The Division of Neurosurgery provides the full range of contemporary neurosurgical practice. Using a multidisciplinary approach, we provide care to diagnose, treat, and rehabilitate patients with neurological disorders. The division also offers residency and fellowship opportunities, and conducts path-defining research that is advancing the field.

The 2018-2019 academic year was a pivotal period of expansion for UC San Diego Neurosurgery. Neurosurgery and Neurosciences maintained its top 50 ranking in U.S. News & World Report. Our Quad-Pod of neurosurgical operating rooms in Jacobs Medical Center continued to provide integrated cranial and spinal navigation, intra-operative MRI and CT capabilities, and sophisticated microscopy and imaging tools. In addition to the tremendous opportunities for neuro-oncology and restorative procedures, these suites are home to the stereo-EEG and laser ablation procedures that anchor our Level 4 Epilepsy Center — the only one in the region.

The Neurosurgery division was a local host of the 2019 American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) conference in April, and was featured in a "History of San Diego Neurosurgery" video that was shown at the opening general plenary session.

We launched our "Neuro Hub", an innovative, technology-driven teaching and meeting space designed for surgeons both here and abroad. This space complements and connects our resources of our Quad-Pod, the Altman Clinical and Translational Research Institute, and the Center for the Future of Surgery, as well as our unique institution that is rich in both neurosciences and engineering.

Neurosurgery also broadened its geographic footprint to include a new clinic in Rancho Bernardo, in addition to several other regional locations including Hillcrest, La Jolla, Carlsbad, and Escondido. In addition to our community medical center partnerships of Tri-City and Palomar, Neurosurgery also provides the neurosurgical service needs at the La Jolla VA Medical Center and Rady Children’s Hospital. Our two destination neurovascular centers at Hillcrest and Jacobs Medical Center enable us to maintain our status as the third Comprehensive Stroke Center in the country. We receive national-level referrals for complex cases for both adult and pediatric patients.

Our strong tradition of teaching excellence will be further enhanced by the expansion of the Center for the Future Surgery to include a new microsurgical lab and hybrid OR/angiography suite, that opened in Fall 2019. This visionary, unique facility provides national and international training opportunities as well as a clearinghouse for the research and development of new technologies.

Our world-class Skull Base Surgery program — led by Dr. Marc Schwartz in Neurological Surgery and Dr. Rick Friedman from Otolaryngology — remains one of the largest in the country. Through this program, Drs. Schwartz and Friedman bring destination integrated care to UC San Diego for the most complex cranial tumors.

The faculty and residency program continue our strong history of academic productivity and national engagement. Faculty were responsible for 96 peer reviewed publications and 4,092 citations in the 2018-2019 academic year. Neurological Surgery continued its strong support of UC San Diego medical students; all four matched successfully to top programs around the country including UC San Francisco and University of Pennsylvania. We were delighted to recruit leading candidates for our own residency program.

Our faculty continues to expand. Over the course of the past academic year, we recruited Drs. Beaumont, Kfoury-Beaumont, Osorio, and Pham.

Thomas Beaumont, MD, PhD specializes in skull base and minimally invasive cranial surgery. He performs both open microsurgery and endoscopic approaches for brain, skull base and pituitary tumors where he tailors the surgical approach to provide maximally effective yet minimally invasive neurosurgical care. Also trained as a scientist, Dr. Beaumont has extensive research experience in genomics and epigenetics, and has received funding from the National Institutes of Health.

Najla Kfoury-Beaumont, MS, PhD is the first of three dedicated PhD researchers in Neurosurgery. For her postdoctoral training, she pursued translational research at Washington University to investigate potential antibody-based therapies to target tau trans-cellular propagation in Alzheimer’s disease. Her current research interests extend across cancer biology, development, and epigenetics with special emphasis on glioblastoma. Her long-term research interests include the study of epigenetics in brain tumors and developmental disorders.

Above: Dr. Martin Pham — a world leader in robotic surgery — performing spine surgery.

Above: Homiro Fawzy, NP, DNP (second from right) pictured with fellow delegates from the North San Diego County branch of California Association for Nurse Practitioners (CAMP) who met with legislators to discuss healthcare issues in California. Separately, she also received the Medal of Excellence in patient care from Moore’s Cancer Center.

Above: Dr. John Alksne, Founding Chief of the Division of Neurosurgery and Former Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences, pictured with 2019-2020 Chief Residents, Drs. Jeffrey Steinberg and David Santiago-Dieppa.
which fundraises for brain cancer research. Oligodendroglioma, was the first patient survivor Angie Weight, at the December 2018 Society of Neurological Surgeons (SNS) boot camp event “Over the Edge for Brain Cancer” (Cure). Angie, a 41-year-old artist and Martin Pham, MD, PhD earned his PhD in Biomedical Engineering at UC Berkeley/UC San Francisco (UCSF), with a focus on translational research in brain tumor imaging, and completed both medical school and Neurosurgery residency at UCSF. Dr. Osorio completed a post graduate surgical fellowship in the Department of Orthopaedics at Columbia University in New York City. His dual-training provides an interdisciplinary perspective for the most complex spine pathologies including adult spinal deformity, cervical deformity, and spinal tumors.

Dr. J. Scott Pannell instructing neurosurgery interns at the Society of Neurological Surgeons (SNS) boot camp held at the Center for the Future of Surgery, May 2019.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Neurosurgery resident Dr. Arvin Wali was recognized by third year medical students and received the UC San Diego School of Medicine Humanism in Medicine Resident Award in Surgery. With this award, he is now a member of UC San Diego School of Medicine’s Chapter of the Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS).

For his considerable involvement in UC San Diego Neurocritical Care, Dr. David Barba was awarded the 2018 AAN Award for Most Collaborative Neurosurgeon.

In July 2018, Dr. Sharona Ben-Haim was granted the AAMC/AMA Early Career Women Faculty Leadership Development Scholarship to attend the seminar in Colorado. This seminar provides women physicians and scientists the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and skills used to navigate academic medicine and continue their path to leadership.

SELECT PUBLICATIONS


In 2018, Dr. Suniti Jeswani was named Palomar Physician of the Year for his work in Trauma ICU. Dr. Jeswani was also recognized as Palomar Physician of the Year in 2019 for his exceptional work in the Neuro Unit.

Dr. Michael Levy was recognized and awarded the Service Award as an international member of the Peruvian Neurosurgical Society at their annual meeting.

Dr. J. Scott Pannell has been appointed the role of the Primary Endovascular faculty liaison to the Stroke Leadership Committee.

FUNDED RESEARCH

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Joseph Ciacci

Alexander Khalessi

RESEARCH TITLE

A Prospective, Randomized, Double Blind, Vehicle and Placebo-Controlled, Multi-dose, Multicenter Study to Evaluate the Safety and Preliminary Efficacy of Human IDCT in Subjects

exRNA Biomarkers for Human Gliona

FUNDING SOURCE

CTI Clinical Trial and Consulting Services

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