. We have also consulted with engineers to ensure that the robot will be compatible with our current operating rooms, without requiring any additional upgrades or equipment.

Over the past several months, our team has worked with the St. Paul's Hospital Foundation to fundraise for the 4th generation of the da Vinci Robot, which will be the first of its kind in western Canada. Our fundraising goals are well

on their way to being achieved in such a short period of time, thanks to a major philanthropic donation from Merlis Belsher and family, along with several other generous donations from our amazing community. Now that funding for the da Vinci Robot is almost secured, the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Government of Saskatchewan have fully approved this exciting new advancement to laparoscopic surgery. Thank you to everyone involved in this large undertaking.

Dr. Varunkumar Bathini
Assistant Professor
Department of Surgery, Division of Urology
University of Saskatchewan & Saskatchewan Health Authority

(Images courtesy of St. Paul's Hospital Foundation)



Philanthropist, Merlis Belsher at the Da Vinci Robot demonstartion

Saskatchewan Surgical Robotic Program Public Announcement

NEW FACULTY IN SURGERY

Dr. Neil Arnstead, Otolaryngology
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Dr. Evan Barber, Thoracic Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Dr. Max Buchko, Cardiac Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Dr. Neil Arnstead grew up in Regina and graduated from medical school at the University of Saskatchewan in 2016. He then completed Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery residency at the University of Toronto, followed by an additional fellowship in Anterior Skull Base Surgery, Advanced Rhinology, and Head & Neck Oncology in Toronto.

He will be joining the Wall Street ENT group and will have a comprehensive otolaryngology practice with a focus on head and neck cancers, endocrine surgery, ultrasound-guided biopsies, and sinonasal disorders and tumours.

He is excited to return to Saskatoon with his partner, Dr. Ronelle Calver, a new faculty member in the Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation after their years training in Ontario. They are both looking forward to spending time with family and friends in Saskatchewan, and trips to Waskesiu Lake.

Dr. Evan Barber completed medical school and General Surgery residency at the University of Saskatchewan. He went on to complete subspecialty training in Thoracic Surgery at the University of Calgary.

He looks forward to joining the thoracic surgery group in his hometown of Saskatoon.

His interests include teaching, quality improvement, and all aspects of general thoracic surgery including minimally invasive esophagectomy.

Outside of work, he enjoys spending time at the lake and playing music. He is married to Dr. Brianne Philipenko who will be starting her respirology practice in Saskatoon as well.

Dr. Max Buchko is originally from Tofield, AB. He completed medical school and cardiac surgery residency at the University of Alberta. During residency, he completed a MSc of Experimental Surgery focusing on optimization of ex vivo lung perfusion for preservation of donor organs in lung transplantation. Following his residency, he completed a fellowship at the Ottawa Heart Institute in transcatheter therapies for the management of structural heart disease, with a particular focus in TAVI (transcatheter aortic valve implantation) and Mitraclip. He is excited to join the Department of Cardiac Surgery, as well as the structural heart team at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.

Outside of surgery, Dr. Buchko enjoys getting out and being active including cycling, cross-country skiing, soccer, and camping . He is married to Dr. Ana-Maria Bosonea, FRCP, who will be starting practice in Saskatoon as a community allergist and immunologist.

Dr. Courtney Bull, Pediatric Orthopedic Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Dr. Courtney Bull completed both her undergraduate and medical degrees at Dalhousie University. Prior to medical school, she went on to receive a Master's degree in International Health and Epidemiology at the University of York in England. Her orthopaedic surgery residency was completed at Memorial University in Newfoundland. In 2021 she received her FRCSC certification with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. She then moved from coast to coast to pursue a fellowship in Pediatric Orthopaedic surgery at BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver. She enjoys all aspects of pediatric orthopaedics, but with special interest in both developmental dysplasia of the hip and neuromuscular disorders. She is also interested in international health and outreach programs in rural communities.

Outside of medicine, she enjoys hiking with her dog, golfing, and travelling. Courtney and her husband, Colin, are excited to soon call Saskatoon home!

Dr. Joel Herback, Vascular Surgery
Regina, Saskatchewan

Dr. Joel Herback completed both medical school and General Surgery residency training at the University of Saskatchewan, followed by subspecialty fellowship training in Vascular Surgery with the University of Ottawa. His clinical areas of interest include limb salvage, complex aortic reconstruction and thoracic outlet syndrome. Research interests include ERAS protocols for vascular procedures, and quality improvement for optimizing care of vascular patients in rural centers.

Dr. Herback will be joining CVT Associates Inc. in Regina as a "home grown" associate where he will be reunited with Dr. David Kopriva whom he shadowed as a grade 12 student as part of the Pre Health-Professionals Club.

Together with his wife, Paige, and their 2 daughters, Sylvie & Mylan, they are thrilled to be returning home where they can once again enjoy the beautiful prairie skies, Regina style pizza, the green pilgrimage to Roughrider games, and most of all being with family.

Dr. John Staples, Plastic Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Dr. John Staples was born and raised in Kindersley, SK. He completed his undergraduate studies in engineering at the U of S before moving to Edmonton to undertake his medical training. He completed his Plastic Surgery Residency training at the University of Alberta, also in Edmonton, prior to moving abroad. He undertook subspecialty training in Pediatric Cleft and Craniofacial Surgery at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, Australia and further Pediatric Plastic Surgery training at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. He then spent a year working at the BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver prior to returning home to Saskatchewan.

Dr. Staples' practice focuses on all aspects of pediatric plastic surgery, including cleft, craniofacial, congenital hand, peripheral nerve, burns, and vascular anomalies. His clinical interests also include areas of adult surgery, including general trauma and reconstruction, craniofacial surgery, and peripheral nerve surgery.

Dr. Staples is excited to be returning home to live and work in Saskatchewan.

New Faculty continued on Page 8

HUMBOLDT BRONCOS TRAUMA LECTURE

Dr. David Mulder, Keynote Speaker 2022 Trauma Lecture

Our 2022 Trauma Lecture in honor of the Humboldt Broncos was held on Monday, May 2nd, 2022 at the RUH Mall Lecture Theatre. The event is held annually in honor of the Humboldt Broncos SJHL Hockey Team after their tragic bus accident in 2018 and the many selfless healthcare workers who went above and beyond following the accident. Our faculty and surgical residents went beyond the call of duty in caring for the injured athletes and their families. This compasionate and highly professional care has continued in the aftermath of the accident.

Events such as the Humboldt Broncos tragedy forces us to reflect on the fragility of life and the selfless contributions of individuals focued in caring for others. We are proud of the actions of our collegues, our institution and all the healthcare workers. The exemplary care provided by our institution has continued during the last two years of the COVID pandemic.

Dr. David Mulder was our keynote speaker for the event. A leader in traumatology and cardio-thoracic surgery, he is one of the reasons the Montreal General Hospital is ranked among the top trauma centres in Quebec. He is a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan and completed his training in General Surgery at the Montreal General Hospital. Dr. Mulder is a former Surgeon-in-chief of the Montreal General Hospital (MGH), Chairman of the Department of Surgery and Director of the Division of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery at McGill University. Currently he is the senior staff surgeon at the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) Department of Surgery, Division of Thoracic Surgery and current Chief Surgeon of the Montreal Canadiens organization and has been honored by the MUHC community with the naming of the *Dr. David S. Mulder Trauma Centre* at the Montreal General Hospital.

NEW FACULTY IN SURGERY (continued)

Dr. Scott Willms, Orthopedic Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Dr. Scott Willms achieved a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Biology, from Ambrose University in Calgary, AB. He was pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration from Briercrest College in Caronport, SK while playing varsity volleyball when this was cut short by admission to medical school at the University of Calgary. Upon graduating, he matched to and completed Orthopedic Surgery residency at the University of Saskatchewan, obtaining his FRCSC designation. During residency, he also finished the Clinical Quality Improvement Program with the Saskatchewan Health Quality Council focusing his project on improving osteoporosis care following fragility fractures. He subsequently went on to complete an Orthopedic Trauma fellowship at the University of Calgary while simultaneously pursuing a Clinician Educator Diploma with the University of Saskatchewan.

His clinical practice will include orthopedic management of adult and pediatric trauma. He will also be working as an Assistant Professor with the University of Saskatchewan, taking on various roles within the medical school and orthopedic surgery residency program while continuing his work with quality improvement. Dr. Willms is very excited to be returning to Saskatoon with his family to serve the province in his new role.