

Surgery News

LUNG INSTITUTE

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Dr. Ramiro Fernandez
joins us from the
Cleveland Clinic

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Staff Highlights



New Thoracic Surgeon

Meet Dr. Ramiro Fernandez

We are excited to announce the addition of a full-time thoracic and lung transplant surgeon to our group. Ramiro Fernandez, M.D., joined us last year from the Cleveland Clinic. Dr. Fernandez completed a general surgery residency at Northwestern University after earning his M.D. at Baylor College of Medicine. He met his wife Lizzy (a nurse) as a doctor in residency and they have two children, Ramiro IV "RJ" and Anna.

When he's not seeing patients or performing research, Dr. Fernandez spends time at the park with his kids and at his parents' home with his immediate and extended family.



CARING HANDS



"The surgery reversed everything," Williams recounted. "My heart started pumping again on both sides and my kidneys are working like a newborn. I have my life back and I can't say enough about my medical team. I really believe that God sent them to perform a miracle for me."

Until he met specialists at The Lung Institute, the road to recovery had been long and painful for 48-year-old William Ramey, a truck driver from Missouri City, Texas. While on a long driving trip out west, he developed blood clots and had to be airlifted to a hospital in New Mexico.

Doctors diagnosed Ramey with pulmonary embolism and despite placing him on blood thinners and then intravenous heart medications, his health problems persisted. Over the next 36 months, he was plagued with shortness of breath, fluid retention and kidney problems. Finally, Ramey saw cardiologist Dr. Ajith P. Nair and was diagnosed with chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension (CTEPH), a rare condition that can develop following a pulmonary embolism.

Because of the severity of his condition there remained only one option—pulmonary endarterectomy—a highly specialized surgery that required placing Mr. Ramey on a heart-lung bypass machine and cooling his body to below 20 degrees Celsius to allow the surgeons to safely operate within the pulmonary arteries. Led by Dr. Gabriel Loor, director of lung transplantation and co-director of adult cardiac surgery, a surgery team removed all the obstructing material within Mr. Ramey's pulmonary arteries. The damage to his lungs and heart was reversed almost immediately.

Happenings

The David J. Sugarbaker Division of Thoracic Surgery

The Division of Thoracic Surgery was founded by Dr. David J. Sugarbaker in 2014 and renamed in his honor in 2022- currently the only named division in our department. Dr. Sugarbaker was the founder and chief of the division and founding director of the Lung Institute. Dr. Sugarbaker was a pioneer in the treatment of patients with malignant pleural mesothelioma and his legacy is carried on by R. Taylor Ripley, M.D., who is director of the Mesothelioma Treatment Center, a national destination for mesothelioma therapy.



Family members gathered in 2022 for the renaming ceremony.

Fight For Air Climb

Join us and the American Lung Association on May 20 at Rice University Stadium for the Fight For Air Climb. The event is an annual fundraising event and the Lung Institute has a team led by Gabriel Loor, M.D and R. Taylor Ripley, M.D. To join the team, go to lung.org.

NEW SUGAR LAND LOCATION



Baylor Medicine
at Sugar Land
1327 Lake Pointe Pkwy
Sugar Land, TX 77478

We are excited to expand our services to Sugarland so patients will not have to drive as far. For referrals, call (713) 798-8636 and specify Sugar Land Clinic.

Faculty Appointments

Gabriel Loor, M.D., cardiothoracic surgeon, has been named president elect of the lung transplant section of the American College of Chest Physicians CHEST, Diffuse Lung Disease and Transplant Network. The goal of this position is to increase awareness about lung transplant indications, innovations and outcomes for patients, providers and collaborators around the globe.

R. Taylor Ripley, M.D., director of Mesothelioma Treatment Center at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center, and Gabriel Loor, M.D., surgical director of the Lung Transplant Program at Baylor College of Medicine, have been nominated to the Houston chapter executive board of the American Lung Association.

Puneet Garcha, M.D., pulmonologist, and Gabriel Loor, M.D., cardiothoracic surgeon, have been appointed to the scientific advisory board for National Organ Procurement Program.

Innovation Zone

Our surgeons recently performed 1200 robotic thoracic surgical procedures. The robotic thoracic surgery program was opened in 2015 by Shawn S. Groth, M.D., and our surgeons are leaders in the field of robotic thoracic surgery. We are also proud to have been scored as a high-performing lung cancer surgery program by *U.S. News & World Report*.



Clinical Trials

We are currently recruiting post-lung transplant patients for three clinical trials:

- PC945 Prophylaxis or Pre-emptive Therapy Against Pulmonary Aspergillosis in Lung Transplant Recipients: A study to evaluate the safety and tolerability of PC945 (an investigational inhaled antifungal drug) for the prevention of fungal aspergillus infections in the lung in patients who have received a lung transplant.
- BOSTON research studies for Bronchiolitis Obliterans Syndrome: Two studies designed to evaluate the safety and efficacy of investigational Liposomal Cyclosporine A (L-CsA-i) in patients with bronchiolitis obliterans syndrome (BOS) following a single or double lung transplant.
- STOP PIV: A Randomized Placebo-Controlled Study to Examine the Efficacy and Safety of DAS181 (investigational anti-viral drug) for the Treatment of Lower Respiratory Tract Parainfluenza Infection in Immunocompromised Subjects

For more info or to enroll,
contact Dr. Garcha at Puneet.Garcha@bcm.edu or (832) 355-9125

Publications

“Safety, tolerability, and efficacy of pirfenidone in patients with rheumatoid arthritis-associated interstitial lung disease: a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, phase 2 study” in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*

Ivan Rosas, M.D., pulmonologist, and his team conducted the first randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial focused only on patients with rheumatoid arthritis-associated interstitial lung disease (RA-ILD). Key secondary endpoints showed a safe and beneficial effect of pirfenidone in patients with rheumatoid arthritis and evidence of fibrotic interstitial lung disease. This study adds to the growing body of evidence in other subtypes of interstitial lung disease patients who have progressive fibrosis and benefit from antifibrotic therapy.

“Effect of mode of intraoperative support on primary graft dysfunction after lung transplant.” in *Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery*

In this study, Gabriel Loor, M.D., and his team looked at the use of extracorporeal life support during lung transplantation and severe primary graft dysfunction and found when extracorporeal life support is required during lung transplantation, ECMO is the preferable approach.

“Plasma protein biomarkers for primary graft dysfunction after lung transplantation: a single-center cohort analysis.” in *Scientific Reports*

Gabriel Loor, M.D., and his team examined the use of plasma protein biomarkers as indicators of primary graft dysfunction severity and duration after lung transplantation. In a step towards precision-based medicine, they found that cytokines circulating in the blood of recipients after transplant are sensitive markers of impending lung dysfunction.