



DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY | 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

CULTIVATING A **CULTURE OF WELL-BEING**

STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP TO HELP
OUR PEOPLE & PATIENTS THRIVE

“For the past six decades, it is the people and the genuine sense of camaraderie that make our department so special.”

WILLIAM B. INABNET III, MD, MHA, FACS

Brooke Skaggs, PA-C, and
James Liaw, MD, FACS

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ON THE COVER

Surgery faculty strive for an optimal balance between work and personal life to manage their well-being. Dr. Jordan Miller, thoracic surgeon, enjoys competitive long-distance running outside of his practice.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

In a recent well-being pulse survey, members of the UK Department of Surgery were asked why they chose to work here. The most frequently cited response was “the people.”

Since its founding in 1961, the Department of Surgery has built a culture of academic excellence that attracts the best and brightest surgical leaders from around the country. For the past six decades, it is the people and the genuine sense of camaraderie that make our department so special.

But in the post-COVID era, working in healthcare has become more stressful than ever. We realized we needed a more intentional and structured investment in workforce well-being.

This annual report highlights several of these strategic decisions, each designed to better support our team members and allow them the space to more effectively care for our patients.

The first deliberate shift was a return to in-person meetings. Face-to-face interactions offer a deeper sense of connection than the impersonal nature of virtual gatherings.

The department also created a vice chair of well-being position, held by Rick Endean, MD, FACS, and hired Glenda Mutinda, PhD, to serve as the first director of well-being. She now oversees the department’s many well-being initiatives, including an internal coaching program.

To improve communication, faculty, residents and advanced practice providers (APPs) formed new councils to identify and discuss challenges — such as the size of our staff — that impact the work environment. In one year, the department increased the number of APPs by one-third. This is a small step toward right-sizing our workforce to meet growing clinical demand.

Under the leadership of Maggie Griffen, MD, vice chair of leadership and professional development, the majority of our department’s leaders entered a group and individual coaching program to foster enhanced communication and leadership skills. Additionally, a performance management team was assembled to provide structured support to faculty experiencing various stages of burnout. Finally, an academic incentive program funded with real dollars was created to acknowledge and reward non-wRVU (Work Relative Value Unit) generating activities around education, research, departmental citizenship and national presence.

Working closely with Danielle Walsh, vice chair of quality and process improvement, the department is transitioning from an incentive structure based on the quantity of care to one based on quality. Plus, the department’s Rural and Global Health Program continues to grow with collaborative opportunities in Ecuador, Zambia and Malawi. Through this program, faculty, residents and students become well versed in equitable healthcare delivery.

These important initiatives underscore the significant strides we have taken toward workforce well-being. And it’s all thanks to the quality of our people and their dedication to providing the finest in advanced surgical care for our patients.



William B. Inabnet III, MD, MHA, FACS
The Johnston-Wright Endowed Professor and Chair of Surgery
Surgeon-in-Chief, UK HealthCare

UK Department of Surgery
Faculty and Residents 2025.

WELL-BEING CENTERED LEADERSHIP

WELL-BEING COMES FIRST

Surgeons spend most of their waking hours ensuring the well-being of others. To do that at the highest level, though, their own well-being must also be a priority.

However, according to the most recent Medscape Physician Burnout and Depression Report, almost half — 49 percent — of physicians report feeling burnt out. Of that number, 83 percent say their burnout is related to their work. As the healthcare field acknowledges — and works to mitigate — systemic burnout, well-being is more critical than ever.

“It’s very clear we have a workforce that is strained, under-resourced and burnt out,” said William B. Inabnet, III, MD, MHA, FACS, chair of the UK Department of Surgery and surgeon-in-chief at UK HealthCare. “That’s not unique to us, but there are things we can do to counteract that. If your workforce is not well, they can’t be leaders.”

Dr. Inabnet recognizes that staff well-being, department leadership and patient care are interwoven. When surgeons have a strong, healthy personal foundation — and when they feel supported systemically by strong leadership and smooth processes — they can provide compassionate treatment and the highest quality care.

To foster that synergy at UK HealthCare, Dr. Inabnet named four vice chairs within his department who are driving initiatives to cultivate and enhance:

- Quality and process improvement
- Well-being
- Leadership and professional development
- Professionalism and integrity

None of these elements exists in a silo. Well-being involves all stakeholders working together, whether that’s hiring external coaches to help surgeons build leadership skills, optimizing operating room processes to reduce mistakes or delays, developing faculty councils as a space to voice concerns and ideas, or hiring more support — like extra advanced practice providers and a department director of well-being.

These collaborations will help ensure healthier futures for UK surgeons — and by extension, organizational growth and improved outcomes for patients.

“Well-being can be an instrument of organizational change. When we think about growth, how can we do it through a mindset of well-being and how can we support our team members as we grow?”

WILLIAM B. INABNET III, MD, MHA, FACS

As the Department of Surgery expands into the future, well-being — of people, of processes, of leadership — will ensure that growth remains sustainable and impactful.

The UK Department of Surgery values well-being through a work-life balance for faculty and staff.



WELL-BEING CENTERED LEADERSHIP

BETTER PROCESSES,
BETTER OUTCOMES

Smoother processes and improved quality lead to better patient care and contribute to greater provider well-being. The UK Department of Surgery is working to optimize its processes — for the sake of both patients and providers.

Documented, refined processes give surgeons a better sense of control and ownership over patient care. They also provide surgeons with lists of solutions or steps to face specific challenges based on the most up-to-date medical evidence. This roadmap offers providers more structure, which can enhance their well-being and decrease stress.

“Improving the quality of care and believing you’re providing high-quality care improves your professional satisfaction,” said Danielle Walsh, MD, FACS, a pediatric surgeon and the department’s vice chair for quality and process improvement.

The Department of Surgery is the longest continuous participant in the American College of Surgeons (ACS) National Surgical Quality Improvement

Program (NSQIP). In pursuit of the ACS Quality Verification Program (QVP), the department aims to expand its commitment to high-quality care across all surgical specialties and departments.

This emphasis on quality and process improvement inspires surgeons to think of our system as a living, malleable concept that requires constant iteration.

The first step is to identify and study a problem, Dr. Walsh said. Take the concern of ensuring only patients who truly have appendicitis undergo surgery. Break that into individual steps and tweak pieces of the process based on the findings. After changes are made, gather more data and repeat.

“People get frustrated when they see problems and they don’t have either the skill set or authority to fix them,” Dr. Walsh said. “Part of quality improvement is teaching this skill set and leading others to address the problem so they can see the benefits of that implementation.”

Fostering Ownership of Patient Care
Collaboration is key to any improvement process and helps ensure good work is propagated across teams. For example, UK HealthCare’s pharmacy team developed up-to-date guidance for antibiotics around the time of surgery while others were standardizing steps for infection prevention. Using these modules, surgeons in the clinical informatics team built standardized

pre-operative procedures and protocols — ultimately improving surgical outcomes and reducing the risk of surgical site infections.

The team went on to add financial incentives to encourage adoption of the new standards. Initial utilization of these protocols was 60 percent but rose to 90 percent within six months of adoption. Over the same period of time, the ACS NSQIP morbidity odds ratios decreased from 1.49 to 1.21 in children and 1.70 to 1.49 in adults.

This shows how using data, working together and integrating clinical best practices into patient care can lead to real improvements in surgical outcomes.

Investing in Our People
The renewed focus on process improvement is also changing the way the department approaches surgery education. The Department of Surgery launched and funded a first-of-its-kind Quality Improvement & Clinical Informatics fellowship, which began in July 2025.

“We’re advancing our own,” Dr. Walsh said. “We’ve invested in our people, which impacts our patients.”

Beyond a solo fellowship opportunity, quality improvement is a concept Dr. Walsh believes is foundational to the whole organization.



WELL-BEING CENTERED LEADERSHIP

LEADING WELL-BEING FROM WITHIN

UK DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY WELCOMES GLENDA MUTINDA, PHD, DIRECTOR OF WELL-BEING

Ushering in a culture of renewal, mindfulness and vitality, the UK Department of Surgery welcomed Glenda Mutinda, PhD, as its first-ever director of well-being this year.

Dr. Mutinda brings deep expertise and leadership in well-being to UK, having previously served as director of interprofessional well-being for JPS Health Network in Fort Worth, Texas. There, she led the development of well-being curricula for residents, launched suicide prevention training and implemented peer support programs. In all she does, her work is driven by data and grounded in compassion.

At UK HealthCare, Dr. Mutinda will lead the department's efforts to tackle malaise and physician burnout. She will serve as a coach, advisor and strategist for faculty and providers. Her role is designed to translate ideas into action, ensure professional development opportunities, and foster a culture that values effectiveness and sustainability.

William B. Inabnet III, MD, MHA, FACS, Johnston-Wright endowed professor and chair of the Department of Surgery,

was inspired to create this leadership role after hearing a presentation at the annual meeting of the Society of Surgical Chairs (SSC) from Dr. Michael Marin, the Department of Surgery chair at Mount Sinai in New York City.

"I was impressed with the ideas," Dr. Inabnet said. "It was a philosophy that appeared to pair well with our own quality improvement efforts and well-being needs."

Dr. Inabnet recognized that this type of work demanded a full-time commitment from a national expert in the field. He brought the presentation and idea for the position to the Department of Surgery's vice chairs and division chiefs. The discussion particularly resonated with Eric Endean, MD, FACS, vice chair of well-being, and Jordan Miller, DO, associate vice chair. Endean and Miller led department-wide efforts to identify the causes of burnout, which has affected faculty and staff, most notably since the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Surgeons have packed schedules and other pressing priorities to ensure the best patient care. The challenge of prioritizing

well-being requires an 'everyday type of persistence,'" Dr. Miller said.

One of Dr. Mutinda's first goals is to build upon the foundation already underway, including well-being councils launched in 2024 for faculty, residents and advanced practice providers. These councils provide a forum to discuss challenges, brainstorm solutions and address burnout head-on.

While some stressors, like parking access, are university-wide problems not easily solved at the department level, Dr. Mutinda will help surface these issues and advocate for systemic change where possible. Her focus will be on identifying root causes and addressing them directly.

Glenda Mutinda, PhD, shares ideas with Dr. Rick Endean, vice chair for well-being, and Dr. Barry Inabnet, chair of the Department of Surgery.

"As a department, we're going to actually try to meet this head-on, which I think is admirable. I think it's pretty unique among surgery departments."

ERIC ENDEAN, MD, FACS





WELL-BEING CENTERED LEADERSHIP

CULTIVATING SKILLS TO SOW
SUCCESS & SATISFACTION

In her first leadership position early in her career, Margaret Griffen, MD, FACS, quickly learned that leading a team requires different skills than caring for patients. Both are important skill sets — and both require specialized training.

Now, as vice chair of leadership and professional development in the UK Department of Surgery, Dr. Griffen aims to help her colleagues succeed as leaders as well as advance their careers.

“Learning to be a leader, to build a team, to provide feedback — all of that is a learned thing,” said Dr. Griffen, a trauma and acute care surgeon within the department. “None of us are built with it, but everyone can learn it. Just like we learn how to take the appendix out, we also need to dedicate time to develop leadership skills to be successful.”

At home, Dr. Margaret Griffen unwinds from her workday with a few hours of writing in her personal journal.

When providers have the tools and opportunities to develop important non-medical skills, they become better team members and leaders. They can worry less about internal friction and focus more on patient care. And when they understand their role and opportunities to progress in their careers, they can work smarter, not harder.

Creating Structure to Support Wellness
In late 2024, the Department of Surgery invested in executive coaching to give division heads another tool to boost their leadership skills. Participants received access to six sessions of executive group coaching, with an option for additional individualized coaching. Most took advantage of the individualized support. Leaders were surveyed in advance to assess what they wanted to work on.

Additionally, Dr. Griffen is working to create structure around specific career tracks within the department (clinical, education and research, for example). She also seeks to more clearly define the steps for promotion, as well as revamp the onboarding process.

“We are investing in leadership skill set development as an avenue for wellness,” Dr. Griffen said. “How do you create trust in your team? How do you create goals in your team? How do you address accountability? How do you provide feedback? How do you do all these things, because every one of them is interwoven into the success of the team?”

Reducing Confusion and Fueling Fulfillment
Dr. Griffen wants to provide colleagues with clear role expectations, as well as a defined pathway for progressing along their desired track. This approach reduces confusion and frustration, while also helping physicians feel more fulfilled in their career.

All of that combined makes for happier, healthier surgical teams — and a more successful organization.

“My pie-in-the-sky dream is that I help everybody understand and embrace these concepts. Through that, we will be a much more efficient and productive team.”

MARGARET GRIFFEN, MD, FACS

WELL-BEING CENTERED LEADERSHIP

FOSTERING AN ENVIRONMENT OF TRUST & RESPECT

The UK Department of Surgery is striving to build a workplace where the best surgeons in the world want to practice. With that vision in mind, Crystal Totten, MD, FACS, and Prakash Pandalai, MD, FACS, vice chairs of professionalism and integrity, are bringing a variety of voices to the table.

Workplace integrity is about creating an environment where everyone feels respected and supported. It is a recognition of everyone’s unique reality.

“When you feel like you’re not seen, you isolate and disengage. Then ultimately — when you don’t feel supported, you don’t feel trusted and you don’t have a community environment — your patient care capabilities can suffer.”

CRYSTAL TOTTEN, MD, FACS

The more providers can feel happy, healthy and supported in their work environment, the more fully they can show up for their patients.

“This year, one thing we want to be intentional about is supporting our people so they can support our team,” Dr. Pandalai, a surgical oncologist, said.

The two vice chairs have been working on improving the culture all along, but here are some of the recent ways that they have been supporting their colleagues and cultivating an environment that nurtures everyone.

They are increasing community outreach by bringing together employees of varying backgrounds to represent the department at public events. “I’ve brought our tables and education events to high school kids, elementary kids, middle school events,” Dr. Totten said. “The individuals who come are able to see that surgeons can look just like them, be like them, and they have a vision of what to look forward to.”

They also serve as a sounding board for colleagues to share concerns and seek support, which makes it possible to head off issues early. “We’re the place where people come and confide, and we then transmit that up to leadership,” Dr. Totten said.

As the work of reducing silos and building synergy continues, Dr. Totten and Dr. Pandalai believe they can be the glue in departmental efforts to reduce burnout and cultivate well-being. They collaborate with other vice chairs to tackle frustrations, share resources and elevate issues to appropriate stakeholders.

“What we’ve realized is we’re actually a good conduit to all the other vice chairs,” Dr. Pandalai said. As overlapping themes are identified, they can pass them along and facilitate change. “We’re the secret sauce that pulls some of this together.”

Dr. Crystal Totten uses her personal time to enjoy the company of her dogs, Ziva and Zeus.



FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS

SUPPORTING A
GREATER
GOOD

Fostering a culture of organizational well-being and individual wellness touches on every foundational pillar by which the UK Department of Surgery measures and defines its progress.

Along with work-life balance, Surgery faculty, advanced care providers, residents and support staff derive a sense of well-being from their professional accomplishments and recognition of their good work: positive outcomes in patient care, improved surgical skills from residents under our mentorship, influencing productive change through organizational leadership, and being participants in the development of new processes and procedures in our ORs and clinics.

While the practice of surgery remains in a state of change, our foundational pillars are constant to ensure that the Department of Surgery stays with our peers at the forefront of academic medicine.



Optimal Patient Care
Deliver unparalleled, patient-centered clinical care.



Education
Inspire the next generation of surgeons toward advanced skill and utmost knowledge.



Research
Yield new knowledge and advance scientific discovery.



Innovation
Pursue collaborative partnerships to advance scientific discovery.



Leadership & Professional Development
Advocate, at local and national levels, to develop impactful surgeon leaders.



Professionalism and Integrity
Foster an environment that removes barriers and promotes access for all.



Global and Rural Surgery
Provide humanitarian surgical services to the medically underserved and rural communities the world over.



Philanthropic support continues to be vital to the department’s continued success and serves as a key accelerator for pillar-based initiatives. To learn more about giving opportunities, contact Lindsey Clem, director of philanthropy, at jlcclem4@uky.edu or make a gift using the QR code.

DIVISIONS

A CULTURE OF SUPPORT AND EXCELLENCE

Improving the well-being of both patients and providers at UK HealthCare starts with a supportive culture.

The UK Department of Surgery division chiefs and vice chairs embrace a management philosophy that values patient outcomes and better processes, provider development and welfare, and excellence in surgical education and recruitment.

Patient care teams analyze local and national surgery data from an experienced surgical outcomes research staff to identify opportunities for process improvement. Attention to these facets of healthcare operations leads to optimal patient care and more fulfilled, healthier surgical teams.

Leadership centered on well-being involves faculty and staff — including a new director of well-being — supporting each other in the development of leadership skills, workplace integrity and improved outcomes.

The department is also committed to keeping pace with increasing demand for advanced surgical services by recruiting top faculty and advanced practice providers to the University of Kentucky.

The divisions of the Department of Surgery are:

- Acute Care Surgery, Trauma and Surgical Critical Care
- Cardiac Surgery
- Thoracic Surgery
- Colon and Rectal Surgery
- General, Endocrine, and Metabolic Surgery (GEMS)
- Healthcare Outcomes and Optimal Patient Services (HOOPS)
- Pediatric Surgery
- Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
- Research
- Surgical Oncology
- Transplantation
- Vascular and Endovascular Surgery

ACUTE CARE
SURGERY, TRAUMA
AND SURGICAL
CRITICAL CARE

2,329
2023 Surgical Cases

2,497
2024 Surgical Cases

3,479
2023 Clinic Visits

3,593
2024 Clinic Visits

\$60,438
2024 Industry-sponsored,
Federal and NIH grants



VISIT TO ZAMBIA
ADVANCES GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIP

After years of virtual meetings, UK Department of Surgery faculty were able to finally connect face-to-face with colleagues from the University Teaching Hospital (UTH) in Lusaka, Zambia, in January 2024. The trip occurred as part of UK’s involvement in the American College of Surgeons Health Outreach Program for Equity in Global Surgery (ACS H.O.P.E.).

Alexis Nickols, MD, and Brittany Wheelock, MD, both with the UK Division of Trauma and Critical Care Surgery, joined William B. Inabnet III, MD, MHA, FACS, chair of the Department of Surgery, for a two-week visit with faculty and residents at Zambia’s largest teaching hospital.

The Department of Surgery belongs to the Lusaka Surgical Training Collaborative, established in 2019 by ACS H.O.P.E. The collaborative is a partnership among UTH — composed of five hospitals in the capital city — and about a dozen Departments of Surgery in the United States belonging to the ACS.

Through the collaborative, surgeons on both continents can share knowledge in patient care and surgical education. In recent years, the lasting effects of the COVID pandemic had hampered on-site visits. Official partner visits started again around 2022, but most activity had remained virtual until recently.

Virtual meetings made it possible to conduct a needs assessment to identify specific goals that included:

- Implementing a formal quality improvement program aimed at surgical outcomes
- Helping mentor UTH surgery residents in advanced techniques in minimally invasive surgery

Dr. Nickols heads the collaborative’s Quality Improvement initiative. The objective for the first on-site visit, she explained, was to establish relationships with UTH colleagues who would help develop the program.

“We had a lot of good conversations about the type of records-keeping and reporting needed for quality improvement.”

ALEXIS NICKOLS, MD

Together with UTH providers, Drs. Wheelock and Nickols conducted a critical care needs assessment, finding that the issues and opportunities for improvement at both UK and UTH — despite the miles between them — are similar.

The UK team also spent time with general surgery residents working on exercises in laparoscopic surgery fundamentals. Meeting in person was especially helpful for advancing program goals.

Going forward, UK Surgery plans to send representatives to UTH for one month each year for the next several years. UK is also seeking approval through the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) to allow residents at the University of Kentucky to participate in the program through international rotations.



A CELEBRATION OF SURVIVORSHIP

Patients, their families and 2024 UK Level 1 Trauma Center team members came together in May for the second annual Trauma Survivor’s Celebration, sponsored by the Trauma Survivor’s Network.

Five patients, introduced by their UK provider, shared their experiences and the lifesaving care they received.

A Dr. Zach Warriner introduced Jacob Hardy
Hardy suffered a life-threatening head injury when he fell 35 feet while working on a roof. A police officer’s rapid response enabled Dr. Warriner and the trauma team to treat Hardy in time. Following treatment, Hardy has made significant strides in his recovery.

Shelby Simpson, RN, introduced Sydney Adkisson
Adkisson was involved in a motorcycle accident that resulted in lacerations, broken bones and severe leg damage. Thanks to a prosthetic replacement, she has recovered fully and gone on to a rewarding career at UK HealthCare.

B Dr. Margaret Griffen introduced Marley Curry
Curry was seriously injured in an auto accident in West Virginia. After receiving treatment from her local hospital, she was airlifted to UK. Curry’s grandfather joined her on stage to express thanks for her treatment.

C Dr. Alexis Nickols introduced Seiver Utsey
Utsey suffered severe injuries when his motorcycle collided with a telephone pole. He required a breathing tube to make it through the first few days of his recovery. Dr. Nickols described Utsey as a fighter, and Utsey expressed gratitude for his treatment and recovery.

D Crystal Rogers, APRN, NP-C, CCRN, introduced Anthony Daulton
Daulton, a Fayette County Public Schools police officer, was in a severe car collision with a large deer. Though he has no memory of the accident, he does recall the extensive work done to repair his injuries. He was back to work in just seven months.

Names used with family and individual consent.

HIGHLIGHTS



New Faculty

Meet Dr. Brittany Wheelock

Brittany Wheelock, MD, became an official member of the Division of Acute Care Surgery, Trauma, and Surgical Critical Care in summer 2024. She also opted to complete a second year as an instructor in the surgical critical care fellowship. Last January, Dr. Wheelock completed a two-week visit to the University Teaching Hospital in Zambia as part of the American College of Surgeons H.O.P.E. program.

Prior to her UK HealthCare fellowship, Dr. Wheelock completed a general surgery residency at the University of Arizona College of Medicine — Phoenix. In addition to her clinical experience, Dr. Wheelock has pursued a range of research interests in medicine and psychology.

Meet Dr. Danielle Detelich

Danielle Detelich, MD, joined the Division of Acute Care Surgery, Trauma and Critical Care Surgery in September 2023. Prior to UK, she completed fellowships in surgical critical care and acute care surgery at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C.

A Baltimore native, Dr. Detelich earned her medical degree from Rosalind Franklin University’s Chicago Medical School and subsequently matched into the general surgery residency program at Tufts Medical Center in Boston.

During her time at both Tufts and Wake Forest, Dr. Detelich earned several recognitions for her research and participated in multiple quality and process improvement initiatives.

Meet Dr. Helen Wei

The UK Department of Surgery welcomed Helen Wei, MD, PhD, to its ranks in October 2024. Interested in global surgery, Dr. Wei recently completed a two-year fellowship in surgical critical care and acute care surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. Dr. Wei spent time in Rwanda and South Africa treating trauma patients as part of her fellowship.

Dr. Wei completed a general surgery residency at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School and medical school at the University of Rochester School of Medicine. Her clinical research interests include neuroscience, cerebral blood flow, enteric nervous system and small bowel ischemia.

UK’S EXPERTISE, NEAR AND FAR

Wanda Lam, MD, and Beth Stuebing, MD, became official members of the Division of Acute Care Surgery, Trauma, and Surgical Critical Care in summer 2024 — a significant step forward in the department’s commitment to develop and expand global surgery initiatives.

Both Dr. Lam and Dr. Stuebing are faculty members at Nkhoma Mission Hospital in Malawi, a medical center that began a general surgery residency program through an association with the Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons. Each joined the Nkhoma Mission Hospital faculty in 2021.

The two appointments are possible thanks to a Program Letter of Agreement (PLA) between UK and Nkhoma Mission Hospital. Faculty exchanges such as these provide respite from the demands of working in a low-resource surgical environment and will allow both doctors to maintain U.S. credentials and connect with mainstream academia.

The PLA will also give UK surgery residents the option of a global surgery rotation while earning ACGME credits toward completion of their residency. And both Dr. Stuebing and Dr. Lam have shared with UK trauma providers the challenges of treating patients in low-resource environments.

Dr. Lam completed a general surgery residency at University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center/Case Western University in 2020. She matched into the Global Surgery Fellowship program at Loma Linda University Medical Center, where she was trained in performing essential surgeries in low-resource settings.

Dr. Stuebing, who also earned her medical degree at Case Western Reserve University, finished general surgery residency at Alpert Medical School of Brown University in Providence, R.I., and a trauma and surgical critical care fellowship at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami.



FACULTY



Andrew C. Bernard, MD, FACS
Division Chief



Danielle Detelich, MD



Margaret Griffen, MD, FACS
Vice Chair for Leadership and Professional Development



Wanda Lam, MD



Alexis Nickols, MD



Jessica Kathleen Reynolds, MD, FACS
Program Director, Critical Care Surgery Fellowship



Rachel Rodriguez, MD, MS



Elizabeth Stuebing, MD



Brian K. Tucker, DO



Zachary D. Warriner, MD, FACS
Associate Program Director, General Surgery Residency



Helen Wei, MD, PhD



Brittany Wheelock, MD

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDERS (Dec. 2024)

Stephanie Thea Priest, APRN
Dakota McQuaid Halbert, PA-C
Brayden Squire Imel, PA-C
Crystal Starr Rogers, APRN
Grace Marie Moses, APRN
Taylor Dewayne Tidwell, APRN
Mariya Nikolaevna Brock, APRN
Rebecca Anne Doll, APRN

Diandra Nicole Bowling, APRN
Casey Lane Pasley, PA-C
Yvonne P. Rice, APRN
Emma K. Kroger, APRN
Ardis Meredith Roederer, APRN
Candice Evelyn Travers, APRN
Logan Lee Goff, PA-C
Carly Denise Welch, PA-C

Sara Beth Carter, APRN
Bridget Jewel Pennell, APRN
Jillian Emily Scott, PA-C
Morgan Adrianna Payne, APRN
Lara Marie Friel, APRN
Jessica Arianne Rossi, APRN

CARDIOTHORACIC SURGERY

1,598
2023 Adult Surgical Cases

1,660
2024 Adult Surgical Cases

6,454
2023 Adult Clinic Visits

6,730
2024 Adult Clinic Visits

73
2023 Pediatric Surgical Cases

72
2024 Pediatric Surgical Cases

107
2023 Pediatric Clinic Visits

122
2024 Pediatric Clinic Visits

\$341,246
2024 Industry-sponsored,
Federal and NIH grants

A TEAM EFFORT
AGAINST
ENDOCARDITIS

The opioid epidemic has led to younger, sicker endocarditis patients — a challenge for hospitals accustomed to lower incidence of the potentially deadly disease. But UK HealthCare’s multidisciplinary endocarditis team, launched in 2021, has risen to the challenge.

The team brings together a wide variety of UK HealthCare experts for a common goal: lowering mortality rates for endocarditis patients. “It’s a very complicated disease,” said Sami El-Dalati, MD, infectious disease physician and director of the team. “It requires input from a lot of different specialties.”

The multidisciplinary team meets weekly to discuss the hospital’s endocarditis patients and their care. Experts from specialties like infectious disease, cardiology, cardiac surgery, addiction medicine, palliative care, and physical medicine and rehabilitation join the meeting to offer input on patient care from the moment patients enter the hospital to follow-up care after discharge.

Only a handful of hospitals nationwide have similar teams. In a region that has deeply felt the damaging effects of the opioid crisis, UK’s endocarditis team has decreased its in-hospital mortality rate for endocarditis from 17.6% to 9.9% in 2017-2018.

“What we have at UK is pretty unique and novel,” Dr. El-Dalati said. “Even the other places that have these programs don’t do as much of the outpatient care, like the multidisciplinary clinics and the nursing support.”

The first trip to the hospital for endocarditis patients can be very jarring, so the endocarditis team also collaborates with social workers, like Alyssa Tremblay, who help patients across the continuum of care. Tremblay is a member of UK’s Addiction Consult and Education Services (ACES), another hospital-wide multidisciplinary team that offers education to both providers and patients on substance use disorder.

Additionally, the endocarditis team works closely with UK’s Wrap Around for Addiction and Infectious Diseases program, which offers services and case management for patients after discharge. They call patients to check in and have funds to pay for transportation to follow-up appointments.



Dr. Sami El-Dalati (left), Dr. Michael Sekela (center) and Dr. Talal Alnabelsi look at a scan. Only a handful of hospitals nationwide have an endocarditis team like the one at UK HealthCare.

To further help patients keep follow-up appointments, Dr. El-Dalati offers combined clinics with cardiac surgeons so patients can see multiple providers at once. The team will also expand their outpatient work throughout the state. Dr. El-Dalati already makes monthly visits to see patients at the UK North Fork Valley Community Health Center in Hazard.

“It’s such a privilege that patients put their trust in us to guide them through these incredibly challenging times in their lives, and what I am so proud of about our team is that I think everyone takes that very seriously,” Dr. El-Dalati said.

“Before Dr. El-Dalati came, we had no structure and I would always see these patients again in my clinic. But a lot of times when they had an operation, or an intervention, or even discharge from the hospital, there was no long-term plan about how to look after them.”

MICHAEL SEKELA, MD, FACS



Innovation in Cardiac Care
on a Global Scale

Tessa London-Bounds, MD, faculty member with the UK Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, is the principal investigator at UK HealthCare for a major international clinical trial to determine the efficacy of left atrial appendage exclusion (LAAE) to reduce the risk of stroke in cardiac surgery patients.

Over 250 hospitals and medical centers worldwide are participating in the LeAPPS (Left Atrial Appendage Exclusion for Prophylactic Stroke Reduction) study. It is sponsored by AtriCure, manufacturers of AtriClip, which is a popular medical device cardiac surgeons use to perform an LAAE.

Cardiac surgery carries an inherent risk of stroke for patients with a history of heart disease and high blood pressure, but it has long been established that performing an LAAE as part of a procedure can significantly reduce the risk for those patients by as much as 80%.

The purpose of this new clinical trial is to investigate whether all heart surgery patients, regardless of their level of stroke risk or other potential complications, would benefit as much from an LAAE.

UK HealthCare began contributing to the study about six months into the clinical trial. In addition to Dr. London-Bounds, Erinn Ogburn, MD, and Hassan Reda, MD, FACS, from cardiothoracic surgery are also participating.

“This is a great example of UK HealthCare’s increasing presence in cardiac and vascular research on national and international scales,” Dr. London-Bounds said. “We have even secured more active participants than originally projected.”



From Kentucky to the White House

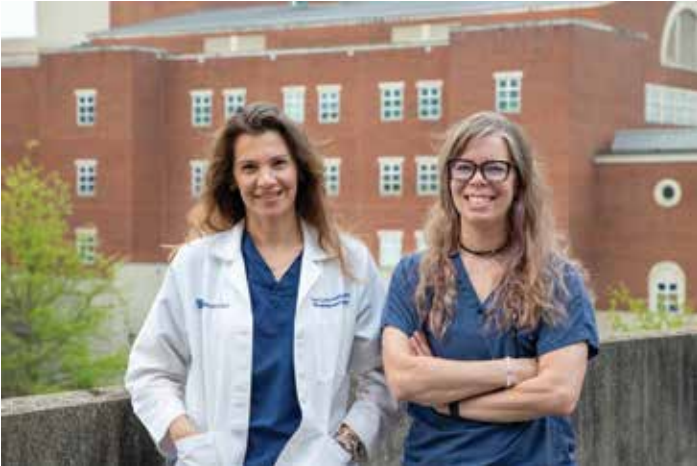
Timothy Mullett, MD, FACS, UK Markey Cancer Center surgeon and medical director of the UK Markey Cancer Center Affiliate and Research Networks, participated in a White House forum in 2023 focused on expanding access to smoking cessation programs.

Dr. Mullett, who also serves as chair of the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Commission on Cancer (CoC), was invited to speak at the Washington, D.C., forum for medical and advocacy leaders. The event was part of former President Joe Biden’s Cancer Moonshot initiative, which includes efforts to reduce the burden of preventable cancers, including tobacco-related cancers.

“Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer deaths in the country, killing more people than prostate, breast and colon cancers combined,” Dr. Mullett said. “If we can help provide effective and practical smoking cessation programs to more Americans, we can greatly reduce deaths from lung cancer.”

Smoking cessation programs offer practical and individualized ways to quit smoking, including counseling and access to medications such as nicotine replacement therapies. At the forum, Dr. Mullett was among a group of leaders who provided real-world guidance on ways to help reduce the incidence of lung cancer by identifying barriers and increasing access to these programs.

“All of us physicians need to be having more frank conversations with our patients about smoking cessation,” Dr. Mullett said. “It can not only reduce the risk of getting cancer, but it can also reduce the risk of dying from other smoking-related illnesses that may occur during or after cancer treatment.”



Improving Patient Care Through Advocacy

Cardiovascular surgeon Tessa London-Bounds, MD, was recently recognized by the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) alongside Amanda Crabtree, RN, for their efforts advocating for Medicaid patient coverage for in-home INR testing.

INR testing, essential for patients on blood thinners, monitors blood coagulation to prevent dangerous conditions like blood clots or excessive bleeding. An at-home INR test is a quick finger stick like a glucose monitor. An instant reading informs a medication change, whereas results from a hospital visit can take a day.

Dr. London-Bounds and Crabtree worked with Kentucky legislators to craft Kentucky House Bill 31. This bill, introduced by Rep. Deanna Frazier Gordon, passed with unanimous support and was signed into law by Governor Andy Beshear.

The next step is working to expand access to in-home INR testing beyond Kentucky. Dr. London-Bounds and Crabtree already met with federal lawmakers to push for nationwide access.

Their success led to Dr. London-Bounds receiving the STS Advocate of the Year award, which will be formally presented at the 2025 STS Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C. She views this advocacy as a rewarding way to improve patient care.

“It highlights how important it is for providers to be advocates for their patients because even though lawmakers mean well, they may be disconnected from the issues our patients are dealing with,” Dr. London-Bounds said.



Dr. Matthias Loebe, surgical director for Heart and Lung Transplantation, and Dr. Masashi Kawabori, surgical director of Mechanical Circulatory Support, are part of the team of specialists recruited to the department to fight lung and heart disease in Kentucky.

HIGHLIGHTS



New Faculty

Meet Dr. Masashi Kawabori
Masashi Kawabori, MD, FACS, recently joined UK HealthCare as surgical director of Mechanical Circulatory Support, bringing extensive experience in heart transplant and cardiogenic shock care.

A board-certified cardiac surgeon, he previously served as an associate professor at Tufts University, where he also directed the Division of Cardiac Surgery’s research. Dr. Kawabori trained in Japan, completing a cardiac surgery residency at Yamato Seiwa Hospital and Tokyo Bay Medical Center. He then completed advanced fellowships at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston and the Texas Heart Institute at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Widely recognized for his research, Dr. Kawabori received the Annals of Thoracic Surgery’s Reviewer of the Year award in 2021.

Meet Dr. Matthias Loebe
Matthias Loebe, MD, PhD, recently joined the UK Department of Surgery as a new cardiothoracic transplant specialist and surgical director of Heart and Lung Transplantation. With over three decades of experience, Dr. Loebe has participated in the design and clinical testing of many mechanical circulatory support devices and has hundreds of academic publications.

Dr. Loebe trained in both Germany and the United States. Prior to coming to Kentucky, he contributed significantly to the growth of the lung transplant program at Houston Methodist before leading thoracic transplant programs at the University of Miami.

He joins UK HealthCare with a commitment to providing specialized care and expanding transplant services to areas of Kentucky with limited access to care.

Meet Dr. Naureen Narula
Naureen Narula, MD, recently joined the faculty in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery. Dr. Narula is double board-certified in internal medicine and pulmonary medicine and specializes in lung transplant, heart-lung transplant, ECMO and critical care medicine.

Originally from India, Dr. Narula completed an internal medicine and pulmonary critical care fellowship at Northwell Health in New York. She then further specialized in lung and heart-lung transplant through advanced fellowship training at Stanford University.

Dr. Narula’s training has equipped her with the skills and expertise necessary to provide exceptional treatment for patients requiring complex transplant procedures. She has a strong passion for research, academia and patient care.

STS makes generous donation in honor of Dr. Shari Meyerson

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) recently gave a \$5,000 gift to the UK Department of Surgery in recognition of Dr. Shari Meyerson’s extraordinary volunteer leadership as the National Chair of the Workforce on E-Learning and Education Innovation.

Widely known for her strides in surgical education and patient care, Dr. Meyerson is chief of the Section of Thoracic Surgery and director of the Thoracic Surgery Training Program at the UK College of Medicine.

Founded in 1964, the STS is a not-for-profit and is the largest cardiothoracic surgery organization in the world. It has more than 7,800 members in 102 countries.



FACULTY



Michael Sekela, MD, FACS
Division Chief



Jin W. Chung, MD



Masashi Kawabori, MD, FACS
Surgical Director of Mechanical Circulatory Support



Matthias Loebe, MD, PhD
Surgical Director of Heart and Lung Transplantation



Tessa London-Bounds, MD



Shari Meyerson, MD, M.Ed., FACS
Division Chief, Thoracic Surgery; Director of I-6 CT Residency and CT Fellowship



Jordan Miller, DO
Associate Vice Chair of Well-Being



Clinton Morgan, MD, PhD



Timothy Wm. Mullett, MD, MBA, FACS
Medical Director, Markey Cancer Center Network Development



Naureen Narula, MBBS, MD



Erinn A. Ogburn, MD



Hassan Reda, MD, FACS



Sibuj Saha, MD, MBA, FACS



Mansi Shah, MD, FACS
3rd Year Clerkship Director



Joseph B. Zwischenberger, MD, FACS

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDERS (Dec. 2024)

- Mary A. Richardson, PA-C
- Jered Dale Waggoner, PA-C
- William Daniel Manning, PA-C
- Carla A. Zacher, APRN
- Harold Michael Jenks, APRN
- Suzanne Burke, APRN
- Lisa Carroll Yearsley, APRN
- Katie Virginia Walker, APRN
- Brionna Virginia Leahy, APRN
- Michael Brandon Soto, APRN
- Anna Alexandra Gerard, APRN
- Kelli A. Curry, APRN
- Ethan Tyler Beasley, APRN
- Mike Dugan, PA-C
- William Joseph Meadors, PA-C
- Danielle Michelle Mayton, PA-C
- Alexandria Ross, PA-C

COLON & RECTAL SURGERY

1,221
2023 Surgical Cases

1,244
2024 Surgical Cases

4,950
2023 Clinic Visits

5,067
2024 Clinic Visits*

\$46,730
2024 Industry-sponsored,
Federal and NIH grants

WHAT’S DRIVING
EARLY ONSET
COLORECTAL
CANCER?

Colon and rectal surgeon Erin Wolf Horrell, MD, PhD, who joined UK HealthCare in September 2024, is focused on solving a problem Kentuckians face at growing rates: early onset colorectal cancer.

“Although the overall incidence of colorectal cancer has decreased, the incidence of early onset colorectal cancer has increased since the 1990s,” Dr. Wolf Horrell said. “We don’t have a solid understanding of the mechanism explaining this phenomenon; however, we believe it is related to a generational shift in environmental exposures that began in the 1940s, including changes in diet, physical activity and antibiotic exposure.”

Dr. Wolf Horrell’s research is centered on coordinating epidemiologic studies with basic science mechanistic studies to further explain this phenomenon. She is also looking at the potential role of inflammation and aberrant metabolism in the development of early onset colorectal cancer.

Dr. Wolf Horrell has always been interested in cancer biology, but she became particularly interested in early onset colorectal cancer as a surgical resident.

“As I was treating patients on my rotations, I realized we were treating a large number of patients under the age of 50 with very advanced stage colon or rectal cancer,” Dr. Wolf Horrell said. “I began to appreciate the uniqueness of this patient population both from a patient care perspective and a research perspective. Patients diagnosed with cancer in their 20s, 30s and 40s have unique psychosocial needs compared to those diagnosed in their 60s, 70s or 80s.”

Treatment for colorectal cancer can include a combination of chemotherapy, radiation and surgery, which is time consuming and can limit daily activities. Younger patients diagnosed with early onset colorectal cancer are often still employed, and cancer treatment can dramatically affect their ability to perform their jobs. These patients might also have young children, or they might desire future children following treatment, which might require fertility assistance.

“The goals of my research are to further understand the mechanism of early onset colorectal cancer and to better understand the challenges these patients face so we can provide more comprehensive care,” Dr. Wolf Horrell said.

Dr. Wolf Horrell is both excited for the clinical implications for her research and thankful for the supportive community of researchers here at UK HealthCare. “I am fortunate to have several fantastic collaborators and mentors at UK, including Dr. Tianyan Gao, Dr. Eric Rellinger and Dr. Mautin Barry-Hundeyin,” Dr. Wolf Horrell said. “They have helped me navigate the challenges of being a surgeon-scientist as well as assisted with the direction of the projects.”

Dr. Erin Wolf Horrell, a colon and rectal surgeon, is using the extensive resources of the UK Markey Cancer Center to advance her research into early onset colorectal cancer.

HIGHLIGHTS



Dr. Jitesh Patel Selected for Membership in Society of University Surgeons

Jitesh Patel, MD, FASCRS, FACS, division chief of UK Colon and Rectal Surgery, was recently selected for membership in the Society of University Surgeons (SUS), one of the premier organizations dedicated to the advancement of the surgical sciences.

Throughout his career, Dr. Patel has distinguished himself nationally as a leading colon and rectal surgeon and an accomplished educator.

In addition to his role as division chief, Dr. Patel is the director of the colon and rectal surgery fellowship program and a co-director of the general surgery residency program. In 2020, Dr. Patel was inducted into the American College of Surgeons’ Academy of Master Surgeon Educators.

As a researcher and surgeon, Dr. Patel was part of a multidisciplinary team that succeeded in reducing surgical site infection rates in colon surgeries to among the lowest in the nation. He also completed a master’s in business administration from the Gatton School of Business and Economics in 2019.

Dr. Avinash Bhakta Tapped as Director of Cancer Program at Lexington VA

UK Markey Cancer Center colorectal surgeon Avinash S. Bhakta, MD, FACS, was named director of the cancer program at the Lexington VA Health Care System, which joined Markey’s Affiliate Network last year.

This partnership provides veterans with expanded access to specialized cancer care, including clinical trials and advanced technology only available at NCI-designated cancer centers like Markey. Thanks to the affiliation, veterans receive comprehensive cancer care within the VA network and closer to home.

The Lexington VA Health Care System serves a population of nearly 83,000 veterans across Central Kentucky, with two Lexington campuses and community clinics in Berea, Hazard, Morehead and Somerset. Dr. Bhakta’s leadership will expand upon the partnership’s goal to bring leading-edge cancer care and research opportunities directly to veterans.

FACULTY



Jitesh Patel, MD, MBA, FACS
Division Chief;
Program Director,
Colon and Rectal
Surgery Fellowship



Sandra Beck, MD, FACS, FASCRS
Assistant Dean
for Program
Development – UK
Graduate Medical
Education



Avinash Bhakta, MD, FACS, FASCRS
Cancer Program
Director, Lexington
VA Health Care
System



Erin Wolf Horrell, MD, PhD



Jon S. Hourigan, MD, FACS, FASCRS



Dr. Sandra Beck Named Assistant Dean for Program Development

Sandra Beck, MD, FASCRS, FACS, is joining the Office of Graduate Medical Education (GME) leadership team as assistant dean for program development.

The position was established in tandem with an assistant dean for accreditation role to fill the former assistant dean for accreditation role held by Angela Dearing, MD, MPH. Dr. Dearing was recently named acting vice dean for strategic initiatives.

As assistant dean for program development, Dr. Beck will collaborate with GME and program leadership, office staff, and training site affiliates to oversee the implementation of new programs and facilitate requests. She will also lead program preparation for accreditation and site visits.

Dr. Beck is a professor of surgery and the co-chair of the GME Compliance Subcommittee. She has been actively involved in resident education for 20 years.

Dr. Beck attended medical school at Wright State University, followed by a general surgery residency at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh. She completed her colon and rectal surgery fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic. Her clinical focus is the application of minimally invasive approaches to diseases of the colon and rectum.

GENERAL,
ENDOCRINE &
METABOLIC SURGERY

1,429

2023 Surgical Cases

1,389

2024 Surgical Cases

10,371

2023 Clinic Visits

9,796

2024 Clinic Visits

\$347,145

2024 Industry-sponsored,
Federal and NIH grants

PIONEERS
IN OBESITY
RESEARCH

Obesity is one of Kentucky’s most pressing health issues, with wide-ranging comorbidities such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. To address this challenge, UK HealthCare has added a research component to become a national leader in bariatrics care — going beyond expert surgery and advanced care to deliver lasting, transformative scientific impact.

It was the vision of William B. Inabnet III, MD, MHA, FACS, chair of the UK Department of Surgery and surgeon-in-chief at UK HealthCare, that research be one of the core pillars of the Weight Loss Surgery program when it was first established at UK HealthCare.

At the heart of the research component is the Alliance for Diabetes and Obesity Research and Education (ADORE) Bariatric Tissue Project, a unique resource within UK’s Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS) tissue bank. While many institutions collect tissue samples, few in the country focus specifically on bariatrics. This infrastructure enables a range of clinical and basic science studies, setting the UK Bariatrics program up as a hub — and national leader — for obesity-related research.

“Obesity is an incredibly complex chronic medical condition. Through the unique groundbreaking bariatric tissue repository, researchers at UK have the ability to dive deeper into the pathophysiology and molecular basis for some of the changes these patients experience,” said Varun Jain, MD, FASMBS, FACS, assistant professor in the Division of General, Endocrine and Metabolic Surgery (GEMS).

One such study is a clinical trial investigating the drug tirzepatide, a dual GLP-1/GIP agonist, frequently prescribed for type 2 diabetes and weight loss. Marlene Starr, PhD, Division Chief of Research, and Dr. Jain, in collaboration with Dr. Inabnet, are co-leading the study. Its goal is to understand the impact of pre-operative tirzepatide on inflammation and bariatric surgery outcomes, including weight loss and resolution of obesity-related comorbidities. While still in early stages, the trial leverages the tissue bank to collect pre- and post-surgical blood and tissue samples for deeper analysis.

“The biobank is an invaluable asset. It allows us to continue making strides in the treatment of obesity — a serious health burden for our patient population.”

VARUN JAIN, MD, FASMBS, FACS

In addition to this study, the Bariatric Tissue Project has already sparked several other basic science projects and is supporting PhD candidates in promising obesity-related research. Tissues preserved through the biobank can be stored indefinitely, enabling future studies into adipose tissue, liver, gastrointestinal physiology and other areas that affect metabolic health.

As a surgical referral center for complex bariatric cases and a national leader in bariatric research, UK’s Weight Loss Surgery program is making a meaningful impact — both locally and beyond.



Department of Surgery Names New Residency Director, Resumes Fellowship

Two important residency and fellowship updates at the UK Department of Surgery will enhance education and training offerings and opportunities.

Cortney Lee, MD, FACS, has accepted the role of program director of General Surgery Residency, following the promotion of Sandra Beck, MD, FASCRS, FACS, to assistant dean in the Graduate Medical Education (GME) office.

Dr. Lee, professor of surgery in the Division of General, Endocrine and Metabolic Surgery, previously served over four years as director of the surgery medical education program at the College of Medicine. As both a resident and faculty member, Dr. Lee has received multiple awards from the College of Medicine and the Department of Surgery, including the Ward O. Griffen Award and the UK College of Medicine’s Distinguished Teacher Award. Dr. Lee has also been recognized for her innovative improvements that have led to an increasing number of medical students pursuing surgery.

Additionally, after an eight-year hiatus, the Division of General, Endocrine and Metabolic Surgery (GEMS) announced the resumption of the Gastrointestinal — Minimally Invasive Surgery (GI-MIS) Fellowship program. The division is delighted that the GI-MIS Fellowship is being offered for the first time since 2016. The one-year fellowship, previously offered from 1998-2016, went on temporary hiatus after the expansion of the general surgery residency program. Scott Roth, MD, FACS, GEMS division chief, was the first GI-MIS fellow in 1998, and Crystal Totten, MD, FACS, a member of the GEMS division faculty, was the most recent graduate.

HIGHLIGHTS



New Faculty

Meet Dr. Tim Horrell
Tim Horrell, MD, FACS, has joined the UK General, Endocrine and Metabolic Surgery faculty.

He completed the advanced GI minimally invasive surgery/bariatric surgery fellowship at Vanderbilt University and a general surgery residency here at UK.

Dr. Horrell’s first appointment was with the United States Army as a general surgeon at Blanchfield Army Community Hospital in Fort Campbell, Ky. In addition to his time at Blanchfield, Dr. Horrell served in two deployments: in Iraq and Kuwait supporting Operation Inherent Resolve, and in Afghanistan as part of Operation Allies Refuge, evacuating at-risk Afghan civilians, American embassy representatives and other non-combatants.



Annual Meetings on the Horizon

The UK Department of Surgery is hosting a number of annual meetings in 2026.

The annual meeting of the American Association of Endocrine Surgeons (AAES), hosted by the Department of Surgery and the Division of General, Endocrine, and Metabolic Surgery, is scheduled for April 18-20, 2026. Cortney Lee, MD, FACS, an endocrine surgeon, is the local arrangements chair.

Additionally, the department is set to host the Southern Surgeons Collaborative. The gathering is tentatively scheduled for April 2026.

FACULTY



J. Scott Roth, MD, FACS
Division Chief;
Vice Chair for
Clinical Affairs



Erik Ballert, MD, FACS
Deputy Executive
Director of Veteran’s
Administration
National Surgery
Office



William Cavatassi, MD, FACS



Oliver J. Fackelmayer, MD, FACS
Medical Director,
Good Samaritan
Surgical Specialties
Clinic



Timothy Horrell, MD, FACS



William B. Inabnet III, MD, MHA, FACS
The Johnston-Wright
Endowed Professor
and Chair of Surgery,
Surgeon-in-Chief,
UK HealthCare



Varun Jain, MD, FASMB, FACS
Associate Program
Director of
Gastrointestinal MIS
Fellowship



Cortney Y. Lee, MD, FACS
Program Director,
General Surgery
Residency



Melissa R. Newcomb, MD, FACS
Vice Chair for
Education; Assistant
Dean for Assessment
and Evaluation – UK
Graduate Medical
Education Office;
Associate Program
Director, General
Surgery Residency



David Sloan, MD, FACS, FRCSC



Joshua Steiner, MD, FACS
Director of Bariatric
Surgery



Crystal F. Totten, MD, FACS
Co-Vice Chair of
Professionalism
and Integrity;
Program Director of
Gastrointestinal MIS
Fellowship

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDERS (Dec. 2024)

Tracie Lear, APRN
Lauren Crockett, APRN
Donna Damron, APRN

HEALTHCARE
OUTCOMES &
OPTIMAL PATIENT
SERVICES

5,194
CY 2024 Total Surgical
Case Abstractions

1,934
CY 2024 Adult Surgical NSQIP
Cases Abstracted

1,409
CY 2024 Pediatric Surgical NSQIP
Cases Abstracted

746
CY 2024 Society of Thoracic Surgery
(STS) Database Cases Abstracted

157
CY 2024 MBSAQIP Cases Abstracted

LONGEST-
RUNNING NSQIP
SURGERY QUALITY
PROGRAM

The UK Department of Surgery celebrated its unique position as the longest-running program in the American College of Surgeons National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (ACS NSQIP) in 2024. It was also one of the very first three programs in the nation to implement NSQIP based on the template created by the Veteran’s Health Administration (VA).

The celebration took place at a General Surgery Grand Rounds. In his opening remarks, William B. Inabnet III, MD, MHA, FACS, chair of the Department of Surgery and surgeon-in-chief at UK HealthCare, commented on the surgery landscape before there was a NSQIP or even an ACS. At the beginning of the 20th century, the field of surgery had no standards for quality, billing, nor any national oversight. “It was literally a wild West scenario,” Dr. Inabnet said.

The ACS, founded in 1917, has spent over a century establishing and updating standards for surgery. In the past 25 years, the Department of Surgery has played a vital role in the development of those standards as one of the formative participants in NSQIP.

There are now nearly 700 participating hospitals in ACS-NSQIP.

An early version of NSQIP was developed in 1985 by the VA to show Congress that its surgical care was on a par with the rest of the nation. The program was expanded in 1994 to all VA medical centers.

The primary leaders were Shukri F. Khuri, MD, a cardiothoracic surgeon; William G. Henderson, PhD, a biostatistician; and Jennifer Daley, MD, a primary care physician.

In 1999, Dr. Khuri recruited three surgeon colleagues, Robert M. Mentzer, MD, (Chair, UK Department of Surgery), Darrell A. (Skip) Campbell, MD, (University of Michigan) and Aaron S. Fink, MD, (Emory University), to investigate implementing the VA NSQIP in a non-VA setting.

In addition to Dr. Mentzer’s support, NSQIP had a strong advocate in James W. Holsinger, MD, chancellor of UK Albert B. Chandler Hospital.

Dan Davenport, PhD, now division chief of Health Care Outcomes and Optimal Patient Services (HOOPS), and Charli Townes were brought in as the UK project managers. Davenport hired the first nurse clinical case reviewer, Devauna Riley, RN, in 1999. Riley has continued as UK’s — and the world’s — most senior non-VA surgical clinical reviewer.

In 2001, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) funded a study to further investigate expanding the NSQIP in the non-VA sector with the American College of Surgeons as the sponsoring organization. The Department of Surgery was one of the 14 funded beta sites.

In 2004, the ACS embraced the program and the ACS NSQIP was born.

“Our data continues to show that empowering clinicians with a robust quality improvement infrastructure will have a lasting impact on patient care,” Davenport said.

HIGHLIGHTS



HOOPS Drills Down on Data

HOOPS is leading the charge in turning enterprise performance metrics into actionable insights for divisions, faculty and clinical staff. The division produced divisional performance dashboards to quantify service-level performance and identify specific surgeon and patient cases for analysis and opportunities for improvement. Alongside quality and process improvement activities, these dashboards have helped fuel process changes to enhance patient care. This data is at the core of the UK Department of Surgery’s participation in the American College of Surgeon’s Quality Verification Program. Through the department’s Quality Data Educational Initiative, residents are given one service’s quality data, plus HOOPS’ assistance interpreting it. Then, under mentorship, residents perform a literature review and present potential opportunities for improvement on a monthly basis at the morbidity and mortality conference.

FACULTY & STAFF



Daniel Davenport,
PhD
Division Chief



Ellen Williams, RN



Devauna Adkins, RN



Tiffanie Cavatassi,
RN



Susan Mclean
Risemberg, RN



Allison James, RN



Kim Poland, RN



Rena Warner, RN

PEDIATRIC SURGERY

1,393

2023 Surgical Cases

1,490

2024 Surgical Cases

3,437

2023 Clinic Visits

3,612

2024 Clinic Visits*

\$625,000

2024 Industry-sponsored,
Federal and NIH grant

MORE
EDUCATION,
BETTER CARE

When Andrea Doud, MD, FACS, joined the surgical team at Kentucky Children’s Hospital in September 2019, she had already completed a fellowship in pediatric surgery. But after half a decade at UK, she took time away from her attending role to complete a second fellowship in pediatric and adult trauma, allowing her to expand upon her position and bring a unique skillset to both Kentucky Children’s Hospital and the larger UK HealthCare enterprise.

In completing the fellowship, Dr. Doud better understands how and why connections are needed between the adult and pediatric surgery worlds — enriching the care of both populations.

“Trauma is too often thought of as an acute process, but the physiologic and psychologic effects can span a lifetime,” Dr. Doud said. “This fellowship has allowed me to better understand how my handling of a pediatric trauma might affect a patient’s future health and how I try to help set them up for a healthy life in the future. It also allows me to understand how adult patients might be affected by prior incidents in their youth.”

When Dr. Doud approached David Rodeberg, MD, FACS, chief of the Division of Pediatric Surgery, and William B. Inabnet III, MD, MHA, FACS, chair of the UK Department of Surgery, about the fellowship, both were extremely supportive. Dr. Doud then contacted Jessica Reynolds, MD, the program director for the acute care surgery and critical care fellowship, who indicated that Dr. Doud could complete the fellowship in a year.

The fellowship ran from March 2024 to February 2025. Dr. Doud recently rejoined the Department of Surgery in a slightly modified version of her old role: She will now split time between adult trauma and pediatric surgery, focusing primarily on trauma, acute care surgery and emergency general surgery for both. Dr. Doud is excited to carry over new ideas and techniques to both pediatric and adult populations, which could have a big impact, not only across UK HealthCare, but also across the entire state.

“My new understanding of the pediatric and adult trauma worlds will allow me to contribute greatly to the ongoing efforts of [Trauma Medical Director] Dr. Andrew Bernard and others to build a statewide trauma system,” Dr. Doud said. “This is desperately needed to help take care of those who get injured in rural areas or areas devoid of trauma centers.”

Dr. Andrea Doud took time from her pediatric surgical practice to complete a pediatric and adult trauma fellowship.





Continuing a Legacy of Excellence

David Rodeberg, MD, has been named the inaugural recipient of the Andrew R. Pulito, MD Endowed Professorship in the Department of Pediatric Surgery. The professorship was established in 2023 by emeritus faculty member Dr. Andrew Pulito and the Pulito family.

Dr. Rodeberg is division chief of Pediatric Surgery and operating room medical director at Kentucky Children’s Hospital. He is a nationally celebrated pediatric surgeon and recognized as an expert in the field through his involvement in the Children’s Oncology Group Sarcoma Committee and the International Soft Tissue Sarcoma Consortium.

Dr. Rodeberg joined UK HealthCare from East Carolina University Brody School of Medicine and ECU Health Maynard Children’s Hospital, where he served as surgeon-in-chief. His extensive clinical experience also includes a six-year stretch as the pediatric trauma director at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

Dr. Pulito is the former division chief of Pediatric Surgery at Kentucky Children’s Hospital and a beloved professor emeritus. Dr. Pulito’s decades of service as an outstanding pediatric surgeon and general surgery clerkship director exemplify excellence in academics, clinical care, leadership and teaching in surgery.

HIGHLIGHTS



New Faculty

Meet Dr. Lindel Dewberry

Lindel C.K. Dewberry, MD, FACS, joined the Division of Pediatric Surgery in October 2023. Prior to coming to UK HealthCare, Dr. Dewberry completed medical school at Emory University, general surgery training at the University of Colorado and a pediatric surgery fellowship at the University of Iowa.

At Colorado, Dr. Dewberry also earned a master’s degree in clinical science and received several recognitions for teaching and clinical research, including the AAP Section on Surgery 2019 Clinical Research Rosenkrantz Award for work on adolescent bariatric surgery outcomes.

Dr. Dewberry has authored more than 20 publications and is active in multiple national societies focused on pediatric surgery. She is developing a bariatric surgery program for adolescents suffering from obesity and its associated diseases.



Pediatric Cancer Researcher Receives Funding for Neuroblastoma

Pediatric surgeon and researcher Eric Rellinger, MD, FACS, recently received funding in support of his work on neuroblastoma, the most common form of cancer in infants.

Dr. Rellinger received \$600,000 for three years from the Dick Vitale Pediatric Cancer Research Fund through the V Foundation for Cancer Research. The V Foundation was founded by ESPN and legendary basketball coach Jim Valvano in 1993 with one goal in mind: to achieve Victory Over Cancer®. One of the premier supporters of cancer research, the V foundation has awarded over \$310 million in research grants nationwide.

Dr. Rellinger was also awarded the prestigious Grosfeld Scholar Grant from the American Pediatric Surgical Association Foundation Board in support of his work on metabolic profiling of neuroblastomas.



FACULTY



David Rodeberg, MD, FACS
Division Chief;
Medical Director,
Kentucky Children’s
Hospital OR



Lindel C.K. Dewberry, MD, FACS
Assistant 3rd Year
Surgery Clerkship
Director



Andrea Doud, MD, FACS
Medical Director,
Pediatric Trauma
Program



Abigail Martin, MD, FAAP, FACS
Director of Intestinal
Rehabilitation,
Kentucky Children’s
Hospital



Eric J. Rellinger, MD, FACS



Danielle S. Walsh, MD, FAAP, FACS
Vice Chair for
Quality and Process
Improvement



David Worhunsky, MD, FACS

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDERS (Dec. 2024)

Amanda Baker Thomas, APRN
Meagan Komondoreas, APRN
Liv Noelle Prather McFadden, APRN

PLASTIC & RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY

1,992

2023 Surgical Cases

1,973

2024 Surgical Cases

15,393

2023 Clinic Visits

17,118

2024 Clinic Visits

\$10,776

2024 Industry-sponsored,
Federal and NIH grants

CONTINUED EXCELLENCE IN CLEFT CARE

The Cleft Lip and Palate Care Team at UK HealthCare’s Kentucky Children’s Hospital (KCH) officially renewed and achieved re-accreditation as an ACPA (American Cleft Palate Craniofacial Association) Approved Team in November 2024. This important designation means that the KCH Cleft Lip and Palate team meets or exceeds the highest national standards for cleft lip/palate surgical services for infants and children.

The ACPA is the premier national network for treatment of cleft lip, cleft palate and craniofacial differences. It maintains and continuously updates national standards of care in this specialized field through research, education and advocacy.

The UK Division of Plastic Surgery has provided cleft lip and palate repair for infants and children for decades. Many of its providers have applied their skills in Kentucky, its neighboring states and even across the world.

The KCH cleft care team is led by James Liau, MD, FACS, professor of plastic and reconstructive surgery, and Brooke Skaggs, PA-C, cleft care coordinator and UK Surgery director of advanced practice providers.

“Through Kentucky Children’s Hospital and UK HealthCare, our team has endeavored to become the regional destination center for families needing cleft palate and cleft lip care,” Dr. Liau said.

Meeting ACPA’s standards requires a team of experts across several disciplines, as well as cooperation between KCH and the Kentucky Cabinet for Children. It also means establishing a process that adheres to ACPA’s national standards and quality protocols based on current best practices.

Dr. Liau credits Skaggs for taking a huge leadership role in the effort. While the ACPA refers to programs that meet their standards as having earned “approval” rather than the more formal term of “accreditation,” their standards are no less stringent and the process to become an approved team is a work-intensive endeavor.



Dr. James Liau confers with Brooke Skaggs, PA-C, over matters concerning cleft lip and palate care at UK HealthCare’s Kentucky Children’s Hospital.

The 35-page application requests documentation and details along six major quality measures: Team Composition; Team Management and Responsibilities; Patient and Family/Caregiver Communication; Cultural Competence; Psychological and Social Services; and procedures for Outcomes Assessment.

In addition to cleft palate and craniofacial surgeons, the multidisciplinary team includes providers in several major disciplines: oral surgery, speech-language pathology, orthodontics, social work, psychology, otolaryngology, pediatrics and primary care providers, dentistry, dietetics, and audiology.

Applicants must also document the processes by which the team evaluates overall patient outcomes, how the team communicates with families and how it implements quality improvement.

“We have been in the process of organizing the appropriate physicians and providers for a few years. It was a major undertaking. Achieving approval just confirms how much KCH has grown as a pediatric healthcare system serving the entire Kentucky region.”

BROOKE SKAGGS, PA-C

The team has also established metrics to maintain and even improve that quality going forward, Skaggs added.



New Leader for Advanced Practice Providers

Brooke Skaggs, PA-C, was named director of advanced practice providers (APPs), a new position within the UK Department of Surgery. Her combination of leadership skills and dedication to her peers and patients made Skaggs an excellent choice to fill the new director’s seat. This position was developed in collaboration with Paula Works, DNP, Chief Advanced Practice Officer of the UK Office of Advanced Practice. It is meant to address the needs of the growing number of APPs within the Department of Surgery.

There are approximately 60 APPs currently serving in one or more of the department’s 11 divisions. It’s likely that more will join those ranks in the near future. This level of growth throughout the department needs administrative oversight to manage budgets, staffing and strategic operations.

The division’s advanced practice providers now have a director who is an experienced APP and who understands best practices and flow models for effective patient care, Works said.

Skaggs earned her degree in physician assistant studies from UK in 2018. She subsequently joined the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, where she divided her time between patient care services and acquiring leadership experience. In addition to providing urgent and emergent treatment to patients suffering severe burns, hand and facial traumas, and complex lacerations, she assists in surgical procedures and maintains clinic hours to follow up on treatment and visit with new patients.

HIGHLIGHTS



New Faculty

Meet Dr. Alisha Paranzino

Alisha Paranzino, MD, a 2022 graduate of UK’s integrated plastic surgery residency, returned to Kentucky to become a faculty member in the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. She is a board-certified plastic surgeon specializing in general reconstructive plastic surgery and aesthetic surgery.

Following her residency, Dr. Paranzino completed a fellowship in complex breast reconstruction and microsurgery at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston.

In addition to her medical degree from the University of South Florida, Dr. Paranzino also earned a master’s degree in biomedical science from the College of Medicine at Drexel University in Philadelphia.

Meet Dr. Christine Schaeffer

Christine Schaeffer, MD, joined the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery faculty after completing a hand and upper extremity fellowship at the Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta.

Dr. Schaeffer earned her degree in medicine from the University of Cincinnati. She subsequently matched into the integrated residency program in plastic and reconstructive surgery at the University of Virginia (UVA).

During her residency, Dr. Schaeffer earned several awards and recognitions for her work, including the UVA Health Spark Innovation Award and the Raymond F. Morgan Academic Productivity Award based on her research. She was also honored for outstanding contributions to medical education.

Meet Dr. Christopher Howell

A graduate of the UK College of Medicine, Christopher Howell, MD, is now part of the faculty of the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

Dr. Howell graduated summa cum laude with his bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Wake Forest University, before going to medical school at UK. There, he earned the Albert B. Chandler Award, which is given to the top academically performing medical students in each graduating class.

Dr. Howell then completed his integrated plastic surgery residency at UK, where he was twice recognized for achieving the highest in-service score. He was honored with annual Plastic Surgery Resident Teaching Award at his graduation. Following this, he completed a fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania in microsurgery and complex reconstruction.



Dr. Evan Lynch Is Runner-up for Prestigious SESPRS Glancy Award

Evan Lynch, MD, PhD, a former PGY-5 in the I-6 plastic surgery residency program, was runner-up for the 2024 Resident Glancy Competition at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons (SESPRS).

The Glancy Award, sponsored by SESPRS, recognizes excellence in resident-led research. Dr. Lynch was recognized for his work, entitled “Acute Nerve Pedicle Transfer after Transection Prevents Neuroma Formation and Demonstrates Potential for Reinnervation in a Rat Sciatic Nerve Injury Model.”

Prior to his entry into the UK College of Medicine, Evan worked as a research associate and graduate student in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Michigan. During this time, he became interested in the complex cellular processes regulating inflammation.



Plastic Surgery Resident’s Research Earns Award

E. Abi Recktenwald, MD, a resident in UK’s integrated plastic surgery residency, received the 2024 Bostwick Award. This award recognizes excellence in resident research at the 39th Annual Atlanta Breast Surgery Symposium, sponsored by the Southeastern Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons (SESPRS).

Dr. Recktenwald submitted an abstract entitled, “PROFiT: Protocol to Reduce Operating Room Foot Traffic in Implant Based Breast Reconstruction.”

The abstract outlined an investigation of a protocol that limited foot traffic in and out of the operating room during implant-based breast reconstruction procedures. Results of the study indicated that when foot traffic protocols were logged and implemented, reduction of surgical site infections (SSI) trended toward significance.



Dr. David Drake Served as a SESPRS Visiting Professor in 2024

David Drake, MD, FACS, the William S. Farish Endowed Chair of Plastic Surgery at UK HealthCare, was a Visiting Professor for the Southeastern Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons (SESPRS) in 2024.

SESPRS annually sponsors two Visiting Professors from their active or lifetime membership. Dr. Jorge de la Torre, Director of the Plastic Surgery Division at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, was the other Visiting Professor last year. Both Dr. Drake and Dr. de la Torre have served as past presidents of SESPRS and have distinguished careers as providers and educators in plastic and reconstructive surgery.

As Visiting Professors, the doctors brought their clinical, educational and technical expertise to plastic surgery residency programs as well as state and regional society meetings.



Dr. Lesley Wong Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award in Surgery Education

Lesley Wong, MD, FACS, professor and program director of the Integrated Plastic Surgery Residency Program, joined a distinguished group of faculty as recipient of the Richard W. Schwartz Leadership in Education Award. She was honored at the annual UK Department of Surgery teaching awards recognition program.

The Schwartz Award is considered the Department of Surgery’s lifetime achievement for teaching. It was last awarded in 2019 to former department chair Dr. Joseph Zwischenberger.

In addition to a long career as a plastic and reconstructive surgeon specializing in breast reconstruction, Dr. Wong has served as program director of the Integrated Plastic Surgery Residency Program since 2019. She has been recognized for her dedication and mentorship to medical students and residents.

FACULTY



David Drake, MD, FACS
Division Chief;
Program Director,
Hand Surgery
Fellowship and Hand
Surgery Service



Morgan Brgoch, MD
Associate Program
Director of Integrated
6-Year Plastic Surgery
Residency



Christopher Howell, MD



James Liau, MD, FACS
Section Chief
of Pediatric and
Craniofacial Surgery



Alisha Paranzino, MD



Christine Schaeffer, MD



Lesley Wong, MD, FACS
Program Director
of Integrated 6-Year
Plastic Surgery
Residency; Director
of Burn Unit

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDERS (Dec. 2024)

Crystal Genea Dale, APRN
Leah Gretchen Carloni, PA-C
Pamela Renee Kouns, PA-C
Brittany Lynn Dahl, APRN

RESEARCH

\$3,148,339

FY24 Total Funding

\$1,339,247

National Institutes of Health (NIH) Funding

\$1,269,142

Industry-sponsored Studies

RESEARCH FUNDING GOES UP AND UP

Alongside news of a second record-setting year of grant awards and contracts at the University of Kentucky, the UK Department of Surgery Division of Research reported a 94.3% increase in private and public funding from FY23 to FY24. The increase includes grants received in every clinical and research division in the department. It also reflects new funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as well as from the private sector.

Marlene Starr, PhD, division chief of research, reported that total awards to the department have consistently increased in the last three fiscal years. She cited a report from the UK Office of Sponsored Projects Administration (OSPA) database. In FY23, total awards credited to Surgery were a reported \$1.6 million. At the end of FY24, OSPA reported grant awards, private and federal, at \$3.148 million.

“In the last three years, Surgery has made consistent progress forward at the UK level and nationally. That’s something to celebrate, but there’s plenty of opportunity to continue improving in years to come,” Dr. Starr said.

This year’s awards include over \$190,000 to faculty in surgical oncology, \$625,000 to pediatric surgery and well over \$1.3 million in the Division of Research, which includes at least two new NIH grants.

NIH grants awarded in the most recent fiscal year include a new R01 grant of \$2.6 million over five years to Dongfang Wang, MD, and the Wang labs. Dr. Starr’s lab was also awarded an NIH R21 and an R35 from the National Institute of General Medicine.

Surgery faculty also have been awarded several private foundation and commercial grants. Eric Rellinger, MD, of the Division of Pediatric Surgery and colleagues have received support for investigations into the treatment of pediatric neuroblastoma. In Surgical Oncology, Mautin Barry-Hundeyin, MD, and Morgan Jones, MD, have each received substantial support to further their respective investigations into cancer causes and treatments. Included here are only a few of the ongoing investigations surgery faculty members are conducting. According to OSPA, Surgery has 23 faculty listed as principal investigators (PIs) for 39 grant awards this past fiscal year. These numbers don’t include faculty credited as co-PIs on collaborative

projects or grants awarded to faculty in connection with other UK entities, such as the Markey Cancer Center. OSPA tracks those grants separately.

However, the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research, which publishes NIH grant funding on a national scale, counts those awards in their list of the top medical institutions receiving federal grants. That list excludes private or commercial research awards. For FY24, UK is listed 33rd in Blue Ridge Institute reporting, which is about average for the department, Starr said.

Marlene Starr, PhD, division chief of research, has tracked consistent increases in private and public research grants to surgery department faculty.





Funding Momentum Continues for Surgery Research

The UK Department of Surgery entered FY25 with major new grants from the public and private sectors.

Marlene Starr, PhD, division chief for research, is the principal investigator for an R35 grant. The project, “Obesity-Mediated Protection in Sepsis,” was funded at \$1.9 million over five years by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences.

Dongfang Wang, MD, a member of the cardiothoracic surgery and research faculty, was approved for a three-year, \$1.3 million Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant. The project is: “Development of a Minimally Invasive Single Cannulation, Compact Single Port Pulsatile Ventricular Assist Device (sppVAD) for Total LV Support.”

Eric Rellinger, MD, FACS, a pediatric surgeon, had his research, “FY25 DNA-PK Inhibition in Neuroblastoma,” approved for a two-year, \$250,000 grant from the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

HIGHLIGHTS



Surgery Residents Present Research Across the Nation

Surgery residents at the University of Kentucky excel not only in patient care but also research.

Several general surgery residents presented their research in podium presentations, posters and e-posters at the 2023 and 2024 American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress, including: Hannah McDonald, MD; Megan Harper, MD, PhD, MS; Jennifer Castle, MD; Brittany Erin Levy, MD; Wesley Stephens, MD; Anna Reagan, MD; Marina Robson Chase, MD; and Madeline Anderson, DO.

In the plastic surgery residency program, Evan Lynch, MD, PhD, presented at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons (SESPRS). Abi Recktenwald, MD, presented at the SESPRS Atlanta Breast Symposium and the Southern Medical Association Burn Conference.

FACULTY



Marlene Starr, PhD
Division Chief



Cherry Ballard-Croft, PhD



Francesc Marti, PhD



Anna Rockich, PharmD, MS
Director of Clinical Research Section



Hiroshi Saito, PhD



Dongfang Wang, MD, PhD
Director of Artificial Organ Laboratory



Congquin Wu, PhD

SURGICAL
ONCOLOGY

1,302

2023 Surgical Cases

1,248

2024 Surgical Cases*

9,273

2023 Clinic Visits

8,783

2024 Clinic Visits

\$193,740

2024 Industry-sponsored,
Federal and NIH grants



MARKEY CANCER
CENTER **ATTAINS**
NCI'S HIGHEST
STATUS

In fall 2023, the UK Markey Cancer Center earned the highest level of recognition awarded by the National Cancer Institute, achieving designation as an NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center. Markey is the first and only center in Kentucky to achieve this designation.

There are only 73 NCI-Designated Cancer Centers in the United States, 57 of which are Comprehensive Cancer Centers.

“The elevation to Comprehensive Cancer Center is an achievement that underscores our commitment to addressing the healthcare needs of the people of Kentucky,” said B. Mark Evers, MD, FACS, UK Department of Surgery vice chair for research, who has been director of the Markey Cancer Center since arriving at the University of Kentucky in 2009.

As the federal government’s principal agency for cancer research and training, the NCI awards designations based on excellence in cancer treatment, diagnosis and prevention.

To become an NCI-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, centers must demonstrate depth and breadth of laboratory, clinical and population-based research — including substantial transdisciplinary research that bridges these scientific areas. Comprehensive Cancer Centers are also recognized for cancer research and control programs that benefit the communities they serve, and programs to educate and train cancer researchers and clinicians.

Comprehensive Cancer Center designation enhances Markey’s ability to:

- Attract top-tier researchers and clinicians
- Secure additional research funding
- Collaborate with worldwide partners
- Give patients access to leading-edge treatments and clinical trials

Comprehensive designation ensures Markey patients — 97% of whom come from Kentucky — get access to new drugs, treatment options and clinical trials offered only at NCI-designated centers.

Markey’s incredible clinical growth has necessitated the need for newer patient facilities. In 2021, the University of Kentucky began planning a new outpatient cancer treatment center and advanced ambulatory complex that will bring Markey’s outpatient services under one roof. Anticipated to open in 2027, the new complex will allow Markey to further grow and expand as more patients from in and out of state need its services.

“Comprehensive status is an investment of faith from the NCI in our work to eradicate cancer in Kentucky,” said Eric Monday, co-executive vice president for health affairs. “Here at UK, we’re fortifying that investment as we begin construction of a new outpatient cancer and ambulatory facility that will house more than 500,000 square feet of cancer-specific services, which will enable us to further increase our capacity to treat and heal even more Kentuckians.”

“Designation as an NCI Comprehensive Cancer Center is a testament to our passion to take care of our cancer patients to the best degree that we can. It is an acknowledgement that we have the talent, the skills, and the expertise to treat any patient from Kentucky and beyond.”

JOSEPH KIM, MD, FACS
DIVISION CHIEF, SURGICAL ONCOLOGY



**Dr. Mautin Barry-Hundeyin
Receives Funding to Support
Cancer Research**

UK Markey Cancer Center surgical oncologist Mautin Barry-Hundeyin, MD, received funding from both the Markey Women Strong program and the Elsa U. Pardee Foundation to support her cancer research.

Dr. Barry-Hundeyin is one of two cancer researchers at the University of Kentucky selected as a recipient of the 2024 Markey Women Strong Distinguished Research Award. She received support for her research into how macrophages can regulate stomach cancer. Awards were presented during Markey Cancer Center Research Day in May.

Markey Women Strong is a special program of the Markey Cancer Foundation focused on supporting women-led research at the UK Markey Cancer Center. Members review proposals and participate in a voting process to award two researchers \$50,000 grants to support their endeavors.

In December 2023, Dr. Barry-Hundeyin received funding of over \$150,000 from the Elsa U. Pardee Foundation to support her research into a potential immunological treatment for patients with pancreatic cancer.

The Elsa U. Pardee Foundation, a family-run organization devoted to cancer research, is noted for its grants supporting innovations in cancer treatment that show promise. The foundation’s medical committee evaluates approximately 300 proposals annually.

HIGHLIGHTS



New Faculty

Meet Dr. Irada Ibrahim-zada
Irada Ibrahim-zada, MD, PhD, joined the UK Markey Cancer Center as a surgical oncologist. She was previously a surgical oncologist specializing in breast cancer at St. Elizabeth Cancer Center in Edgewood, Ky.

Dr. Ibrahim-zada completed her general surgery residency at the University of Colorado and residencies in general surgery and surgical oncology in her home country of Azerbaijan. In this period of her education, she developed an interest in cancer research. This led her to obtain a doctorate in laboratory medicine and pathobiology at the University of Toronto, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

She also completed a fellowship in complex general surgical oncology at the Roswell Park Cancer Center in New York.

Meet Dr. Leah K. Winer
Leah Winer, MD, is one of the latest surgeons to join the Division of Surgical Oncology faculty.

In the spring of 2024, Dr. Winer finished a two-year fellowship in complex general surgical oncology at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia.

Dr. Winer completed her general surgery residency at the University of Cincinnati. Additionally, she spent two years as a research resident studying murine models of chronic critical illness and was co-author of several journal articles on clinical outcomes in surgical oncology and transplantation, as well as general surgery residency education.

During residency, she co-founded a surgical education research group. She currently serves on the American Board of Surgery’s Entrustable Professional Activities Writing Group for CGSO Fellowships.

FACULTY



Joseph Kim, MD, FACS
Division Chief



Mautin Barry-Hundeyin, MD



Michael Cavnar, MD, FACS



B. Mark Evers, MD, FACS
Director Markey Cancer Center; Vice Chair For Research



Irada Ibrahim-zada, MD, PhD, FACS



V. Morgan Jones, MD



Prakash Pandalai, MD, FACS
Co-Vice Chair of Professionalism and Integrity



Leah Winer, MD

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDERS (Dec. 2024)

- Tamara Carey, APRN
- Jennifer Young, APRN
- Samantha Reckley, APRN
- Sarah Knight, APRN
- Nathan Yuen, APRN



Dr. Morgan Jones Selected for Prestigious Award

Morgan Jones, MD, a breast surgeon at the UK Markey Cancer Center, was selected as a recipient of The Robert A. Winn Career Development Award (Winn CDA), which is part of a broader initiative, The Robert A. Winn Excellence in Clinical Trials Award Program. The award seeks to improve participation in clinical trials to drive better health outcomes in all communities and save lives.

Winn CDA is a 2-yr program designed to support the career development of early-stage investigator physicians who have a demonstrated commitment to transforming and expanding access to the clinical research landscape.

“As an early-career member of our faculty, Dr. Jones has demonstrated expertise as a surgeon and great promise as a clinical researcher,” said Joseph Kim, MD, FACS, Chief of the UK Division of Surgical Oncology. “This award is clear evidence that others recognize her tremendous potential.”

The award provides \$120,000 annually for two years to institutions sponsoring clinical investigators who will develop community-based approaches to increase the variety of subjects participating in clinical trials.

These funds enable recipients to devote 40% of their professional time to learning about community-oriented clinical trials under the mentorship of an experienced clinical investigator. Dr. Jones’s mentor is Reema Patel, MD, who is currently running a GENOCARE clinical trial in the research branch of Markey Cancer Center.

Dr. Jones hopes to use this experience to inform the design of a pilot trial centered on breast cancer. Her specific interests are in triple-negative breast cancer, disparities in treatment outcomes and tumor microenvironments.

TRANSPLANTATION

25	17
2023 Heart Surgical Cases	2024 Heart Surgical Cases
35	9
2023 Lung Surgical Cases	2024 Lung Surgical Cases
127	116
2023 Kidney Surgical Cases	2024 Kidney Surgical Cases
68	78
2023 Liver Surgical Cases	2024 Liver Surgical Cases
2,707	3,261
2023 Clinic Visits	2024 Clinic Visits
\$131,183	
2024 Industry-sponsored, Federal and NIH grants	

A FIRST FOR KENTUCKY

A UK transplant surgeon performed Kentucky’s first ever robot-assisted nephrectomy in November 2023.

Alejandro Cracco, MD, FACS, an assistant professor in the UK Department of Surgery’s Division of Transplantation, performed the donor kidney extraction utilizing the da Vinci Xi surgical robot.

During this procedure, Dr. Cracco sits at a console located just a couple of feet away from the patient. He controls the surgical robot — which has greater range of motion than a human hand — to create small, precise incisions in real time. The system uses a 3D camera to give Dr. Cracco an enhanced, magnified view of the surgical area.

While this minimally invasive procedure is a first for the state of Kentucky, Dr. Cracco performed this procedure more than a dozen times during a fellowship at Northwestern University in Chicago.

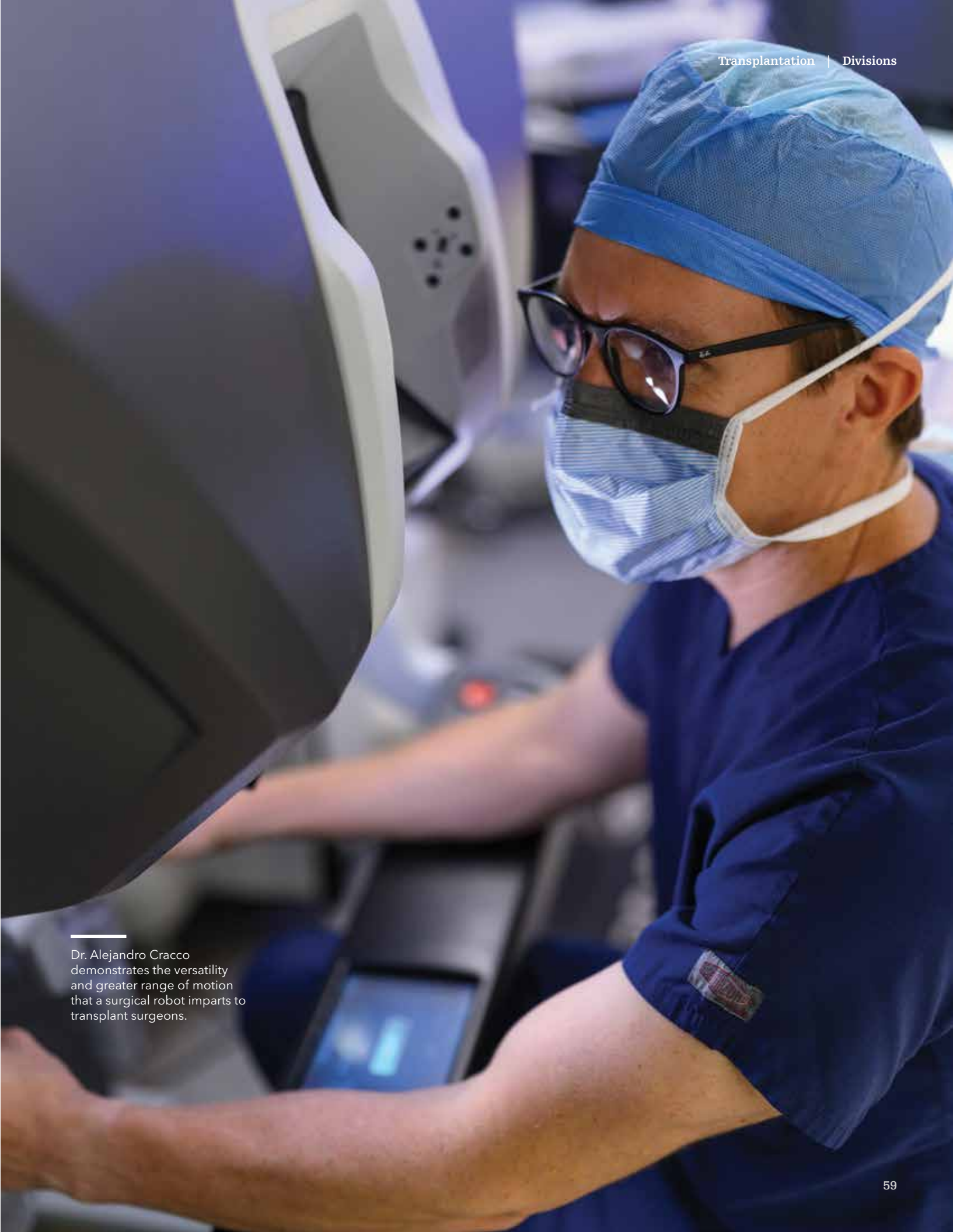
“This groundbreaking milestone marks a significant advancement for the University of Kentucky Transplant Center,” said Dr. Roberto Gedaly, director of the Transplant Center. “Incorporating innovative technologies is a key part of our vision to enhance patient care throughout the Commonwealth.”

There are typically fewer complications with robot-assisted surgery, compared to conventional open surgery. For transplant patients, this means fewer incisions, less pain after surgery, shorter recovery time and less scarring.

Dr. Cracco said there are “no red flags or concerns we can identify at this moment” with this new technology.

With the success of this procedure, UK HealthCare joins a growing list of hospitals across the country adapting robotics to an increasing range of complex surgeries.

Dr. Cracco joined the UK HealthCare faculty in 2023. He received his medical degree from the Universidad Central de Venezuela. He then completed a residency in general surgery at Cleveland Clinic Florida and a fellowship in abdominal transplant and hepatobiliary surgery at Northwestern University.



Dr. Alejandro Cracco demonstrates the versatility and greater range of motion that a surgical robot imparts to transplant surgeons.

A SHOWING OF GRATITUDE

“We may not have walked the same path before, but today you walk with me ...”

Thus begins a letter written by an organ transplant recipient to their donor. The author goes on to celebrate their donor’s legacy and express gratitude for the gift of a new life.

“I do not know the dignity of your birth or the tragedy of your death,” the letter continues. “But you left a legacy, which I try to honor every day.”

About 250 people receive an organ transplant at UK HealthCare every year. The Transplant Center asked transplant recipients to share what they wished they could say to their donors. Dozens of letters poured in.

An exhibit called “Dear Donor” at UK Albert B. Chandler Hospital, displayed from April (National Donate Life Month) through June 2024, showcased these letters. The letters shared a common theme: appreciation. Gratitude for “bonus days.” For the opportunity to experience more of life’s milestones. For organ donors’ selfless decision to give the ultimate gift.

To help them create something special, the UK HealthCare Brand Strategy team collaborated with BORN, a Lexington-based creative agency, on the exhibit. Letters were displayed like works of art in a gallery. Columns were arranged throughout the space near the Donor Memorial Wall — which is inscribed with the names of organ donors over many years at UK HealthCare — and the letters were mounted on the columns. The installation included special overhead speakers to share the letters aloud.

“It’s a different experience listening to these letters,” said Laura Baker of the Brand Strategy team. “Listening brings a whole new level of connection.”

The project also featured a web page with letters and audio recordings: ukhealthcare.com/deardonor.



NEW LEADERSHIP FOR HEART AND LUNG TRANSPLANT PROGRAM

In 2024, UK HealthCare welcomed Matthias Loebe, MD, PhD, as the new surgical director of the heart and lung transplant program, reinvigorating the program with his three decades of experience as a global leader in innovative transplant care. Dr. Loebe has built strong transplant programs in both the United States and Europe, some of which have become the largest in the world. Now, his focus is on Kentucky.

“Lung disease is very common in Kentucky, so our main goal is to provide Kentuckians with top-notch service for advanced heart and lung disease,” he said.

Dr. Loebe is also excited about building on the existing knowledge at UK HealthCare. UK has the largest mechanical circulatory support (MCS) program in the state; Dr. Loebe wants to continue to use MCS to enhance recovery, adapting advanced MCS treatment for heart disease to the lung transplant program.

“In addition to our expertise in mechanical support, we’ll also use ECMO as a bridge to lung transplant,” Dr. Loebe said. “This expertise and collaboration allow us to offer combined organ transplants in cooperation with the other solid organ transplant programs here at UK.”

In addition to MCS and ECMO, other innovative technologies in organ preservation and donor organ monitoring help the program expand the donor pool, in turn expanding access.

“This collaboration and access, combined with new opportunities in organ procurement, ultimately helps us achieve our goal: to provide access to advanced therapies to all communities across the Commonwealth,” Dr. Loebe said.

FACULTY



Roberto Gedaly, MD, FACS
Division Chief;
Director, UK
Transplant Center



Alexandre Ancheta, MD, FACS
Surgical Director,
Kidney and Pancreas
Program



Alejandro Cracco, MD, FACS



Siddharth Desai, MD



Malay Shah, MD, FACS
Surgical Director,
Liver Transplant
Program

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDERS (Dec. 2024)

- Ellen Ernestine Ratcliffe, APRN
- Hender Rojas, APRN
- Tonya Rae Moline, APRN
- Karen M. Herrell, APRN
- Christopher Paul Hoffman, APRN

VASCULAR &
ENDOVASCULAR
SURGERY

1,476

2023 Surgical Cases

1,531

2024 Surgical Cases*

6,819

2023 Clinic Visits

7,568

2024 Clinic Visits*

\$52,834

2024 Industry-sponsored,
Federal and NIH grants

LIFESAVING
CARE THROUGH
COLLABORATION

The UK Vascular and Endovascular Surgery team collaborates with other departments to leverage leading-edge techniques and procedures on complex cases.

The vascular surgeons are trained in innovative, comprehensive care for vascular disease, including the latest treatments for advanced aortic disease through partnerships with other Gill Heart & Vascular Institute experts.

“A significant part of current vascular surgery training is focused on treating complex aortic disease using novel, endovascular techniques,” Eleftherios Xenos, MD, PhD, RVT, FACS, vascular surgery division chief, said. “The vascular surgery faculty at UK have accumulated the experience to expand upon and teach these advanced techniques to our surgery residents and fellows. It’s important that we continue to develop these techniques because many of our patients with advanced aortic disease are far too ‘at-risk’ as candidates for open surgery.” These procedures are performed through small incisions or needle punctures through the skin to access the arteries and are less stressful for patients.

The vascular surgery team has collaborated with specialists in other departments, including cardiothoracic surgeon Hassan Reda, MD, FACS, and interventional cardiologist John Gurley, MD, to significantly expand endovascular surgical options for high-risk aortic and cardiovascular patients. Dr. Reda surgically treats pathology of the ascending aorta and aortic arch, and Dr. Gurley’s years of experience and innovation has been a boon to the team’s multidisciplinary approach.

UK vascular surgeon Sam Tyagi, MD, and a former faculty member, Ryan King, MD, were the first in the region to use the newly FDA-approved thoracoabdominal aortic device (TAMBE), a minimally invasive device for treating extensive aortic aneurysms. UK is the regional leader in custom and off-the-shelf aortic endografts, performing more of these procedures than any other center in the area. And with more collaborative opportunities on the horizon, UK is further pushing the boundaries of what is possible in aortic surgery.

But it’s not just the surgeons’ expertise or the access to groundbreaking techniques and technology that are responsible for the high-quality care — it’s the entire staff.

“Our nurses, intensivists, anesthesiologists, techs, trainees and specialists across multiple disciplines collaborate to handle the region’s most challenging medical cases every single day,” Dr. Xenos said. “We specialize in treating what others consider untreatable — that’s who we are.”

Dr. John Gurley, interventional cardiologist, Dr. Hassan Reda, cardiac surgeon, and Dr. Sam Tyagi, vascular surgeon, work together as an effective multi disciplinary team treating patients suffering from complex aortic disease.



A REVOLUTIONARY NEW DEVICE FOR AORTIC ANEURYSM

The UK Vascular and Endovascular Surgery team provides a variety of innovative procedures and collaborates seamlessly with local physicians to solve complicated health issues. UK is a major regional referral center, and UK Vascular and Endovascular surgeons are among the nation’s leading experts in their field, offering groundbreaking techniques to treat thoracic and abdominal aorta pathologies.

Last year, Gill vascular surgeon Sam Tyagi, MD, performed the first aneurysm repair in Kentucky using a GORE EXCLUDER Thoracoabdominal Branch Endoprosthesi (TAMBE) device. The device is a less-invasive method of repair for aortic aneurysm. It is the first and only such device to have FDA approval. Prior to approval, the standard aortic aneurysm treatment requires opening the patient’s chest and abdomen.

“Not every patient is an open operative candidate, so the TAMBE device takes a lot of patients who have no option and gives them a minimally invasive one,” Dr. Tyagi said. “The mortality rate in the clinical trial for this device was zero.”

In June 2024, the first patient in the state to received a GORE TAMBE device. Omran Abdul-Khoudoud, MD, a vascular surgeon at UK King’s Daughters, was monitoring the patient’s aneurysm for almost five years. It was impacting her kidneys and bowels, so she was referred to UK HealthCare for further treatment. The GORE TAMBE procedure went well and paved the way for Hutton to have a hernia and bowel obstruction repaired through surgery. She is recovering well.

HIGHLIGHTS



New Faculty

Meet Dr. Manda Maley

The UK Department of Surgery welcomed Manda Maley, MD, RPVI, as an assistant professor in the Division of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery in August 2024. Prior to joining UK HealthCare, Dr. Maley was chief resident of the integrated vascular surgery residency program at the Einstein Health Care Network — Jefferson in Philadelphia.

Dr. Maley earned her medical degree at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C. After medical school, she completed a surgery intern year at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore.

Meet Dr. Travis Hughes

Following a two-year fellowship at UK, Travis Hughes, MD, joined the UK Department of Surgery as an assistant professor in the Division of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery. Dr. Hughes originally came to UK HealthCare in 2017 after matching into the general surgery residency and has remained part of the Department of Surgery since then.

Prior to coming to UK, Dr. Hughes earned his medical degree from the University of Texas McGovern School of Medicine in Austin.

Dr. Hughes is an accomplished researcher with several publications. He also earned multiple resident awards for his excellent teaching.

FACULTY



Eleftherios Xenos, MD, PhD, RVT, FACS
Division Chief;
Associate Chief
Quality Officer – UK
HealthCare



Joseph Bobadilla, MD, FACS



Eric Endean, MD, FACS
Vice Chair for Well
Being



Travis Hughes, MD



Mandy Maley, MD



David Minion, MD, FACS
Co-Director, Saha
Aortic Center;
Program Director
of Vascular and
Endovascular
Fellowship



Tana Repella, MD, PhD, FACS



Mary Sheppard, MD
Co-Director, Saha
Aortic Center



Samuel Tyagi, MD

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDERS (Dec. 2024)

Whitney Jamison, APRN
Larissa Spurgeon, APRN
Jana Elam, APRN
Sharon Pelfrey, APRN

Dr. Eric Endean, vice chair for well-being, and Glenda Mutinda, PhD, director for well-being, discuss ways to infuse concepts of well-being into a guiding leadership strategy within the Department of Surgery.

KEY PERSONNEL

LEADERSHIP



William B. Inabnet III, MD, MHA, FACS
The Johnston-Wright Endowed Professor and Chair of Surgery, Surgeon-in-Chief, UK HealthCare



Sandra Beck, MD, FACS, FASCRS
Assistant Dean of Program Development – UK Graduate Medical Education



B. Mark Evers, MD, FACS
Vice Chair for Research; Director, Markey Cancer Center



J. Scott Roth, MD, FACS
Division Chief; Vice Chair for Clinical Affairs



Margaret Griffen, MD, FACS
Vice Chair for Leadership and Professional Development



Danielle Walsh, MD, FAAP, FACS
Vice Chair of Quality and Process Improvement



Crystal F. Totten, MD, FACS
Co-Vice Chair of Professionalism and Integrity; Program Director of Gastrointestinal MIS Fellowship



Prakash Pandalai, MD, FACS
Co-Vice Chair of Professionalism and Integrity



Eric Endean, MD, FACS
Vice Chair of Well-Being



Melissa R. Newcomb, MD, FACS
Vice Chair of Education
Assistant Dean for Assessment and Evaluation - GME



Jordan Miller, DO
Associate Vice Chair for Well-Being



Brooke Skaggs, PA-C
Director, Surgery Advanced Practice Providers



Glenda Mutinda, PhD
Director of Well-Being

KEY PERSONNEL

RESIDENTS & FELLOWS
2025-26

RESIDENTS

General Surgery Residency

PGY 1

Alexandra Ahrens, MD
Rashmi Bharadwaj, MD
Madeline Coleman, MD
Blake DiPaola, MD
Margaret Hybl, MD
Paul Jin, MD
Zachary King, DO
Kayce Phelps, MD

PGY 2

Logan Beutler, DO
Benjamin Duggan, MD
Jack Kuerzi, MD
Karleigh Maze, MD, MEd
Bridget McClain, MD
Summer Roberson, MD
Dimond Shartzter, MD
Zhuang-Yao Daniel Wei, MD

PGY 3

Emily Cassim, MD
Lekha Devara, MD
Rylie Frayman, MD
Megan Ireland, MD
Osvaldo Mendez, MD
Madison Sands Gutierrez, MD
Manasa Veluvolu, MD, MPH

PGY 4

Marina Robson Chase, MD
Cody Crnkovic, MD
Noah Jordan, DO
Jessica McKelvey, MD
Cristina Ortega, DO
Gabriele Pate, MD
Aum Patel, MD
Anna Reagan, MD
Adam Rooks, MD

PGY 5

Madeline Anderson, DO
Mackenzie Prewitt, MD
Brittany Levy, MD
Hannah McDonald, MD, PhD
Tejas Nandurkar, MD
Kyle Ridlen, MD
Morgan Sindall Burrows, MD

General Surgery
Research Year

Jacob Hubbuch, MD
Meredith Johnson, MD
Carly Celebrezze, MD
Andrew Whipkey, MD
Omar Zaki, MD

Preliminary Interns

Mary Bedard, MD, PhD
Marisa Bohn, MD

Alison Campbell, MD
Kyle Cicalese, MD (PGY2 Prelim)
Nicholas Demas, MD
Cole Homer, MD
Nausherwan Hussain, MD
Sohan Kumar Jakkaraju, MD
Dimitri Johnson, MD
Yochana Kancherla, DO
Christina Kuhrau, MD
Weston McDonald, MD, MS
Mary Katherine Oberman, MD

Interventional Radiology

Dakota Doucet, MD
Jessica Hiscox, DO, MS
Mohamed Abo Ali, MD

Cardiothoracic Surgery
Integrated 6-Year Residency

PGY 1

Soyoung Cheon, MD

PGY 2

Mohammad Malik, DO

PGY 3

Jeffrey Hutchens, MD

PGY 4

Daniel Mohammadi, MD

PGY 5

Alan Parr, MD

PGY 6

Andrew Gorton, MD

Plastic And Reconstructive
Surgery Integrated 6-Year
Residency

PGY 1

Collin Gonce, MD
Dakota St. Pierre, MD

PGY 2

Rohan Brebion, MD
Rachel Pan, MD

PGY 3

Kaitlyn Samuels, MD

PGY 4

Bradley Miyake, MD
Sara Taege, MD
Sydney Char, MD

PGY 5

E. Abi Recktenwald, MD

PGY 6

Susan “Tucker” Kornegay, MD
Evan Lynch, MD, PhD
Garrett Minor, MD

FELLOWS

Quality Improvement and
Clinical Informatics Fellow

Jake Hubbuch, MD

Thoracic Surgery Fellowship

PGY 7

Huseyin “Akin” Erol, MD

General, Endocrine, &
Metabolic Surgery Fellow

Kyle Murphy, MD

Colon And Rectal Surgery
Fellowship

Erin McAtee, DO

Hand Surgery Fellow

Alexander Rosinski, MD

Surgical Critical Care
Fellowship

PGY 6

Elizabeth Bittner, MD
Megan White, MD

Vascular Surgery Fellowship

PGY 6

Reagan Stafford, MD
Michaela Thomas, DO, MBA

PGY 7

Charles Renner, MD

A CHAMPION OF GLOBAL SURGERY

The UK College of Medicine Department of Surgery Global and Rural Health Program enhances medical education by providing opportunities for residents to learn and train abroad, delivering surgical care in high-need areas across the world. One of its notable supporters, Richard Furman, MD, FACS, has long understood the value of global surgical service — not only for the communities it benefits but also for the surgeons it shapes.

Dr. Furman’s early experiences in medical school and residency provided him with a strong foundation, but it was his work in global surgery that changed the trajectory of his career and his mission.

After earning his medical doctorate from the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta, Dr. Furman completed general and cardiothoracic surgery residencies at UK. He relocated to Boone, N.C., soon after to work in private practice alongside his brother, Lowell, until his untimely passing in 2006.

The Furman brothers developed a close friendship with Franklin Graham, son of famed evangelist Billy Graham, and were asked to assist on a medical mission to India in 1977. This experience ignited a passion for international medical service, leading the trio to establish the World Medical Mission (WMM) less than a year later. Now the medical arm of Samaritan’s Purse, WMM has placed thousands of medical professionals in underserved hospitals worldwide.

Given his lifelong commitment to global surgery, Dr. Furman was particularly excited to support UK Department of Surgery’s Global and Rural Health Program, launched under the leadership of William B. Inabnet III, MD, MHA, FACS, chair of the UK Department of Surgery and surgeon-in-chief at UK HealthCare. The program offers residents unparalleled opportunities to work in resource-limited settings, developing their skills while addressing urgent surgical needs.

“By going overseas, you’re helping people in much greater need than we typically see in the U.S.,” Dr. Furman explained. “And you’re helping yourself as a surgeon. You gain confidence navigating complex conditions and encounter cases you wouldn’t dream of seeing here.”

Despite stepping back from primary surgical roles, Dr. Furman remains active with WMM, assessing hospital needs and mentoring younger surgeons. He believes that medical missions are as much about training the next generation as they are about serving the immediate needs of patients.

Through his support of the program, Dr. Furman continues to inspire new surgeons to broaden their horizons and embrace the responsibility of global service. His legacy is evident in the growing number of medical professionals who, thanks to programs like UK’s, are carrying forward his mission: ensuring that high-quality surgical care reaches those who need it most.

Alumni, faculty and staff interested in donating to the Department of Surgery Global Surgery Fund, the General Surgery Resident Wellness Fund, or the Legacy Lectureship Fund, please use the QR code below.



Philanthropic support continues to be vital to the department’s continued success and serves as a key accelerator for pillar-based initiatives. To learn more about giving opportunities, contact Lindsey Clem, director of philanthropy, at jlcclem4@uky.edu or make a gift using the QR code.

Dr. Richard Furman, right, a UK surgery alum and co-founder of the World Medical Missions program, has been a key supporter of the Department of Surgery Global Surgery Fund.





IN MEMORIAM: ALFRED BYRON YOUNG, MD, FACS

Alfred Byron Young, MD, FACS, former chair of the UK Departments of Surgery and Neurosurgery, died on January 31, 2025, at age 85.

The Department of Surgery mourns the loss of one of its dynamic leaders and a giant in the field of surgical education and brain tumor research.

Dr. Young grew up in Kentucky and Illinois. He earned his undergraduate degree from Transylvania University and was a member of the second medical school class at the University of Kentucky. Following his medical degree from UK, he completed a residency in neurosurgery at Vanderbilt University.

After two years of military service, Dr. Young returned to the UK College of Medicine as a professor of neurosurgery in 1975. As a faculty member, Dr. Young had clinical interests in carotid disease, brain injuries and treatment of brain tumors. He was awarded numerous National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants for investigations into brain injuries and the developing field of stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS) for the treatment of brain cancer.

In 1985, Dr. Young was named chair of the Department of Surgery. He was the third chair of the department following Ben Eiseman, MD, and Ward Griffen, MD, PhD. He would serve in that position for 11 years.

During his leadership, Dr. Young recruited surgical faculty with strong interests in research as well as a number of full-time PhD investigators. He also recruited faculty with strong commitments to teaching, such as David Sloan, MD, FACS, FRCS, and Richard Schwartz, MD, to enhance resident and medical student education. As a result of his recruitment and support efforts, the Department of Surgery became ranked among the top five programs in surgical education.

“He was an early and very strong advocate for innovation in surgical education ... and an early proponent of quality initiatives,” Dr. Sloan said. “I shall mourn Dr. Young’s passing.”

At the same time, the Department of Surgery’s clinical services increased dramatically. By the end of Dr. Young’s tenure, the number of operative cases increased to 8,500 and out-patient visits to 49,000 cases.

Dr. Young also established the Division of Otolaryngology at UK HealthCare and recruited Raleigh Jones, MD, as its chief. He was also instrumental in the advent of UK’s trauma program and supported the hospital’s first helicopter trauma response team with its division chief, Dr. Donald Barker.

In 1996, Dr. Young returned to neurosurgery full time, nurtured its transition from a division to its own department, and served as its founding chair.

While continuing his practice and contributing to advanced research, he served on the Council of the NIH Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke and had a seat on the advisory committee to the Director of the NIH. In recognition of his contributions to brain tumor research, the Congress of Neurological Surgeons awarded him the prestigious MaHaley Award.

In the last few years of his life, Dr. Young was steadfast in his support of the mission of UK HealthCare and the two departments to which he dedicated so much of his expertise and love. His contributions as a surgeon, professor and leader at UK continue to have a lasting impact.



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