Building on a long and distinguished history, the Jefferson Plastic Surgery practice is forging an equally bright future as part of the Jefferson Department of Surgery. The group - believed to be the oldest continuing plastic surgery practice in the United States – has been affiliated with Thomas Jefferson University for more than a century. As of February 2021, the surgeons and the practice have formally joined the Jefferson enterprise.

Led by Steven Copit, MD, the practice also includes Matthew Jenkins, MD, and Andrew Newman, MD. Dr. Copit and Dr. Jenkins are continuing to practice in their office space on the 15th floor of the Wills Eye Hospital Building at 9th and Walnut Street in Center City. They are supported by an excellent staff including nurse practitioner Brooke Bell, CRNP, who provides pre and post-op support to patients. As a certified nurse injector, Brooke is also able to offer Botox and filler injections.

"With the responsibility for plastic surgery services throughout the enterprise, we can better integrate and standardize these procedures across all of our hospitals."

These surgeons handle the full complement of plastic surgery procedures, including reconstructive procedures for trauma and cancer patients, as well as craniofacial surgery, pediatric plastic surgery, various forms of microsurgery, and cosmetic surgery.

"As Jefferson Health has increased the focus on breast cancer treatment, we are expanding our plastic surgery coverage at all the affiliated hospitals," Dr. Copit explains. "Our practice stands out for the ability to offer breast cancer patients extensive options for reconstructive surgery."

The Department of Surgery’s legacy in plastic surgery dates back to Thomas D. Mütter, MD, who served as the third Chair of Surgery from 1841 until 1856 and whose collection of artifacts formed the basis for the Mütter Museum at The College of Physicians of Philadelphia. The Jefferson Plastic Surgery practice was founded in 1904 by Warren B. Davis, MD, the first president of the American Board of Plastic Surgery. Dr. Davis’ son, Wallace Davis, MD, subsequently joined the practice and went on to become Chief of Plastic Surgery at Jefferson. Other notable partners include James W. Fox, MD, who no longer practices but still volunteers as the practice historian, and John H. Moore, Jr., MD, who died in 2011.

Dr. Copit joined the practice in 1995 and now looks forward to the exponential impact that will be possible as part of Jefferson Health. “With the responsibility for plastic surgery services throughout the enterprise, we can better integrate and standardize these procedures across all of our hospitals,” he says. “By creating clinical pathways and consistent pre-op and post-op protocols, we will further improve the quality and safety of care.”

For more information about Jefferson Plastic Surgery, please visit: Jeffersonplasticsurgery.com

In addition to general plastic surgery, Dr. Newman focuses on breast reconstruction, microsurgical reconstruction, as well as extremity and post-orthopedic reconstruction. After attending medical school at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, he completed his general surgery residency and plastic surgery residency at the University of Pennsylvania Health System.

Dr. Newman is currently providing surgical care to patients through his office in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, as part of Abington – Jefferson Health. In February 2022, he will extend his practice to include the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and Methodist Hospital.

To schedule an appointment with a plastic surgeon or refer a patient, please call 215-625-6630.
In the Spotlight

Breast surgeon Kristin L. Brill, MD, has joined the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center at Jefferson Health (SKCC) as Enterprise Director of Breast Oncology.

Dr. Brill brings expertise in a comprehensive range of services for patients with malignant and benign disease, including breast-conserving surgery, nipple-sparing mastectomy, preventive mastectomy, reconstruction, accelerated partial breast radiation device placement, and clinical trials for breast cancer. Particular areas of focus include young women with breast cancer and those at high risk.

She is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and is routinely named a “Top Doc” by Philadelphia magazine and New Jersey Monthly. She is a member of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, American Society of Breast Surgeons, Society of Surgical Oncology, and the Breastcancer.org advisory board.

After receiving her Bachelor’s Degree from Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pa., she received her Medical Degree from Hahnemann University School of Medicine in Philadelphia. She completed her Surgical Residency at New York Methodist Hospital in Brooklyn and a Breast Surgical Oncology fellowship at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York.

Dr. Brill sees patients at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Center City, Abington – Jefferson Health, and Jefferson Health in New Jersey (Cherry Hill, Hammonton, and Sewell).

To schedule an appointment or refer a patient, please call 215-503-2346. For more information about the Jefferson Breast Care Center, please visit JeffersonHealth.org/Breast.

Ernest L. "Gary" Rosato, Professor of Surgery and Division Director, General Surgery

Ernest L. "Gary" Rosato, MD, FACS, died March 17, 2021, at age 57 following a courageous battle with glioblastoma. Gary spent 34 years of his life as part of the Jefferson family—first as a student, then a resident and, for the last 24 years, as a faculty member.

He was born January 10, 1964, in Philadelphia to Gertrude and Francis E. Rosato, Sr., MD. He served as senior class president at Episcopal Academy and completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania in 1986. Gary went on to medical school at Jefferson Medical College (now Sidney Kimmel Medical College), graduating in 1990. After completing his general surgery residency at the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in 1996, he joined the faculty as an instructor before advancing through the ranks to become a full professor in 2010.

For more than 50 years, the Rosato family has been linked to the Department of Surgery at Jefferson. Gary’s father spent 22 years as Chair of the Department of Surgery and served as the sixth Samuel D. Gross Professor of Surgery. (For more about the Rosato family legacy, please see “ Those Who Give” on page 4.) During his own nearly quarter-century at Jefferson, Gary assumed multiple leadership roles, including Chief of the Division of General Surgery and Vice Chair for Clinical Affairs, as well as founder and first director of the Jefferson Gastroesophageal Center. He also held leadership positions in numerous professional societies, published more than 85 peer-reviewed publications and received grant funding for numerous clinical trials.

"Gary had an amazing ability to assess a situation whether it be in the operating room or in life, calculate the outcome, and bring an intense measure of positivity to the situation. This was true in the operating room. This was true in regards to patient care. This was true in regards to resident progression through the 5-7 year General Surgery residency. This was true on the softball field. This was true when dealing with difficult faculty or organizational matters. This was also true when I spoke to him just one day after his craniotomy, awaiting the diagnosis of his brain tumor.”

— from the eulogy given by Charles J. Yeo, MD, at the memorial service on May 2, 2021.

Gary helped train scores of surgical residents and medical students. He was recognized with the Jefferson Medical College Dean’s Citation for Advancement of Education in 2005 and 2010, the Jefferson Medical College Dean’s Citation for Faculty Mentoring in 2006 and the Thomas Jefferson University Outstanding Clinician Award in 2010.

Gary is survived by his wife Jeanette (née Kolmen), his son Francis Ernest, MD, his son Ernest Lancelot (Gary), Jr., and his daughter Madeline Claire. He is also survived by siblings Anne V. Rosato, MD, Gertrude M. Rosato (James Simpson), Frances E. Rosato, Jr., MD (Kimberly) and Aimée Ansie (Jeffrey).

If you wish to make a donation in memory of Dr. Rosato, please call Kelly Austin at 215-955-6383.
Saligman-Funded Projects Yield Insights for Liver Transplant, Lung Cancer Patient Care

Over the past five years, the Saligman Family Surgery Pilot Grant Program has supported 21 novel research ideas within the Department of Surgery, sparking innovation for our faculty and trainees alike. These projects explore a range of topics related to improving the quality and safety of surgical care. What follows are highlights of two studies that have demonstrated success and long-term potential for continued research to improve patient care.

Primary Non-Function Following Liver Transplant: How Do We Define High Risk Retransplant Candidates?

Principal Investigator: Adam S. Bodzin, MD

Although deceased donor liver transplant success rates are excellent, transplant physicians still face the most feared complication: primary non-function (PNF) of liver allografts. This pilot has been using the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR) database to evaluate the number of patients who experience PNF following a liver transplant. Dr. Bodzin, along with resident Peter Altshuler, MD, and other members of the team, are identifying the proportion of patients with PNF who undergo retransplantation and analyzing their survival rates. After retransplantation, patients have considerably lower survival rates compared to those for whom the primary transplant is a success.

In the past year, this team has performed extensive analysis of more than 3,000 patients who suffered PNF. They used that analysis to create a Recipient PNF Futility Score, which they presented at the Philadelphia Academy of Surgery, where the paper earned second place out of 68 submissions.

Their analysis also identified an unintended subpopulation of patients with PNF who are relisted for transplant but improve on their own and have long-term survival without retransplant.

“We want to understand which pretransplant characteristics might predict this ability to experience PNF and improve without retransplant,” explains Dr. Bodzin. “This will be another important patient population that we will define by a risk model, ultimately guiding physician management of this dreaded morbidity.”

Evaluating Variations in Lung Cancer Surgical Outcomes Along Referral Pathways

Principal Investigator: Tyler S. Grenda, MD, MS

Lung cancer screening has gained momentum with healthcare payers, including the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), based on mortality benefits demonstrated in screening trials. These benefits are predicated on early detection in at-risk populations, as well as subsequent treatment of those diagnosed with lung cancers.

“Surgical resection is the standard of care for early-stage disease,” explains Dr. Grenda. “Yet there is significant variation in mortality across nationally representative cohorts of patients.”

With the help of the Saligman Grant funding, Dr. Grenda and his team purchased individual state inpatient databases from both the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP) and the Pennsylvania Healthcare Cost Containment Council. They are using these databases to further evaluate the relationship between services used and quality of patient care.

“More specifically, we are evaluating the quality and efficiency of care from the initial diagnosis or staging evaluation to postoperative care,” Dr. Grenda says. “We’re working to determine if certain provider ‘networks’ or referral patterns simply provide higher-quality care across the entire continuum for lung cancer.”

This team has already generated preliminary data to motivate future studies and serve as pilot data for additional work aimed at better understanding quality and efficiency in lung cancer care.

“We hope our efforts will help in identifying factors underlying variation in lung cancer outcomes and opportunities for quality improvement across the spectrum of care,” he concludes.

To learn more about supporting Jefferson’s surgical research efforts, please contact Kelly Austin at 215-955-6383 or kelly.austin@jefferson.edu.

Sean Maher, MBA

Sean Maher joined the Department of Surgery in March 2021 as Senior Business Manager, bringing a decade of experience in healthcare management. As an undergraduate at the Pennsylvania State University, he earned a degree in Health Policy Administration. After graduation, he spent more than five years at the University of Pennsylvania Health System, starting in the Department of Neurology.

After moving to the Temple Health System, he discovered that his true passion is in the financial – not operational – side of healthcare management. While at Temple, he earned an MBA from Gwynedd Mercy University and advanced to become Senior Financial Analyst for projections, handling budgets for the entire health system.

As the Department of Surgery’s Senior Business Manager, Maher is applying his skills in financial management and analysis. In addition to having overall responsibility for the Department’s budget, Maher is working to streamline the collection, analysis and dissemination of financial data to clinicians within the Department. He is building a financial model to help physicians to better understand and continually improve their own performance data.

“I’m most excited about getting this statistical information to the physicians on a monthly basis,” he says. “Once everything is automated, they’ll be able to drill down to see the financial information associated with the procedures they are performing.”

Maher, who grew up in Northeast Philadelphia, met his wife in Sea Isle City (his favorite vacation). They now live in Upper Dublin with their daughter, Quinn, who turns two in August.
Surgical Resident Workspace Honors Rosato Family and Dr. Karen Chojnacki

In October 2020, the Department of Surgery unveiled the newly constructed surgical resident workspace on the fourth floor of the Gibbon Building in Center City. The dedicated, multi-use space is designed to give residents a comfortable environment that promotes their well-being.

“A surgical residency is rewarding and exhilarating, but it can also be stressful and exhausting,” says Gerald A. Isenberg, MD, Vice Chair for Education and President, Thomas Jefferson University Hospital Medical Staff. “This ‘home away from home’ gives our trainees space and time to create the healthy habits that will help them perform at their best during residency and throughout their surgical careers.”

The RRC Surgical Resident Workspace offers personal lockers and comfortable seating areas, television monitors for Jefferson employee announcements, eight individual computer stations and a full-length conference table. The kitchenette features a full-sized refrigerator, coffee maker, microwave, cabinet storage and a sink.

Chief Resident Zachary Callahan, MD, explains, “The RRC has quickly become home base for our surgical residents with the emphasis on ‘home.’ Having a beautiful, secure location to discuss patient care, complete with the latest technologies, has had a profound positive impact on resident camaraderie and affords us the resources to provide excellent care to our patients.”

Following a devastating health diagnosis for Ernest L. “Gary” Rosato, MD, last fall, an anonymous donor provided a naming gift for the space, now called the Rosato, Rosato, Chojnacki (RRC) Surgical Resident Workspace. In addition to memorializing Gary, the gift recognizes the significant contributions of his father, Francis E. Rosato, Sr., MD, who was Chair of Surgery from 1978 until 2000, as well as their practice colleague, Karen A. Chojnacki, MD, the second Francis E. Rosato Professor of Surgery, following Gary.

At the time of publication, more than $210,000 has been raised for the project in Dr. Rosato’s honor. To make a gift in memory of Dr. Rosato, contact Kelly Austin at 215-955-6383 or kelly.austin@jefferson.edu.

Karen Chojnacki, MD, has been named the Francis E. Rosato Professor of Surgery and Vice Chair for Clinical Affairs.

Caitlyn Costanzo, MD, and Harish Lavu, MD, have been named Co-Vice Chairs for Quality.

Hien Dang, MD, has been named interim Vice Chair for Research.

Theresa Yeo, PhD, MPH, ACNP-BC, AOCNP-BC, will be inducted as a fellow of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (FAANP) during the annual meeting this summer. She was also recognized as the Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse Practitioner (AOCNP®) of the Year.

Olugbenga Okusanya, MD, (pictured) and PGY3 resident Brian Tili, MD, received a $5,000 Jefferson seed grant to study neurogenic thoracic outlet syndrome (TOS).

Vakhtang Tchantchaleishvili, MD, has been named Editor-in-chief of Artificial Organs.

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