

Where Innovation Accelerates: Office of Strategic Business Development & Partnerships



Rajesh Aggarwal, MD, PhD, FRCS, FACS, joined Jefferson in July 2017 as Senior Vice President of Strategic Business Development and Professor of Surgery. Dr. Aggarwal is a global leader in utilizing simulation technologies in medical education and a passionate healthcare innovator.

Innovation is everywhere – from smartphones in virtually every consumer's pocket to groundbreaking business and operating models shaking up entire industries. How can disruptive innovations make a positive impact on healthcare in general and the Jefferson enterprise in particular?

That's the central question that the Office of Strategic Business Development & Partnerships at Jefferson, established at the end of last year, is addressing. Rajesh Aggarwal, MD, PhD, FCRS, FACS, serves as Senior Vice President for Strategic Business Development in addition to maintaining his bariatric surgery practice as a Professor of Surgery.

Dr. Aggarwal explains that the Office isn't facilitating the traditional "technology transfer" model that universities use to spin off homegrown innovations. Rather, this Office is looking for outside companies with pilot solutions or minimally viable products to "spin in" to the Jefferson enterprise.

"We are working with companies to co-develop and co-implement innovations, including identifying clinical and financial ROI," Dr. Aggarwal says. "In addition to adopting the solutions within Jefferson Health, we will join our partners in commercializing successful innovations to other healthcare systems."

In addition to working to improve patient care and financial performance, the Office is working to solidify Jefferson's reputation as one of the key organizations advancing healthcare innovation across the country. The team welcomes timely input from across Jefferson.

"If one of our surgeons reads about an innovative company and thinks, 'I wish we could have that at Jefferson,' please reach out to me right away," Dr. Aggarwal says. "We can look into it, and if it's a viable product, we will work to catalyze the entire process – from administration and logistics to financial and legal considerations. Time is of the essence."

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The Office of Strategic Business Development & Partnerships is working closely with the Clinical Research Office to ensure that all studies are approved by the Institutional Review Board and accepted by scientific, peer-reviewed publications. Yet Dr. Aggarwal is quick to note that not every stage of the innovation process requires a formal study.

"We can do a quick trial as long as it's HIPAA compliant," he explains. "A pilot study can inform a power analysis – which helps confirm the viability of the innovation and the need for a full-blown trial."

One of the Office's first partners is Lifeguard Health Networks, which has developed digital technology that enables cancer patients to self-report outcomes.

"If patients report their outcomes at least once a day, providers can be more mindful of side effects or complications, and they can intervene before a patient has adverse outcomes. That can improve quality of life and lengthen survival," Dr. Aggarwal says. He adds that while it seems simple, the company's technology is underpinned by a complex set of algorithms and processes.

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The Office is collaborating with the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center to explore how Jefferson can implement the solution – including what questions to ask, when to trigger alerts to clinicians and how to handle patient issues as they arise. Running a trial of the technology is a way to test impact on patient outcomes and satisfaction and to identify opportunities to reduce costs and/or increase revenue.

Above all, he says, the Office is operating as a start-up within a 194-year-old institution: "We aim to be very agile. When a company gets in touch with us, we don't want to think in terms of weeks or months, but days or even hours."

For more information, please contact Dr. Aggarwal at rajesh.aggarwal@jefferson.edu or 215-955-8987.



Betty Coyle

Step into Suite 605 in the College Building and you'll receive a friendly greeting from the Department of Surgery's Administrative Secretary Betty Coyle. Since taking her post 21 years ago, Betty has been making sure the front office is orderly, well supplied and welcoming to staff and guests alike. In addition to those responsibilities, she supports the intensivist group and coordinates the busy schedule of Jonathan Brody, PhD, Vice Chair for Surgical Research.

Betty first joined Jefferson in 1973 as a library technician. She ordered medical books, kept the library's budget and helped start the Patient Education Resource Collection (PERC) – an invaluable program in the pre-Internet era.

"We were serving people who walked in from the street and wanted information to support a relative or friend who was in the hospital. We offered books about diseases and conditions and resources on how to cook better," she says. "We were still using the card catalog, so there was a lot of work cross-referencing the information!"

After a decade in Jefferson's library, Betty left for 14 years to focus on her sons, Michael and Timmy. During that time, she was very active in the Frankford Mothers Nursing Association, making phone calls and home visits to support new moms with breastfeeding.

Outside work, she and her husband, Frank, have always been involved in their parish. These days, she gives back by volunteering through Jefferson's Pastoral Care department – devoting most of her Wednesday lunch hours to visiting with patients at Jefferson Hospital for Neuroscience. A Eucharistic Minister, she offers patients encouragement, prayer and often just the gift of a warm, friendly presence.

When she arrives to work each morning, Betty reads the wall plaque as she exits the elevator: "God loveth a cheerful giver."

"That, to me, is who we all should be – whether we're working with each other or interacting with patients," she says.