
2023

News in Brief

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Recommended Citation

(2023) "News in Brief," *Jefferson Surgical Solutions*: Vol. 18: Iss. 1, Article 9.

Available at: <https://jdc.jefferson.edu/jss/vol18/iss1/9>

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Grateful Patient Supports Dr. Plestis and Jefferson Aortic Center



Renée Cardwell Hughes

For Renée Cardwell Hughes, April 30, 2021, started as an ordinary Friday. She arrived early to her office at Philadelphia Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), the workforce development corporation where she was president and chief executive officer.

The day took a turn just before 9 a.m. – when Hughes experienced crushing pain while walking from the ladies’ room back to her office.

“It felt like Wonder Woman had slammed her shield into my chest,” she recalls.

Security footage shows Hughes, who was alone on the fourth floor, stumbling in the hallway. She made it back to her office, where she collapsed on the floor, unable to move. When she didn’t respond to calls about her 11 a.m. appointment, building personnel came to check on her.

“I lay on the floor for two hours,” she says. “I now know that my heart was pumping blood into my chest the whole time.”

To this day, Hughes does not know the reason behind the ambulance transporting her to Jefferson rather than the closest hospital. What she does know: she’s incredibly grateful they did.

When she woke up in the hospital on Saturday, May 1, she saw her husband, Ken, followed by her son and her sister. She also had two brothers in the waiting room, and a third brother on his way from Virginia. “That tells you – family is a big deal for me,” she notes.

That’s also when she learned what had happened the day before. Despite having no risk factors, Hughes experienced an aortic rupture. Konstadinos A. Plestis, MD, who leads the Jefferson Aortic Center, surgically repaired it by replacing the damaged part of her aorta with a piece of GORE-TEX. Hughes laughs as she remembers asking, “So I’ve got a North Face jacket in my chest?”

A retired Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas judge, Hughes is now recovered and receiving ongoing care from the Jefferson Aortic Center. She is effusive in praising Dr. Plestis and Jacqueline McGee, CRNP, as well as cardiologist Howard H. Weitz, MD. And she lauds the nurses who not only took “incredible care” of her but also shared stories about their families and their passion for patient care. In fact, Hughes says everyone she and Ken encountered at Jefferson – including food service workers, cleaning staff and parking valets – were amazing.

Hughes has expressed her gratitude to Dr. Plestis and his team with a contribution to the Jefferson Aortic Center. To learn more about supporting the Department of Surgery, contact Kelly Austin at **215-955-6383** or kelly.austin@jefferson.edu.



Surgical Solutions

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[JeffersonHealth.org/Surgery](https://www.jeffersonhealth.org/Surgery)

Jefferson Surgical Solutions
is published by
Thomas Jefferson University and
Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.
Jennifer Brumbaugh, MA, Editor-in-Chief
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At the 20th Annual Jefferson Gala on November 30, **Nathaniel R. Evans III, MD**, received the 2022 Achievement Award in Medicine. This award honors a physician who has embraced Jefferson’s mission, provided exemplary care to their patients, and has been a recognized leader in their field. Dr. Evans is Director of the Division of Thoracic and Esophageal Surgery and Chief of Cancer Services at Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center.



Taki Galanis, MD, has been promoted to Associate Professor. He sees patients at the Jefferson Vascular Center in Center City.



Amanda Kohli, PA-C, received the Jefferson Enterprise Advanced Practice Providers (APP) Award for Clinical Excellence. She works in the Division of Acute Care Surgery at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.



Orlando C. Kirton, MD, MBA, Chair of Surgery at Jefferson Health – Abington, has been elected Vice President of the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma (AAST).



Walter K. Kraft, MD, is President Elect of the American Society for Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics. He is a member of our Division of Vascular Medicine.



Danielle M. Pineda, MD, has been promoted to Associate Professor. She specializes in vascular surgery and sees patients at Jefferson Health – Abington.

The Sidney Kimmel Medical College recognized the following faculty members with 2022 Dean’s Awards: Excellence in Education: **Drs. Loren Berman, Caitlyn Costanzo, Jaime Glorioso, and Tyler Grenda**



Faculty Mentoring Award:
Dr. Nathaniel Evans III



Outstanding Clinician in Surgery:
Dr. Francesco Palazzo

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