

SKALPEL

Journal of the Department of Surgery - Year in Review



September 2025



Surgeons Making a Difference:
Dr. Vanessa Cranford with Surgical Team in South Sudan

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As we enter the fall of 2025, I am proud to reflect on the remarkable progress across the Department of Surgery. Together, we have strengthened surgical care, advanced innovation, and expanded our academic and clinical footprint across Saskatchewan.

Over the past two years, we have welcomed more than 40 new surgical faculty members, enhancing capacity in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, and rural communities. This growth reflects the success of our Surgical Human Health Resources Plan, which now

supports 271.8 FTE surgeons as of August 28, 2025. Our current vacancy rate is under 9%, and targeted recruitment continues.

Our academic strength is supported by 42 active Academic Clinical Funding Plan (ACFP) contracts, alongside many others who teach, conduct research, and contribute to academic work. These agreements enable faculty to balance clinical service with teaching and research, ensuring a sustainable and high-performing surgical workforce.

The 2024–25 provincial budget includes a significant increase for surgical services. This funding also advances robot-assisted surgery, hybrid operating rooms, radiosurgery and the rollout of OR Manager® software across all surgical sites. All of these initiatives are aimed at enhancing safety, efficiency, and patient outcomes.

We have established a provincial Surgical Quality and Safety Committee, with a key mandate to optimize the use of physician assistants and nurse practitioners to support surgical teams. Innovation continues to thrive, with recent milestones including endoscopic vein harvesting for cardiac surgery and groundbreaking procedures in facial reanimation and minimally invasive techniques.

Our focus remains on collaboration, recruitment, and wellness. Together, we are building a surgical system that is resilient, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of our communities. Thank you for your dedication and contributions to this shared mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MKelly'.

Michael Kelly, MD, PhD, FRCSC, FACS

Provincial Department Head & Fred H. Wigmore Professor of Surgery

University of Saskatchewan & Saskatchewan Health Authority

Knight Family Enhancement Chair in Neurological Surgery

MESSAGE from the DEAN OF MEDICINE



SKalpel highlights many wonderful initiatives across the Department of Surgery, including advancements in surgical techniques, research, teaching, leadership, and international engagement. Importantly, it features the many successes of the people in this department—those who have shaped our identity and those who have recently joined and will be part of our future growth. As I read through its pages, I was struck by the breadth and impact of your contributions over the past year.

The College of Medicine is successful because of our people. Your dedication, innovation, and collaborative spirit continue to elevate our work and inspire excellence across disciplines. Thank you for your ongoing contributions to the Department of Surgery and to our college. I look forward to what we will accomplish together in the years ahead as we continue to grow, lead, and serve our communities with purpose and passion.

Sincerely,

Sarah Forgie

*Dean, College of Medicine
University of Saskatchewan*

SKALPEL Journal is a publication of the Department of Surgery at the College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan.

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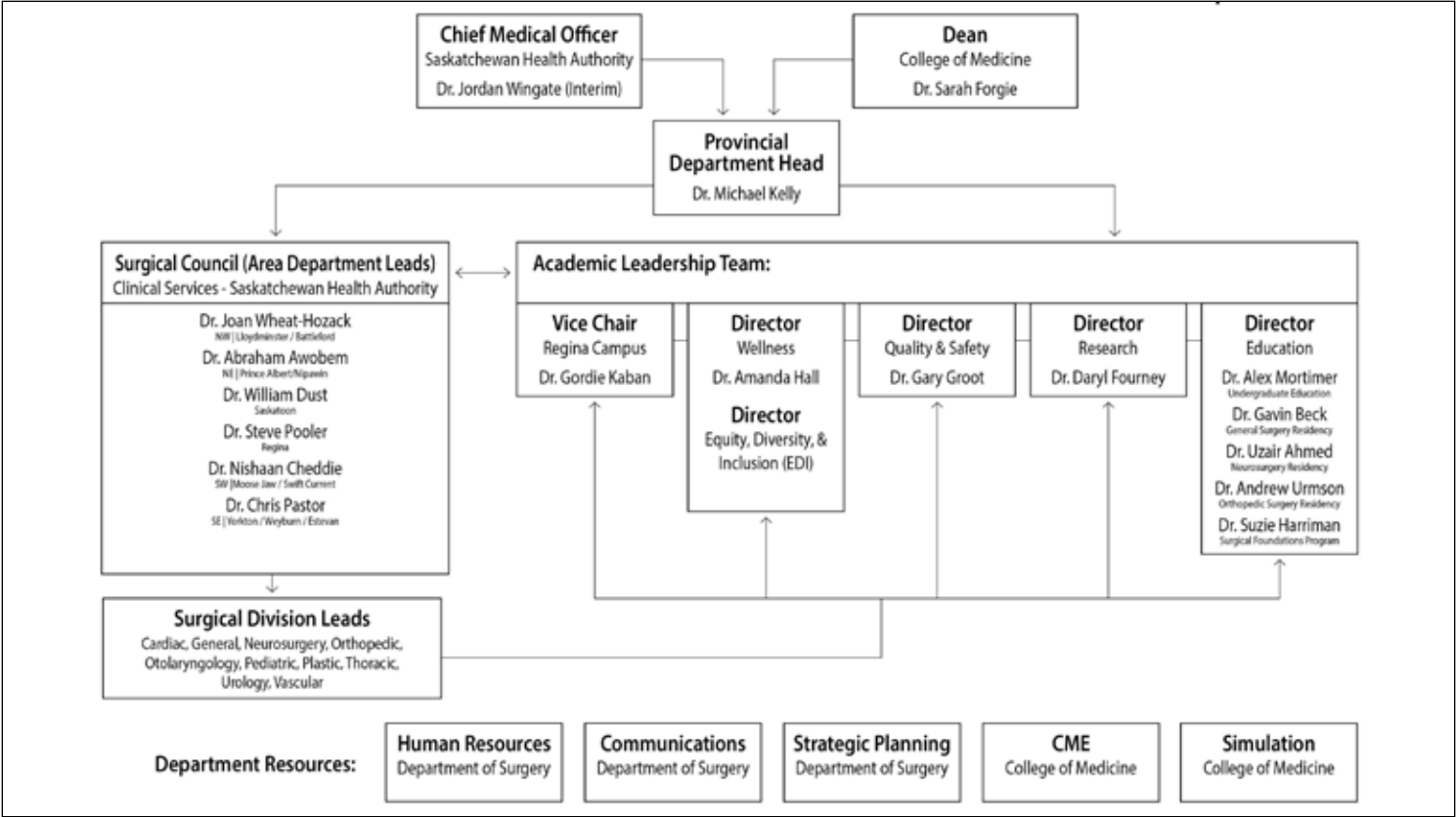
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SURGICAL LEADERSHIP



Department of Surgery LEADERSHIP



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Director of Otolaryngology Surgery Residency Program
(launching 2027)



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SURGERY LEADERSHIP RETREAT

Leadership in Health Care: Managing Conflict with Confidence: Reflections from Surgery Leadership Day and What Comes Next

The recent Surgery Leadership Day brought together leaders from across the department for a powerful day of reflection, learning, and skill-building focused on conflict management and navigating difficult conversations in complex healthcare settings. The session was co-facilitated by three experts in mediation and conflict resolution, each bringing decades of experience and practical insight to the table.

Our Presenters

Kevin Fenwick is a retired mediator, lawyer, and senior public servant. Over a 25+ year career, he served as Saskatchewan's Ombudsman, Deputy Minister of Justice, and Deputy Attorney General. He is known for leading systemic change and championing accessible, collaborative approaches to conflict resolution.

Jae Morgens is a professional mediator with nearly 20 years of experience across multiple sectors. He is a Chartered Mediator and Qualified Arbitrator with a strong background in negotiation, emotional health, and skills-based conflict management.

Lisa Korec, Director of Neurosciences within the SHA, has over 25 years of healthcare experience, including frontline nursing and leadership in Oncology and Neurosciences. She holds a Master's in Conflict Analysis and Management and is passionate about empowering leaders through effective conflict engagement.



Communication, Conflict, and the Leadership Toolkit

Leadership in healthcare is as much about navigating human dynamics as it is about clinical expertise. Effective leaders understand that conflict is inevitable, but mismanaged conflict can damage relationships, lower morale, and compromise patient care. Done well, however, conflict can be a catalyst for innovation, collaboration, and trust.

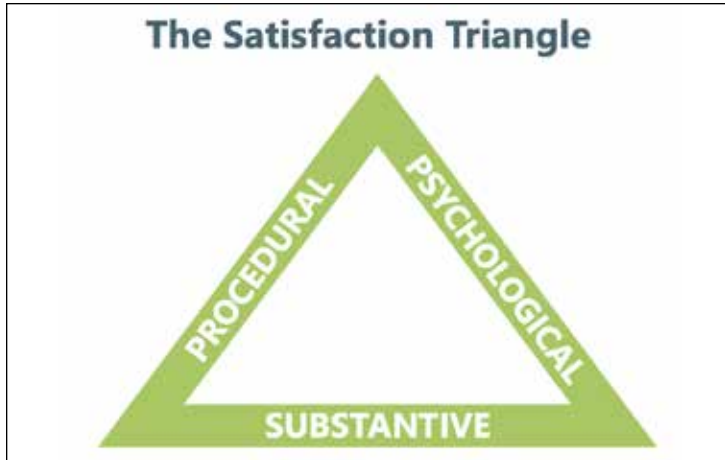
The session introduced several frameworks that help leaders better manage conflict:



The Conflict Management Process involves clear steps: preparation, active listening, identifying underlying interests, generating options, and developing mutual agreements. Structured approaches increase the chance of success.



Conflict Management Styles highlight that no single approach fits all situations. Effective leaders are flexible and intentional in choosing how to respond.

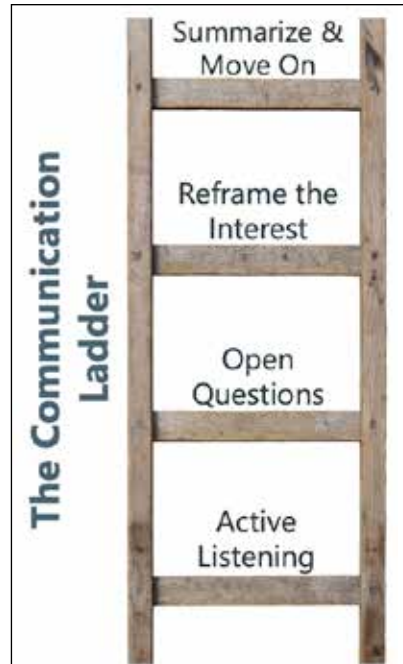


The Satisfaction Triangle emphasizes that sustainable conflict resolution must address three areas: results (the outcome), process (how decisions are made), and relationships (trust and respect). Ignoring any of these elements can lead to dissatisfaction.

Looking Ahead

While Surgery Leadership Day provided valuable insights, there's more to explore. To continue building these skills, we're planning follow-up sessions in fall 2025 and spring 2026. These will dive deeper into the art and science of conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and difficult conversations in leadership.

As we move forward, we're excited to build on this momentum and continue growing as leaders who can face conflict with clarity, compassion, and confidence.



The Communication Ladder illustrates how miscommunication escalates when assumptions, judgments, and emotions take over. Leaders must "climb down the ladder" by staying curious, asking open questions, and checking assumptions.



Faculty in the Spotlight:

Dr. Chris E. U. Ekong has been named CTV Regina's Citizen of the Year for 2024.

He has served as a Clinical Professor in the Department of Surgery at the University of Saskatchewan and St. George's University School of Medicine, as well as Adjunct Clinical Professor at the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine.

Ekong served for five years on the Board of Directors of the Saskatchewan Medical Association, and previously on the Regina Regional Medical Association, participating in several local and national committees.

His career has also taken him to developing

countries with neurosurgery groups, where he helped establish a philanthropic trust to improve neurosurgery through site visits and clinical research.

Ekong also founded a private charitable foundation that supports technological needs of religious organizations, schools, and health institutions worldwide. He has published over 100 papers and won numerous awards, including the Canadian Red Cross Power of Humanity Award and a Canadian Medical Association Honorary Member Award.

Most recently, he launched the Dr. Chris Ekong Neuro Spine Fellowship program in Regina, offering 10 clinical fellowships at Regina General Hospital.

Image & Article, compliments of CTV News

**Dr. Zarrukh Baig, Division of General Surgery**

Dr. Zarrukh Baig is currently doing a colorectal surgery fellow at the University of British Columbia, specializing in rectal cancer surgery and academic research. He completed his General Surgery residency at the University of Saskatchewan and holds an MPH from Harvard. His training includes taTME, robotic surgery, and minimally invasive techniques. Dr. Baig has presented at major surgical conferences and received recognition for research on anticoagulation and rectal cancer management. His current work focuses on creating a national robotic surgery curriculum for Canadian colorectal fellows.

Dr. Matt Getzlaf, Division of Orthopedic Surgery

Dr. Matthew Getzlaf, originally from Avonlea, SK, completed medical school and orthopaedic residency at the University of Saskatchewan, followed by a sports medicine fellowship in Banff. There, he specialized in knee and shoulder arthroscopy, ligament reconstruction, and patellar instability, also earning his CASEM Diploma. His clinical interests include knee ligament surgery, patellar stabilization, osteotomies, and shoulder stabilization. Now returning to Saskatoon, Matt is eager to rejoin Saskatchewan's surgical community.

**Dr. Kyle Irvine, Division of General Surgery**

Dr. Irvine spent his first year out of residency working as a locum across rural BC. He spent his time between Vancouver Island, Northern BC and the Kootenays. His family has moved around with him and have decided to settle in Cranbrook for the next couple of years where he will be practicing a full spectrum of community General Surgery from toenails to thyroids and everything in between.

Dr. Annalise Kudryk, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Annalise Kudryk is currently completing a fellowship in Trauma and Acute Care Surgery at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, with a focus on managing critically ill and injured patients in high-acuity settings. Dr. Kudryk is looking forward to returning to Saskatoon to begin a locum position as a trauma surgeon at Royal University Hospital and to contribute to both patient care and surgical education in the community where she began her surgical training.

**Dr. Nebojsa Kuljic, Division of Orthopedic Surgery**

After completing his Orthopedic Surgery Residency in Saskatoon in June 2024, Dr. Nebojsa Kuljic moved to Calgary to begin a one-year fellowship in Adult Hip and Knee Reconstruction. He is now completing his second (and final) fellowship in Orthopedic Trauma. Beyond this lies a job — still to be determined — but he is beyond excited and feels well prepared for whatever comes next, thanks to his time in Saskatoon.

UGME SURGICAL OPEN HOUSE

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A HANDS-ON INTRODUCTION TO SURGERY:

SASKATOON | APRIL 3RD, 2025 & REGINA | APRIL 14TH, 2025

In April 2025, the Department of Surgery and the Student Surgical Society proudly hosted the annual Surgical Open House events in Saskatoon and Regina. These much-anticipated gatherings offered undergraduate students a unique opportunity to connect with practicing surgeons, explore the surgical field, and get hands-on experience with real surgical tools in a relaxed, informal environment.

The Saskatoon event, held in the Health Sciences Building, saw 45 enthusiastic students and 16 faculty and residents in attendance. Meanwhile, Regina's event at the Dilawri Simulation Centre welcomed 30 students and 12 faculty members. Both locations featured a wide range of interactive stations, including chest tube insertion, casting, suturing, orthopedic bone models, a urology station, laparoscopy trainers, and a demonstration of the Sonopet ultrasonic aspirator, courtesy of Stryker.

These sessions not only provided valuable technical experience but also encouraged mentorship and career exploration in surgery. Students had the rare chance to practice clinical skills side-by-side with surgeons in a supportive and engaging atmosphere.

A sincere thank you goes out to all students, faculty, residents, and industry partners who participated and contributed to the success of this year's Open House. Your support and enthusiasm continue to make this annual event a highlight for the surgical community in Saskatchewan.

We look forward to seeing you again in 2026 for another exciting and inspiring Surgical Open House!



Dr. Alex Mortimer with student at Casting station



Dr. Uzair Ahmed with student at Neuro-simulation station



Ortho Residents with students at the Bone station



Dr. Taylor Bereti with students at Simulation station



Dr. Gordie Kaban with student at Simulation station

10 MPAS PROGRAM ARRIVES AT USASK

MASTER OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES (MPAS):

SHAPE THE FUTURE – SIGN UP TO TEACH WITH THE MPAS PROGRAM

New program, familiar faces. We're excited to share that the University of Saskatchewan's Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) program is set to launch in August 2025, welcoming its inaugural class of 20 students. As a new academic program within the College of Medicine, MPAS represents a meaningful step toward improving access to health care across Saskatchewan.

The Physician Assistant (PA) profession is also new to our province. These advanced clinical practitioners will work alongside physicians and interdisciplinary teams to support high-quality, team-based care. The MPAS program is more than just about training new health professionals - it's about driving a transformative shift in how health care is delivered throughout the province.

Our graduates will be trained to collaborate effectively across health teams with a strong focus on social accountability, ensuring their education and future contributions are aligned with the needs of our communities - particularly underserved and vulnerable populations.

As we prepare to launch, we need your help to make this program a success. Faculty across the College of Medicine, including our surgical colleagues, will be central to educating and mentoring this new generation of providers. Your involvement is critical, and we are deeply grateful for the support you've already shown.

To get involved, we invite you to complete a brief interest survey, to let us know how you would like to contribute to teaching in the program: <https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/MPASTeaching2025-26>.

We know building something new takes time, collaboration, and heart. Thank you for being such an important part of the MPAS Program's story.

Learn more:

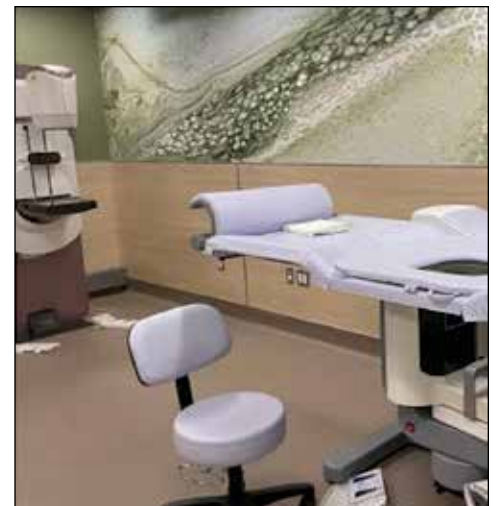
<https://medicine.usask.ca/mpas/index.php>



Ashley Millham, Program Lead - MPAS Program & Dr. Trustin Dome, Academic Director - MPAS Program

STREAMLINED BREAST CARE IN SK

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INTRODUCING THE REGINA BREAST HEALTH CENTRE AND POOLED REFERRAL PROCESS

A new facility designed to enhance breast health-care access for patients in Regina and southern Saskatchewan will open this year. The Regina Breast Health Centre (BHC) will be located at the Regina Centre Crossing (1621 Albert Street) and officially opened in April 2025.

“The services currently fulfilled in Regina area hospitals will be part of the suite of services provided by the BHC, which will include expanded access to a variety of co-located specialists able to provide streamlined, patient-centered care under one roof, and help optimize patient care,” said Kerri Hysuick, Executive Director of Tertiary Care and Surgery for Integrated Regina Health.


Effective December 11, 2024, the Regina BHC started utilizing the single referral form for Breast Health Centre and Breast Assessment Centre (BAC). The referral form is used for imaging, imaging consults or imaging related procedures, and utilize a pooled referral model for breast surgeons. Direct requisitions to BAC or surgeons will not be accepted and returned requesting the single referral form be utilized. The new referral will enhance seamless breast care, and ensure patients are seen in the appropriate setting as soon and as close to home as possible.

For more information on the Regina Breast Health Centre and the new pooled referral, process please contact 306-766-0160.


The Department of Surgery remains proud of its longstanding commitment to excellence in undergraduate medical education. Over the past year, our teams across Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, and our rural locations have continued to collaborate with the College of Medicine to support curricular updates and enhance the learning experience for our students.

A key focus this year has been the continued growth of our in-house multiple-choice exam for third-year clerks. Thanks to the dedication of many faculty members, our question bank has expanded with high-quality, clinically relevant content that supports both assessment and learning.

Beyond assessments, our department remains deeply committed to fostering a positive and engaging learning environment. Feedback from students consistently highlights the quality of their surgical rotations, with many describing their experience as “very good” or “excellent.”



DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY



CELEBRATION OF SURGICAL TEACHING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16TH, 2025

Keynote Speaker
Dr. Norgrove Penny

Pediatric Orthopedic Surgeon, Clinical Assistant Professor
Vancouver Island - Victoria General Hospital | University of British Columbia

As part of this celebration, we are pleased to announce the recipients of the 2024 & 2025 Department of Surgery Teaching Awards:

- Gold Scalpel – Pre-Clerkship: **Dr. Jordan Buchko, Orthopedic Surgery (2024) & Dr. Amanda Hall, General Surgery (2025)**
- Gold Scalpel – Clerkship: **Dr. Sarah Miller, General Surgery (2024) & Dr. James Holden, General Surgery (2025)**
- Gold Scalpel – Postgraduate: **Dr. Lissa Peeling, Neurosurgery (2024) & Dr. Scott Willms, Orthopedic Surgery (2025)**
- Rural Surgeon Educator Award: **Dr. Yemi Lasoebikan, General Surgery (New award in 2024)**
- Kvinlaug Surgical Foundations Award:
Dr. Kaitlin Adey, General Surgery (2024) & Dr. Chris Thomson, Plastic Surgery (2025)
- Silver Shovel: **Dr. Peter Graham, General Surgery (2024) & Dr. John Shaw, General Surgery (2025)**
- Bronze Shovel: **Dr. Aisha Moustapha, General Surgery (2024) & Dr. Kayla Marritt, General Surgery (2025)**
- Lifetime Achievement in Surgical Education:
Dr. Donald McCarville, Vascular Surgery (2024) & Dr. Michael Harington, General Surgery (2025)

We extend our congratulations to all award nominees and recipients and thank them for their exceptional contributions to surgical education.

We were thrilled to host the annual Department of Surgery Celebration of Surgical Teaching on Tuesday, September 16, 2025, at the Delta Bessborough Hotel. The evening brought colleagues together to celebrate our shared commitment to teaching and to recognize the vital contributions of surgical educators. We were honoured to welcome Dr. Norgrove Penny, Pediatric Orthopedic Surgeon and Clinical Assistant Professor from the University of British Columbia, as our guest speaker. Thank you to everyone who joined us—it was a memorable night of connection and celebration.

CULTIVATING WELLNESS IN SURGERY

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*Art in Medicine Exhibit (Regina)*

The 2024–2025 academic year has been a vibrant and engaging one for the Department of Surgery Wellness Committee. From outdoor activities and community service to creative showcases and educational sessions, the committee has continued its mission to foster well-being and connection within the department.

In the fall of 2024, we embraced the outdoors with a guided walk at the Wanuskewin Heritage Site and a rewarding volunteer event with the Meewasin River Authority. These outings offered a refreshing change of pace and a chance to connect with colleagues in nature.

Our focus on mental wellness continued with a memorable Grand Rounds presentation by Dr. Alana Holt, who spoke on Burnout, Boundaries, and Better Practices—a talk that resonated deeply with attendees.

Throughout the year, we emphasized giving back, organizing a Christmas giving campaign and coordinating several volunteer visits to the Friendship Inn in Saskatoon. Participants shared that these experiences were some of the most meaningful of the year.

2025 began on a creative note, with Art and Music Shows in both Saskatoon and Regina showcasing the incredible talents of our department members. We wrapped up the academic year with a Wellness Retreat featuring Pickleball and an informative session on Sleep Practices for the Surgeon led by Dr. Rachana Bodani.

Looking ahead, we're excited for the 2025–2026 year. Watch for our updated Wellness Survey this fall to help shape future events. Visit the Wellness page on the Department of Surgery website for resources and upcoming event details.

Interested in contributing? We're always welcoming new committee members and fresh ideas!

*Pickleball in Saskatoon**Wellness presentation on Sleep Practices for the Surgeon*

NEW FACULTY IN SURGERY



*Dr. Mariusz Bral, General Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Mathew Clarke, Orthopedic Surgery
Regina, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Katie de Champlain, Otolaryngology
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*

Dr. Mariusz Bral completed his medical degree from the Medical University of Warsaw, in Poland. He went on to do his General Surgery Residency at NOSM, followed by an ASTS Abdominal Transplant Surgery Fellowship and PhD at the University of Alberta.

His PhD research involved improving clinical and experimental ex situ organ perfusion, and his current research interests concern mitigating ischemia/reperfusion injury, improving mitochondrial function, and resuscitating damaged and marginal transplant grafts on an ex-situ platform.

He is joining the University of Saskatchewan as a Transplant Surgeon.

Outside of work, he spends as much time on forest trails and on water as possible.

Dr. Mathew Clarke grew up in Moose Jaw, SK. He completed his medical school at the University of Saskatchewan and then moved to Edmonton, AB for his residency in orthopaedic surgery. Continuing his journey west, he then did a fellowship in pediatric orthopaedics at BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver, BC. Dr. Clarke is excited to come back home to southern Saskatchewan to begin his practice in Regina. He has joined the Prairie Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine group.

Outside of work, Matt enjoys a few favorite pastimes. He can often be found relaxing with a cup of coffee and his snoozy Puggle, Sam, curled up on his lap. He also loves working on his golf game at local courses. Cooking is another of his passions, and he's well-known for his Sunday suppers, where he enjoys preparing and sharing delicious meals with family and friends.

Dr. Katie de Champlain grew up in beautiful Victoria, British Columbia. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Victoria prior to moving to Vancouver, BC where she completed a Masters of Science in Audiology and Speech Sciences. After a short career in audiology, she found her way to Calgary, AB where she completed medical school, followed by her residency in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery. With her interest in auditory sciences and love for the beach she naturally found her way to Perth, Western Australia where she completed a fellowship in Otology and Lateral Skull Base Surgery.

After a year abroad chasing sunsets with her spouse and son, she is looking forward to being back in Canada and exploring a new province they get to call home.



*Dr. Amiel Dror, Otolaryngology
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Peter Dust, Orthopedic Surgery
Regina, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Tamer Elghobary, Cardiac Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*

Dr. Amiel Dror is an Otolaryngologist specializing in Otology and Neurotology. He trained in Israel, where he practiced as a senior surgeon with expertise in adult and pediatric ear surgery, including hearing rehabilitation, cochlear implants, bone-anchored devices, and skull base procedures. He completed a fellowship in Otology and Neurotology at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

Dr. Dror holds a PhD in the genetics of hearing loss. His clinical and research interests include hearing preservation, cochlear implantation, skull base tumors, and complex ear pathology. His personal connection to hearing loss, through his sister's congenital impairment, informs his commitment to patient-centered care and improving access to advanced hearing treatment.

He joins the Department of Surgery in Saskatoon as an Associate Professor, working to expand local otology and skull base programs alongside Dr. Katie De Champlain.

Outside of work, he enjoys music, crafting, and outdoor adventures with his wife Tal and their three children.

Dr. Peter Dust was raised in Saskatoon. He completed both a Bachelor of Science (Honours) degree in Physiology and his undergraduate medical degree at the University of Saskatchewan. He completed his residency in Orthopaedic Surgery at McGill University. While doing his residency, he completed a Master of Science degree through the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Clinical Investigator Program and McGill Surgical Scientist Program. He then completed two fellowships at the University of Toronto. First, an Orthopaedic Trauma fellowship at St. Michael's Hospital and the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, and then, an Arthroplasty and Lower Extremity Reconstruction fellowship at Mount Sinai Hospital.

Dr. Dust moved to Regina in December 2023 as a locum and is very happy to have now joined the Department permanently, becoming the fourth generation of his family to provide medical and surgical care to the people of Saskatchewan.

Outside of work, he enjoys travelling and retains a strong passion for music, most particularly the French Horn.

Born in Egypt, Dr. Tamer Elghobary completed medical school and earned a PhD in his home country before moving to Canada in 2007 to pursue training in cardiac surgery. He completed advanced fellowships and clinical training at leading academic centers in Halifax, Quebec, and Kingston. Now a Staff Surgeon in Saskatoon, he brings expertise in complex cardiac procedures, academic mentorship, and surgical education. His global exposure to diverse healthcare systems has shaped his patient-centered approach and commitment to quality improvement. Dr. Elghobary has held academic appointments at renowned institutions, mentored numerous trainees, and contributed extensively to cardiac surgery research and innovation. He has authored multiple peer-reviewed publications and completed executive education in emerging healthcare technologies, including AI and digital health solutions, at Harvard.

Outside medicine, he balances his professional passion with family life with his wife Salma and his three children Youssef, Noor and Hyat.



*Dr. Matthew Getzlaf, Orthopedic Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Tanner Hall, General Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. John Heaphy, Otolaryngology
Regina, Saskatchewan*

Dr. Matthew Getzlaf grew up in Avonlea, Saskatchewan, and remained close to home for both medical school and orthopaedic surgery residency at the University of Saskatchewan. He then completed a fellowship at Banff Sport Medicine in Alberta, where he sub-specialized in sport medicine and arthroscopic reconstruction of the knee and shoulder. During fellowship, he gained extensive experience in managing ligamentous knee injuries and patellar instability. He also completed his Canadian Academy of Sport and Exercise Medicine (CASEM) Diploma during this time. His orthopedic interests include knee ligament reconstruction, patellar stabilization, osteotomies around the knee, and shoulder stabilization.

Now excited to be returning to Saskatchewan, Matt is looking forward to joining the surgical community in Saskatoon and reconnecting with his home province.

Outside of work, he enjoys fishing, spending time outdoors, and enjoying family time with his wife and their two young children. Together, they are excited to settle back into prairie life in Saskatoon.

A proud Saskatoon native, Dr. Tanner Hall is returning home to join the Division of General Surgery. He earned his medical degree and completed his General Surgery residency at the University of Saskatchewan. He then completed a fellowship at the University of Toronto in Advanced GI Minimally Invasive Surgery and Bariatrics.

His practice will focus on minimally invasive approaches for conditions such as abdominal wall hernias, benign foregut disease, bowel resections, and acute care surgery. He also holds expertise in Breast Oncology, joining the dedicated team at the Breast Health Center. Academically, Dr. Hall is a strong advocate for surgical education and simulation, and he will continue to advance these areas within the department. He also has experience in quality improvement initiatives, gained through mentorship with Dr. Timothy Jackson, a leader in surgical QI.

Outside of his professional life, Dr. Hall enjoys a vibrant family life with his wife and three children. He stays active with hobbies including cooking, golf, curling, and tennis.

Dr. John Heaphy attended the University of Michigan, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Molecular, Cell, and Developmental Biology. Before attending medical school at Case Western Reserve University, he worked in public health in the Philippines and disaster relief malaria control programs in Aceh, Indonesia after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. His internship year and residency in Otolaryngology were completed at University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center in Cleveland, Ohio. His fellowship in Head and Neck Surgery and Microvascular Reconstruction followed at Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

John worked at Kaiser Permanente in Hawaii for three years before moving to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He practiced as a Consultant and was section head of Otolaryngology and subsequently deputy chairman of surgery at King Faisal Specialist Hospital & Research Center. Dr. Heaphy looks forward to serving the head and neck cancer patients of Saskatchewan as he joins the team in Regina.



*Dr. Alexis Jeannotte, General Surgery
Regina, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Sree Kannasanthan, Vascular Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Katlin Mallette, General Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*

Dr. Alexis Jeannotte was born and raised in Regina. She completed medical school and general surgery residency at the University of Saskatchewan, spending much of her time on the Regina campus. She then completed a trauma surgery fellowship at the University of Ottawa and worked for 2 years thereafter as a general and trauma surgeon in Edmonton. She is currently completing her Masters of Health Sciences Education through the University of Alberta.

She enjoys a diverse general surgery elective practice alongside her trauma commitments including comprehensive breast care and endoscopy. Her academic interests include rural trauma education, curriculum development, and the empowerment of female surgical leadership.

She is thrilled to be back in Regina – the city that raised and trained her – to settle into permanent practice as a general and trauma surgeon. Outside of work she and her husband Iain enjoy NFL fantasy football, hosting backyard get-togethers, and traveling. They look forward to welcoming a new puppy at Christmas and sharing more time with their family and lifelong friends.

Dr. Kannasanthan is a Vascular and Endovascular surgeon with a particular interest in thoracic and abdominal aortic disease, cerebrovascular pathology, and thoracic outlet syndrome. He grew up in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – a city of nine million – and later immigrated to Halifax, where he earned his MD at Dalhousie Medical School. During that time, he was honored to receive the National Student Research Award from the Canadian Society of Vascular Surgery. He completed his Vascular Surgery residency at McGill University, where he served as Chief Resident and received the Outstanding Resident Teacher Award. His training included electives in high-volume open aortic centers in Halifax and Newfoundland in addition to involvement in complex endovascular and hybrid aortic procedures at McGill. Outside the OR, he has worked as a surgical consultant for the TV show Transplant and help produce episodes for the Audible Bleeding podcast (Society of Vascular surgery).

When he is not in scrubs, you will probably find him experimenting in the kitchen or watching horror movies.

Dr. Mallette grew up in Manitoba and received a BSc in Forensic Science in Oshawa, Ontario. She then went on to complete medical school at the University of Manitoba, followed by General Surgery Residency at the University of Saskatchewan. Upon completion of residency, she went on to complete an MIS/Advanced Therapeutic Endoscopy Fellowship at Western University, and then an HPB Fellowship at the University of Ottawa.

Dr. Mallette is thrilled to be returning to start her practice with the Hepatobiliary Surgery group in Saskatoon. Her main areas of focus are Hepatobiliary Surgery, including robotic surgery, and therapeutic endoscopy, specifically ERCP's. Katlin's academic interests include quality improvement, and patient outcomes research including partnerships with the CMPA. She is currently in the process of completing her MSc in Epidemiology through the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, traveling, baking and training for her next half marathon.



*Dr. Rita Nguyen, Neurosurgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Amit Persad, Neurosurgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Neda Najib Pour, General Surgery
Yorkton, Saskatchewan*

Dr. Rita Nguyen was born and raised in Regina and completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Regina. She went on to earn her medical degree from the University of Saskatchewan and completed her neurosurgery residency at the University of Calgary. During her residency she also completed a PhD, studying neuroinflammation in traumatic brain injury. Following residency, Dr. Nguyen pursued a fellowship in pediatric neurosurgery at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital through a tri-institutional program with Weill Cornell Medicine, Columbia University, and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

Dr. Nguyen's clinical and surgical interests span both pediatric and adult neurosurgery. She has a particular focus on pediatric neuro-oncology, including the management of brain and spinal cord tumors in children. She also has specialized training in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of cerebrospinal fluid circulation and is experienced in endoscopic and shunt-based procedures. In addition to her pediatric practice, Dr. Nguyen maintains a broad interest in adult neurosurgery, with a focus on adult brain tumors, including gliomas and metastatic disease, as well as general cranial and spinal neurosurgical care. Her research interests reflect her clinical interests with an academic focus on neuroimmunology as it relates to pediatric brain tumors and neurobiology. She is delighted to return home to Saskatchewan and to be joining the neurosurgical team in Saskatoon and looks forward to helping grow and enhance pediatric neurosurgical care for children and families across the province.

Outside of her clinical work, Dr. Nguyen enjoys spending quality time with her family.

Dr. Persad grew up in Edmonton, Alberta where he completed his undergraduate and medical degrees. He trained in developmental neuroscience and cancer biology laboratory of Dr. Roseline Godbout during his training, with a focus on axon guidance cues during development of the CNS. Following this, he completed his neurosurgery residency at the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Persad underwent fellowship training in Neurosurgical Oncology and Stereotactic Radiosurgery at Stanford University in California as well as Epilepsy Surgery at Western University in London, Ontario.

Dr. Persad is excited to join the division of surgery as Assistant Professor. He aims to develop a strong epilepsy surgery program and to develop the neurosurgical oncology program. His research interests are glioma development, network integration and associated immunologic phenomena as well as characterizing networks underlying mood and pain disorders. He has an interest in resident education and surgical mentorship, and hopes to be able to help with development of the residency program in order to make it a prime destination for Canadian trainees. He looks forward to returning to Saskatoon and enjoying the hiking and lake locations with his fiancée.

Dr. Neda Najib Pour was born and raised in Iran, where she became a general surgeon in 2009 and completed a fellowship in colorectal surgery at Shiraz University. During her time in Iran, she held several academic and clinical roles, including attending surgeon, faculty member, and member of the National General Surgery Board Committee. She had the privilege of teaching medical students and General Surgery Residents, and served as the only colorectal surgeon in a province with a population exceeding four million - an experience that greatly shaped her clinical and professional development.

In January 2023, Dr. Najib Pour began practicing general surgery in Newfoundland and Labrador. Her life took an exciting turn in November 2024 when she and her family moved to Yorkton, Saskatchewan, where she continues to practice general surgery with a strong commitment to patient-centered care. She sees surgery as both a science and an art, and finds deep meaning in academic environments that foster collaboration, teaching, and continuous learning.

Outside of medicine, she enjoys pottery and gardening, and cherishes time spent with her husband, their 9-year-old daughter, and their beloved horses.

eHEALTH SASKATCHEWAN UPDATE



Dr. Bekir Unal, Plastic Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan



Dr. Pierre Zaharia, Orthopedic Surgery
Lloydminster, Saskatchewan

Dr. Bekir Unal completed his medical degree and residency training in Plastic, Reconstructive, and Aesthetic Surgery in Turkey. He subsequently worked as a consultant plastic surgeon in a range of clinical settings, including a major trauma referral center, gaining broad experience in general reconstructive surgery, hand surgery, maxillofacial trauma, microsurgery, replantation, and breast procedures. He holds both the Turkish Board of Plastic Surgery and the European Board of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery (EBOPRAS).

Dr. Unal relocated to Canada with his family and is excited to join the Division of Plastic Surgery at the University of Saskatchewan. He looks forward to contributing to clinical care, surgical education, and the continued improvement of patient outcomes.

Outside of work, he enjoys playing chess and football, listening to classical music, exploring nature, and discovering all that Saskatchewan has to offer with his family.

Dr. Pierre Zaharia is an orthopaedic surgeon based in Lloydminster, serving both Alberta and Saskatchewan. Originally from Montréal, he earned his medical degree from McGill University and completed his Orthopaedic Surgery residency at the University of Calgary. He pursued further subspecialty training with a Trauma Surgery fellowship at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City and an Arthroplasty fellowship at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

Since August 2020, Dr. Zaharia has provided comprehensive orthopaedic care in Lloydminster, with a focus on joint replacement, trauma, and minimally invasive procedures. He is part of the Meridian Clinic's orthopaedic team and is known for his evidence-based, patient-centered approach.

In addition to his clinical work, Dr. Zaharia is dedicated to medical education and serves as an Assistant Professor of Orthopedic Surgery at the University of Saskatchewan. Through his academic role, he mentors medical students and surgical trainees while contributing to advancements in musculoskeletal care.

eHEALTH SASKATCHEWAN myeHEALTH 2.0 IS LIVE

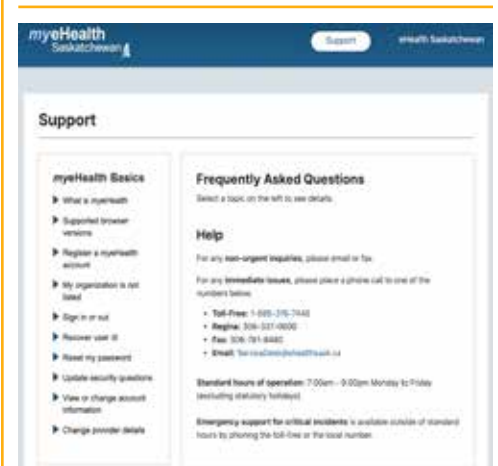
eHealth has rolled out myeHealth 2.0 to better support users. This may impact how you access certain services and applications:

- eHR Viewer users can now log directly into eHR Viewer.
- Panorama users can now log directly into Panorama.
- Panorama and eHR Viewer users no longer need to use the old myeHealth website. Use myeHealth 2.0 to reset your password or update your account.

Note: If you access eHR Viewer through another application (SCM, Convergence LTC, Med Access EMR or Accuro EMR) your login hasn't changed.

We recommend creating a desktop shortcut or bookmarking the new links for Panorama, eHR Viewer and myeHealth 2.0. There's also a myeHealth 2.0 Support page for help.

If you have any questions or issues, please contact eHealth Saskatchewan Service Desk at 1-888-316-7446 or servicedesk@eHealthSask.ca.



NEW ERA IN THE FIELD OF CONDUIT HARVESTING FOR CORONARY ARTERY BYPASS GRAFTING, IN SASKATCHEWAN

On October 1st, 2024, the Division of Cardiac Surgery, at the Royal University Hospital, Saskatoon, introduced Endoscopic Vein Harvesting (EVH), as an alternative mean of harvesting conduits for Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting (CABG) procedures. This was Saskatchewan's, and western Canada's first use of this technique, which is currently the standard of care in many countries, including the USA and UK.

EVH is performed through a small incision (1.5-2 cm long) to harvest the greater saphenous vein or the radial artery, with the aid of a specialized scope/camera and CO2 insufflation. Furthermore, specialized instruments are passed through the created tunnel, to dissect and harvest the vessels safely.

EVH offers a safe mean of harvesting the conduit for CABG procedures, through a significantly smaller incision, compared to conventional harvesting methods, minimizing the degree of scar and trauma at the harvest site. This will not only decrease the risk of infection and wound complications, specially in high risk population (PVD, Morbid obesity and DM), but will lead to less postoperative pain and swelling, early mobilization and better patient satisfaction. As a result, better recovery, less in hospital time and ultimately less overall cost on the health system.

Since it's introduction, to date, the Division of Cardiac Surgery performed 65 successful vein harvesting using the EVH technique, with great end results. The initial length of stay and the rate of re-admission for wound complications and infections are drastically decreased, leading to a significant decrease in the overall cost. While in the mean time EVH is in use for vein harvesting, the department is planning to expand it's use for the harvest of radial arteries.

As members of the Division of Cardiac Surgery in Saskatoon, Drs. Abbas Khani-Hanjani, Emilie LeRoux, Tamer Elghobary, and Dr. Mohamad Burhani are proud to be the first centre in Saskatchewan and western Canada to adopt and offer this service to patients. The team is dedicated to enhancing patient care and satisfaction through the adoption of innovative techniques and advanced technologies.



Cardiac Surgery Team (Saskatoon)



Endoscopic Vein Harvesting



Incision from new technique



Incision from conventional technique

Dr. Mohamad Burhani voluntarily has donated many hours of his time to come in and train on this technology and make it a reality in our center. Division of Cardiac surgery would like to recognize and thank Dr. Burhani for his contributions and efforts to make this project a success at Royal University Hospital.

GROUNDBREAKING FACIAL REANIMATION PROCEDURE PERFORMED AT ST. PAUL'S HOSPITAL - DIVISION OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY

Last week, a landmark surgical procedure was performed at Saint Paul's Hospital that may represent a first for Western Canada. Dr. Rick Jaggi, from the Division of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery, successfully completed a selective neurectomy for non-flaccid facial paralysis, offering renewed hope for patients living with long-standing facial movement disorders.

The patient, a retired nurse practitioner, had been living with the inability to smile for over 20 years due to a non-flaccid facial paralysis. With her permission, Dr. Jaggi shared that the outcome has been transformative: "She was able to smile for the first time in two decades," he said. "She and her family were overwhelmed with joy."

Selective neurectomy is a complex and highly specialized procedure that targets hyperactive or misdirected facial nerve signals. By selectively removing specific nerve branches, surgeons can restore more natural movement to the affected side of the face while minimizing undesired muscle contractions.

This successful case marks an exciting advancement in facial reanimation surgery and highlights the innovation and excellence within the Department of Surgery. It also reflects the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and patient-centered care in improving quality of life for individuals with rare or difficult-to-treat conditions.



Before procedure.



Post-procedure.

Congratulations to the surgical team at St. Paul's Hospital, led by Dr. Jaggi for this significant achievement and for continuing to push the boundaries of surgical care in Saskatchewan and beyond.

*Abyei Medical Team**Abyei Nurses with Dr. Cranford**MSF Plane*

FROM REGINA TO SOUTH SUDAN

Dr. Cranford is leader and teacher in the Department of Surgery at the University of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Health Authority. She joined the Division of Surgery in Regina in 2017 to help initiate the clinical trauma program. She completed both a Surgical Critical Care fellowship at the University of Florida and a Trauma fellowship at the University of Ottawa. She has been an integral part of the trauma program in Regina since its inception.

Recently, however, her practice has expanded to global and humanitarian surgery. She embarked on her first mission in Patzun, Guatemala in February 2023 with the Moose Jaw International Medical Mission and this sent her on her new career trajectory. Since then, she has rearranged her clinical practice in Regina to allow her to pursue her humanitarian efforts with more ease.

In less than 2 years, she has worked on two other short medical missions to Trujillo, Peru in October 2023 and again back to Guatemala in February 2024 before embarking on her longest and most challenging mission yet. She has just completed her first mission with Medecins Sans Frontieres, working as a surgeon in Abyei, South Sudan for 2 months. In this capacity she was challenged with diagnosing, and treating complicated surgical cases from all subspecialties, while living in the austere and war ridden area.

"Working in an austere environment means trying to save lives when you literally have nothing you are used to having at home- from diagnostics, to intervention, to post op care. It's learning how to be comfortable with always being uncomfortable." Dr. Cranford has said of her experience in South Sudan. Despite the hardships however, she remains committed to global surgery and is already looking forward to her next mission with MSF sometime in 2025.



Dr. Philippe 2nd from left



Dr. Philippe 3rd from left



Dr. Philippe is far right

ADVANCING ORTHOPEDIC CARE IN HAITI AMID CRISIS

The global fellowship within the Division of Orthopedics remains a cornerstone of our teaching and research mission. Dr. Fevry Desire, our current fellow from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, is progressing well toward his goals in trauma and reconstructive surgery. The skills he is acquiring will directly contribute to improving orthopedic care in Haiti upon his return.

Efforts are ongoing with the College of Medicine and the University of Saskatchewan to secure a sustainable funding model for the fellowship. We are hopeful that support through the "Be What the World Needs" campaign will make this long-term vision a reality.

While Haiti's current crisis receives limited media coverage, the situation on the ground is worsening. Our former fellow, Dr. Peterly Phillipe, continues to work under increasingly difficult and dangerous conditions. Two of the sites where he previously worked, once considered safe, are no longer secure. Bernard Mevs Hospital in Port-au-Prince - where our Saskatoon Team Broken Earth began work in 2015 - was recently firebombed by gangs, destroying the operating rooms and the hospital's CT scanner, serving a population of over three million.

Despite these challenges, Dr. Phillipe remains committed to his patients and teaching orthopedic residents. His courage and determination put a human face on the severe hardship faced by the Haitian people amid ongoing gang violence. As a division, we recognize the urgent need for coordinated international support and solutions to this escalating crisis.

POSITION STATEMENT

The Division of Orthopedics in the Department of Surgery at the University of Saskatchewan believes it is essential that the global community, including all Canadians, be made aware of the worsening humanitarian crisis in Haiti. This crisis has persisted for years and continues to deteriorate, profoundly affecting all hospitals in Haiti and the work of our Haitian physician and surgeon colleagues.

We urge our medical and surgical peers to advocate for increased awareness through Canadian media and to contact their Members of Parliament, encouraging the Canadian government to take meaningful action in support of the Haitian people.



KAITLIN ADEY, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

Award Recipient:
2024 Surgical Foundations Kvinlaug
Award, Department of Surgery
Teaching Awards
2024 Kvinlaug Surgical Foundations
Research Award, Department of
Surgery Research Day, University of
Saskatchewan



UZAIR AHMED, MD, FRCSC, FACS
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY

New Appointment in Surgery:
Program Director, Neurosurgery
Residency Program, Department of
Surgery



AIYA AMERY, MD
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
2024 CanMEDS Resident
Communicator Award



VARUN BATHINI, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF UROLOGY

Promotion to Associate Professor
Department of Surgery, College
of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan



GAVIN BECK, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

Promotion to Associate Professor
Department of Surgery, College
of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan



JORDAN BUCHKO, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

Promotion to Associate Professor
Department of Surgery, College
of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan

Award Recipient:
2024 Gold Scalpel Award for
PreClerkship Education, Department
of Surgery Teaching Awards



GARSON CHAN, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF UROLOGY

Promotion to Associate Professor
Department of Surgery, College
of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan



VANESSA CRANFORD, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

New Appointment in Surgery:
Regina Trauma Education
Coordinator, College of Medicine



ROBERT DOWNEY, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
2025 Surgical Foundations
Research Award, Department of
Surgery Research Day, University of
Saskatchewan



DILIP GILL, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

Promotion to Associate Professor
Department of Surgery, College
of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan



KYLE GOLDSTEIN, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
Samuel Claman Research Prize in
Orthopedics, 2024 Combined UofS/
UofM Orthopedic Surgery Resident
Research Day



LAYLA GOULD, PhD
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY

Award Recipient:
2024 Teaching Excellence Award,
University of Saskatchewan's
Students Union (USSU)



PETER GRAHAM, MD, FRCS
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

Award Recipient:
2024 Silver Shovel Award,
Department of Surgery Teaching
Awards



GARY GROOT, MD, FRCS
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

Award Recipient:
2024 Excellence in Research,
College of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan
2025 Surgery Research Award,
Department of Surgery Research
Day, University of Saskatchewan



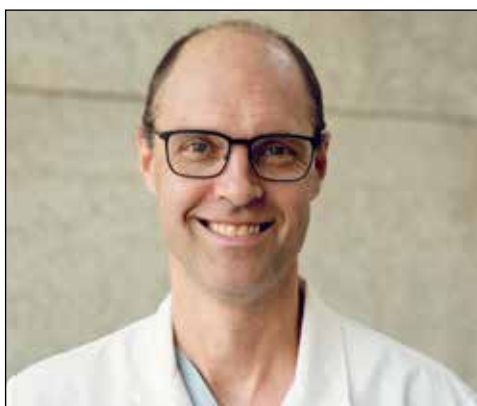
NOLAN HUNKA, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
1st Place Resident Research
Presentation Award, 2024 REACH
Resident Research Day
1st Place Podium Presentation,
Department of Surgery Research
Day, University of Saskatchewan



NICK JETTE, MD
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
3rd Place Podium Presentation,
Department of Surgery Research
Day, University of Saskatchewan



MIKE KELLY, MD, FRCS, FACS
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY

Award Recipient:
2025 King Charles III Coronation
Medal, Governor General of Canada



LEE KOLLA, MD, FRCS
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

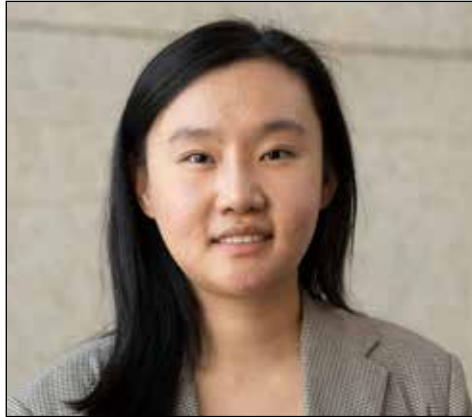
Award Recipient:
2025 RDoS Exceptional Teacher
Award, Resident Doctors of
Saskatchewan



ADEYEMI LAOSEBIKAN, MB-BS, FRCSC
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

New Appointment:
Director of Admissions, College
of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan

Award Recipient:
2024 Rural Teaching Award,
Department of Surgery Teaching Awards



EVA LIU, MD
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
2nd Place Podium Presentation,
Department of Surgery Research
Day, University of Saskatchewan
2025 Kloppenburg Award,
Department of Surgery



DON MCCARVILLE, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF VASCULAR SURGERY

Award Recipient:
2025 Regina Campus Teaching
Award, College of Medicine
2024 Lifetime Achievement Award,
Department of Surgery Teaching
Awards



IVAR MENDEZ, MD, FRCSC, FACS
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY

Award Recipient:
Excellence Award, Saskatchewan
Health Research Foundation (SHRF)



SARAH MILLER, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

New Appointment:
Medical Director, Regina Breast
Health Centre
Award Recipient:
2024 Gold Scalpel Award for
Clerkship, Department of Surgery
Teaching Awards



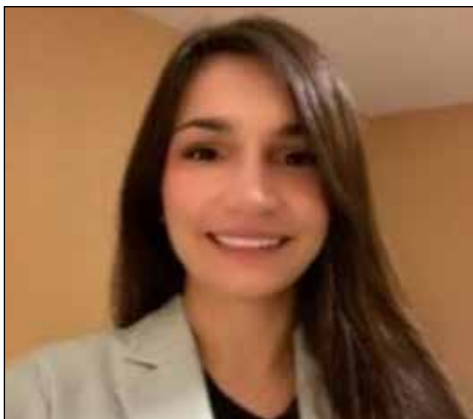
ALEXANDRA MORTIMER, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

Promotion to Associate Professor
Department of Surgery, College
of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan



KAREN MOSIER
DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

Award Recipient:
2025 Excellence in Research
Administration – Distinguished
Administrator, College of Medicine



AISHA MOUSTAPHA, MD
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
2024 Bronze Shovel Award,
Department of Surgery Teaching
Awards



RUSSELL MURPHY, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY,
HEAD & NECK SURGERY

New Appointment:
Lead, Division of Otolaryngology,
Head & Neck Surgery



COLLEEN NESBITT, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
2nd place Research Award, 2024
Combined UofS/UofM Orthopedic
Surgery Resident Research Day



BRENDAN NEWTON, MD
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
Resident of the Month (January
2025), Resident Doctors of
Saskatchewan's (RDocs)



JONATHAN NORTON, PhD, MRes, FACNS
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY

Award Recipient:
2024 King Charles III Coronation
Medal for Neurophysiology,
Governor General of Canada



ZACH OLEJNIK, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
1st place Kirkaldy-Willis Research
Award, 2024 Combined UofS/
UofM Orthopedic Surgery Resident
Research Day



CHRIS PASTOR, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

New Appointment:
Area Department Lead (ADL) -
Southeast, Saskatchewan Health
Authority



LISSA PEELING, MD, FRCSC, FACS
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY

Award Recipient:
2024 Gold Scalpel Award for
Residency Education, Department
of Surgery Teaching Awards



LAURA SIMS, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

Promotion to Associate Professor
Department of Surgery, College
of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan



JANS VAN DER MERWE, MBChB, FRCSC
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

Promotion to Associate Professor
Department of Surgery, College
of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan



MARS ZHAO, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

2024 Resident Teacher of the Year,
Postgraduate Medical Education,
College of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan

Recognizing the Problem and Responding with Support

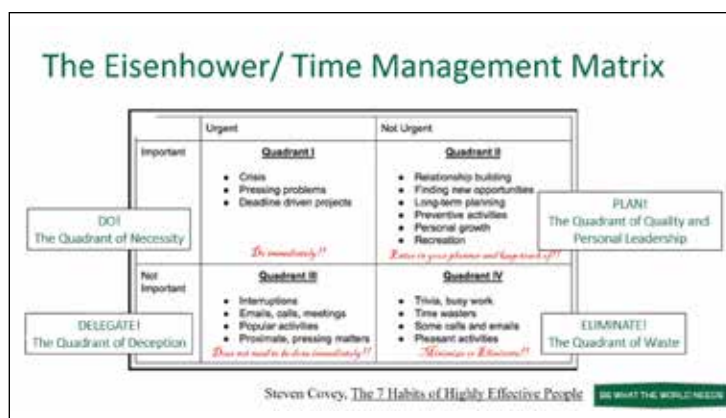
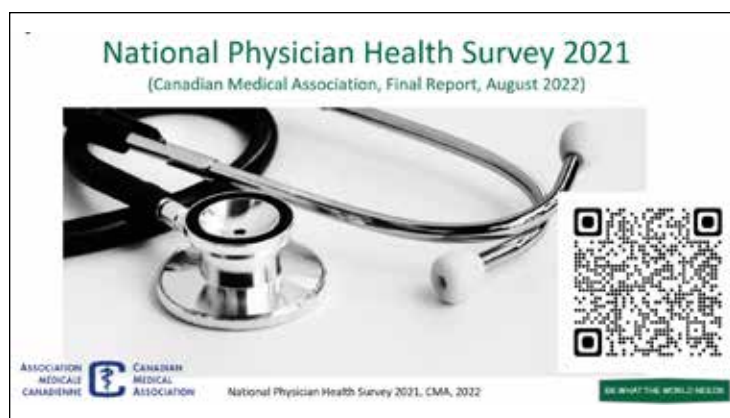
Burnout among surgeons continues to be a growing concern, with serious implications for physician health, team performance, and patient safety. Characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment, burnout is particularly common in high-demand specialties like surgery (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The Canadian Medical Association's 2021 National Physician Health Survey found that more than half of Canadian physicians experience high levels of burnout. Surgeons face distinct pressures—long hours, complex decision-making, and frequent emotional stress—which compound the risk (CMA, 20. Research has identified systemic contributors to burnout, including excessive workload, inefficiencies, limited control over work, and poor alignment between individual and organizational values (Shanafelt et al., 2016).

In response, the Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) offers valuable tools and programs specifically for physicians. The SMA Well-Being Index, a free, confidential app, allows physicians to regularly assess and monitor their mental health and burnout risk. It provides individualized feedback and resources and is designed to support early recognition and intervention. Physicians can access the tool directly at: mywellbeingindex.org.

Additionally, the SMA Physician Health Program (PHP) offers confidential support for physicians dealing with mental health concerns, stress, burnout, or substance use. The program is non-punitive and focused on restoring physician wellness and function (sma.sk.ca).

Practical strategies, such as the Eisenhower Matrix for prioritizing tasks based on urgency and importance, can also help physicians manage time more effectively and reduce overload.



Maslach Burnout Inventory

How do you perceive your work? Are you exhausted? How capable are you of shaping your relationship to others? To what degree are you personally fulfilled?

Indicate how frequently the following statements apply to you and add the points indicated on top of the respective box:

0 = Never
1 = At least a few times a year
2 = At least once a month
3 = Several times a month
4 = Once a week
5 = Several times a week
6 = Every day

22 items listed on the right side of the form.

Well-Being App sponsored by SMA



Easy access to information, advice or support via telephone, email or virtually

Counseling and Coaching

Referral to other resources

Workplace conflict resolution and mediation services

Assistance when faced with complex, investigations, audits, or formal proceedings

Advocacy services

Virtual training and online resources

Financial support for unexpected life events

For General Inquiries
php@sma.sk.ca
workplacewellbeing@sma.sk.ca
306.244.2196
1.800.667.3781
www.sma.sk.ca

As a department, supporting surgeon wellness is our priority. Recognizing the signs of burnout early and using available resources are key steps in maintaining a sustainable, healthy surgical practice.

SHA STANDARDIZES SURGICAL SAFETY

31

Saskatchewan Health Authority

Surgical Safety Checklist Operating Room

BRIEFING → **TIME-OUT** → **DEBRIEFING**

1 SURGICAL TEAM
Surgeon/MRP*, Anesthesiologist*, Nurse, and Patient (Parent, Guardian, or Proxy)

BEFORE ADMINISTERING ANESTHESIA

LEAD: Surgeon/MRP (EMERGENCY CRITERIA ■)

- ☐ Introduction of Patient and Team Members
- ☐ Patient ID Confirmed
- ☐ Consent(s)
- ☐ Procedure
- ☐ Surgical Site (Side) Confirmed
- ☐ Allergies
- ☐ Weight (**Pediatrics**)
- ☐ Antibiotics (Refer to Monograph)
- ☐ Precautions
- ☐ Advance Care Directive / DNR status

ANESTHESIA SAFETY CHECK

- ☐ Anesthesia Plan
- ☐ Equipment & Supplies

RELEVANT INVESTIGATIONS

- ☐ Laboratory: Group & Screen, ABO Confirm, Bloodwork
- ☐ Medical Imaging

EQUIPMENT / INSTRUMENTATION / IMPLANT

POSITIONING / SUPPORT MEASURES

- ☐ Normothermia measures
- ☐ VTE Prophylaxis
- ☐ Pressure Injury Prevention

PATIENT'S VOICE – "IT IS SAFE TO ASK"

PRIOR TO PROCEEDING - QUESTIONS/CONCERNS

2 SURGICAL TEAM
Surgeon/MRP*, Anesthesiologist*, and Nurse

BEFORE SKIN INCISION AFTER PREP DRY TIME

LEAD: Nurse

- ☐ Patient ID Re-confirmed
- ☐ Procedure
- ☐ Surgical Site (Side) Confirmed
- ☐ Allergies
- ☐ Antibiotics
- ☐ ASA Score
- ☐ VTE Prophylaxis

PRIOR TO PROCEEDING - QUESTIONS/CONCERNS

3 SURGICAL TEAM
Surgeon/MRP*, Anesthesiologist*, and Nurse

BEFORE PATIENT TRANSFERRED

LEAD: Surgeon/MRP & Nurse

- ☐ Procedure verified by surgeon
- ☐ Final Count correct? Surgeon notified?
- ☐ Specimen(s): quantity and names confirmed and charted
- ☐ Medications used and amounts charted
- ☐ Wound Class
- ☐ Implants used and charted


QUESTIONS/CONCERNS

- ☐ Critical Event?
 - ☐ Document Event
 - ☐ Report Event
 - ☐ Support Needed?
 - ☐ Employee Assistance Program 1.844.336.3136

SSC COMPLETED

*THE ROYAL COLLEGE COMPETENCY BY DESIGN FRAMEWORK SUPPORTS TRANSITION TO CARE FOR SURGICAL AND ANESTHESIA RESIDENTS TO LEAD THE SSC. THE SURGICAL SAFETY CHECKLIST IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ENTIRE SURGICAL TEAM. IT IS DOCUMENTED IN THE PATIENT'S CHART.

SHA 0583 (06/25) SHA Surgical Safety Checklist adapted from the World Health Organization CS-CS-0022 Surgical Safety Checklist Clinical Standard QR Code



Surgical Safety Checklist Now in Effect Across SHA

As of June 9, 2025, a revised Surgical Safety Checklist Clinical Standard is in place throughout the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA).

Endorsed by the Surgical Quality and Safety Committee, the updated standard mandates the use of the checklist for all surgical, interventional, minimally invasive, and diagnostic procedures performed within or contracted by SHA.

The revised checklist is a standardized tool designed to enhance communication among surgical team members and support safer surgical care. It aims to reduce preventable complications, improve patient outcomes, and align with Accreditation Canada requirements. While some local adaptation may be necessary, the checklist's core principles should be applied consistently across all surgical settings.

Surgeons and surgical teams are encouraged to review the updated checklist, along with supporting resources and audit tools, available on the SHA intranet under Surgical Safety Checklist – Clinical Resources. (<https://www.saskhealthauthority.ca/surgical-safety-checklist-clinical-resources>)

If your clinical area requires a version not currently available, please work with provincial partners to create a care-specific checklist. The SHA Clinical Standards team is available to support this development.

This revision reflects SHA's ongoing commitment to delivering safe, standardized, and high-quality surgical care.

Advancing Surgical Knowledge Through Collaboration and Innovation

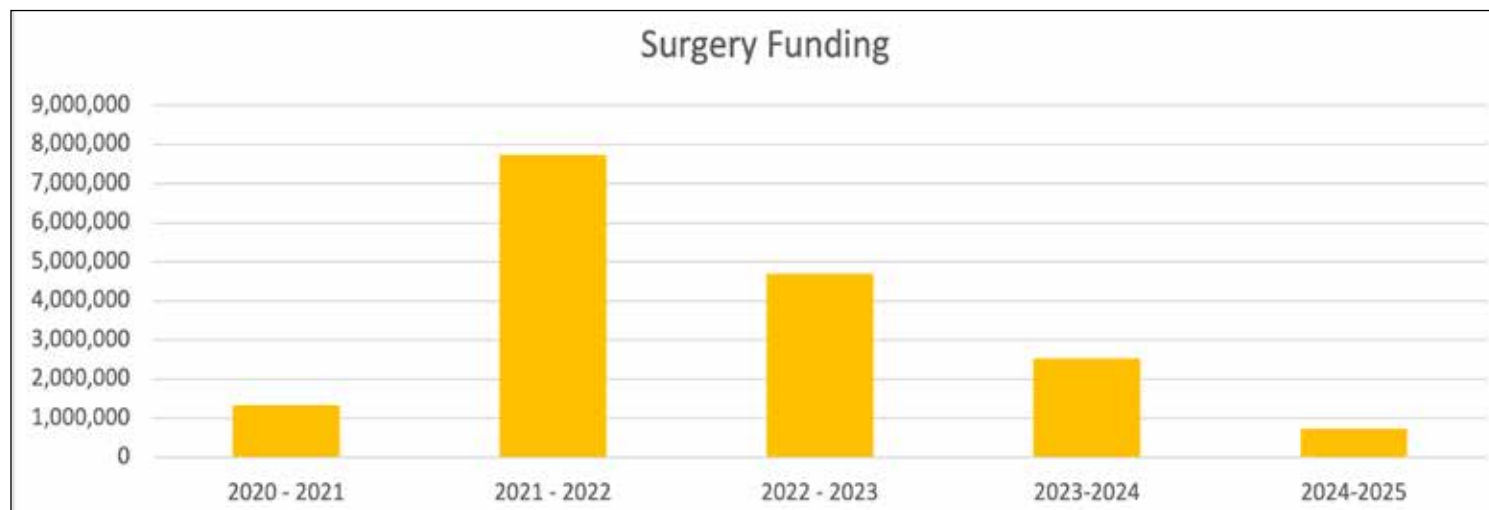
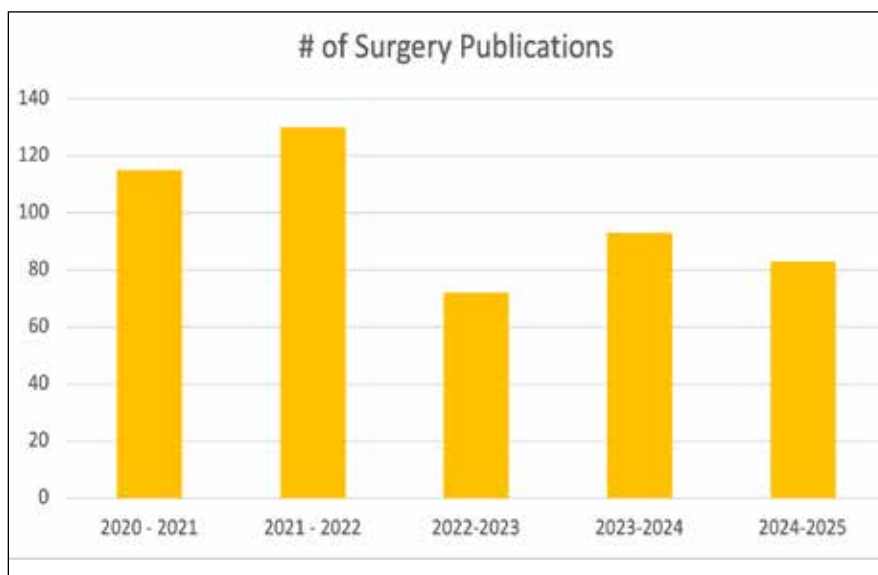
The 2024–2025 academic year has been a productive and rewarding time for research within the Department of Surgery. Our faculty, residents, and research staff have continued to make important contributions to the advancement of surgical science, with growing engagement across the province.

Over the past year, the Department provided close to \$50,000 in internal research funding to support resident-driven projects. This included 14 Resident Research Incentive Program awards (\$6,200), 12 Resident Travel awards (\$28,740), and three Resident Research awards (\$15,000). We extend congratulations to our residents on their outstanding work, and sincere thanks to the faculty mentors who guide and support their development as clinician-scientists. Faculty contributions were also recognized, with three Faculty Publication Awards awarded this year, totaling \$3,000. Overall, residents and faculty collectively published 76 peer-reviewed papers—an encouraging indicator of our department's growing research capacity and impact.

The Research Committee hosted six Research Rounds throughout the year, with topics including: "How I Became a Clinician-Scientist," "Responsible Use of Generative AI," "Common Ethics Application Challenges," and "Ethical Implications of Using AI." These hybrid sessions remain open to all faculty, residents, and research staff, and aim to promote research literacy and collaboration across disciplines.

To encourage broader interdisciplinary partnerships, the Department launched a new initiative connecting surgeons with Saskatchewan-based research teams. Two dedicated Grand Rounds were held in December and January, featuring speakers in AI, tissue engineering, biobanking, and radioimmunotherapy. Following these sessions, several faculty members expressed interest in potential collaborations—an encouraging outcome.

Thank you to all who contributed to research this year. Your ongoing efforts continue to improve surgical care in Saskatchewan and beyond. We look forward to continued progress in 2025–2026.



2025 Research Day Showcased Surgical Excellence and Innovation

On May 8, 2025, the Department of Surgery at the University of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Health Authority hosted its Annual Research Day - an inspiring showcase of surgical innovation, academic excellence, and collaborative research. The event highlighted its unwavering commitment to advancing surgical care through inquiry, mentorship, and innovative solutions.

Opening remarks from Dr. Michael Kelly and Dr. Daryl Fourney celebrated a year of remarkable achievements, including 89 published papers and over \$50,000 in internal research funding. With 23 podium presentations and 7 posters, the program reflected the breadth and depth of research across surgical specialties - from robotic esophagectomy and Indigenous health frameworks to AI-assisted decision-making and spinal oncology.

A major highlight was the keynote address by Dr. Ziya L. Gokaslan, Chair of Neurosurgery at Brown University, who shared insights on enabling technologies in the treatment of spinal column tumors. His presence underscored the department's global connections and leadership in surgical innovation.

The day also recognized the essential contributions of faculty mentors, session chairs (Drs. Francisco Cayabyab, Paul Mick, & Melissa Wood), judges (Drs. Uzair Ahmed, Trustin Domes, Ziya Gokaslan, Gary Groot, & Renée Kennedy), and staff for their role in making the event a success. Award winners were later announced at the Department of Surgery Celebration Dinner.

Research Day 2025 reaffirmed the department's vision: to be a leader in surgical excellence through innovation, collaboration, and a strong culture of research. It was a day of inspiration, connection, and celebration of the future of surgery in Saskatchewan and beyond.



Dr. Ziya L. Gokaslan Lecture



Research Day Judges: Drs. T. Domes, G. Groot, Z. Gokaslan, D. Fourney, U. Ahmed, & R. Kennedy

SURGERY CELEBRATION

The inaugural Surgery Celebration was held on May 16th, 2025, following the Department of Surgery Research Day. This event has replaced the Research Day Banquet and is designed to recognize our members, fellows, residents & Research Day Award winners. The Surgery Celebration is an annual event held in conjunction with the Department of Surgery's Research Day, offering a platform for faculty, research scientists, graduate students, residents, and undergraduates to showcase their research.

Dr. Mike Kelly, Provincial Department Head of Surgery served as the evening's MC.

The program began with the recognition of our graduating residents and fellows:

General Surgery Residency Program (presented by Dr. Gavin Beck, Program Director)

Dr. Moayad Alturkistani
Dr. Samantha Bird

Dr. Meaghan Ryan
Dr. Megan Spafford

Neurosurgery Residency Program (presented & accepted by Dr. Uzair Ahmed, Program Director)

Dr. Kristen Marciniuk

Orthopedic Surgery Residency Program (presented by Dr. Andrew Urmson, Program Director)

Dr. Liz Quon

Division of General Surgery, Fellow in Acute Care Surgery (presented by Drs. Suzie Harriman & Niroshan Sothilingam)

Dr. Anna Mierzwa

Division of Otolaryngology, Fellow of Facial Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery (presented by Dr. Rick Jaggi)

Dr. Abdulmalik Ismail

Division of Neurosurgery, Fellow of Neurosurgery (Regina) (presented by Dr. Joseph Buwembo)

Dr. Abiola Babatunde



Drs. Gavin Beck & Megan Spafford



Drs. Gavin Beck & Moayad Alturkistani



Drs. Andrew Urmson & Liz Quon



Drs. Rick Jaggi & Abdulmalik Ismail



Drs. Mike Kelly, Joseph Buwembo & Abiola Babatunde



Drs. Mike Kelly, Attil Saemann & Uzair Ahmed



Drs. Mike Kelly & Varun Bathini



Drs. Mike Kelly & Gavin Beck



Drs. Mike Kelly & Jordan Buchko



Drs. Mike Kelly & Garson Chan



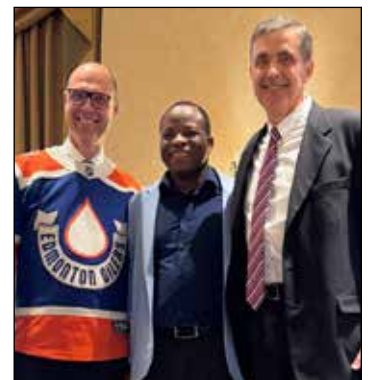
Drs. Mike Kelly & Alex Mortimer



Drs. Mike Kelly & Laura Sims



Drs. Mike Kelly & Jans van der Merwe



Drs. M. Kelly, A. Awobem & R. Friesen

Division of Neurosurgery, Fellow of Cerebrovascular Neurosurgery (Saskatoon) (presented by Drs. Uzair Ahmed & Michael Kelly)

Dr. Attil Saemann

Division of Orthopedic Surgery, Fellow of Global Clinical Orthopedic Surgery

Dr. Fevry Desir

Dr. Kelly then recognized our 2024 Faculty Promotion & 2023-2024 Faculty Retirees.

Surgery Faculty Promotions

- Dr. Varun Bathini - Division of Urology (Saskatoon), promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Gavin Beck - Division of General Surgery (Saskatoon), promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Jordan Buchko - Division of Orthopedic Surgery (Regina), promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Garson Chan - Division of Urology (Saskatoon), promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Dilip Gill - Division of General Surgery (Saskatoon), promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Alexandra Mortimer - Division of Orthopedic Surgery (Saskatoon), promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Laura Sims - Division of Orthopedic Surgery (Saskatoon), promoted to Associate Professor
- Dr. Johannes van der Merwe - Division of Orthopedic Surgery (Saskatoon), promoted to Associate Professor

Surgery Retirees

- Dr. Randall Friesen – Division of General Surgery, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
- Dr. Bruce DuVal – Division of Vascular Surgery, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
- Dr. Carolyn DuVal – Division of Plastic Surgery, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
- Dr. Peter Chang – Division of Plastic Surgery, Regina, Saskatchewan
- Dr. Malcolm Retief – Division of General Surgery, North Battleford, Saskatchewan
- Dr. Pieter Seshadri – Division of General Surgery, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

The 2026 Research Day & Surgery Celebration is scheduled to take place May 7th.

SURGERY CELEBRATION (CONT'D)

The evening concluded with Dr. Daryl Fourney, Director of Research in the Department of Surgery presenting the Surgery Research Day Awards:

1st place podium: Dr. Nolan Hunka, General Surgery

2nd place podium & Department of Surgery Kloppenburg Award: Dr. Eva Liu, Neurosurgery

3rd place podium: Dr. Nick Jette, Orthopedic Surgery

Poster Presentation Award: Fatima Awan, Undergraduate Medical Student

Kvinlaug Surgical Foundations Research Award: Dr. Kaitlyn Adey, General Surgery

Department of Surgery Undergraduate Surgical Research Award: Sabahat Saeed/Zili Zhou, Undergraduate Medical Student

Department of Surgery Research Award (non-resident): Dr. Gary Groot, General Surgery



Drs. Daryl Fourney



Dr. Daryl Fourney & Melanie Elhafid



Dr. Daryl Fourney & Sergey Kens



Drs. Daryl Fourney & Eva Liu



Drs. Jans van der Merwe & Daryl Fourney

ADVANCING SKILLS THROUGH SIMULATION

37



Staff and students take part in the hands on skills session.



Porcine model used to simulate bleeding.



Simulate bleeding.



Residents, surgical staff and nurses take part in the hands-on skill sessions.

INTERVENTIONAL ENDOSCOPY LAB HIGHLIGHTS IN REGINA

This year's interventional endoscopy simulation lab was again held in Regina for Surgical residents and staff, as well as Nursing students and staff from Regina and Saskatoon. It was a great showcase of the partnership between the surgical department, the endoscopy nurses, GI staff, and the Dilawri Simulation Center.

Dr. Bereti and Dr. O'Byrne delivered presentations to learners in Regina and Saskatoon on recent advancements in endoscopic biliary drainage procedures and techniques for foreign body removal.

The hands-on skills sessions were held at the Dilawri Simulation Center in Regina. This center has been instrumental over the past few years in establishing and building this course as well as other interventional simulations for the Surgical residents while in Regina.

The highlight of the day was the hands-on interventional endoscopy sessions, where learners spent time practicing on porcine tissue models. The interactive stations featured a variety of advanced procedures, including foreign body removal (such as razor blades and batteries), simulated bleeding control, esophageal stricture dilation, and polyp removal.

Dr. Bereti, the current PGME coordinator in Regina, is excited to

try and expand the availability of the simulation offerings in Regina to include tracheal dissection and repair, as well as working on cardiac injury simulation in the near future. Currently, Regina residents are able to engage in Laparoscopic gastric perforation repairs, hand sewn and laparoscopic anastomosis techniques, as well as various other simulated surgical procedures. Dr. Bereti is excited about the possibility of incorporating new ideas that are low cost, but have a high impact on ways to expand surgical resident education in a safe and controlled setting for the University of Saskatchewan and Regina learners.

MEET OUR 'NEW' RESIDENTS



Dr. Ameer Abusada, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Ameer Abusada was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, and completed his undergraduate training at the University of Saskatchewan. He found gratification in the impact surgeons have on patient care and quality of life. This inspired him and gave him a way to give back to the prairie community that raised him. While he discovered his love for surgery fairly late in his journey, he has not regretted his decision to pursue it. He is looking forward to continuing to grow as an individual and being part of this incredibly supportive team.

Dr. Oreoluwa Adeyinka, Division of Neurosurgery

Dr. Ore Adeyinka grew up mostly in the hometown of Windsor and completed his undergraduate degree in Kingston, Ontario. He went on to complete his medical degree in Sydney, Australia, and is excited to train in Saskatoon. His love of neurosurgery began with the amazing team he worked with and the cases he encountered as a medical student. He considers it an incredible honour to care for the organ system that makes us who we are as humans.



Dr. Moudi Alsubaie, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Moudi Alsubaie was born in Kuwait and completed her undergraduate studies at Jordan University of Science and Technology in Jordan. She was drawn to surgery due to its unique blend of problem-solving, precision, and the opportunity to make immediate, tangible improvements in patients' lives. The dynamic environment of the operating room and the collaborative nature of surgical teams further inspired her to pursue a career in surgery.

Dr. Aleya Anderson, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Aleya Anderson (pronounced al-ee-ah) grew up in Warman, Saskatchewan. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of Saskatchewan, where she also completed her medical degree. She was drawn to surgical residency for its dynamic, hands-on nature and the daily challenges that demand precision, adaptability, and a drive for continual improvement - traits she has honed since childhood through sports and ballet. She has also always appreciated the comfort of scrubs and a healthy dose of OR banter.



Dr. Shervin Forootan, Division of Orthopedic Surgery

Dr. Shervin Forootan is originally from Toronto, where he completed his undergraduate studies at York University and his medical degree at the University of Toronto. His passion for musculoskeletal anatomy began in the cadaver labs of medical school during dissections. What drew him most to orthopedic surgery was the privilege of helping patients regain function, independence, and hope—often with immediate results. He is also excited by the technical aspects of orthopedics, working with a wide array of surgical instruments to restore anatomy. He is grateful for the opportunity to train and learn alongside such supportive colleagues and staff at the University of Saskatchewan.

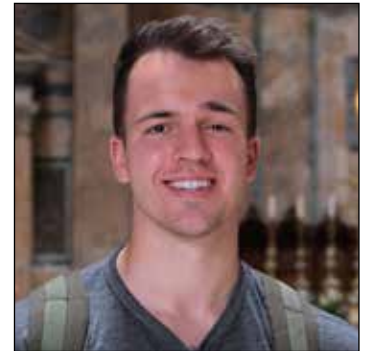


Dr. Evan Parchomchuk, Division of Orthopedic Surgery

Dr. Evan Parchomchuk was born and raised in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. He completed his Bachelor of Kinesiology and medical school at the University of Saskatchewan. During his five years playing varsity volleyball with the Huskies, he developed a strong passion for the musculoskeletal system and all its intricacies. Orthopedic surgery seemed like the perfect fit to continue growing that passion while mastering the complex skills of surgery. He is very excited to be here and looks forward to the next five years and beyond.

Dr. Patterson, Division of Orthopedic Surgery

Dr. Ethan Patterson is originally from Lloydminster and completed his undergraduate and medical education at Queen's University. He spent a year in family medicine residency in Saskatoon, where he was fortunate to train with some great faculty and friends. He switched to orthopaedics because he loves the anatomy, the structure of the training, and the opportunity to provide definitive care for musculoskeletal issues. He feels very fortunate to be part of such a supportive group of residents and faculty, and is excited to get to know more of his colleagues across the surgical specialties.



Dr. Kalea Rempel, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Kalea Rempel is one of five R1s in General Surgery. She is from Saskatoon and has lived there her whole life, except for three years spent at the University of Saskatchewan's Regina campus during her medical training. She completed both her undergraduate and medical degrees at the University of Saskatchewan. She chose to pursue a career in General Surgery for the variety in cases and patients, as well as the acuity and complexity the specialty offers. She is happy to be staying at the University of Saskatchewan and looks forward to working with everyone.

Dr. Anya Sigurdson, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Anya Sigurdson is from Regina and completed her undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan. She worked briefly in oil and gas, as well as agricultural manufacturing, before entering medicine. Her medical school training was also completed through the University of Saskatchewan, largely at the Regina campus. She chose to pursue a career in general surgery because of the variety of patient pathologies, the opportunity to use hands-on skills to make distinct changes in patient care, and the involvement in cancer care. She is excited to be staying in Saskatchewan to continue her training.



Dr. Natalie Tilbury, Division of Neurosurgery

Dr. Natalie Tilbury grew up in Saskatoon and completed her undergraduate degree in Neuroscience at the University of Calgary before returning home for medical school. She chose to pursue a career in surgery after enjoying procedural skills both in her undergraduate research lab and throughout medical school. She became attracted to the intricate procedures and high-acuity cases seen in neurosurgery, and she appreciates the trust and responsibility required in navigating relationships with patients and families as a surgical provider.



Surgical Services Budget and Program Highlights 2024-25

The Saskatchewan surgical program continues to advance in 2025-26, with a targeted volume of 101,000 procedures for the fiscal year. Between April 1 and June 30, 22,951 surgeries were performed—94.7% of the target for that period—despite challenges such as unreleased OR blocks due to limited anesthesiology resources. The province remains committed to reducing wait times, with 88.5% of patients receiving a surgical offer within six months, and ongoing efforts to meet the new benchmark of 90% within that timeframe.

However, 2,722 patients have been waiting over 12 months, a 30% increase since April. Action plans are underway to address this, including centralized scheduling and anesthesiologist recruitment. Cancer surgery performance remains strong, with 66.7% meeting target timeframes, and Saskatchewan continues to lead nationally in bladder cancer wait times, ranking second for lung, breast, and colorectal cancers.

Key initiatives include:

- * Launching a centralized neurosurgery intake system and expanding spine clinics.
- * Finalizing hip and knee clinic designs and tracking outcomes using Oxford scores.
- * Upgrading the OR Manager software across facilities, with full implementation expected by March 2026.
- * Expanding robot-assisted surgery and standardizing OR staffing ratios based on new ORNAC standards.

The province has also made significant strides in health human resources, with 83 graduate nurses and 47 internationally educated nurses hired since April. Anesthesiology recruitment remains a priority, especially in Regina, with 16 new hires expected by January 2026.

These investments and strategic actions reflect Saskatchewan's commitment to improving surgical access, efficiency, and patient outcomes across the province.