Message from the Chair

One Year Down...

Hard to believe, but it’s been a year since I arrived in Pittsburgh! The time has gone by very fast. When I look back at my time here so far, a lot of good things have happened. Many of these good things explain why I have been lax about sending out the newsletter for the past several months.

Perhaps the most important achievement for all of us has been the generous system support that has enabled us to recruit more effectively. While we are still short staffed, we have been able to successfully recruit many more CRNAs and faculty. Not only that, the quality of the candidates we are interviewing has improved markedly. I really appreciate the efforts of everyone in the department to fill in the gaps until staffing is up to required levels. It took a full court press by many people to drive and implement these changes — in particular, I would like to thank Mark Hudson, Bill Thomson, Tim Lyons, Helen DeFranco, and Linda Fleming for their tireless efforts.

We continue to innovate on the clinical side. Under the expert leadership of Mark Hudson, new hospitals are being successfully integrated into our group and we have improved the efficiency of our operations dramatically. Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) efforts spearheaded by Stephen Esper, Mike Boisen, Kat Subramaniam, Julie Ging, and Jess Erjavac have caught on like wildfire. Significant cost reductions and decreases in length of stay have been demonstrated systemwide. Another major initiative that will lead to tremendous benefits for our patients, our department, and the system is the establishment of the Centers for Presurgical Care. This initiative, also led by Stephen Esper, in collaboration with UPMC’s Donald D. Wolff, Jr. Center for Quality, Safety, and Innovation and the Department of Surgery, provides not only comprehensive preoperative evaluation, but also prehabilitation services to optimize patients for their procedures. In addition, in collaboration with the frailty initiative, we will assess the suitability of the patient for the proposed procedure and consider alternate therapies in conjunction with our surgical colleagues.

Academics efforts have continued to flourish. The SRNA school remains top-rated, and our residency program under Dave Metro had another banner year! In addition to sweeping ALL the awards at the Pennsylvania Anesthesiology Resident Research Conference, numerous awards were garnered by residents and fellows at many other regional and national conferences. Dr. Sakai’s efforts continue to bear fruit as the number of resident presentations at the annual American Society of Anesthesiology meeting continues to increase. Over 200 papers from our department were published in the past year, and research funding remains robust.

The upcoming year promises to be full of opportunities to build upon this past year’s accomplishments. As you all know, one of the main reasons I was recruited here was to build upon our already strong academic foundation to make Pitt/UPMC Anesthesiology #1. Over the past year, I spent a substantial amount of time focused on financial and system issues. As discussed above, we have achieved a great deal and resolved important pressing issues. Therefore, during the upcoming year, I plan to focus my energies on growing our academic footprint and developing our people. We have a large number of students, residents, and faculty that are enthusiastic about research and academics. We also have been given a tremendous opportunity to expand our research enterprise. I am looking forward to working with the CRNAs, faculty, residents, fellows, and staff to expand these efforts and integrate them into the fabric of our department.

Thank you all very much for your support and feedback over the past year. I have learned a great deal. One of the most important things that I learned is that my initial impressions about Pitt were absolutely right. Our department is full of talented, hard working people dedicated to serving our patients, our colleagues, and each other! I am truly honored to be a part of this group, and look forward to the opportunities the next year will bring!
In Memoriam

With great sadness, we share news of the passing of several department alumni.

Peter M. Winter, MD passed away on Saturday, May 14, 2016. Dr. Winter was the second Chair of the Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine, serving from 1979-1996 after Dr. Peter Safar. Read more

On May 7, we lost valued alumnus and colleague Terence McAuliffe, MD, who completed an Anesthesiology/Critical Care Medicine Fellowship with the department in 1968. Read more

Last, we lost long time former department CRNA Patricia L. Swedlow, who passed away on August 19, 2016. This marked the third loss from the UPMC Presbyterian neurosurgery and neuroanesthesiology group. Pioneering neuroanesthesiologist Maurice S. Albin, MD, MSc died on July 2, 2016 and the groundbreaking neurosurgeon Peter Jannetta, MD passed away earlier this year as well. Read more

News

Phillip Adams, DO, Michael Chiang, Stephanie Puig, PhD, and Grace Lim, MD were our winners from the sixth annual Multi-Departmental Trainees’ Research Day, May 17, 2016. Read more

Shushma Aggarwal, MD; Cheryl D. Bernstein, MD; Jacques E. Chelly, MD, PhD; ZongFu Chen, MD; Franklyn P. Cladis, MD; Peter J. Davis, MD; Andrew Herlich, DMD; Steven L. Orebaugh, MD; Jerome Parness, MD, PhD; Doreen E. Soliman, MD; Erin Sullivan, MD; and Ajay D. Wasan, MD were all named in Pittsburgh Magazine’s 2016 “Best Doctors” list. Read more

Congratulations and thank you to our 2016 retirees, Shushma Aggarwal, MD, Barbara Brandom, MD; Charles Buffington, MD; Rajani Chuensumran, MD; Evelyn Gonzalez-Abola, MD; Thomas Lace, MD; Richard McHugh, MD; and Bharati Parikh, MD. The Department of Anesthesiology hosted a celebration in their honor on June 27, 2016 at the University Club. Photos from the celebration can be viewed online. Read more

The University of Pittsburgh Anesthesiology Interest Group (AIG) was selected by the American Society of Anesthesiologists Medical Student Component as winner of the 2015-2016 Outstanding AIG Student Chapter Award. This award distinguishes the group as one of the top AIGs in the nation. Read more

Bruce Ben-David, MD; Andrew Herlich, DMD; FAAP; Steven L. Orebaugh, MD; and Joseph J. Quintan, MD were elected to the Association of University Anesthesiologists. Read more
Stephen A. Esper, MD, MBA will receive funding from the American Heart Association for a two-year GRA Winter 2016 Mentored Clinical & Population Research Award titled “A Pilot Study in Feasibility and Safety: Point of Care Testing with Thromboelastography for Blood Product Transfusion.” Read more

Dan Devinney, CRNA, BSN, MBA, JD accepted the position of Clinical Director of UPMC Passavant. Dan has been the Assistant Director at UPMC Mercy from 2013 to present. He previously worked as a staff CRNA at UPMC Passavant from 1996 through 2013. Dan graduated from the Mercy Hospital School of Anesthesia in August 1984. He also earned a law degree from Duquesne University in 1993 and an MBA in 1995. 

Kirsten Radaker, CRNA, MSN accepted the position of CRNA Assistant Clinical Director of UPMC Mercy. Kirsten has been a staff CRNA at UPMC Mercy from 2011 to present. She previously worked as a CVICU RN at UPMC Mercy from 1997 through 2009. Kirsten graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing Nurse Anesthesia Program in 2010. Kirsten and Dan bring a myriad of experience both clinically and professionally to these leadership roles. Congratulations to both!

Tomas Drabek, MD, PhD will serve as a co-investigator on the new project "Dopamine System-focused Neurorehabilitation Model for Improving Neurorecovery among Cardiac Arrest Survivors." Read more

Catherine Duda-Hampel, DrPH, MPH joined the department as our Executive Administrator, also managing the Department of Critical Care Medicine and the ICU Service Center. Catherine comes to us with an impressive 15+ year track record in clinical program development, operations management, and administration. She previously served as Chief Administrative Officer of the Departments of Anesthesiology and Emergency Medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, where she provided senior administrative leadership for all clinical, educational, research, and financial functions within the two departments. She also previously served in numerous administrative management positions in UCLA Health System, UCLA Radiology, COPE Health Solutions, and Balance Pharmaceuticals Inc. Originally from Pittsburgh, Catherine earned her BS in Biological Sciences from Carnegie Mellon University and both a Master and Doctor of Public Health in Health Policy and Management at UCLA.

Calin Gorun-Gorunescu, MD won a 2016 UPMC Richard L. Simmons, MD Speak Up for Safety Award. The award honors the dedication of Dr. Richard Simmons to improving the quality of healthcare and patient safety and is given to those who embody those values. Dr. Gorun-Gorunescu is honored for his attention to detail, which resulted in life-saving actions in a recent case. When notified about the award, Dr. Gorun-Gorunescu acknowledged the work of many other people, such as the PACU nurse, surgeon, and anesthesia team, in saving the patient’s life. Read more

Ibtesam A. Hilmi, MB CHB, FRCA was promoted to Professor of Anesthesiology. Read more

Gregg E. Homanics, PhD received the Medical Student Research Mentoring Merit Award from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine at 2016 Scholars Day. Read more
James W. Ibinson, MD, PhD, K. Grace Lim, MD, Ajay D. Wasan, MD, MSc, and Andrea Gillman, PhD are all department principle investigators (PIs) or Co-PIs on research projects that recently won University of Pittsburgh Clinical and Translational Science Institute Pain Research Challenge awards. Read more

James W. Ibinson, MD, PhD, A. Murat Kaynar, MD, MPH, and Marsha Ritter Jones, MD, PhD were awarded UPP Foundation Grants. Read more

A half hour PBS/WQED Public Cable TV special called "Journey to Medicine" was filmed in Pittsburgh and focused on Gateway Medical Society's mentorship program. Read more

K. Grace Lim, MD was awarded a $10,000 SEAd Grant for her project, "Residents as Teachers: Effect of a Patient Education Strategy on Resident Self-Efficacy and Maternal Outcomes (The EDUCATE Study)" at the Spring 2016 SEA Meeting. Read more

She was also selected to receive a Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH) in Pittsburgh NIH K12 scholar award. This mentored career-development program connects BIRCWH scholars to senior faculty with shared research interest in women's health and sex-differences research. Read more

Lastly, Dr. Lim was appointed as the new Director of Obstetric Anesthesiology at Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC. Read more

Sanford M. Littwin, MD joined the department as Operating Room Clinical Director of UPMC Presbyterian/Montefiore. Read more

Michael P. Mangione, MD was nominated for the 2016 Golden Apple Award. Read more

The spring 2016 issue of Pennsylvania Physician Magazine featured an article about Kristin M. Ondecko Ligda, MD (read more). She was also featured as a guest blogger on the Pennsylvania Medical Society website (read more) and was nominated for the American Medical Association's Women Physicians Section's Inspirational Physician Recognition Award (read more).
Steven L. Orebaugh, MD was spotlighted in a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article for his fiction book, *A Night in the Life*. He also signed copies of his book on August 6 at Half-Price Books at Village Square Mall in Bethel Park. [Read more]

Rita M. Patel, MD was selected for the 2016 Society for Education in Anesthesia/Duke Award for Excellence and Innovation in Anesthesia Education. [Read more]

Joseph J. Quinlan, MD was promoted to the new role of Director of Operating Room Management for the UPMC System. Over the past 15 years, Dr. Quinlan has made his mark as the Chief Anesthesiologist at UPMC Presbyterian. In addition to being an outstanding clinician and educator, he has developed methods to keep scheduling as efficient and effective as possible in the face of an environment with frequent emergencies, cancellations, and disruptions. Additional systemwide responsibilities for Dr. Quinlan include management of the anesthetizing locations cap and serving as the Chief Compliance Officer for Anesthesiology. [Read more]

Shawn T. Beaman, MD will serve as the Interim Chief of Anesthesiology at UPMC Presbyterian. Dr. Beaman has been our Associate Residency Program Director for the past seven years, and has been the Director of our General/Trauma Anesthesia Service at Presbyterian for the past three years. His educational efforts have been recognized by his election into the prestigious University of Pittsburgh Academy of Master Educators. [Read more]

Tetsuro Sakai, MD, PhD was invited to speak at the 2016 International Liver Transplantation Society Annual International Congress on May 4-7, 2016 (read more). He was also invited to Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Department of Anesthesiology to serve as a Visiting Professor (read more) and was elected to the Pitt Non-Tenured Faculty Promotions and Appointments Committee (read more).

William Simmons, MD received the National Medical Association Scroll of Merit “in recognition of his leadership and promotion of wellness, healthcare equality, medical education, and efforts towards increasing the pipeline of minority students entering medicine” (read more). Dr. Simmons was also one of three mentors in Gateway Medical Society’s Journey to Medicine Academic Mentorship Program selected to receive the Jefferson Award for Volunteerism, the highest award for volunteerism in the nation, in June 2016. [Read more]

Many department presenters participated in the Society for Education in Anesthesia (SEA) 2016 Spring Meeting, June 3-5, 2016, Baltimore, MD (read more). Phillip S. Adams, DO won the 3rd place abstract award at the meeting for his oral presentation, “Integrated Clinical Subspecialty and Research Training In Anesthesiology: Academic Anesthesiology Scholar Tracks” (authors: Phillip S. Adams, DO; Tetsuro Sakai, MD, PhD; James Ibinson, MD/PHD; Keith M. Vogt, MD, PhD; Sandra C. Hirsch, MBA; Yan Xu, PhD; David G. Metro, MD).

SRNAs and CRNAs from UPMC Presbyterian participated in the Tunch and Wolf Walk for the Homeless on June 11, 2016 in Pittsburgh. [Read more]
Monique Saxon, MSN, CRNA and Robert Scott Lang, MD were voted Outstanding CRNA and Outstanding Anesthesiologist, respectively, by the graduating student nurse anesthetist class of fall 2016. Read more

Erin A. Sullivan, MD was appointed as a Senior Examiner for the American Board of Anesthesiology (ABA) Part 2 exam for a four-year term beginning in 2017. Read more

Pei Tang, PhD was invited to give the talk, “Probing Channel Structure, Dynamics, and Function,” on February 28, 2016 at the symposium on Pentameric Ligand-gated Ion Channels at the 60th annual meeting Biophysical Society in Los Angeles, CA.

A paper by Nicole Verdecchia, MD; Vladyslav Melnyk, MD; and Steven L. Orebaugh, MD, “The Physical Relationship of the Sciatic Nerve and its Paraneural Sheath,” was chosen as a “top 5” abstract for NYSORA 2016. Read more

Brian A. Williams, MD, MBA received the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System’s Excellence in Research Award. Read more

Education News

Our residents swept the first place awards in ALL categories at the 11th Annual Pennsylvania Anesthesiology Resident Research Conference on Saturday, May 14, 2016 at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. Read more

Peter Yeh, MD (PGY-4 resident) was chosen as President-elect of the Society for Obstetric Anesthesia and Perinatology Resident Affairs Committee. Read more
Michael Schnetz, MD, PhD (PGY-3 Resident) was accepted into the FAER Resident Scholar Program. Read more

Congratulations to the Residency and Fellowship Graduating Classes of 2016! Read more

A resident/fellow welcome picnic was held at the home of Drs. Howard Gutstein and Jill Schumacher on July 9, 2016. Read more

David G. Metro, MD; Anne E. Kamarchik, MD; Melanie Hodge, MD; and Brian Gierl, MD served on a Surgicorps international survival mission trip in Antigua, Guatemala. Read more

2016 Safar Symposium and Multi-Departmental Trainees’ Research Day

The 14th annual Safar Symposium and sixth annual Multi-Departmental Trainees’ Research Day was held on May 16-17, 2016. This yearly event honors the late Dr. Peter Safar (founding Chair of the Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine) and his wife Eva for their contributions to the scientific community and highlights current research in areas spanning Dr. Safar’s interests. Read more

2016 FAER Medical Student Anesthesia Research Fellows Anh Nguyen and Elizabeth Snajdar

The Department of Anesthesiology was one of 37 sites nationwide selected to host the Foundation for Anesthesia Education and Research (FAER) Medical Student Anesthesia Research Fellowship Program in 2016. Read more
At the end of my anesthesiology residency at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, I interviewed at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) for a fellowship position in their respiratory unit, then run by Drs. Henning Pontoppidan, Hendrik Bendixen, and John Hedley-Whyte. With a broader interest in medicine, my chief at the time, Dr. Leroy Vandam, suggested that I interview with Dr. Peter Safar, a former trainee of his, who was developing a multidisciplinary ICU Program in Pittsburgh. I decided not to go to MGH and interviewed with Dr. Safar in the lobby of the Sheraton Hotel in Boston. I was offered a fellowship position.

On July 1, 1966 - 50 years ago - I began my fellowship in critical care medicine (then acute medicine) in the Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh. My co-fellows were Drs. Clara Jean Ersoz and Jean Pennickx from Belgium. Dr. Pennickx encouraged others, such as Arsene Mullie, Achiel Bleyaert, Andre deWolf, and Jan Hendrikx, to train in Pittsburgh.

Clara Jean (nee Babb - her father owned the Babb Insurance Agency in Pittsburgh) was married to Namik from Turkey - also an anesthesiologist who worked at both the VA hospital and Montefiore. They had two children - Miriam and Nathanial. Clara Jean trained with Dr. Rick Siker at Mercy, but due to visa issues, she and Namik pursued further training in Toronto. Clara Jean later became the Medical Director of the ICU at Presbyterian and after that, the forceful and well-respected Medical Director of St. Clair Hospital in Pittsburgh. Clara Jean and Namik Ersoz were tragically killed in the TWA Flight 800 explosion in 1996.

Later additions to the fellowship program were Dr. Michael Hedden, Dr. Terry McAuliffe from Australia, who recently passed away, and Dr. Stephen Kampschulte from Germany, who later started the first pediatric ICU at Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. He returned to Munich and sadly died from a ruptured cerebral aneurysm.

The head nurse was Mary Ann Scott, a dynamic leader who later become in charge of EMS activities in the South Hills of Pittsburgh.

Respiratory Therapy was in its infancy and leaders such as Gil Davis, Bela Eross, and George Nelson all contributed to its development. Ventilators in use were the Bird (with its oxygenation problems), the early Bennett, and the Moerch ventilator.

We worked hard. We were on call every third night and still had to work the next day. However, it was a most productive time and the rapport with our surgical and nursing colleagues was tremendous. Many parties involving all ICU groups were held at our various homes and apartments.

We performed our own blood gases and calibrated the blood gas machine twice daily. There were no central lines and arterial lines - femoral route - were in their infancy.

CPR research was pushed and those doing lab research included Drs. Leroy Harris and Bulet Kinmill. Administrative support was provided by Ms. Diana Maling and Ms. Patricia Sands.

Numerous visitors from around the world came to Pittsburgh to learn from what Dr. Safar was doing in the field of critical care medicine. These included Dr. Vladimir Negovsky from Moscow, Drs. Henrik Bendixen and Henning Pontoppidan, Drs. John Severinghaus, Ake Grevnik, Miroslav Klain, Rudolf Frey, William Hamilton, and many others.

A yearly ICU meeting was started, which ultimately served as a stimulus for the establishment of the Society of Critical Care Medicine. This meeting was very popular and topical, with an active social program on the Gateway Clipper and visits to The Meadows.

The concept of critical care medicine was hard for some of our medicine colleagues to accept. For example, we were ridiculed by our pulmonary medicine colleagues for using IPPV to treat fulminant pulmonary edema (are you going to blow the fluid back!). Later, they would accept its efficacy.

The Chair of Medicine rounded regularly on patients in the ICU. Dr. Myers was insistent on detail and was a superb clinician. He served as an outstanding mentor and role model, supplementing the outstanding leadership provided by Peter Safar. Many myocardial infarction patients and patients with decompensated COPD were managed in this multidisciplinary unit. Our medical, cardiology, and pulmonary colleagues were very visible and we learned much from them. I later went on to complete a pulmonary medicine fellowship with Dr. Eugene D. Robin, Chief of Pulmonary Medicine.

This was in 1966...nine hundred years after 1066!


Upcoming Events

The University of Pittsburgh Physicians Department of Anesthesiology will sponsor the St. Thomas Anesthesiology Legal Education Symposium March 8-11, 2017 at the beautiful Frenchman’s Reef Marriott, St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. This distinctive program is designed to bring together experts in anesthesiology, medical malpractice defense law, medical malpractice plaintiff law, risk management, and malpractice insurance in a collaborative educational program. More info

Redesigning the Perioperative Process: Prehabilitation, ERAS, and Acute Pain Management November 4-6, 2016, Nemacolin Woodlands Resort
More info

University of Pittsburgh Department of Anesthesiology Annual Alumni Reception at the ASA Annual Meeting
Sunday, October 23, 2016, 6-9:00pm
Hyatt Regency Conference Center, Room Prairie B, 2nd floor
2233 S. Martin L. King Drive
Chicago, IL
Please RSVP to AnesEducation@upmc.edu by October 5, 2016

Have News to Share? Please e-mail us!

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