

# ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

## CONGRATS, GRADS!

On Saturday, June 25, members of the Baylor College of Medicine Department of Neurosurgery came together to celebrate the newest class of graduates. It was a wonderful evening celebrating with so many familiar faces. Join us in congratulating Sungho Lee, MD, Melissa LoPresti, MD, and Terence Verla, MD, MPH, our newest residency graduates! We also also congratulate Ben Shofty, PhD, MD, Alex Hoang, MD, and Nisha Gadgil, MD for completing their fellowships! Click [here](#) to view more photos from the evening.



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Patrick Karas, MD  
*Class of 2021*



We also congratulate Dr. Patrick Karas for recently being awarded the ASSFN Mentored Research Grant! Mentored by BCM Neurosurgery's own Dr. Sameer Sheth, Dr. Kara summarizes that his research

"will use electrodes implanted in brains of patients undergoing evaluation or epilepsy surgery to record how the brain interprets what we see and hear when talking to another person." He explains, "the brain combines these auditory and visual speech signals in complex ways to improve comprehension, but the mechanism of how and where this happens is still not well understood."

## Alumni Connect

Join BCM Alumni Connect, Baylor's exclusive online community, built to help you reconnect with classmates, grow your professional network, and keep up with Baylor news! Perks include: A full opt-in directory of alumni, automatic mentor mapping (find a mentor or become one), access to upcoming events, grand rounds, and more. Visit [www.alumni.bcm.edu](http://www.alumni.bcm.edu) to join today!

Venita Simpson, MD, FAANS  
*Class of 2019*

Join us in congratulating Dr. Venita Simpson for passing her Oral Boards earlier this year! When asked about the accomplishment, Dr. Simpson reflects, "Passing the Oral Boards was the final step in a culmination of many years of hard work and sacrifice. I'm so grateful to my mentors and attendings at Baylor St. Lukes, MD Anderson, Ben Taub, the VA, and Texas Children's Hospital for preparing me in this life-long journey."



## Have an update?

We enjoy celebrating our alumni and all of their accomplishments. From career moves to publications, life milestones and more, email [nsprograms@bcm.edu](mailto:nsprograms@bcm.edu) to share your good news with us!

Nisha Gadgil, MD  
*Class of 2021*

From medical student to resident, fellow to faculty, please join us in congratulating Dr. Nisha Gadgil for her appointment to Director of Pediatric Neurosurgical Movement Disorders at Texas Children's Hospital! With her appointment, Dr. Gadgil joins the BCM Neurosurgery faculty as assistant professor. We look forward to Dr. Gadgil's continued contributions to the BCM Neurosurgery team.



## Chair's Message

Ganesh Rao, M.D.

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for reading the alumni newsletter of the Department of Neurosurgery at Baylor College of Medicine. We have had a remarkable past year and I am excited to share our accomplishments with you. Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center was recently recognized as one of the top 50 hospitals in the nation for Neurology and Neurosurgery (moving from #33 last year to #27).



## Neurosurgery News

We are proud to offer new and exciting technologies at BSLMC including laser interstitial thermal therapy for the treatment of metastatic and primary gliomas, epilepsy and radiation necrosis, 5-ALA guided resections of high grade glioma, and high frequency focused ultrasound for the treatment of movement disorders.

In June we graduated our latest chief residents. Dr. Melissa LoPresti joined Northwestern University as a fellow in pediatric neurosurgery. Dr. Sungho Lee joined the faculty at Louisiana State University Shreveport as an Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery. Dr. Terence Verla joined a private practice group in Orlando and will focus on spinal neurosurgery.

The residency program was recently recognized as #12 in the U.S. in terms of reputation by Doximity. We have been fortunate to host luminaries in the field as visiting professors for our named lectures this past year. We have held dissection labs as well, which have been incredibly educational for the residents. From a research standpoint, the department continues to shine. We are in the top 10 in NIH funding for Departments of Neurosurgery in the U.S. Under the leadership of Dr. Benjamin Deneen, Professor of Neurosurgery, we have launched the new Center for Cancer Neuroscience which will investigate the recently described interactions between the central nervous system and primary brain tumors. This exciting endeavor is being supported by the college and we are actively recruiting new scientists to support this research. We are hopeful that with your continued support, the Department of Neurosurgery at Baylor College of Medicine will continue to excel.

## Lights, Camera, Action!

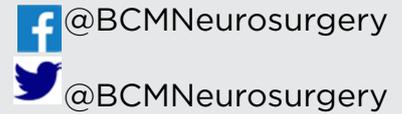
This summer, BCM Neurosurgery leadership and current and former residents took part in filming for a special project. Click [here](#) to watch our recent residency recruitment video and hear what BCM Neurosurgery Chairman Ganesh Rao, MD and Program Director Akash Patel, MD, as well as alumna Nisha Gadgil, MD and current residents Nisha Giridharan, MD and Vigi Katlowitz, MD, PhD, have to say about our program.

## Alumni Reception

As a reminder, you are invited to join us for a special alumni reception at the 2022 CNS Annual Meeting in San Francisco. The reception will be held on Monday, October 10 from 6-7 p.m. in the Sierra J Room at the San Francisco Marriott Marquis (780 Mission Street).

Email [Gina.Collier@bcm.edu](mailto:Gina.Collier@bcm.edu) to RSVP.

**This newsletter is a publication  
of The Department of Neurosurgery at  
Baylor College of Medicine.**



To submit content for the next newsletter,  
please e-mail:

neurosurgery@bcm.edu



Neurosurgery  
Ehni Fund

Named after George Ehni, who founded the Baylor College of Medicine neurosurgical residency program in 1958, the Ehni Fund benefits the Department's Residency Program and covers written board examination fees each year for approximately 10 residents. Additionally, the Fund covers surgical loupes, lead aprons, textbooks, and travel expenses for residents whose abstracts are accepted for presentation. Such support empowers residents to focus on education and developing their skills without having to worry about the mounting costs of study. Baylor is grateful for the generosity that created this Fund, which furthers the work of exceptional Baylor physician-scientists.

**[Click here to support the Ehni Fund.](#)**