

SKALPEL

Journal of the Department of Surgery



July 2026



A Friendly Rivalry on Ice
Surgery vs. Medicine Hockey Game Kicks Off a New Tradition

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Provincial Head's Message
- Surgery Takes to the Ice
- Surgery Leadership Retreat
- Highlighting Our Faculty
- Surgical Open House
- New Faculty in Surgery
- Research Day in Surgery
- Annual Surgery Celebration
- Remembering Dr. Ekong
- New Role in Research
- Meet our New Residents & Fellows
- Faculty Promotion in Surgery
- Awards, Appointments & Promotions
- CoM Faculty Development
- Sask Health Authority Updates
- Advancements in Cardiac Surgery
- Research Update
- What's Next in Surgery!



As I reflect on the past year, I am struck by the remarkable progress being made across surgery in Saskatchewan. Whether in our operating rooms, clinics, research programs, classrooms, or communities, the collective commitment of our surgeons, residents, fellows, researchers, and staff continues to strengthen surgical care for patients across the province.

One of the most significant priorities for Saskatchewan's health system is improving timely access to surgical care. The provincial commitment to perform 450,000 surgeries over four years is an ambitious and important goal, aimed at reducing wait times and ensuring patients receive the care they need when they need it. As surgeons, we play a central role in this effort. Across the province, we are working closely with our Saskatchewan Health Authority, Ministry of Health, and clinical partners to improve surgical access through initiatives such as pooled referrals, centralized scheduling, enhanced perioperative pathways, and more efficient use of resources. These efforts are already helping us improve coordination and patient flow while maintaining the highest standards of care.

At the same time, we continue to invest in the future of surgery. Over the past several years, we have recruited over 60 new faculty members and achieved a full surgical complement in Saskatoon, while recruitment efforts continue in Regina and regional centres. These investments are strengthening surgical services throughout Saskatchewan and improving access for patients closer to home. We are also expanding our educational footprint with the launch of our Plastic Surgery Residency Program and continued development of future programs in Otolaryngology and Urology. These initiatives will help train the next generation of surgeons and support long-term workforce sustainability across our province.

Innovation remains a defining characteristic of our department. This year has seen continued growth in robotics, simulation-based education, and advanced surgical technologies. We have also celebrated

important clinical milestones, from advances in cardiac and vascular surgery to the expansion of specialized referral pathways that improve patient access to expert care. Equally important is our commitment to research, where faculty and trainees continue to generate impactful discoveries that improve patient outcomes and strengthen Saskatchewan's academic reputation. More than 100 peer-reviewed publications over the past year and continued investment in resident research speak to the strength of our academic mission and our commitment to advancing surgical knowledge alongside clinical excellence.

This edition of SKalpel highlights another important theme: leadership. Whether through mentorship, education, quality improvement initiatives, community engagement, or provincial collaboration, surgeons continue to lead beyond the operating room. The stories in these pages demonstrate the breadth of impact our members have across Saskatchewan and remind us that progress is achieved through teamwork, shared purpose, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Most importantly, however, our success is driven by people. The stories highlighted throughout this issue reflect the talent, dedication, leadership, and compassion that define the Department of Surgery. I am grateful for the privilege of working alongside such exceptional colleagues and optimistic about what we will accomplish together in the years ahead.

Thank you for all you do for our patients, learners, and communities.

Sincerely,



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

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SURGERY VS. MEDICINE HOCKEY GAME



A Friendly Rivalry on Ice Launches a New Tradition

The inaugural Surgery vs. Medicine Hockey Game brought energy, camaraderie, and a healthy dose of competition to Merlis Belsher Place this spring, marking what is hoped to become a new annual tradition. Colleagues, friends, and families gathered to cheer on the two teams as they faced off in a spirited and entertaining matchup that highlighted both athletic skill and collegial rivalry.

Led by team captain Dr. Jeff Gaboury for Surgery, both teams showed impressive determination and teamwork on the ice. The atmosphere was electric, with enthusiastic support from the stands and plenty of good natured banter between departments. In the end, Surgery claimed the win, securing both bragging rights and momentum heading into what is sure to be an eagerly anticipated rematch next year.

Following the game, attendees continued the evening, where the competition gave way to celebration, connection, and a few laughs - whether celebrating victory or planning Medicine's comeback.

With such a strong turnout and overwhelmingly positive response, plans are already underway to make the Surgery vs. Medicine Hockey Game an annual highlight - one that continues to build teamwork, tradition, and a little friendly rivalry on and off the ice.

A special thank you goes to the St. Paul's Hospital Foundation for sponsoring the event and helping bring this vision to life. Their ongoing generosity and commitment to supporting healthcare initiatives across Saskatchewan make events like this possible, and their impact on patient care in our province is deeply appreciated.



SURGERY LEADERSHIP RETREAT

05



Beyond the OR: Developing Leadership Skills in Surgery

On Friday, May 22, members of the Department of Surgery gathered in Regina for a highly engaging Leadership Retreat focused on strengthening teamwork, communication, and leadership in surgical environments. The event, held at the Hotel Saskatchewan, brought together surgeons and leaders for a full day of learning, reflection, and practical skill-building.

The day was anchored by Marlene Smadu, who guided participants through key concepts drawn from the Excellence in Healthcare Leadership (EHL) program. Her sessions emphasized the importance of effective teams in supporting patient safety and fostering a positive workplace culture. Through a combination of discussion and interactive activities, participants explored tools such as self-assessment strategies, the “ladder of inference,” and approaches to navigating conflict - concepts that resonated strongly with attendees.

A highlight of the afternoon was the session led by Jennifer Klatt, which focused on coaching styles and performance management. This discussion struck a particular chord with surgeons, many of whom reflected on the unique challenge of leading within the operating room environment - where expectations for leadership are high. Klatt’s practical framework for coaching as a distinct process from performance management provided valuable strategies for influencing team dynamics and supporting colleagues effectively.

Throughout the day, there was a strong emphasis on self-awareness, communication, and building trust within teams. Informal networking opportunities during breaks and lunch further enriched the experience, allowing participants to share perspectives and strengthen connections across the department.

Overall, the retreat was very well received, with participants noting the relevance of the content to their daily practice. The Department of Surgery looks forward to continuing to build on this momentum through ongoing leadership development opportunities.



DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY
**Leadership
RETREAT | 2026**
SAVE THE DATE

Friday | May 22 | 2026
HOTEL SASKATCHEWAN
Regina, Saskatchewan

TOPICS for discussion:

- Taste of the JSGS Excellence in Healthcare Leadership (EHL) Program: TEAMS
- Teams as one component of the Quadruple Aim
- The advantages, contexts, and challenges of teams in the healthcare sector
- Tools for addressing team challenges
- Building a team culture and training
- Coaching & Conflict Resolution

Learning Objectives - By the end of this event, you will be able to:

1. Describe the role of collaboration and diversity in successfully addressing challenges | 2. Identify challenges to effective teamwork and collaboration | 3. Design strategies to improve working relationships and communication in teams | 4. Apply coaching strategies and questioning skills

Please RSVP via email to angie.white@sask.ca






*Team image -*

36 Hours Without a Home:

What the Sanctum Challenge Taught Me About Medicine, Empathy, and Our City

It is 5 a.m. on a cold October morning in Saskatoon. I'm in donated clothes that don't quite fit, no phone, no wallet, no credit cards. The night before, I slept at the Salvation Army. That was day one done. Now comes day two, and the city is just waking up while I'm already running on bad sleep and a lot of uncertainty about what's ahead. I chose to be here. That's what I kept thinking about. I chose this. The people I was spending these 36 hours alongside mostly did not.

Last October I took part in the Sanctum Care Group's 36 Hour Challenge. It's an annual event that puts community leaders through tasks designed by people with lived experience of homelessness and the front-line workers who support them. Mayor Cynthia Block was there, Police Chief Cameron McBride, and a handful of other civic and business leaders. Thanks to the generosity of my friends, family and colleagues, I raised over \$36,000 for Sanctum's programs, including Sanctum 1.5, Canada's first care home specifically for HIV positive and high-risk mothers in the pre and postnatal period. I am genuinely grateful for every single donation.

I have been trying to figure out how to write about it ever since.

We know the physiology. Sleep deprivation, cold exposure, caloric deficit, chronic stress. I've explained hypothermia to medical students. None of that knowledge did much for me when I was actually inside the experience rather than standing outside it.

The tasks were specific and real: navigate the ID requirements to access services, find food, figure out where to go and when. Each one seemed manageable until it wasn't. The barriers aren't dramatic. They're mundane and relentless. They pile up. And when you're already tired and cold and disoriented, even small obstacles feel enormous.

I've thought about my patients differently ever since. The one who missed their follow up. The one who showed up in rough shape. I have a clearer picture now of what their morning might have looked like before they walked through our door.

I'll be honest, the physical part was hard but manageable. What I wasn't prepared for was the invisibility. Walking around downtown Saskatoon in worn clothes, people just don't see you. Not unkindly. Just... absent. Eye contact that doesn't come.

That is a strange thing to notice when your normal day involves a fair amount of social recognition. Even a few hours of it left a mark. I can only imagine what months of it does to a person.

The staff at the Friendship Inn always welcomed me with a smile and treated me with the most dignity. They had no idea I was going home in the morning. I've thought about them a lot since.

But the biggest shift in my thinking was about addiction. I came into the challenge with a pretty standard clinical assumption: substance use leads people into homelessness. I came out believing the opposite is more often true.

Homelessness causes addiction. When you are cold, unsafe, invisible and out of options, substances are not a moral failure. They are a coping mechanism. They dull something that most of us will never have to feel. Once you understand that, the clinical question changes. It stops being why can't they just stop and start being what would need to change in their life before stopping becomes possible. Those are very different questions. They lead to very different answers.

The tasks in the challenge were built around moments like that one. Not stunts. Genuine windows into a reality most of us never see up close. Designed by people who have actually lived it.

When it ended, I went home, showered, ate a real meal and slept in my own bed. The relief of that was almost uncomfortable. Because what I had just walked away from, thousands of people in this city cannot walk away from.

I am now working with Mayor Block's office on a broader strategy to address homelessness in Saskatoon. It is slow, complicated work. Housing, mental health, addictions, Indigenous led approaches, health system integration. None of it moves quickly and there is no simple solution. But I am better equipped for that work having spent those 36 hours. Not because I have answers, but because I have a different starting point.



Homelessness is a health issue. It walks through our clinic doors every day whether we recognise it or not. The Sanctum Care Group is doing work that sits right at the intersection of housing, addiction, mental health and medicine, and doing it with a seriousness and compassion that I think any clinician would respect.

If you get the chance to take part in the 36 Hour Challenge, do it. It will not be comfortable. It is not supposed to be. But you will see your patients differently afterward.

For information about the Sanctum Care Group and future 36 Hour Challenge events, visit sanctumcaregroup.com.

Article written by Dr. Rick Jaggi, Division of Otolaryngology



Introducing the next generation to Surgery: Saskatoon faculty and residents engaging undergraduate students

A GROWING, MUST-ATTEND EXPERIENCE FOR FUTURE SURGEONS: SASKATOON | APRIL 20TH, 2026 & REGINA | APRIL 28TH, 2026

In April 2026, the Department of Surgery and the Student Surgical Society hosted the annual Surgical Open House events in Regina (April 20) and Saskatoon (April 28). Each event welcomed approximately 40 undergraduate students and featured strong faculty participation, with all divisions represented in Saskatoon and most represented in Regina. These events continue to grow each year and have become a must-attend experience for both students and faculty - a strong reflection of their success, impact, and strong engagement.

Both events began with faculty and residents introducing their practices and sharing insights into surgical careers, a component that was very well received by attendees. Expanded simulation opportunities and interactive stations provided hands-on experience in an engaging environment, supported by the Surgical Skills Lab in Saskatoon and the Dilawri Simulation Centre in Regina. Students had the opportunity to rotate through stations, ask questions directly to surgeons, and gain a clearer understanding of the variety within surgical specialties and training pathways.

For faculty and residents, the events continue to be equally rewarding, offering the chance to connect with highly motivated learners early in their training. There is a clear enthusiasm in the room, and many surgeons value the opportunity to share their experiences and encourage interest in the field. These interactions often extend beyond the event, with many faculty offering shadowing opportunities and welcoming students into clinics, research

projects, and operating rooms - helping to build early mentorship and exposure to surgical careers.

The event will be held again next year, and we encourage faculty, residents, and partners to watch for opportunities to get involved—we look forward to building on this momentum for another successful year. We would also like to recognize and thank our industry partners for their continued support, including providing a wide range of simulation equipment that greatly enhanced the hands-on experience for students.

A special thank you to Dr. Alex Mortimer (Saskatoon) and Abdalla Butt (Regina) for their leadership in organizing these events, as well as to all faculty, residents, staff, and partners who contributed to another highly successful year.



Regina Open House at the Dilwari Simulation Centre



Dr. Sree Kannasanathan engaging students with a vascular simulation



Drs. Russ Murphy (ENT), Renee Kennedy (Thoracic), & Joeseph Ojah (Thoracic)



Neurosurgery Simulation - Drs. Amit Persad, Kotoo Meguro, & Braeden Newton (R5)



Suturing with Dr. John Staples (Plastic)



Dr. Gordie Kaban getting students excited



*Dr. Alexandra Bain, Pediatric Urology
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Chris Bell, Otolaryngology
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Audrey Durrant, Pediatric General Surgery
Regina, Saskatchewan*

Dr. Bain is originally from Ontario and completed her post-secondary education including her Urology residency at the University of Alberta. She then moved to Columbus, Ohio to complete her Pediatric Urology Fellowship at Nationwide Children's Hospital with exposure in robotic surgery, sacral neuromodulation, and complex reconstructions for bladder exstrophy and Prune Belly Syndrome patients. The prairies have always felt like home for her so she is delighted to be joining as a Pediatric Urologist at the JPCH in Saskatoon this Summer. She has a keen interest in Transitional Urology--helping bridge the gap between pediatric and adult care for patients with lifelong Urologic conditions such as spina bifida. She's also excited to help develop the pediatric robotic surgery program at JPCH.

She did in fact miss the Canadian winters and she plans to pick up cross-country skiing and explore the trails around Saskatoon! Her and her fiancé are also excited to cheer on the Saskatoon Blades and support the local arts community.

Dr. Chris Bell is a fellowship-trained rhinologist and endoscopic skull base surgeon dedicated to advancing subspecialty care in Saskatchewan. He completed his undergraduate, graduate, and medical training at the University of Saskatchewan, followed by residency in Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at the University of Calgary, where he earned FRCSC certification. He then pursued advanced fellowship training in rhinology and endoscopic skull base surgery at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

Dr. Bell specializes in minimally invasive management of complex sinonasal and anterior skull base conditions, including advanced and revision sinus surgery, septal perforation repair, cerebrospinal fluid leak repair, and multidisciplinary care of sinonasal tumors. His practice also includes obstructive sleep apnea surgery and general adult and pediatric otolaryngology.

Committed to his home province, Dr. Bell aims to expand access to specialized care in Saskatchewan through collaborative programs in clinical care, education, and research.

Dr. Audrey C. Durrant, is a dual board-certified pediatric and general surgeon with over two decades of clinical experience across academic medical centers, community hospitals, and high-acuity trauma environments throughout North America.

Dr. Durrant completed her undergrad training at McMaster University and earned her MD from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. She completed surgical training at SUNY Downstate Medical Center, with fellowships at the Hospital for Sick Children (Toronto), Oregon Health & Science University, and UT Southwestern/Parkland, building a foundation across pediatric and general surgery.

She joins Regina General Hospital as a Locum Pediatric Surgeon, bringing experience as an Assistant Professor of Surgery at the University of South Florida, along with a strong record of peer-reviewed research spanning pediatric colorectal surgery, airway management, and trauma.

Beyond clinical practice, Dr. Durrant is the Founder and CEO of Inclusive Health Match and the creator of the WhiteCoatGreenRoom health equity newsletter, reflecting her commitment to advancing equitable, patient-centered care.



*Dr. Jayd Lukenchuk, Orthopedic Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Brian Nocon, General Surgery
North Battleford, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Joseph Ojah, Thoracic Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*

Born and raised in Saskatoon, Dr. Jayd Lukenchuk is a former member of the Canadian National Gymnastics team who eventually traded his spandex singlet for surgical scrubs. He earned his medical degree at the University of Saskatchewan before completing his orthopedic residency training at the University of Calgary. He then moved east for a fellowship in Shoulder Surgery in London, Ontario, before heading across the globe to Perth, Australia, to complete a second fellowship in Sports Medicine and Arthroscopic Reconstruction of the knee and shoulder.

Dr. Lukenchuk is thrilled to return to his hometown and bring his international experience to the team at the Saskatoon Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Center. He is happily settled back into the community alongside his wife, Jillian, and their energetic dog, Jerry.

Outside the operating room, Dr. Lukenchuk enjoys spending quality time with family and friends. He maintains his passion for adrenaline-fueled activities by traveling the world for pursuits like scuba diving, sky-diving, rock-climbing, and skiing. And, on days when he needs to remind himself he hasn't entirely lost his acrobatic edge, you can still find him at a drop-in gymnastics class, proving he still has a few flips left in his repertoire.

Born and educated in the Philippines, I earned my medical degree from the University of Santo Tomas in Manila before relocating to Halifax, Nova Scotia with my family following my postgraduate internship. I engaged in clinical research at Dalhousie University and served as IMG Bridging Program Coordinator at the Immigrant Settlement Agency of Nova Scotia between 2009 and 2014, subsequently entering the Dalhousie IMG clerkship program in 2014. After graduating from Dalhousie University in 2016, I completed my General Surgery residency at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon in 2022. I then started my practice as a community based General Surgeon at Aberdeen Hospital in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia for three years before being recruited back to Saskatchewan. Together with my wife, Dr. Andrhea Nocon, CCFP, we moved to North Battleford with my family in August of 2025 where I am currently practicing as a General Surgeon. My clinical interests include community-based practice, trauma education, hernia repair and abdominal wall reconstruction. I also involve myself in helping other Internationally-trained physicians in navigating the Canadian healthcare system to help them integrate into the system. Outside of medicine I enjoy outdoor pursuits—off-roading, mountain biking, and family travel—more recently I am in the process of obtaining Open Water scuba certification, and also play Airsoft in my free time.

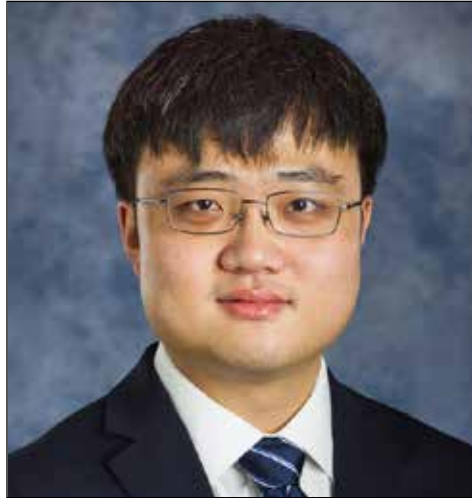
Dr. Ojah is a Maritimer with Trinidadian roots. After completing medicine at Dalhousie, he traded coasts for General Surgery residency at UBC, during which time he finished a Master of Health Sciences in Epidemiology. Thoracic residency at the University of Manitoba was followed by fellowship in Advanced Minimally Invasive Thoracic back in British Columbia. After establishing a robust practice in his home province of New Brunswick in 2018, he was recruited to join the Division of Thoracic Surgery in Saskatoon in August 2025.

His passion for optimizing outcomes for patients in all dimensions of thoracic care, nested in academic frontiers and robotic thoracic techniques, is matched only by his dedication to surgical education. His lung health advocacy work across multiple provincial organizations continues.

He cherishes time with his wife and three children: Nova, Ronan, and Layla. Life at home is a whirlwind of travel, extracurriculars, exercise, and (always!) good food.



*Dr. Olalekan Oke, General Surgery
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Peter Qi, Plastic Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Elizabeth Quon, Orthopedic Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*

Dr Olalekan Oke is a fellowship-trained specialist general surgeon, currently practising in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, where he provides comprehensive surgical services to the hospital and the broader northeast Saskatchewan communities.

Born in Nigeria, Dr Oke obtained his Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) from Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) in 2006, before relocating to South Africa to pursue specialist surgical training. He was awarded his Fellowship of the College of Surgeons of South Africa (FCS (SA) in October 2013.

Dr Oke moved to Australia in 2014, where he held a succession of highly competitive postgraduate surgical fellowship posts in Trauma Surgery (2014-17), HPB and Upper Gastrointestinal Surgery (2018-19) and Acute Care Surgery (2020-2022).

His appointment as Specialist General Surgeon in August 2025, represents the culmination of nearly a decade of surgical training and practice across three continents. Dr Oke is a committed surgical educator, and he brings to Prince Albert exceptional technical breadth, a deep commitment to community surgical care, and a distinguished international record in both acute and elective general surgery.

Dr Oke is looking forward to exploring the beautiful lakes and the outback of the Northern Saskatchewan.

Dr. Peter Qi grew up in Calgary and completed his undergraduate studies in Health Sciences at University of Calgary before earning his medical degree from University of Toronto. He subsequently completed residency training in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at the University of Toronto, followed by fellowship training in Hand and Upper Extremity Surgery at WellSpan York Hospital. He then pursued advanced fellowship training in Orthoplastics and Limb Salvage Surgery at University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Qi is currently an Assistant Professor in the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at University of Saskatchewan. His clinical interests include hand and wrist surgery, peripheral nerve surgery, and microsurgical limb salvage. His academic work focuses on peripheral nerve surgery and outcomes in extremity reconstruction.

Outside of medicine, Dr. Qi enjoys films, gaming, travelling, and spending time with family and friends.

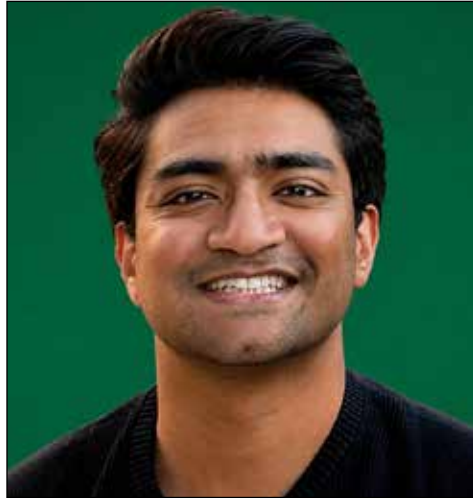
Dr. Elizabeth Quon was born and raised in Saskatoon and is excited to be returning home to begin her career with the Department of Surgery in the Division of Orthopedics. She completed her undergraduate medical education through the University of Saskatchewan, with training in both Saskatoon and Regina, before going on to complete her Orthopedic Surgery residency in Saskatoon.

She completed an Orthopedic Trauma fellowship at Vancouver General Hospital, where she focused on the management of complex fractures and polytrauma patients. Dr. Quon is looking forward to returning to Saskatchewan to join her colleagues in providing orthopedic trauma care for the province.

Her professional interests include orthopedic trauma, surgical education, and mentorship. Outside of work, she enjoys travelling, spending time with friends and family, and outdoor hiking adventures. She is thrilled to be returning home to Saskatoon to begin this next chapter.



*Dr. Palak Suryavanshi, Otolaryngology
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Vishnu Vasanthan, Cardiac Surgery
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*



*Dr. Megan Wiebe, Pediatric General Surgery
Regina, Saskatchewan*

Dr. Palak Suryavanshi recently returned to Saskatoon to join the Division of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery at the University of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Health Authority following advanced fellowship training in Laryngology at Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital in Pune, India, a Royal College of Surgeons of England accredited program. After completing medical school at the University of Saskatchewan and Otolaryngology residency training at Western University, she pursued focused subspecialty training in disorders of the voice, airway and swallowing. Dr. Suryavanshi provides comprehensive general ENT care with additional expertise in hoarseness, vocal cord disorders, chronic cough, swallowing difficulties and complex airway conditions. As Saskatchewan's first fellowship-trained laryngologist, she is looking forward to helping improve access to specialized laryngology care within the province while continuing to support resident education and academic initiatives. Her professional interests also include medical education, mentorship, leadership development and contributing to the ongoing growth of the University of Saskatchewan's surgical training programs.

Dr. Vasanthan was raised in Edmonton, where he completed medical school in 2017. Afterward, he pursued Cardiac Surgery residency in Calgary, where he developed a passion for less-invasive cardiac interventions. During residency, he also earned a PhD in Cardiovascular and Respiratory Sciences. His thesis focused on leveraging matrix biomaterials to enhance post-infarct myocardial healing.

Dr. Vasanthan completed advanced fellowship training at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, specializing in minimally invasive mitral valve surgery and transcatheter valve interventions.

Outside of medicine, he enjoys spending time with his wife and daughter, staying active, and playing video games. He is excited to return to the prairies and join the heart team in Saskatoon, where he aims to contribute to innovative, patient-centered cardiac care.

Dr. Meagan Wiebe grew up in Mississauga, Ontario, and completed her undergraduate degree at Western University. She moved to Ireland for medical school at Trinity College Dublin, during which time she completed an Intercollegiate Masters in Translational Oncology. Following her time abroad she returned to Canada for her General Surgery residency in Winnipeg and moved to Ottawa for a Pediatric Surgery research fellowship. Meagan is currently completing her Pediatric Surgery clinical fellowship at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

Dr. Wiebe is looking forward to joining the Division of Pediatric Surgery in Regina. Her academic interests include quality improvement, clinical research focused on access to care, health systems, and patient outcomes, along with medical education.

Outside of work she enjoys being active outdoors, travelling and exploring new places, scuba diving, and spending time with family and friends.

On May 7, 2026, the Department of Surgery at the University of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Health Authority hosted its Annual Research Day—an engaging and collaborative event showcasing the strength and impact of surgical research across the province. Bringing together faculty, trainees, and students, the day reflected the department's continued commitment to advancing patient care through innovation, mentorship, and scholarly inquiry.

Opening remarks from Dr. Michael Kelly and Dr. Daryl Fourney highlighted another exceptional year of academic productivity, including more than 100 peer-reviewed publications and significant external research funding. Continued investment in trainee development was also emphasized, with over \$54,000 in internal funding supporting resident research initiatives, reinforcing a strong culture of mentorship and early scholarly engagement.

The program featured a full day of podium and poster presentations spanning a wide range of surgical disciplines. Topics reflected both clinical excellence and forward-thinking innovation, including advancements in artificial intelligence in healthcare, precision medicine approaches in pancreatic cancer, orthopedic outcomes research, neurosurgical biomarkers, and improvements in surgical education and systems of care. This breadth of work underscored the department's diverse research portfolio and its focus on meaningful, patient-centered outcomes. A highlight of the day was the keynote address by Dr. Murray Penner, Clinical Professor



Research Day Judges: Drs. M. Moser, R. Bigsby, M. Penner, L. Sims & A. Persad

of Orthopaedics at the University of British Columbia. An internationally recognized leader in foot and ankle reconstruction and surgical innovation, Dr. Penner shared insights on the evolving landscape of ankle arthritis management and the role of innovation and engineering in advancing surgical care. His presentation offered valuable perspective on integrating research, technology, and clinical practice.

The event also recognized the many individuals who contributed to its success, including session moderators, judges, faculty mentors, and dedicated staff. Their efforts, alongside the enthusiasm and high-quality work of presenters, created a dynamic and supportive environment for knowledge exchange and professional development. Award winners were announced later at the Department of Surgery Celebration. Research Day 2026 once again affirmed the department's vision of excellence in surgery through innovation, collaboration, and a strong research culture. It was a day that celebrated not only the achievements of the past year, but also the future of surgical discovery and leadership in Saskatchewan and beyond.



Dr. Nicholas Jette, General Surgery



Dr. Colleen Nesbitt, Orthopedic Surgery



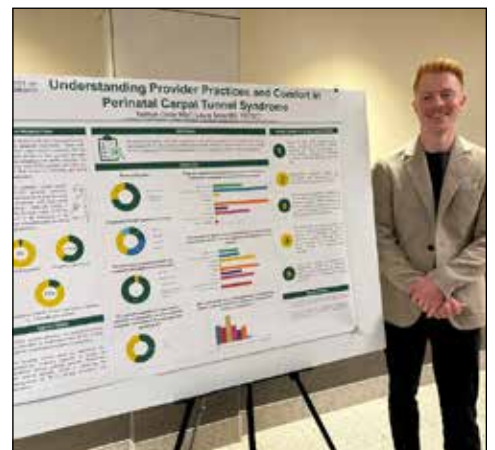
Dr. Natalie Tilbury, Neurosurgery



Dr. Murray Penner (Keynote Speaker) & Dr. Paul Kulyk



Surgery Research Day



Nathan Oster (UGME), Poster Presentation

ANNUAL SURGERY CELEBRATION

The second annual Surgery Celebration, held following Research Day, marked the best-attended event in Department of Surgery history, bringing together faculty, learners, and partners from across the province. The evening celebrated a year of significant growth, including continued recruitment momentum, expansion of residency and fellowship programs, and strong research productivity. Dr. Mike Kelly, Provincial Department Head of Surgery, served as the evening's MC, highlighting the people and achievements driving the department forward.

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

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

Dr. Nicholas Jette

Dr. Aiya Amery

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

Dr. Nicole Coote

Surgical Foundations Graduates (presented by Dr. Suzie Harriman, Co-Program Director)

Dr. Helen Liang, General Surgery

Dr. Ericha Hendel, General Surgery

Dr. Sattam Almalki, General Surgery

Dr. Gavin King, Orthopedic Surgery

Dr. Abdulwahab Aladsani, Orthopedic Surgery

Dr. Lorena Stringer, Obstetrics & Gynecology

Dr. Johan Du Preez Smith, Obstetrics & Gynecology

Dr. Annita Velasque Moreira, Obstetrics & Gynecology

Dr. Tori Shmon, Obstetrics & Gynecology

Dr. Isabella Janusonis, General Surgery

Dr. Manojkumar Balakrishnan, General Surgery

Dr. Mohsen Javam, General Surgery

Dr. Robert Downey, Orthopedic Surgery

Dr. Gabrielle Cousyn, Obstetrics & Gynecology

Dr. Amy Zhou, Obstetrics & Gynecology

Dr. Cynthia Abbasi, Obstetrics & Gynecology

Dr. Ethan Patterson, Obstetrics & Gynecology

Dr. Nina Wingate, Obstetrics & Gynecology

Dr. Roger G. Keith Award in Surgery (presented by Mrs. Nancy Keith)

In its inaugural year, the award was established by his family to honour his legacy as an exceptional surgeon, mentor, and leader, and to recognize future surgeons who embody his enduring commitment to excellence, innovation, and professionalism.

Dr. Nicholas Jette, General Surgery



Drs. Nicholas Jette, Gavin Beck, & Aiya Amery



Drs. Uzair Ahmed & Nicole Coote



Mrs. Nancy Keith with Drs. N. Jette & M. Kelly



Co-Directors; Dr. Suzie Harriman (left) & Dr. Mark Sheridan (right) with graduating Surgical Foundations residents



Drs. Rick Jaggi & Abdullah Alamri



Drs. Scott Willms & Rishkard Juin



Drs. Mike Kelly & Russ Murphy



Drs. Kunal Jana & Kishore Visvanathan

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

Dr. Megan Spafford

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

Dr. Abdullah Alamri

Division of Orthopedic Surgery, Fellow of Global Clinical Orthopedic Surgery (presented by Dr. Scott Willms)

Dr. Rishkard Juin

Dr. Kelly then recognized our 2025 Faculty Promotion & 2024-2025 Faculty Retirees.

Surgery Faculty Promotions

Dr. Raymond Deobald - Division of General Surgery (Saskatoon), promoted to Associate Professor

Dr. Peter Graham - Division of General Surgery (Saskatoon), promoted to Associate Professor

Dr. Russ Murphy - Division of Otolaryngology (Saskatoon), promoted to Associate Professor

Dr. Aleksander Vitali - Division of Neurosurgery (Saskatoon), promoted to Associate Professor

Surgery Retirees

Dr. Aqueel Ghorri – Division of General Surgery, Swift Current, Saskatchewan

Dr. Sanjay Jacob – Division of Vascular Surgery, Regina, Saskatchewan

Dr. Kishore Visvanathan – Division of Urology, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

We look forward to celebrating with you again at the 2027 Surgery Celebration!

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 & Department of Surgery Kloppenburg Award: Dr. Nordan Flaaten, Orthopedic Surgery

2nd place podium: Dr. Coleen Nesbitt, Orthopedic Surgery

3rd place podium: Dr. Natalie Tilbury, Neurosurgery

Poster Presentation Award: Nathan Oster, Undergraduate Medical Student

Department of Surgery Undergraduate Surgical Research Award: Ayeh Aldulaymi, Undergraduate Medical Student

Kvinlaug Surgical Foundations Research Award: Dr. Natalie Tilbury, Neurosurgery

Department of Surgery Research Award: Dr. Michael Moser, General Surgery



Drs. Daryl Fourney & Nordan Flaaten



Drs. Daryl Fourney & Colleen Nesbitt



Drs. Daryl Fourney & Natalie Tilbury



Dr. Nathan Oster & Daryl Fourney



Drs. Daryl Fourney & Natalie Tilbury



Drs. Daryl Fourney & Michael Moser

REMEMBERING: DR. CHRIS E. U. EKONG

December 14, 1946 to February 18, 2026

The Department of Surgery mourns the loss of Dr. Chris E. U. Ekong, a remarkable neurosurgeon whose skill, compassion, and global vision shaped healthcare in Saskatchewan and far beyond. A graduate of the University of Ibadan, Dr. Ekong devoted his career in Regina to advancing spine surgery, championing patient centred care, and elevating neurosurgical excellence across the province.

A Clinical Professor with appointments at the University of Saskatchewan, St. George's University, and the American University of the Caribbean, he influenced generations of learners with his generosity, humility, and unwavering dedication. His leadership extended to the Saskatchewan Medical Association and numerous national committees, reflecting his deep commitment to service. Named CTV Regina's Citizen of the Year in 2024, Dr. Ekong's impact reached well beyond the operating room.



Through initiatives such as the C&J Ekong Charitable Foundation, the Global Neurosurgery Outreach Program, and the Dr. Chris Ekong Neuro Spine Fellowship, he created enduring pathways for international trainees and strengthened global neurosurgical capacity. His legacy, rooted in faith, philanthropy, and excellence, will continue through the many surgeons he mentored, the patients he served, and the programs he built. He leaves behind a profound and lasting impact on our surgical community.

Strengthening Research in Surgery: A New Role to Support Innovation

The Department of Surgery is pleased to welcome Nicole Sylvain to a newly created Bench Science Research Coordinator role, reflecting our ongoing commitment to strengthening research capacity and innovation across disciplines.

Nicole brings extensive and diverse experience, having completed a bilingual BSc in Biology and Science Psychology and an MSc in Physiology and Developmental Biology at the University of Alberta. Since 2009, she has worked across multiple University of Saskatchewan units, including the Department of Anatomy, the Canadian Light Source, the Department of Surgery, and the Clinical Trials Support Unit. Her expertise spans pre-clinical animal trials, animal ethics, bedside-to-bench research, clinical trial coordination, and regulatory documentation.

In her new role, Nicole will support faculty launching research programs or new projects by assisting with onboarding staff and students, identifying laboratory needs, developing budgets, purchasing equipment, and planning bench science experiments. She will also guide teams through regulatory requirements, including animal ethics and biosafety applications, and support the use of research tools.

Her knowledge and collaborative approach will strengthen our research environment, streamline processes, and support investigators at every stage. Nicole welcomes opportunities to assist faculty and encourages colleagues to connect with her to advance innovative and impactful research initiatives within the department.



MEET OUR NEW RESIDENTS



Dr. Razan Almaghrabi, Division of Orthopedic Surgery

Dr. Razan Almaghrabi is originally from Saudi Arabia, where she earned her medical degree at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University. Her dedication to orthopedic surgery stems from a passion for precision, hands-on patient care, and the unique, biomechanical art of restoring structural alignment to directly rebuild a patient's mobility and quality of life. Moving from the vibrant, majestic landscapes of Saudi Arabia to the beautiful prairies of Saskatoon, she sees this transition as a seamless bridge between her proud heritage and an inspiring new chapter. Dr. Almaghrabi is honored to join the University of Saskatchewan and looks forward to learning from its outstanding faculty while collaborating with her colleagues to provide exceptional patient care.

Dr. Mason Beaulieu, Division of Orthopedic Surgery

Dr. Mason Beaulieu was born and raised in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He completed his BSc in Kinesiology and medical degree at the University of Saskatchewan. During this time he gained an interest in musculoskeletal health through both academic and extracurricular experiences. His pursuit of orthopedics is driven by the ability to improve patients' mobility, independence and identity through the rewarding skillset that an orthopedic surgeon provides. He is grateful to start and looks forward to joining the supportive and talented orthopedic community at home with the University of Saskatchewan.



Dr. Annaka Chorneyko, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Annaka Chorneyko is a General Surgery Resident at the University of Saskatchewan. Born and raised in Saskatoon, she completed both her undergraduate and medical training at the University of Saskatchewan. She discovered her passion for general surgery during a transformative clerkship year in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, where immersive mentorship and hands-on clinical experience shaped her career path. She is proud to continue her medical training at home and looks forward to contributing to the USask surgical team.

Dr. Abdullah Fallatah, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Abdullah Fallatah was born in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, and earned his medical degree from King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences in Jeddah. He was drawn early to general surgery because of its breadth, depth, and immediate impact on patients' lives. Before joining the University of Saskatchewan, he worked as a general surgery resident for nearly a year, rotating through acute care surgery, surgical oncology, colorectal surgery, and breast and endocrine surgery. He looks forward to further developing his skills and contributing to the supportive and academically rich environment at the University of Saskatchewan.



Dr. Conné Lategan, Division of Plastic Surgery

Dr. Conné Lategan is originally from Cape Town, South Africa and moved to Westlock, Alberta in 2004. She completed her Kinesiology undergrad while competing as a varsity cross-country/track & field athlete at the University of Calgary, followed by a master's in medical science and medical training at the University of Alberta. She chose plastic surgery as it combines creativity with a patient-oriented focus to restore identity, function, and self-concept with technical precision and detail. Outside of medicine, she enjoys being active, travelling, photography, F1, and teaching exercise classes in the cancer community. She's excited to join Saskatoon's medical community!

**Dr. Alexis Marion, Division of General Surgery**

Dr. Alexis Marion grew up in Montréal, Québec, and completed his Bachelor of Science at McGill University and his Master of Biomedical Engineering at Polytechnique before undertaking his medical studies at the Université de Montréal. He was drawn to surgery as a career choice for the hands-on approach to patient care, as well as the highly innovative research environment it fosters. He is excited to join the University of Saskatchewan community and looks forward to continuing his development in surgery as part of a supportive and collaborative team while sharing good coffee with colleagues along the way.

Dr. Ashling O'Neill, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Ashling O'Neill grew up in British Columbia and obtained her Bachelor of Health Sciences at the University of Northern BC, prior to completing her medical degree at the University of British Columbia. She also worked as a paramedic in northern and rural communities. She decided to pursue a career in General Surgery because she enjoys the collaborative team work, the ability to help patients through hands-on procedural skills, and the breadth and acuity of the specialty. She is excited to undergo her surgical training here in Saskatoon.

**Dr. Retaj Ramadan (R2), Division of Plastic Surgery**

Raised in Saskatoon, Dr. Retaj Ramadan completed her undergraduate degree in Neuroscience and International Relations at the University of Toronto before returning to Saskatchewan for medical school. Now in her second year of Plastic Surgery residency in Regina, she has been fortunate to learn from surgeons who consistently pull her into cases, teach at the operating table, and help her build confidence and independence. Retaj is especially grateful to her mentors Drs. Lyons, Souf, Ledding, Kozan, Kurtz, Ghremida, and Heaphy. Their investment in her training has deepened her passion for the skill and life-changing impact of reconstructive surgery. Next year, she will continue her training in Winnipeg through the Saskatchewan–Manitoba Plastic Surgery Return of Service position. She is excited to return home to work with the exceptional surgeons training her, her favourite ambulatory care nurses, and the Saskatchewan community that first inspired her.

Dr. Sabahat Saeed, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Sabahat Saeed was born in Pakistan and raised in Regina Saskatchewan. She completed her undergraduate degree in Physiology and Pharmacology and earned her medical degree from the University of Saskatchewan. Sabahat discovered her passion for General Surgery during her core surgery rotation, where she was drawn to the technical complexity of the specialty, the collaborative environment of the operating room, and the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with patients throughout their surgical journey. Sabahat is excited to begin her residency training and looks forward to getting to know her colleagues across the various surgical specialties.

**Dr. Tejeshwer Singh, Division of Orthopedic Surgery**

Dr. Tejeshwer Singh is thrilled to be joining the University of Saskatchewan Orthopaedic Surgery residency program. He completed medical school at the Université de Montréal, where his interest in orthopaedics grew through clinical electives, research in musculoskeletal trauma, and early experiences seeing how surgery can help patients regain independence. He has also been involved in student leadership and health advocacy at provincial, national, and international levels, which has shaped his commitment to teamwork, service, and patient-centred care. He looks forward to learning from the surgical community in Saskatchewan and contributing meaningfully to patient care.

MEET OUR NEW RESIDENTS (CONT'D)

**Dr. DuPreez Smith, Division of Plastic Surgery**

Originally from South Africa, Dr. DuPreez Smith grew up in Chilliwack, British Columbia. He started his undergraduate studies in Kinesiology at the University of British Columbia before earning his medical degree from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. He subsequently started a thesis-based MSc in Gynecological Oncology at the University of Alberta and spent two years as an Obstetrics and Gynecology resident at the University of Saskatchewan before transferring to Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. He is passionate about the breadth of plastic surgery and looks forward to a career that combines technical precision, creativity, and meaningful patient impact.

Dr. Joel Sonfack, Division of Neurosurgery

Dr. Joel Sonfack completed his medical education in Quebec after graduating from high school and CEGEP. Throughout his training, meaningful patient encounters and the mentorship he was fortunate to receive sparked his interest in neurosurgery and confirmed his decision to pursue the specialty. In parallel with medical school, he earned a master's degree in Biomedical Sciences, where his research focused on engineering an autologous nasoseptal flap as a reconstructive option for endonasal skull base surgery. From his first interactions with the residents and faculty from Saskatoon, he was struck by how genuine, supportive, and close-knit the program felt. He truly is excited to train in an environment where colleagues can be called family.

**Dr. Kyle Thomson, Division of Plastic Surgery**

Dr. Kyle Thompson grew up in London, Ontario and completed his undergraduate degree at Western University. He then headed west for his Master's degree at the University of British Columbia before returning to Western for medical school. He was drawn to plastic surgery for its combination of reconstructive and technical complexity, along with the opportunity to restore function and meaningfully improve patients' quality of life. He is grateful to be training at the University of Saskatchewan and excited for what lies ahead.

Dr. Faith Wierenga, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Faith Wierenga was born and raised in Alberta, and completed an undergraduate degree in biochemistry and her medical school training at the University of Alberta. In between those degrees she worked at the science centers in both Edmonton and Vancouver. She is excited to start life in Saskatoon and explore all it has to offer. She chose general surgery for the variety, fast pace and patient impact that it offers and is thrilled to be training at the University of Saskatchewan.

**From Vision to Reality: Advancing Surgical Education in Saskatchewan**

The Department of Surgery is entering a new era of postgraduate education with the launch of several residency programs. In 2026, we introduced our Plastic Surgery Residency Program, matching three residents in its inaugural CaRMS cycle under Program Director Dr. Vidya Shankaran's leadership.

Otolaryngology will launch in 2027 under Dr. Neil Arnstead, followed by Urology in 2028, co-directed by Drs. Trustin Domes and Garson Chan. These programs maintain a focus on high-quality training, mentorship, and Royal College alignment.

Dr. Lissa Ogieglo, newly appointed Director of Education, will support curriculum, accreditation, and program development.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate the Department's commitment to innovation and excellence in surgical education.

MEET OUR NEW FELLOWS



Dr. Nicole Coote, Division of Neurosurgery

I completed my residency in neurosurgery in Saskatoon. I chose to pursue a fellowship in functional and epilepsy neurosurgery because it is one of the fastest-growing and most innovative areas within the specialty. Advances in neuromodulation, stereotactic techniques, and epilepsy surgery continue to expand the treatment options available for patients with movement disorders, chronic pain, psychiatric conditions, and medically refractory epilepsy. I am passionate about contributing to this evolving field and look forward to developing the technical expertise to help patients living with these problems.

Dr. Krystal Kan, Division of Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery

Dr. Krystal Kan is originally from Ontario and earned her undergraduate degree in Psychology from the University of Toronto before pursuing her medical education in the United States. She completed medical school at Boston University, followed by residency training at the University of Illinois Chicago. Throughout her training, Dr. Kan developed a deep appreciation for the profound connection between facial appearance, identity, and psychological well-being. Her background in psychology, combined with her passion for surgery, led her to facial plastic and reconstructive surgery. She is excited to have now returned to Canada and continue to advance her expertise in surgery of the face, head, and neck.



Dr. Ahmed Warraich, Division of General Surgery

Dr. Ahmed Warraich grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He completed medical school at Alfaisal University in Saudi Arabia before returning to Winnipeg to complete his general surgery residency. He pursued fellowship training to further develop his expertise in trauma and emergency general surgery and is looking forward to learning from the faculty and trainees in Saskatoon.

Faculty Engagement in the College of Medicine: Are You Closer to Promotion Than You Think?

The College of Medicine is committed to supporting faculty throughout their academic careers. Through the Vice-Dean Faculty portfolio, the Faculty Engagement Office provides guidance on appointments, promotion, tenure, and recognition.

Promotion is an important academic milestone. For surgeons, activities such as patient care, teaching, research, quality improvement, leadership, mentorship, and professional service often form the foundation of a strong promotion application. Promotion recognizes excellence in clinical practice, education, scholarship, leadership, and service.

Preparation starts early. Keeping your CV current and documenting teaching, leadership, scholarly work, and service activities will make the process much smoother when you're ready to apply.

If you are considering promotion or would like to learn more, the Faculty Engagement Office can help you understand College standards and identify evidence that strengthens a promotion case. Contact Jacque Zinkowski, Faculty Engagement Officer, at jacque.zinkowski@usask.ca or the Faculty Engagement Office at medicine.facultyengagement@usask.ca.

Within the Department of Surgery, Angie White (angie.white@usask.ca) is also available to answer questions, discuss timelines, and provide local support.

Academic promotion is more than advancing in rank—it recognizes the impact you have made on learners, patients, colleagues, the University, and the profession. If promotion is on your radar, now is a great time to start the conversation.

AWARDS, APPOINTMENTS & PROMOTIONS



ORE ADEYINKA, MD
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
Resident Research Travel Award,
Department of Surgery, University
of Saskatchewan



SATTAM ALMALKI, MD
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
Resident Research Award,
Department of Surgery, University
of Saskatchewan



NEIL ARNSTEAD, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY -
HEAD & NECK SURGERY

New Appointment in Surgery:
Program Director, Otolaryngology
Residency Program, Department
of Surgery, College of Medicine,
University of Saskatchewan



GARSON CHAN, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF UROLOGY

New Appointment in Surgery:
Co-Program Director, Urology
Residency Program, Department
of Surgery, College of Medicine,
University of Saskatchewan



NICOLE COOTE, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
2025-2026 PGME Exemplary
Resident Award, Department
of Surgery, University of
Saskatchewan



RAY DEOBALD, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

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



TRUSTIN DOMES, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF UROLOGY

New Appointment in Surgery:
Co-Program Director, Urology Residency
Program, Department of Surgery,
College of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan

Award Recipient:
Putting People First Award, College of
Medicine, University of Saskatchewan



ROBERT DOWNEY, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
Resident Research Travel Award,
Department of Surgery, University of
Saskatchewan

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



NORDAN FLATTEN, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
Resident Research Travel Award & Resident Research
Incentive Program Award, Department of Surgery

Golden Scalpel Event Travel Award, Department of
Surgery

1st Place Podium Presentation, Department of
Surgery Research Day, University of Saskatchewan

2025 Kloppenburg Award, Department of Surgery



PETER GRAHAM, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

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



GARY GROOT, MD, PhD, FRCSC, FACS
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

Award Recipient:
Dr. John DeCoteau Clinical
Investigator Faculty Award,
College of Medicine, University of
Saskatchewan



MOHSEN JAVAM, MD
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
Resident Research Travel Award,
Department of Surgery, University
of Saskatchewan



NICHOLAS JETTE, MD
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:

Dr. Roger G. Keith Award in Surgery, College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan

Resident Research Travel Award & Resident Research Incentive Program Award, Department of Surgery, University of Saskatchewan



GAVIN KING, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:

Resident Research Travel Award & Resident Research Incentive Program Award, Department of Surgery, University of Saskatchewan



MARIA LIAMZON
UNDERGRADUATE SURGICAL
EDUCATION

Award Recipient:

College of Medicine Ann Finch Award, University of Saskatchewan



HELEN LIANG, MD
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:

Resident Research Travel Award, Department of Surgery, University of Saskatchewan



EVA LUI, MD
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:

Canada Graduate Research Scholarship-Master's (CGRS M), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)

Resident Research Incentive Program Award, & Resident Research Award, Department of Surgery, University of Saskatchewan



TREVOR LOBACK, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

Award Recipient:

2026 RDoS Exceptional Teacher Award, Resident Doctors of Saskatchewan



ALEXANDRA MORTIMER, MD, FRCSC
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY

Award Recipient:
2025-26 CAME Certificate of Merit,
Canadian Association for Medical
Education



MICHAEL MOSER, MD, FRCSC, FACS
DIVISION OF GENERAL SURGERY

Award Recipient:
Faculty Research Award,
Department of Surgery Research
Day, University of Saskatchewan



RUSS MURPHY, MD, FRCSC
**DIVISION OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY -
HEAD & NECK SURGERY**

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



COLLEEN NESBITT, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
Resident Research Travel Award & Resident Research
Incentive Program Award, Department of Surgery,
University of Saskatchewan

2nd Place Podium Presentation, Department of
Surgery Research Day, University of Saskatchewan

Honourable Mention, 2024 Combined UofS/UofM
Orthopedic Surgery Resident Research Day



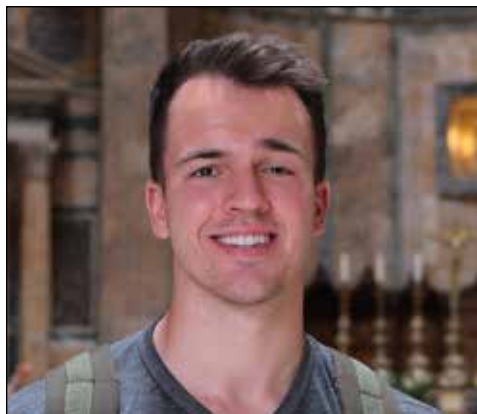
LISSA OGIEGLO, MD, FRCSC, FACS
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY

New Appointment in Surgery:
Director of Education - Academic
Leadership Team, Department
of Surgery, University of
Saskatchewan



EVAN PARCHOMCHUK, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:
Resident Research Incentive
Program Award, Department
of Surgery, University of
Saskatchewan



ETHAN PATTERSON, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:

Resident Research Travel Award, Resident Research Incentive Program Award, & Resident Research Award, Department of Surgery, University of Saskatchewan

2nd Place Research Award, 2024 Combined UofS/UofM Orthopedic Surgery Resident Research Day



VIDYA SHANKARAN, MD, FRCSC, FACS
DIVISION OF PLASTIC SURGERY

New Appointment in Surgery:
Program Director, Plastic Surgery Residency Program, Department of Surgery, College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan



NATALIE TILBURY, MD
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:

2nd Place Podium Presentation, Department of Surgery Research Day, University of Saskatchewan

Surgical Foundations Research Award, Department of Surgery Research Day, University of Saskatchewan



PATRICK TOYOTA, MD
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:

Resident Research Travel Award & Resident Research Incentive Program Award, Department of Surgery, University of Saskatchewan



ALEKSANDER VITALI, MD, FRCSC, FCSSA
DIVISION OF NEUROSURGERY

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



MARS ZHAO, MD
DIVISION OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY
RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Award Recipient:

Resident Research Travel Award, Resident Research Incentive Program Award, & Resident Research Award, Department of Surgery

Resident Best Publication Award, Department of Surgery, University of Saskatchewan

Samuel Claman Prize in Orthopedic Surgery, 2024 Combined UofS/UofM Orthopedic Surgery Resident Research Day

Level Up Your Teaching, Research, and Leadership This Summer - Explore CoM Opportunities

Mindfulness Skills for Busy Physicians with Dr. Jill Bailey, MD, CCFP, FCFP

- Repeating this excellent program in the Fall, 2026

Clinician Educator Diploma Program

A Medical Education Fellowship accredited by the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada

Admissions Closed: March 31, 2026 but consider doing this excellent program if you are taking on any leadership role in Medical Education (UGME or PGME related). Contact Rob Woods, PG Director for more information or go to our webpage at:

<https://medicine.usask.ca/facultydev/clinician-educator-base/prospective-candidates.php>

RISE 2026: Research Innovation and Scholarship in Medical Education

Igniting Purpose: Fostering Joyful Curiosity and Effective Teaching through Innovative Education on Friday, June 12, 2026 was a great success. Consider attending next year. Dates will be out soon!

Timely Topics in Medical Education (T-TIME)

Offered September through May. All are welcome to join!

Sessions will resume this fall. On-line. Great topics in Medical Education! View a list of past T-TIME topics and recordings at

<https://medicine.usask.ca/facultydev/clinician-educator-base/past-t-time-presentations.php>

FD Annual Report

Check out our 2024-25 Annual Report – to learn more on what Faculty Development does each year.

https://medicine.usask.ca/facultydev/documents/2024-25_fd_annual_report_v2.pdf

Asynchronous Canvas Courses

Browse our list of asynchronous Canvas courses. Courses on Clinical Teaching Tips for both FP and other Specialists are still in the works. Also check out or recommend our "Orientation to Teaching for New Faculty" course. We highly recommend this for anyone new to teaching.

<https://medicine.usask.ca/facultydev/medical-education/usask-fd-canvas-online-programming.php>

Masters of Education (HPE)

Learn about the Masters Program in Health Professions Education offered at USask.

<https://grad.usask.ca/programs/health-professions-education.php#Program>

Medical Education Conferences

View a list of upcoming Medical Education conferences on our website.

<https://medicine.usask.ca/facultydev/fd%20events/meded-conference-listings.php>

MicroResearch Training

Planning is in the works with the IWK/Dal. We are recruiting four teams for a 2-year research project to address a pressing community problem that will make a difference to the health of local populations.

Success of these initiatives can build research capacity across the province and is focused on interdisciplinary team projects to meet a community need. Contact Cathy MacLean, FD Director, if you have any interest or questions.

Coach Training

Marcel D'Eon and Sean Polreis are offering a Coach Training program. This program spans 5 months with opportunities to learn and practice coaching skills. It is approved for MOC and MainPro credits. It is back by popular demand. Contact Sean Polreis if you are interested.

New Programming

We are targeting new topics for FD on Team Skills and Multi-level, Layered learners to better equip preceptors for teaching medical students, residents and physician assistant students. Dr. Scott Tunison, FD Teaching and Learning Specialist, is working with MPAS to help them meet their FD needs. If you are teaching PA students in the future, contact Dr. Tunison.

Tailored FD – check out our videos!

We are working with several departments/programs and hospital groups delivering sessions on Implicit Bias, Giving and Receiving Feedback, etc. A list of FD videos is available at <https://medicine.usask.ca/facultydev/fd%20events/FD%20Planning.php#OnlineTeachingResources>

Stay Connected

- Visit our website: <https://medicine.usask.ca/facultydev/>
- Follow us on Instagram: [usask_com_fac_dev](#)
- Check out our YouTube channel

- Subscribe to our FD mailing list
- Bluesky [@usaskcomfacdev.bsky.social](#)
- Visit our Linktree: <https://linktr.ee/usaskcomfacdev>

Contact Us

Cathy MacLean, FD Director: cathy.macleam@usask.ca

Sean Polreis, FD Teaching & Learning Specialist: sean.polreis@usask.ca

Scott Tunison, FD Teaching & Learning Specialist: scott.tunison@usask.ca

Admin Coordinator: medicinefaculty.development@usask.ca

Information Regarding Referrals to Neurosurgeons and Referrals Related to Lower Back or Leg Pain

On March 16, eHealth launched the Referral Management Services (RMS) to coordinate direct and pooled referrals to neurosurgeons throughout Saskatchewan.

The spine pathway will also become the preferred course of action for patients with lower back and leg pain (exceptions in patients experiencing red flag signs and symptoms).

The spine pathway directs patients experiencing lower back and leg pain to a Spine Pathway Clinic for further assessment and treatment recommendations.

Once that assessment is complete, patients may be referred to a spine surgeon should the patient present as a surgical candidate.

For more patient information about the spine pathway, visit:

saskhealthauthority.ca/your-health/conditions-diseases-services/spine-pathway

For more health care provider information about the spine pathway, visit:

saskhealthauthority.ca/intranet/departments-programs/strategy-and-innovation/clinical-pathways/spine-pathway-provider-information

For more information about the pooled referrals and referral management services, visit:

ehealthsask.ca/services/Referral-and-Consult-Tools/Pages/Specialist-Referral-Service



eHR Viewer Access to Patient-Uploaded Health Care Directives (HCDs)

Providers and care team members with access to the eHR Viewer can now view Health Care Directives (HCDs) uploaded by patients through their MySaskHealthRecord (MSHR) account supporting a more connected and patient-centered approach to care. Building awareness with the public will be a focus throughout the summer months.

If you do not currently have access, please visit:

<https://www.ehealthsask.ca/services/ehr-viewer/Pages/Register-eHR-Viewer-Account.aspx>

This change enables timely access to information that reflects the patient's care preferences, helping ensure decisions are made with the most complete information available.

Why It Matters

Provider access to patient HCDs on eHR Viewer:

- supports patient autonomy, providing a predictable place to find documents that reflect patient wishes and values.
- allows for patients to share their HCD documents with providers and care team members across the province at all times of the day.
- provides access to tools that support goal-concordant care.

What to Know

HCD documents available in the eHR Viewer should help inform conversations as part of the shared decision-making process. Health care team members should be aware that a patient with capacity can change or revoke their directive at any time. It is good clinical practice to confirm that the documents shared by the patient on the eHR Viewer are current and accurate.

What's Next

The following references will provide guidance on how to view uploaded HCDs in the eHR Viewer and integrate usage into established Advance Care Planning workflows.

- HCD in the eHR Viewer Quick Reference Guide (<https://www.saskhealthauthority.ca/system/files/2026-05/Guide-eHealth-HowToAccessHCDInTheEHRViewer.pdf>)
- Advance Care Planning and Health Care Directives Policy (<https://documentfinder.saskhealthauthority.ca/en/permalink/policies10859>)
- Advance Care Planning and Health Care Directives Procedure (<https://documentfinder.saskhealthauthority.ca/en/permalink/policies10861>)

For providers and care team members who require assistance, technical support is available through the Service Desk at 1-888-316-7446 or servicedesk@eHealthSask.ca.

Beyond the Bedside: Physicians Shape Smarter Purchasing Decisions

If a product impacts the way you deliver care, your insight should help shape those purchasing decisions. That's why physicians across Saskatchewan are joining product working groups to guide provincial purchasing decisions, ensuring new products meet clinical standards before they reach a patient's bedside.

How it works

3sHealth Provincial Contracting invites physicians to join product working groups that shape requests for proposals (RFPs), review vendor submissions, and test products in real-world settings. Physicians bring evidence and insight that ensure new technologies deliver measurable benefits, meet safety standards, support patient needs, and fit clinical workflows.

Every purchasing decision starts with safety, quality, and performance. Only after those clinical standards are met is cost considered. The goal is to secure the best product for the best value, defined by patient outcomes and physician expertise, not simply the lowest price.

John Britton, Director of 3sHealth Provincial Contracting, says physicians are supporting product working groups in the areas of orthopedics, cardiology, neurology, spinal care, and others. Their input ensures purchased items are safe, effective, and clinically appropriate, providing added assurance around decision making. "This firsthand knowledge speeds up decisions for smoother delivery of care and strengthens our collective buying power as a provincial health system," says Britton. "Ultimately, we want to make sure physicians are using the products they are comfortable with to deliver the best care for Saskatchewan patients."



Share Your Ideas

Your expertise makes all the difference! If you have product improvement ideas or interest in participating in future product working groups, please share those with your department head or contact 3sHealth Provincial Contracting by emailing ProvContracting@3sHealth.ca.



ADVANCING AORTIC CARE:**FIRST FENESTRATED FROZEN ELEPHANT TRUNK PROCEDURE IN SASKATOON**

The Cardiac Surgery team at the Royal University Hospital is thrilled to announce that a new surgical option is now available to treat thoracic aortic disease with the use of a fenestrated frozen elephant trunk graft. Aneurysm or acute aortic syndrome such as dissection or intramural hematoma involving the arch are complex pathologies. Management is difficult and has a high risk of morbidity: it involves circulatory arrest and comes with the risk of stroke, death, and paraplegia. Patients with challenging anatomy have often been referred out of province for treatment.

The Cardiac Surgery team, in collaboration with the Vascular Surgery team, has recently successfully performed its first fenestrated frozen elephant trunk procedure. This technique allows for the replacement of the aortic arch and full reimplantation of the arch vessels. The device used simplifies surgical steps for a successful repair and maintains vascular anatomy for potential staged procedures in patients with extensive aortic disease.

The Cardiac Surgery and Vascular Surgery divisions are hoping to further grow the aortic program in Saskatoon through close collaboration. This recent milestone is a testimony of the excellence of our local surgical team.

This recent success would not have been possible without the support of the operating room staff, perfusion service, cardiac anesthesia, intensive care unit team, and members of the industry. We are also grateful for the help provided by colleagues from Cardiology and Internal Medicine who are involved in the medical management of patients with aortopathy. We are looking forward to continue to improve patients care through innovation and teamwork.





ADVANCING CARDIAC INNOVATION: FIRST TRANSCAROTID TAVI PERFORMED IN SASKATOON

The TAVI Team at Royal University Hospital, provides minimally invasive treatment options for higher risk patients with heart valve disease. Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation (TAVI) is a procedure that replaces a diseased aortic valve using a catheter-based approach, often avoiding open-heart surgery.

We are pleased to announce that the first transcatheter TAVI procedure was successfully performed in Saskatoon. Alternative access approaches expand transcatheter therapy for patients without suitable femoral access while avoiding conventional sternotomy. Previously, femoral and axillary cutdown approaches have been used at our institution.

The transcatheter approach is highly effective, has a low complication rate, and allows faster recovery than other surgical techniques. It offers advantages for patients with peripheral arterial disease, morbid obesity, or aortic arch anomalies, while also enabling rapid ambulation that particularly benefits frail individuals.

This achievement was made possible through collaboration among the cardiac catheterization laboratory, operating room, Department of Medicine Cardiology Team, vascular surgery, and cardiac surgery. The TAVI program continues to grow and is an excellent example of multidisciplinary teamwork, combining expertise to ensure each patient receives the most appropriate care.



34 RESEARCH UPDATE

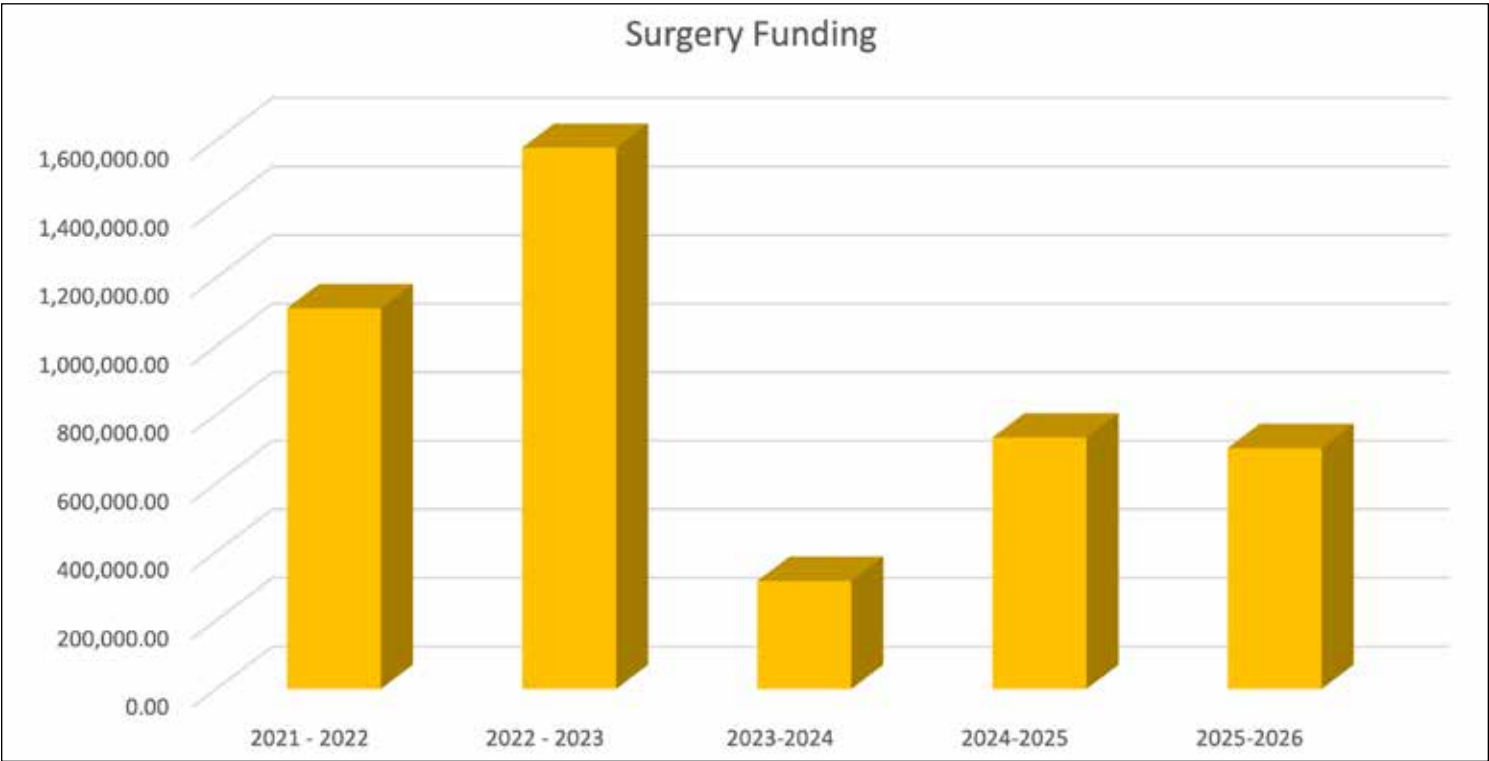
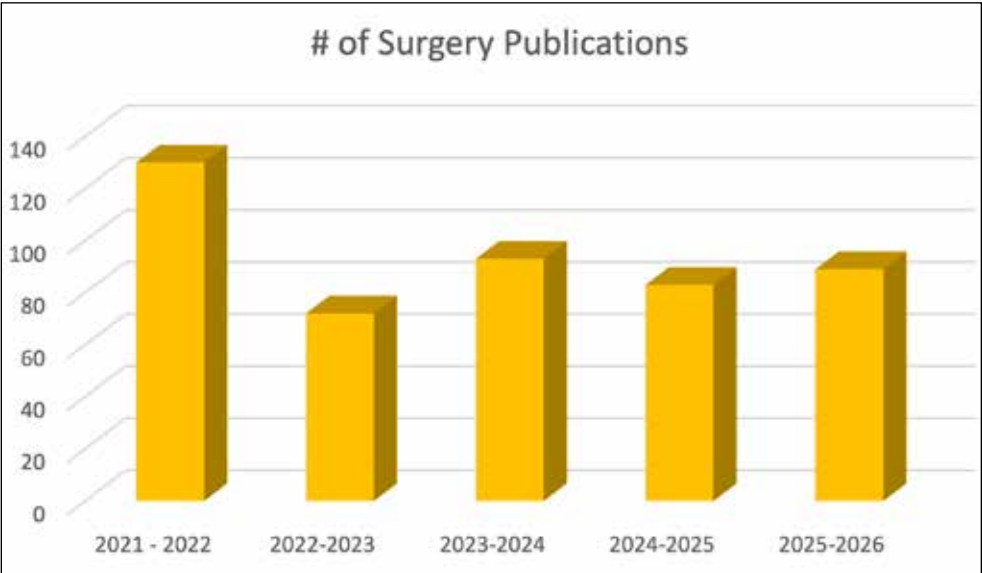
Advancing Surgical Knowledge Through Collaboration and Innovation

The 2025–2026 fiscal year (May 1, 2025 – April 30, 2026) was a productive year for research in the Department of Surgery. Faculty, residents, and research personnel continued to advance surgical science, with increasing participation and collaboration across the province, reflecting a strong culture of inquiry, innovation, and academic excellence.

The Department provided over \$54,000 in internal research funding to support our residents during the year. Our residents received 14 Resident Research Incentive Program awards totaling \$9,000, 10 Resident Travel awards totaling \$25,000, and 4 Resident Research awards totaling \$20,000. On behalf of the Research Committee and myself, I wish to congratulate our residents on their projects and extend special thanks to our faculty for mentoring our future clinician-scientists and fostering a supportive research environment.

We recognize our research-intensive faculty and special recognition to senior faculty mentors who encourage this work and help review grant proposals. We continue to see growth in publishing, with faculty and residents having published 89 papers, demonstrating the Department’s strong and growing research output.

The Research Committee also hosted 4 Research Rounds on topics including “How to Bake Up a Prize



*Research Bootcamp*

Winning Grant Proposal,” “How We Became Clinician-Scientists,” “Would You Use AI in Research?,” and “How I Became a Clinician-Scientist”. As a reminder, Research Rounds are open to all faculty, residents, and research staff and are offered in a hybrid format to ensure accessibility for surgeons across the province.

To support mentorship of new Academic Clinical Funding Plan (ACFP) surgeons with protected research time, we organized a Department of Surgery Clinician-Scientist Research Boot Camp on Oct. 23, 2025. Twenty ACFP surgery faculty participated in the full-day event. Sessions included: Tips on How to Use UnivRS, Common Challenges with Ethics Applications, Obtaining SHA Operational Approval, Accessing Free Statistical Support, Finding Research Collaborators, and Writing a Research Grant. The day concluded with a panel discussion on balancing clinical work and research, featuring Dr. Daryl Fourney, Dr. Gary Groot, Dr. Amanda Hall, and Dr. Mike Moser. It was an excellent day of learning, sharing, and networking, fostering collaboration and strengthening research capacity across the Department.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to research efforts this year. Your dedication continues to enhance surgical care in Saskatchewan and beyond. We are excited to build on this momentum and look ahead to further achievements in 2026–2027.



DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY



CELEBRATION OF SURGICAL TEACHING

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7TH, 2026

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Marcia Clarke

Orthopedic Surgeon, Clinical Professor
Alberta Health Services | University of Calgary

President, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

Teaching Awards Banquet: Join Us for an Inspiring Evening

We are pleased to invite all faculty to our upcoming Teaching Awards Banquet – an opportunity to recognize excellence in education, celebrate our colleagues, and come together as a community committed to teaching and learning.

This year, we are especially excited to welcome our keynote speaker, Dr. Marcia Clark. Dr. Clark is an orthopaedic surgeon and President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, recognized for her leadership in advancing medical education, innovation, and physician well-being. A passionate mentor, she champions inclusive, sustainable healthcare and inspires the next generation of teachers, clinicians, and leaders.

Her insights and experience promise to make this an engaging and meaningful event for all attendees.

We hope you will join us in celebrating teaching excellence and connecting with colleagues. We look forward to seeing you there!

CMPA Theatre Arts Program Coming to Saskatchewan

We are pleased to share that the Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA) will be bringing its Theatre Arts program to Saskatchewan in early 2026. This unique, two-day workshop is designed for multidisciplinary operating room teams and focuses on strengthening collaboration and improving patient safety in complex clinical environments. It offers a valuable opportunity for teams to reflect on current practices and explore innovative approaches to care delivery.

The program provides teams with the opportunity to explore real-world challenges from their own workplaces and apply a design thinking approach to develop practical, sustainable solutions. Through a mix of interactive sessions and small-group work, participants will build strategies to enhance team dynamics, foster psychological safety, and implement meaningful quality improvement initiatives.

Two upcoming sessions have been confirmed, with the first taking place in Saskatoon in January 2027 and the second in Prince Albert in February 2027.

As part of the program, participating teams will also receive six months of follow-up coaching to support long-term impact and successful implementation of their projects, helping teams translate ideas into action and sustain improvements over time.

Planning is currently underway, and additional details will be shared soon, including information on registration and participation.

We are excited to bring this valuable opportunity to Saskatchewan and hope many of our teams will take part.