

Celebrating one year of the Baylor Medicine Spine Center



On Wednesday, May 18, Baylor Medicine faculty and staff, as well as invited guests, came together to celebrate the first anniversary of the multidisciplinary Spine Center. In its first year, the Spine Center treated approximately 3,000 new patients, performed 450 surgeries, and worked with nearly 790 referring physicians.

Our team of multidisciplinary experts provides patients with the most comprehensive treatment options, including state of the art imaging and diagnostic tools; detailed diagnosis and treatment options; individualized treatment plans; prevention protocols to inhibit further damage or pain; outpatient and inpatient rehabilitation services; and access to the latest in spine and pain treatments, including clinical trials.

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

It is hard to believe we are half way through 2022! We have already had some amazing achievements as a department, including winning the Patient Experience MVP Award two quarters in a row. The clinic also welcomes Janean Bacon to the Department who is our new Senior Practice Manager. We said goodbye to Ramanveer Virk last month, but I know that the clinic is in excellent hands with Janean. The department hosted a night out at the Astros game a recently and it was a blast. The Astros lost, but it was fun to see a lot of our colleagues and their families outside of the clinic and hospital.

As this academic year comes to an end, we celebrate the graduation of our chief neurosurgery residents, Drs. Sungho Lee, Melissa LoPresti, and Terence Verla. Dr. Lee is joining LSU Shreveport as a new faculty member focused on neuro-oncology. Dr. LoPresti will be joining Northwestern University as a pediatric neurosurgery fellow. Dr. Verla is joining a busy practice in Orlando, Florida as a spine surgeon. This year's ceremony was held at the InterContinental Houston-Medical Center and it was such a wonderful evening. Special thanks to Dr. Akash Patel, Jill Goodson and Gina Collier for supporting our large residency program. Additionally, we celebrated the graduation of our inaugural Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery Fellow, Dr. Ben Shofty who will be joining the faculty at the University of Utah. Our inaugural endovascular fellow, Dr. Alex Hoang will be joining the faculty at Methodist Hospital right here in the Medical Center.

Although COVID infections remain stubbornly high, we are not seeing this translate into increased hospitalizations. Hopefully we can continue to maintain



our current pace of providing excellent neurosurgical care to our patients.

On the research front, the Department continues to thrive. We have over \$11 million in extramural funding from the National Institutes of Health. We have also launched the Center for Cancer Neuroscience under the leadership of Dr. Benjamin Deneen. This center, recognized by BCM, will focus on understanding how the unique brain tumor microenvironment, including immune cells and neurons, facilitate and promote the growth of brain cancer. We have been holding bi-weekly brain tumor interest group meetings to discuss the latest scientific developments in our laboratories.

Summer is definitely here, with temperatures near 100. I hope that you and your loved ones will have an opportunity to get away and enjoy some time off, hopefully in a cooler environment!

A new option in stroke prevention: Understanding TCAR

The World Health Organization reports that approximately 15 million people globally suffer a stroke annually. Nearly 5 million of these cases are fatal, and another 5 million lead to permanent disability such as loss of vision and/or speech, paralysis and confusion.

The likelihood of survival is often dependent on the type of stroke experienced. Among the most dangerous types of strokes are the ones caused by carotid stenosis (also known as carotid artery disease). Defined as the narrowing of the artery in the neck, carotid stenosis is often caused by high blood pressure.

While in many cases carotid stenosis can be managed by medications and lifestyle changes, surgical intervention is sometimes required to reduce the risk of stroke. A new procedure, TransCarotid Artery Revascularization (TCAR), offers patients a new option in stroke prevention, and BCM Neurosurgery's Dr. Omar Tanweer and his team are leaders in TCAR. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Congrats, Grads!

On Saturday, June 25, members of the Department of Neurosurgery came together to celebrate the newest class of graduates. 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 images from the evening.



Neurosurgery Team Updates

Join us in welcoming in the newest additions to the Department of Neurosurgery at Baylor College of Medicine:

Luke Jan Gelvoligaya, Research Coordinator II

Janean Bacon, Senior Practice Manager

Jenny Heo, Student Helper

Welcome to the team, Luke, Janean, and Jenny!

Dr. Akash Patel, Residency Program Director and associate professor, has recently been featured in *Science Advances* alongside several others for their work on molecular profiling of meningioma, the most common primary brain tumor. Using the current tumor classification system put in place by the World Health Organization, it is sometimes difficult to predict whether a meningioma will recur or remain benign. Through their study, the group sought to improve tumor prognostication. Read the full article [here](#).



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

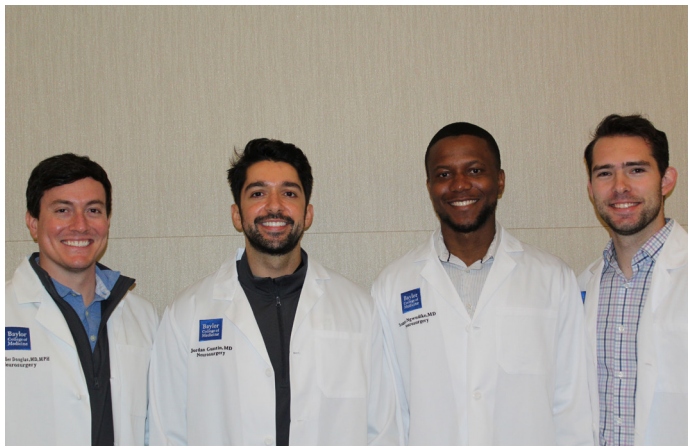


Join us in congratulating **Lona Winnegan, APRN, MSN, RN, NP-C** for being named the first-ever recipient of the inaugural Baylor College of Medicine Department of Neurosurgery Annual Clinical Excellence Award! As voted by her peers, Lona has exhibited excellence in the clinical setting with both patients and amongst her colleagues.

Additionally, we are excited to announce that medical assistant **Natalia Anda** has been recognized as the newest recipient of the award for the first quarter. Join us in thanking Natalia for her commitment to providing excellent patient care!

Celebrating an *All-Star* BCM Neurosurgery Team

In May, the BCM Neurosurgery team was recognized as the recipient of the quarterly Baylor Excellence All-Star Award, based on the department's overall combined scores in Quality Metrics, Patient Safety, and Patient Experience. Congratulations to the entire team!



New Interns on the Block

On June 21 we officially welcomed the newest members of BCM Neurosurgery as we hosted our new interns for their first day of orientation. From looking forward to the opportunity to learn from a diverse case load to hoping to catch a World Cup match in 2026, the group shared its excitement for the next seven years. Click [here](#) to read more.

Through the Lens: At the Ballpark



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