



Women in Transplant Surgery



Surgeons Featured

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Ladner, Daniela

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Inaugural ASTS Women Transplant Surgeons Coffee Table eBook

August 20, 2025

Dear Colleagues, Friends, and Readers,

Throughout the history of medicine, women have driven countless innovations and advancements, and transplant surgery is no exception.

I am thrilled to honor the remarkable women transplant surgeons who have advanced our field by collecting their stories in this inaugural ASTS Women Transplant Surgeons Coffee Table eBook. Their stories celebrate a legacy that continues to inspire and serve as a powerful reminder of the vital contributions women have made – and continue to make – in transplantation.

To date, four women transplant surgeons have served as ASTS Presidents, Nancy L. Ascher, MD, PhD, (2000–2001), Kim Olthoff, MD, (2012–2013), Elizabeth A. Pomfret, MD, PhD, (2023–2024) and me. It is my honor to have served as the 51st ASTS President (2024–2025) alongside an executive committee that included three women transplant surgeons – ASTS Immediate Past President Elizabeth A. Pomfret MD, PhD, ASTS Secretary Debra Sudan, MD, and ASTS Treasurer Julie Heimbach, MD. Furthermore, our elected ASTS Council during my presidency included four women transplant surgeons – Majella Doyle, MD, MBA, Jacqueline Garonzik-Wang, MD, PhD, Daniela Ladner, MD, MPH, and Dinee Simpson, MD.

There was an eleven year hiatus between the second and third woman transplant surgeon to serve as ASTS presidents. Then ASTS had two consecutive women transplant surgeon presidents. The photo shows for the first time in ASTS history the passing of the gavel from one woman transplant surgeon (ASTS 50th President Elizabeth A. Pomfret MD PhD) to another (ASTS 51st President Ginny L. Bumgardner MD PhD).



Historically, ASTS Executive Committee members were appointed not elected positions with selections made by the ASTS Council. ASTS leadership positions evolved to a member-elected process in 2012. I was the first woman transplant surgeon to be elected by the membership to the ASTS Executive Committee as Secretary in June 2020. Elizabeth A. Pomfret MD PhD was elected as President-Elect in June 2022. This year with the election of Irene K. Kim MD as the Community Engagement Officer, five women transplant surgeons now serve as members of the ASTS Executive Committee out of seven total positions, so a critical turning point has clearly occurred.

The leadership, vision, commitment and breadth of professional career activities and personal interests of women transplant surgeons portrayed in this inaugural edition exemplify the impact women continue to have on our Society and on transplantation as a whole. It is my sincere wish that as you read these stories, you are as inspired as I have been by the resilience, dedication, achievements and unique journeys of these incredible women transplant surgeons! And I look forward to future editions with more ASTS women transplant surgeons contributing their stories.

Sincerely,
Ginny L. Bumgardner MD, PhD
51st ASTS President, 2024-2025

Olga Jonasson, MD: A Trailblazer for Women in Transplantation



Olga Jonasson, MD, was a pioneer in the field of transplant surgery, breaking barriers for future women in surgery and setting new standards of excellence in the profession. As the first woman transplant surgeon and the first woman in the United States to head an academic surgery department at a co-educational school of medicine, Dr. Jonasson's contributions to medicine, education, and leadership continue to inspire generations of surgeons. Her remarkable career is a testament to her intelligence, perseverance, and unwavering commitment to advancing the field.

Dr. Jonasson's academic journey began at an exceptionally young age. She enrolled at Northwestern University at just 16 years old. She later attended medical school at the University of Illinois College of Medicine, where she also completed her residency. She pursued a postdoctoral fellowship in immunohistochemistry at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. Further cementing her expertise, she completed another research and clinical fellowship in transplantation immunobiology at Massachusetts General Hospital. These rigorous academic and research experiences laid the foundation for her groundbreaking career in transplant surgery.

Dr. Jonasson's training was influenced by some of the most esteemed figures in medicine. She studied under Warren Cole, MD, FACS, a pioneer in surgical techniques and co-developer of the process for diagnosing gallbladder disease through X-ray visualization with contrast media (cholecystography) in 1924.

Dr. Jonasson's career is marked by a series of historic firsts. She became the first woman to perform kidney transplants and led the way as a trailblazing transplant surgeon. She established the division of transplantation at University of Illinois and performed the first kidney transplant in Illinois in 1968.

In addition to her surgical expertise, Dr. Jonasson shattered glass ceilings in academic medicine. She was named chief of surgery at Cook County Hospital in 1977 before being recruited to the Ohio State University in 1987 where she became the first woman in the United States to head an academic surgery department at a co-educational school of medicine. This groundbreaking achievement underscored her exceptional leadership abilities and her dedication to fostering the growth of academic surgery. The Ohio State University Department of Surgery honored Dr. Jonasson's legacy with the establishment of the Ohio State University Olga Jonasson MD Surgical Professorship in August 2019; the professorship recognizes "...academic surgeons who are dedicated to encouraging and enabling female surgeons to realize their professional clinical and research goals." On April 8th, 2025, Ginny L. Bumgardner MD PhD, the 51st ASTS President, was installed as the Ohio State Olga Jonasson MD Professor in Surgery.

Dr. Jonasson played a pivotal role in the development and governance of the American Society of Transplant Surgeons (ASTS). As a charter member, she helped shape the organization's mission and priorities. From 1988 to 1991, she served on the ASTS Ethics Committee, providing critical guidance on ethical issues in transplantation. Her leadership extended beyond ASTS, as after the passage of the National Organ Transplant Act (NOTA) in 1984, she was selected to chair the National Task Force on Organ Transplantation, where she led the development of principles and policies for operationalizing this landmark legislation. Her leadership of this challenging task resulted in the foundation for governance, organization and financing of the U.S. national transplant system that by 2022 reached the milestone of over a million transplants performed and continues to have a lasting impact on the field.

Olga Jonasson, MD, was a visionary surgeon, educator, and leader whose legacy continues to influence the field of transplantation. From her groundbreaking surgical achievements to her trailblazing leadership in academic medicine, she set new standards for excellence and broke barriers for women in surgery. Her contributions to the ASTS and her advocacy for ethical practices have left an indelible mark on the transplantation community. Dr. Jonasson's life and career serve as a powerful reminder of the impact that dedication, innovation, and mentorship can have in shaping the future of medicine.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the National Library of Medicine

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Nancy Ascher, MD

University of California San Francisco

Professor Surgery and Former Chair Surgery

What drew you to transplant?

The notion of challenging technique and translational investigation

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

Olga Jonasson, John Najarian, Richard Simmons, and David Sutherland

What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

Children
Grandchildren
Art
Physical activity
Gardening
Carnivorous plants

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

My first liver transplant
Absolutely exhilarating and terrifying at the same moment

What would you advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Get well trained and follow your passion
Set up the rest of your life to make it possible

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor that you are most proud of in your career?

Working with fellows (in transplant) and young faculty (in transplant and other surgical fields) on development

What is something most people might not know about you?

I am shy



Talia Baker, MD

University of Utah

Chief, Division of Transplant and Advanced Hepatobiliary Surgery

What drew you to transplant?

As a surgical resident, I was fortunate to be guided by several deeply compassionate mentors—people who truly understood me and helped shape my path. I was drawn to the art of surgery, the intellectual rigor of complex problem-solving, and the collaborative spirit of working within a dedicated team. I was advised that transplant surgery uniquely offered all of these elements in a single discipline. I took that advice to heart—and it proved to be exactly right.



Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

One of the most rewarding aspects of transplant surgery is the shared commitment across the field to mentor the next generation—helping them uncover the excitement of a transplant career, discover their niche, and continuously grow.

My own journey has been largely clinical, shaped by extraordinary mentors who helped define not only my skills, but my purpose.

I had the privilege of being Dr. Frank Stuart's final transplant fellow at Northwestern. Beyond offering me my first role as a transplant attending, he laid the foundation for my career by encouraging me to master every facet of transplant surgery. He challenged me to take on every case, in every domain, for the first five years post-fellowship—a philosophy that deeply influenced my approach and remains core to my practice.

Dr. Michael Abecassis shaped my identity as a liver transplant surgeon. He instilled in me a profound love for liver surgery and trained me to become not only a complex hepatobiliary and liver transplant surgeon, but also a living donor liver transplant specialist. He empowered me to contribute to A2ALL and to help build Northwestern's LDLT program—teaching me how to grow as both a technical surgeon and as a leader building a “program within a program.” His mentorship was transformational: always encouraging, sometimes pushing, but unfailingly supportive.



Later in my journey, Dr. John Fung helped me rediscover the “why.” By that point, I had grown confident in the technical “how” of surgery—but the relentless physical and emotional demands of the field had begun to blur my sense of purpose. Dr. Fung reminded me of the profound privilege we have as transplant surgeons: to care for patients at some of the most vulnerable moments in their lives.

He reignited my passion and inspired the next chapter of my career—one dedicated to exploring the transformative potential of liver transplant oncology. John not only lives by, but actively teaches the wisdom of his mentor, Dr. Thomas Starzl: “The purpose of life is not simply to exist, but to make a difference—to leave the world better than you found it.” That ethos continues to guide me every day.

What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

My greatest passion outside of surgery is my family—truly my number one, two, and three. I’m incredibly proud of my three children, who have grown into thoughtful, independent young adults, and I’m deeply grateful for my brilliant and supportive husband. Our home is also full of love (and fur), thanks to our dogs who keep us grounded and joyful.

To decompress, I turn to movement. Physical fitness has long been my personal outlet and form of therapy. Whether I’m on the Peloton, skiing, or hiking a challenging trail, that time allows me to reset mentally and physically. It keeps me centered—and yes, those who know me would probably say I’m more than a little committed to it!

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

That's a difficult question—not because there aren't memorable moments, but because there are so many. As a living donor liver transplant surgeon, I've had the privilege of being part of some of the most profound journeys patients and their donors will ever experience.

What stands out most is the longitudinal nature of transplant—it's not just about the operation. It's about being trusted with a deeply personal chapter in someone's life, and walking alongside them from pre-transplant to recovery and beyond. Being part of those stories—of courage, generosity, and resilience—is humbling. It is, without question, one of the greatest honors and privileges of my career.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplantation surgeons?

First and foremost—enjoy it. Transplant is challenging, humbling, and at times exhausting, but it's also deeply rewarding and, yes, fun. We are drawn to it because we see the unique luster it holds—so embrace that, and don't feel burdened by the weight of responsibility.

Don't limit yourself. It's not about doing everything—it's about doing everything you can, and giving it your all. Commit fully, but with balance.

And perhaps most importantly, give yourself grace. None of us are perfect—though many of us are perfectionists by nature. You will make mistakes. Let them teach you. Growth in transplant surgery isn't just technical—it's personal. Learn, evolve, and lead with both skill and compassion.



Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

Throughout most of my career, I've had the privilege of being part of a strong abdominal transplant fellowship program. While I've been fortunate to achieve many professional milestones, what I'm most proud of isn't my own accomplishments—but those of the fellows I've been part of training. Watching them grow into exceptional transplant surgeons, build programs, and lead with integrity and purpose has been the most rewarding aspect of my work. Teaching is my passion, and mentorship is the legacy I value most.

What is something most people might not know about you?

My name, Talia, is Israeli and means “dew drop.” As a child, I was embarrassed by its delicacy. But as I've grown—particularly stepping into this next phase of my journey as a transplant surgeon and innovator—I've come to embrace its meaning.

Every morning offers a new beginning, and dew drops are a symbol of quiet hope, clarity, and renewal. That's exactly how I choose to approach the work ahead—with optimism, purpose, and a little bit of sparkle.





Yolanda Becker, MD

LifeGift

Vice President and Chief Medical Officer

What drew you to transplant?

I loved the collaboration among surgeons, medical specialists and basic scientists. The teamwork that is required to go from organ donation to transplant is nothing short of a miracle.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

Munci Kalayoglu taught me the importance of respect and calm in the OR.

John Tarpley showed me how to maintain happiness and appreciation in the face of adversity.

Bing Ridders recognized my love for teaching and I was given the opportunity to lead the General Surgery Clerkship for a decade which opened doors and taught me that I could succeed with education as my path.



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The teamwork that is required to go from organ donation to transplant is nothing short of a miracle.

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What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

I love reading murder mysteries and non-fiction nature books. After I "retired" from University of Chicago, I trained and completed the Chicago and New York Marathons followed by the Disney Princess Half Marathon. I also enjoy needlepoint and making jewelry.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

There are so many! Some experiences are clinical and some are just stories from the trenches of the liver and lung allocation fights. I have been humbled by joining the OPO world after many years in transplant. I am amazed at what gets accomplished at the OPO every day and I hope that we spend time appreciating our colleagues and continue to remember the grace of the donor families.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplantation surgeons?

Get involved and it is absolutely possible to integrate all the parts that make you whole. We have two rules in our household:

- 1: Do not panic and
- 2: Will it matter in 25 years?

I will also add that "I can't" is not in my vocabulary.

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

I received the Friend of Nursing Award from ITNS. Of course, the time I spent as President of the OPTN was such an honor and I hope that the work of the ASTS will help maintain the trust of the public/private partnership. I received the McDonald-Merrill-Ketcham Award for Excellence this year from the Indiana University Law School and School of Medicine.

**What is something most people might not know about you?**

I was the Dazzler Synchronized Figure Skating team mom for many years and am an expert at bedazzling figure skating dresses. It was more stressful watching the girls on the ice worrying that the crystals might fall off or the embellishments I sewed on to 24 dresses would come loose. A transplant does not pop out, but crystals can fall off! I was also the Hinsdale Central Varsity Soccer Team Mom for three years and loved every minute. My kids said it was because I'm a control freak.

Travel



Aleah Brubaker, MD, PhD

University of California San Diego

Assistant Professor of Surgery

What drew you to transplant?

I was drawn to transplant by the complex interplay of immunology, critical illness and surgical complexity that offered the immense potential of a life-changing (saving) opportunity for a patient. I enjoyed the team-based, patient center approach I saw modeled by transplant teams early in my training, and that environment coupled with the medical and surgical management really solidified my interest.



Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

My mom. She's not a transplant surgeon but she's a urogynecologist, one of the first female medical school deans and a current deputy editor for JAMA. I'm not sure I can say this but she's a badass-- and she's my mom. And I feel very lucky to have her as a mom and a mentor. She made me think critically about my decision to go into medicine from the start, and has continued to make me critically assess myself, my career and my boundaries as I have grown personally and professionally.



And second, is Anji Wall. Anji was a fellow when I was a resident at Stanford, and she has been an invaluable friend and mentor.

Anji has far too many skills to list, but as a mentor Anji truly listens and helps create opportunity for you to grow and develop. True mentorship and friendship is a rare combo, and I feel lucky to have found that in her

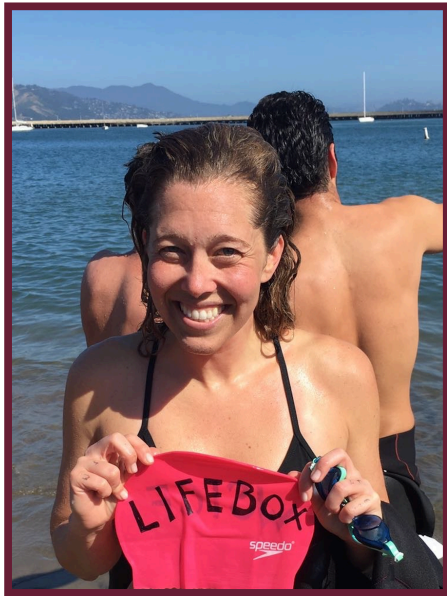
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Give yourself grace. You are not alone.

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What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

I love spending time with my family: hiking, pool, beach, relaxing at home. Exercise definitely helps me decompress - yoga, weight training, Peloton - and as a former swimmer and water polo player, I have found my way back to the pool swimming with the UCSD masters swimming program (Thanks Anji for the encouragement!!)



What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

I think there are far too many to count! Probably the most hilarious ones come from transplant fellowship with my co-fellow Peter Than. Most of them involve a way too turbulent plane flight, sleeping on random hospital floors (or the OR table), and eating Thai food without any utensils on the way to/from getting a liver for an awaiting recipient.

But honestly, the most impactful ones are seeing our recipients randomly 1 month or 1 year out, walking in to get outpatient labs, or even in the community. There is often a big wave: "Hey Dr. Brubaker!" followed by a hug, and chat about how they are doing. I love seeing our patients outside of clinic, and generally, seeing them doing so well and enjoying life (making that wedding they were hoping to be at or at the birth of their grandchild). Those are the memories that make all the other moments worth it.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Be you.

Do life on your timeline.

Put yourself at the table. Every. Single. Time.

Give yourself grace.

You are not alone.



Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

Academically it's a close call between (1) founding CONCORD- the Consortium for Donation after Circulatory Death and Normothermic Regional Perfusion Outcomes Research and Development, and (2) getting my first funding of any kind from the ASTS TransMedics Faculty Perfusion Grant (Expanding utilization of DCD liver allografts with prolonged warm ischemic injury by defining the role of normothermic machine perfusion on PPAR signaling and HSC-mediated fibrosis)

Personally- My daughter Gemma. She's just the best. Full of life, opinions and constant chatter :)

What is something most people might not know about you?

My dad was super into horse racing, and so myself (and my younger sister and brother) are all named after horse racetracks. Hialeah in Florida for me, Santa Anita in California for my sister Anita and Keeneland in Kentucky for my brother Keene.





Ginny L. Bumgardner, MD, PhD

The Ohio State University College of Medicine & Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

Professor of Surgery, Olga Jonasson Professorship in Surgery, Associate Dean for Physician Scientist Education & Training, Director, OSU Medical Scientist Training Program, Director OSU Department of Surgery Research Training Program

What drew you to transplant?

In the first year of medical school my favorite topic was immunology. During medical student clerkships I became aware of the transformational impact of Transplantation on patient's lives. In residency I was drawn to the complexity of the patients and the surgical procedures and again the remarkable impact of a successful transplant on someone's life and their family. The combination of transplant surgery and transplant immunology research was and continues to be a dynamite career combination for me!



Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

I definitely am inspired to pay it forward because of the many wonderful mentors I have had during my career who inspired a surgeon scientist career path including my honors thesis advisor Lawrence Wiseman PhD (College of William & Mary Biology Professor); Wallace Ritchie MD PhD (UVA Medical School Surgery Attending), Nancy L. Ascher MD PHD, Richard L. Simmons MD, David E.R. Sutherland MD PhD, John S. Najarian MD (University of Minnesota General Surgery Residency Faculty and Chair), Marc Jenkins PhD, Fritz H. Bach MD (University of Minnesota Research Faculty), Charles G. Orosz PhD (OSU Transplant Research & HLA Lab Director), Allan J. Yates MD PhD (OSU MD PhD and Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program Director, Pathology Faculty) and many others. These mentors trained, encouraged and supported my pursuit of a transplant surgeon-scientist career.

What are you passionate about other than transplant?

I love foreign languages and traveling abroad with my family. My father worked for the State Department and inspired an interest in international relations. I enjoy swimming, kayaking, canoeing and reading outside in a hammock on a sunny breezy day while vacationing at our cabin in Maine -- a real treat. Closer to home, I frequent arts and craft shows, take piano lessons, go to museums, watch movies with my family and hang out with our agile, smart and cuddly German Shorthaired Pointer Ruby!



What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

I transplanted a patient who I had followed for weeks in the hospital while he was awaiting a liver transplant and when the call finally came he and his wife were both stunned and overjoyed. Much later, when I saw him in clinic for the first time, he and his wife brought me a gift that was a 3 ring binder notebook filled with photos that catalogued his pre- and post-transplant experience and I still have it to this day in my office!

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Don't be afraid to pursue transplant surgery if it beckons to you. You have the talent and the creativity to make it all work out for your personal circumstances and there are

many peers and colleagues around who are willing to help you along the way for any obstacles or challenges. Just reach out!



———— “ ————

You have the talent and the creativity to make it all work out...

———— “ ————

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

I learned early on as a faculty member that mentoring surgery residents, medical students and undergraduate students was immensely gratifying. This led to my pursuit of opportunities to complement clinical/surgical education and training with the development of research training programs.

I am most proud of the trainee outcomes achieved in the programs I lead and of the students I have trained. It is easy for me to recall each of their major accomplishments because I am so excited for each of their successes!

My most proud personal honor is the opportunity to serve as the President of the ASTS!

What is something people might not know about you?

I learned to ride horses as an adult by taking lessons during surgery residency and then continued these lessons believe it or not at the San Francisco Golden Gate Park and enjoyed trail riding at the Miwok Livery Stables in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area during my transplant fellowship. I somehow convinced Nancy Ascher to join me on a horseback riding camping trip (tent, campfires, the whole experience) with trail riding in different terrains in the beautiful Golden Gate National Recreation Area and it was a blast!



[Learn more about Dr. Bumgardner](#)

Education

BS: College of William & Mary (1979)

MD: University of Virginia (1983)

Residency: Surgery, University of Minnesota ('83-91)

Postdoctoral research: University of Minnesota ('86-89)

PhD: University of Minnesota (1993)

Transplant Surgery Fellowship: UCSF ('91-93)



Linda Cendales, MD

Duke University

Professor of Surgery, Professor in Orthopaedic Surgery

What is your educational background?

I received my MD from Universidad Metropolitana, and completed a General Surgery Residency at the Hospital General Manuel Gea Gonzalez, both in Mexico City. I completed a Hand and Microsurgery Fellowship at the Christine M. Kleinert Institute in Louisville, KY and a solid-organ Transplantation Fellowship and Research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). I completed a Certificate Program in Translational Research at Emory University.

What drew you to transplant?

Several reasons made me decide to pursue transplantation and keep me in transplantation;

- One, is the opportunity to make a difference in patients' lives and their families. This is incredibly rewarding to me.
- Another reason is that transplantation is a complex and intellectually stimulating work: transplantation provides a wealth of unique opportunities to create something new and to be at the forefront of cutting-edge research and clinical practice.
- A third reason is the sense of community: working closely together as part of a team, creates a sense of friendship and collaboration, and fosters a strong sense of community and shared purpose.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

I have been privileged to have invaluable mentors who have influenced my career path, and their impact will permeate forever. Allan Kirk, MD, PhD, has been a very influential mentor, colleague, and friend. His impact has been severalfold from my abdominal transplant surgery and immunobiology fellowship training at the National Institutes of Health until today.

Allan has been impactful on major career decisions, on my scientific approach to the development and implementation of a new field in transplantation [i.e. vascularized composite allotransplantation], he has been a sounding board, and certainly, the epitome of a surgeon-scientist.

What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

Traveling and spending time with the people who I care about are two activities that fill me with joy. Exploring different cuisines, outdoor activities, the beach, and a good conversation help me focus on things other than work.



What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

I have countless memorable experiences. Perhaps many of them are around performing something for the first time, what it entails - scientifically and at many other levels - their success and impact on the patients and on everyone on the team who make them happened, and on science.

To name a few, there is the first hand transplant that we performed in the United States in Louisville, KY, the first hand transplant in the State of Georgia at Emory University and the first hand transplant in the State of North Carolina at Duke University. The first time that we completed a non-human primate experiment with the introduction of costimulation blockade, in VCA, which provided the rationale for the application of the immunosuppressive regimen for the first time in our hand transplant recipients. Giving hope and "a hand" to people who have no other option for reconstruction and watching them to become independent is a reward difficult to describe with words.

One of my patients lost three of her limbs (left hand and bilateral lower extremities) at the age of 4 months. She received her left hand transplant with our team at the age of 21. During the postoperative care, she learned that I like brownies. During her hand therapy sessions, she was asked what occupational activity she wanted to do first with her left transplanted hand.

She baked brownies for me. Those have been the most special brownies for me. People asked me, “how long did it take you to do her hand transplant”, I responded: “14 years of my career [at that time]”.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

I'd like to share a few things that have worked for me in my career; (1) be true to yourself, (2) create a specialty that doesn't exist, and (3) lose all sense of entitlement.

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

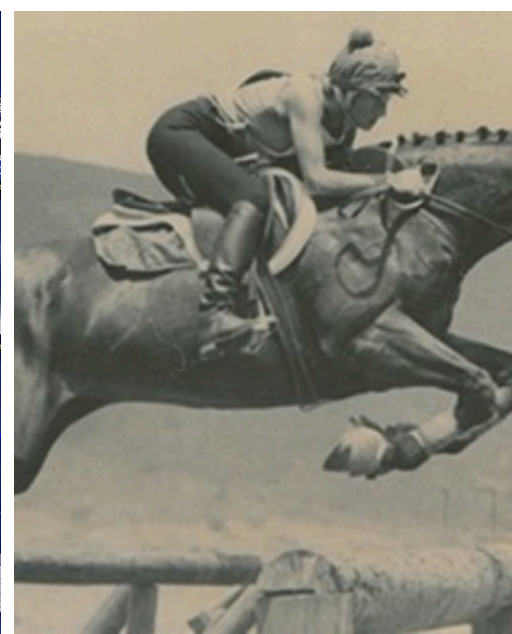
I have been fortunate to have been recognized for our work and for work that I have led and developed. Recognitions come in many different ways and at different times in our careers. All of them are significant. Accomplishments that stay with me are the systematic approach and contributions to a new field in transplantation from idea to implementation, and watching the hand transplant recipients that we have transplanted using their transplanted hands in their daily activities.

What is something some people might not know about you?

When I finished high school, I won a scholarship based on merit to study college. I chose to study it in the Kingdom of Eswatini [a.k.a. Kingdom of Swaziland].

Learn more about Dr. Cendales

- [*Human Transplantation* | Linda C. Cendales, MD | TEDxRVA](#)
- [*Induction to the National Academy of Medicine in Colombia*](#)
- [*Dr. Cendales' Biography* | *Duke Surgery*](#)



Sports



Kelly Collins, MD

University of Wisconsin

Associate Professor of Surgery, Division of Transplantation; Surgical Director Pediatric Liver and Kidney Transplant, UWHealthKids

What is your educational background?

My undergraduate degree was in Bioethics.

What drew you to transplant?

Over the years it has become easier for me to recognize what initially attracted me to transplant: focus on team, meaning in work, instant gratification, incredible surgery with vascular component.



Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

In residency, I had a few key mentors that supported me to pursue a BIG surgical specialty in spite of me not being a BIG surgeon in the archetypal sense. In fellowship, all of my attendings and supporting staff mentored me in different ways, but all of them modeled to me that the strength of the surgeon relies on collaboration, and calling on the team for support is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness. This has helped me (over time) to embrace the things I have yet to learn and lean into the expertise that surrounds me every day on our team.

What are you passionate about other than transplant?

Running, eating, baking, skiing, binge watching Netflix.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

Endless possibilities here... Some of my favorite memories in transplant are when different aspects of my transplant network collide, IE getting an NKR kidney from someone I've worked with on an ASTS committee or procuring an organ for a friend.



What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Honestly define your priorities. Learn what brings you joy and try to find it every day. Focus on gratitude not criticism. Don't listen to the noise.

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

Having the best network of friends and colleagues in all the land :) and working to promote quality and standards in transplant training.



What is something most people might not know about you?

My first pursuit in medicine was OB/GYN. During my intern year I realized I disliked the chaos and stress of deliveries and taking care of healthy people... my GYN oncology rotation introduced me to surgery in a new way and so I pivoted into general surgery residency.







Majella Doyle, MD, MBA

Washington University in St. Louis

Professor of Surgery, Mid-America Transplant Services,
Distinguished Chair, Surgical Director of Adult and Pediatric Liver
Transplant and Executive Vice Chair of the Department of Surgery

What is your educational background?

I trained in Ireland in basic surgical training and higher surgical training in general surgery and did my board certification in Ireland under the UK and Irish board certification pathway. I came to the US

for Fellowship in 2005 and stayed on faculty in 2007 in Transplant in HPB.

What drew you to transplant?

I had intended coming to the US for training for one year in HPB and transplant surgery mostly to be a better HPB surgeon. I hadn't intended on practicing transplant at all in my career. However, during my fellowship, I fell in love with transplantation as well and was lucky enough to be able to continue both in my career.

I think what threw me to transplant was the proficiency of the surgeons who I worked with, and Fellowship, performing these very complex operations and their skill and ability to be able to get out of trouble under any circumstances. I now find great fulfillment not only in performing transplant procedures but also in educating others on these techniques.

Additionally, I deeply appreciate that patients entering the hospital are genuinely eager for liver transplants; their transformation is often remarkable, with many feeling significantly better the very next morning compared to their condition prior to surgery. The profound impact on patients makes this technically challenging field truly remarkable.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

All of the surgeons I worked with in Ireland had a part in my career, but the Irish who swayed me to doing liver was Mr. Gerry McEntee. In the United States, Will Chapman, Jeff Lowell, David Linehan, Tim Eberlein, all played an enormous role in me staying in the US and advancing my career. From outside of my institution, Susan Orloff. Has always been a great friend and support to me, especially during my early years in training as they were very few women and transplantation at the time.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have? (Continued)

In addition to these wonderful people many of the fellows who have come through our training program, and continue to be my mentors, colleagues and friends, especially many of our female trainees, Erin Maynard, Kelly Collins, Kendra Conzen, Jackie Garonzik Wang, and Leigh Ann Dageforde.

What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

To decompress, I prioritize spending quality time with my wonderful family, engaging in activities that bring us closer together. Whether it's playing golf or skiing, these shared experiences create lasting memories and provide a refreshing escape from daily stresses.

I cherish our vacations in Ireland, my homeland, as they allow me to reconnect with my roots and the beauty of the landscape. While I miss the joy of riding horses, I find fulfillment in other pursuits, such as practicing yoga, lifting weights, and incorporating meditation into my routine. These activities not only help me maintain physical fitness but also foster a sense of inner peace and balance in my life.

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The profound impact on patients makes this technically
challenging field truly remarkable.

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What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

Performing my first pediatric liver transplant solo was a significant milestone for me. With my colleague Jeff Lowell deployed, my fellow Kelly Collins and I transplanted a very ill, tiny baby utilizing a split graft. The procedure was exceptionally challenging and stressful, yet the experience was profoundly rewarding as I witnessed that little patient thrive and eventually go home in good health.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

My advice to the next generation of female transplant surgeons is to embrace your passion and pursue it with confidence. The field of transplant surgery is demanding, but it is also incredibly rewarding. Surround yourself with mentors friends and colleagues and create a network for collaboration.

**What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?
(Continued)**

Don't be afraid to advocate for yourself and seek opportunities for advancement, whether in clinical practice, research, or leadership roles. Embrace challenges as learning experiences, and remember that resilience is key. Lastly, prioritize self-care and maintain a balance between your professional and personal life; your well-being is essential for your success. Together, we can continue to break barriers and inspire future generations of surgeons.

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

Receiving the mentorship award from ASTS in 2025, hands-down the greatest honor!

What is something most people might not know about you?

People may not know I used to be a successful equestrian in Ireland but I gave it up to go to medical school.



Ty Dunn, MD, MS

Medical College of Wisconsin, Children's Wisconsin

Professor of Surgery, Surgical Director of Kidney & Pancreas Transplantation at MCW, Surgical Director of Kidney Transplantation at CW. Director of Clinical Operations for Solid Organ Transplantation, MCW

What drew you to transplant?

Experience in hepatocyte transplant research in residency.



Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

Olga Jonasson, Enrico Benedetti, John Najarian, David Sutherland, Rainer Gruessner, and Abhi Humar all were excellent clinicians and demonstrated true compassionate and patient-centered care at the bedside. Curiosity and problem solving were front and center in the mix of amazing surgical talent as well.

What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

I enjoy my neighborhood book club and outings exploring my new city with my husband.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

There are so many I can't think of a favorite, but first are watching the patients enjoy their wins and freedoms from organ failure, meeting transplant legends (Drs. Joe Murray, Max Dubernard, Sir Roy Calne, Paul Terasaki, Carl Groth, and Tom Starzl), and battling tough problems in high-risk patients who require complex surgery to improve their health.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Try everything and you will stumble not only on your favorite professional and extramural activities - but what you have unique talents for. Don't let anyone else define your mojo. Remember to give yourself credit when others don't.

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Remember to give yourself credit when others don't.

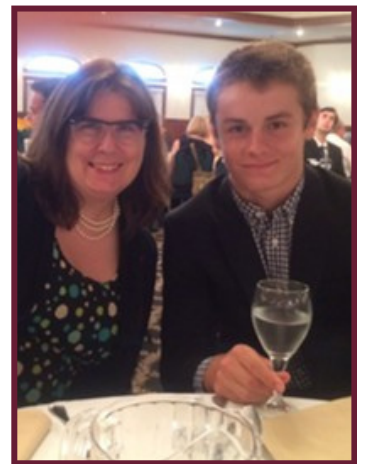
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Can you identify an accomplishment or honor you are most proud of in your career?

Receiving the Ray and Joan Kroc Academic Scholar Award, Department of Surgery, University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Center and being one of the three residents selected by Drs. Olga Jonasson, George Sheldon and John Preskitt to help form the Resident and Associate Society of the American College of Surgeons.

What is something most people might not know about you?

I used to like rollercoasters and scary movies and dream about bungee jumping, but I don't anymore.



[Learn more about Dr. Dunn here!](#)





Juliet Emamaullee, MD, PhD

University of Southern California

Associate Professor of Surgery and Immunology (Clinical Scholar), Associate Chief (Division of Clinical Research), Research Director (Division of Abdominal Organ Transplantation at CHLA)

What drew you to transplant?

I was a scientist before I became a doctor. I think transplant is one of the only surgical specialties that is constantly and rapidly innovating our field. It has already changed so much over the course of my career. I love that my clinical practice informs my research and vice versa. I also love being in an academic environment with trainees.



Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

James Shapiro inspired me to pursue a career in transplant surgery, as a surgeon-scientist. Shishir Maithel at Emory saw the best in me and was a wonderful role model as an academic surgeon. Norm Kneteman, my fellowship director, was a patient and kind teacher in and out of the operating room.

What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

I love to spend time with my family, walk my dog, listen to podcasts/audiobooks, read voraciously, and enjoy seeing the world via personal and professional travel.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

The first time I was ever in an operating room was for an organ procurement, followed by an emergency liver transplant for a young woman with fulminant hepatitis B. She did well and was home in around a week. I was mesmerized.

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

Completing my surgical training with two school-age children.

What is something most people might not know about you?

I played volleyball at the University of Alabama. Roll Tide!



[Learn more about Dr. Emamaullee!](#)



Sandy Feng, MD, PhD

University of California San Francisco

Professor of Surgery in Residence; Vice Chair of Research

What drew you to transplant?

I remember the 1st kidney transplant I ever performed. It was the 1st day of my Kidney Transplant rotation as a 3rd year general surgery resident at Brigham and Women's Hospital. The recipient was a businessman in his mid 50's with children in college. He spoke of how kidney disease made it very difficult for him to continue working since his work required travel. He had to arrange dialysis in Chicago and New York whenever he traveled. He had, however, just won the lottery, getting a 0 mismatch offer. Needless to say, I was simply enthralled by the technical aspects of the operation. But the cherry on top was when the ureter squirted urine on my chest. That was the moment that hooked me.



Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

As a medical student, I loved everything that I experienced. I had no pre-conceived notions as to how I might differentiate. However, it was my time on the Cardiac Surgery service as a 3rd year medical student at Stanford that pulled me into surgery. I saw so many different operations performed with unbelievable skill in patients ranging from infants to the elderly. To top it all off, I was left to close the saphenous vein harvest incision that extended from the ankle to nearly the thigh – the 1st time that I

ever sewed. I struggled, as one might imagine, especially since the leg was awkwardly frogged. I can still hear Norman Shumway yelling at me to stop shaking the table, between telling dirty jokes.

What are you passionate about other than transplant?

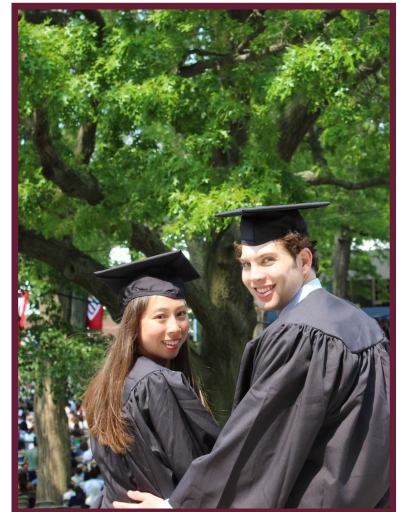
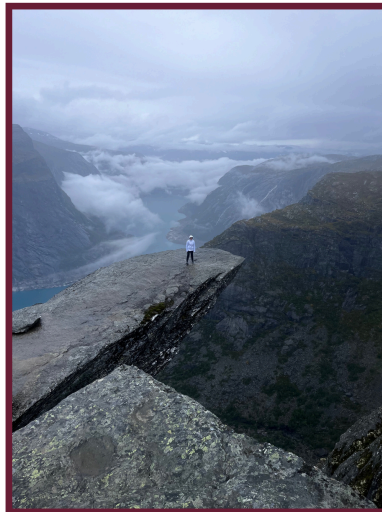
I am passionate about my family and English bulldogs. Traveling and hiking are my choices for decompression.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

It is really impossible to isolate a single memory with a patient / patient family or even with colleagues over and above all others. Transplantation weaves an incredibly rich fabric of experiences that embodies the connectivity that is both satisfying and rewarding. So I will take this question in a different direction. During high school, my daughter had a data entry job at UCSF. With patient permission, she was able to watch (unscrubbed) an entire liver transplant, without passing out! The experience, I think, gave her some sense as to what I actually did.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Only enter if you absolutely love it. As the saying goes, you receive proportional to what you give.



Can you identify an accomplishment or honor you are most proud of in your career?

Election to the National Academy of Medicine is the honor of which I am most proud, particularly since I now have an understanding and appreciation of the nomination and election process.

What is something most people might not know about you?

The scrub nurses tell me that my playlist is the talk of the OR!

————— “ —————

Transplantation weaves an incredibly rich fabric of experiences that embodies the connectivity that is both satisfying and rewarding.

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Lisa Florence, MD

Swedish Health Services

Director, Kidney Transplant Program (Retired)

What drew you to transplant?

As a surgical intern at the University of Texas, Houston, I did a rotation on the transplant service led by the Transplant Director, Dr. Barry Kahan, MD, PhD. Cyclosporine was a novel immunosuppressive agent at that time in the mid 1980's. Dr. Kahan was working on perfecting CsA drug level monitoring as well as running a large immunology research lab. I was intrigued by the kidney transplant surgeries and fascinated by the drug and immunosuppressive medical advances. It was an exciting time to be involved in the field of transplantation.



Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

Dr. Barry Kahan MD, PhD - Dr. Kahan sparked my initial interest in transplantation and provided the opportunity to study/work in his research lab. I participated as a presenter in ASTS conferences/meetings as a junior surgical resident and this exposure determined my career choice.

Dr. Nancy Ascher MD, PhD and Dr. John Roberts, MD – Drs. Ascher and Roberts provided me a transplant fellowship opportunity at

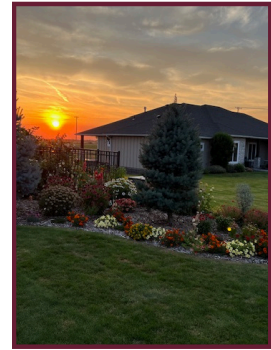
UCSF. They taught me technical proficiency, resilience under pressure, and effective teamwork. They were steadfast mentors.

Dr. William H. Marks MD, PhD – Dr. Marks was my transplant surgical colleague for many years. We took on complex challenges and worked together to build a successful transplant program from the ground up. He is an excellent clinician and teacher. I learned many “tricks of the trade” that served me well throughout my career.

Dr. Ginny Bumgardner MD, PhD and Dr. Susan Orloff MD – We trained together as transplant fellows at UCSF and became life-long friends. We support and mentor each other both personally and professionally.

What are you passionate about other than transplant?

I have quilted for many years, but since retirement I have had more time to devote to this hobby. Piecing quilts satisfies my need to keep my hands busy. I also enjoy growing my own food. During my career I lived in large cities without garden space, but after retirement I moved to a small farming community where I can have a large garden. I start my own vegetable and flower seedlings in the Spring, put in a large vegetable garden every year and can/freeze the produce in the fall. I am quite proud of my homemade salsa!



What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

One of my most memorable experiences in transplant occurred very early in my career. I assisted my surgical partner in performing a kidney transplant on a young morbidly obese woman running out of dialysis access. It was technically difficult, but fortunately she had no complications. Both she and the transplant did well long-term. We learned how to achieve successful outcomes with these patients. This was before the advancements in bariatric surgery and medical therapies for obesity.



What would your advice be to the next generation of transplant surgeons?

1. When the hours get long, remember what you are about - what you accomplish with your time and talent. You give people with organ failure a future – a future to make a difference in the lives of their families, in their communities, and in the life of society.
2. Hold fast to your family. They provide balance to your life.
3. Take your family and travel the world as much as you can when you are young. Don't wait until your retirement years.
4. Develop and nurture close friendships with other women transplant surgeons. Be there for each other.

Can you identify an accomplishment or honor you are most proud of in your career?

I practiced at a private non-academic medical center. In 2010 I was successful in setting up the first of many domino kidney transplant chains utilizing altruistic donors and paired kidney exchange. I also worked with our HLA lab to set up a successful desensitization program for our incompatible living kidney donor pairs.

What is something people might not know about you?

I appreciate the beauty and complexity of nature, especially interesting garden spiders!





Jacqueline Garonzik Wang, MD, PhD University of Wisconsin

Associate Professor of Surgery and Surgical Director of Kidney Transplantation

What drew you to transplant?

From the moment I started my PGY-3 Transplant Surgery rotation, I knew transplant was the field for me. Up to that point I was debating between a career in vascular surgery or trauma/acute care. When I did my PGY-3 rotation, I was met by a perfect combination of what I had loved about both of those fields – technically challenging and stimulating operative cases and caring for sick patients with multi-system disease. It was the happiest month of residency, and it was clear why. I also met two key surgical mentors who modeled the type of academic career a transplant surgeon could have, and I knew this field would be something that would keep me excited, motivated and evolving for an entire career. And thus far, it has lived up to all those expectations.



Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

During my PGY-3 rotation, I met and worked closely with Dr. Bob Montgomery and Dr. Dorry Segev. Both were visionary, groundbreaking surgeon scientists who took on complex clinical cases, but also worked tirelessly behind the scenes to evolve the field and advance care for the patients they cared for. This introduced me to what life as an academic transplant surgeon could look like.

I've since worked closely with countless transplant visionaries who have all impacted my career in various ways, including William Chapman, Majella Doyle, Jason Wellen, Andrew Cameron, Ben Philosophe and Shane Ottman to name a few (this list is too long to name them all and the vital roles they have played in my career and development). I call on these individuals often for help, support and mentorship and am incredibly grateful for their friendship and guidance. Having a core group of individuals who can help support you in various aspects of your career and development is vital to happiness and longevity in this field.

What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

I found a home in long distance triathlon. Having a race on the books to train for ensures that I get outdoors regularly and take care of my physical and mental health. It also allowed me to create a network of like-minded individuals who can help me separate from work.

I also have a devoted and wonderful husband and a boisterous and adorable 5 year old who keep me on my toes and I love spending time with them. As a family, we love to travel and spend time outdoors.



What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

I don't know if I can pinpoint one most memorable experience. My entire time in transplantation has been a journey of growth and discovery.

While it has had its own challenges, I've truly enjoyed the entire journey from fellowship to my junior faculty years and onward. It's been fun to be a part of an evolving field, where I can professionally and personally grow, evolve and mature alongside it. From learning the initial steps to successfully performing a transplant, to taking on these challenges independently as a junior faculty member, developing and growing my academic lab and then picking up a new surgical skill as a mid-career faculty member learning how to do robotic transplant surgery. The whole experience has been an amazing and wild ride and I'm excited to see what the next two decades have to bring.



What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

A career in transplantation can be incredibly rewarding and fulfilling, but it's not without its challenges. Seek out mentorship and sponsorship early and find your people! I have a small cohort of colleagues who I can call upon to get support, ideas, encouragement and guidance. You need this same group to occasionally call just to vent and commiserate. This has been critical to stay grounded, unbiased and motivated in challenging times. Also, hold on to the things outside of medicine that make you whole and happy. They will allow you to bring your best self to work every day.

**What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?
(Continued)**

Learn how to say no and set boundaries early. As women, we are often good at communicating and connecting and thus, are often asked to take on extra administrative tasks in the workplace. Often, no one will say no to these things for you and it will be easy to get over committed, which leads to burnout and bitterness quickly.

You will need to learn to be your own advocate and say no to things – something that I found incredibly hard to do early in my career. Refer to the above-mentioned group of colleagues, when you need help deciding whether or not take on a new task.

Finally, trust your instincts and allow your voice to be heard!

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[T]rust your instincts and allow your voice to be heard!

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Darla Granger, MD, MBA Henry Ford St. John

Section Chief, Transplant, Vice Chair, Surgery

What drew you to transplant?

While in medical school, I attended the student as scientist lecture series and was fascinated by the elegance of the human immune system as presented by Dr. Richard Simmons and Dr. Fritz Bach. Dr. Simmons and Dr. Nancy Ascher's lab meetings which I took part in throughout medical school deepened my interests. Being an intern on the ridiculously busy transplant service almost changed my mind, but getting past the scut work as a junior resident rejuvenated my interest!

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

Too many to list! Dr. John Najarian cared for my grandfather, a junior high principal from northern Minnesota, when I was a young girl. The amazing gift he had for making my grandfather feel like he was his only patient was what made me dream of attending the University of Minnesota--not the research or clinical expertise.

Dr. Arthur Matas was all you could hope for in a research mentor, and also the greatest clinician. He also helped me deal with the inevitable imposter syndrome that comes with being a woman from a small town "up North!"

And the powerful women who preceded me at University of Minnesota who led to the expectation that women were great surgeons--Alexa Canady, the gifted neurosurgeon; Nancy Ascher, well-known to all in transplant; Mary Dunn, a neurosurgeon with four children in residency; Sara Shumway, hosting her "chicks with knives" meetings; and of course, Ginny Bumgardner. They all made it easier for me to succeed.

What are you passionate about other than transplant?

I remain passionately in love with my husband of over forty years! He grounds me. We enjoy traveling and try to take a cooking class together wherever we go. It is a great way to learn more about a culture and remembering him try to fold gyoza like our teacher still makes me giggle.



What are you passionate about other than transplant? (Continued)

I golf, albeit poorly, but I do not keep score--just smiley faces or sad faces--a practice that I believe makes a stress reliever rather than frustrating! I enjoy Pilates and photography, especially of flowers.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

The first hand transplant done in the United States while I was at the University of Louisville. The recipient called me in January to remind me it has been over 25 years, and it still works. He was very brave as were all the early patients in the transplant areas – Dr. Shumway's heart patients, Dr. Sutherland's pancreas recipients, Dr. Starzl's liver transplant patients, Dr. Najarian's pediatric patients.

What would your advice be to the next generation of transplant surgeons?

While the path may at sometimes seem daunting, it is important to remember that you will be doing whatever career you choose for a long time. It should be something you love. I still get joy from seeing my transplant recipients do well and their lives changed for the better. Always stay involved with surgery residents; they will keep you challenged and younger.

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I still get joy from seeing my transplant recipients do well and their lives changed for the better.

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Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

No honor I have received means more to me than seeing my patients do well. What makes me happy every year is when a liver recipient I transplanted nearly 30 years ago calls the office to say, "thank you for saving my life." I have two drawers of cards I have received from patients that I just have to open the drawer to turn around a bad day.

What is something most people might not know about you?

I have kept orchids alive for years.





Wendy Grant, MD

University of Nebraska Medical Center

Professor of Surgery, Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs

What drew you to transplant?

As a 4th year medical student on an IM sub-internship a lady from rural North Carolina was admitted with acute liver failure. She was my patient and I went to the library and copied the Kings College paper and took it to the transplant surgeon in his office - who

knows why I thought I should do this, but she eventually received a transplant and I kept in touch with her and visited her before I left North Carolina. When I was a third year resident on my transplant rotation, a young man from Idaho came in for transplant. He had a long complicated course and I got to know his family well. We still keep in touch. Why these patients . . . who knows. But ultimately being able to do the tonsil behind the portal vein maneuver was the technical seducer for me.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

When in residency Dirk Noyes was a mentor and now a friend. He was Bud Shaw's Chief Resident at Utah and when I decided to pursue transplant surgery as a career he helped by introducing me to Nebraska. Bud continues to be an inspiration.

Deb Sudan raised me as a fellow and the colleague. She held me to high standards and we have reciprocated our support throughout the years.

Alan Langnas raised me and continues to be my boss, partner and friend. Alan knows transplant and helps us all understand when we are "on the path" and when we deviate.

Doug Farmer and John Magee helped me to lead the ASTS/TAC innovation of Certification for our fellows and increase the robustness of accreditation of our Fellowship programs.

Kym Watt is an incredibly smart and brilliant hepatologist and has taught me so much about being a great person, doctor and human.

What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

I am passionate about my family. Beau, Amelia and Charlie are my world.

I also am passionate about my sisters - Janet and Lynda and their families. We lost both our parents early - 2009 and 2012 - so we have made huge efforts to make sure that we see each other and that our families know each other.

I decompress by camping, sitting by a fire, walking with our dog(s), doing jigsaw puzzles and listening to country music.

Where can we learn more about you?

I have the honor of being the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs for the College of Medicine ... my surgical training has allowed me to bring perspective and skills learned to our leadership team and I think make our medical school better.

I was a leader in the ASTS and TAC for about 20 years and moved forward the goal to achieve not only more robust accreditation of Fellowship Training Programs, but Certification of graduates from our Fellowship Training Programs.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

Oh so many. Mostly seeing patients that had transplants as infants and children come back as adults. In this field it is hard to define something as most memorable because what we get to do every day is memorable and amazing.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Please do not forget that you get to do this. Not everyone gets to go to medical school, not everyone gets to do a transplant fellowship, not everyone gets to sew these vessels together. You have earned the right to be here. Just remember that you get to do this.

Can you identify an accomplishment or honor you are most proud of in your career?

My children.

Getting the TAC going and starting the Certification process for TAC.

What is something most people might not know about you?

My favorite color is purple.



Juilie Heimbach, MD

Mayo Clinic Rochester

Director, Mayo Clinic Transplant Center

What drew you to transplant?

The chance to do very interesting surgery and also advance the science (so many questions still to be answered in transplant!) plus the chance get people back to full function. Plus, you often get to see patients over the long term, which is not common in surgery

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

Igal Kam-- transplant surgeon and the chief of transplant at University of Colorado where I was a resident. Dr Kam is a remarkable surgeon, who built a very strong transplant program and along with Michael Wachs, was one of the leaders in the development of living donor liver transplant in the US. He was a role model as well as an inspiration and a trusted advisor.

Dr Greg Gores- Mayo Clinic Transplant hepatologist, Dean of Research at Mayo Clinic, former president of AASLD and current Editor of Hepatology-- despite me being a surgeon and not a hepatologist, Greg has been my strongest supporter and the person who has been invaluable as a research mentor, for clinical questions, and who has helped me navigate a lot of key decisions both inside and outside of Mayo Clinic.

Kim Olthoff-- Kim visited Mayo Clinic as a visiting professor when I was very early in my career on staff at Mayo Clinic. She immediately recognized that I could use a friend and mentor from outside my institution to provide a different perspective. Kim has been invaluable for me as someone who "has been there" and has experienced most of the same things I have. I am so very grateful for her guidance and friendship.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

The thing I find most exceptional and memorable in transplant is the teamwork-- with our fellows who work so hard, our partners, and also our hepatologists and nephrologists who are right alongside us taking such great care of the patients. It is not just one experience, but it is the epitome of transplant, and it is what I cherish the most.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Work hard, do your best, and be willing to accept that you cannot be as good at any one area of your life (family, clinical job, academic job) as you would like to be and as you would be if you only had one or two things you are responsible for. Even so, what you are doing is still probably very good and the lessons learned in one area do make you better at the other areas.

Can you identify an accomplishment or honor you are most proud of in your career?

I recently became a named professor, which at my institution is rare, and is therefore quite an honor. I am very grateful for this recognition. I was also named as a distinguished alumni from my undergraduate institution, which still seems like it may have been an "over call" but is also amazing.

What is something most people might not know about you?

I love running marathons and have also done an ironman triathlon, but my favorite outdoor adventure is canoeing in the BWCA.



Irene Kim, MD

Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

Esther and Mark Schulman Endowed Chair in Transplant Surgery. Director, Comprehensive Transplant Center. Surgical Director, Liver Transplant. Professor of Surgery

What drew you to transplant?

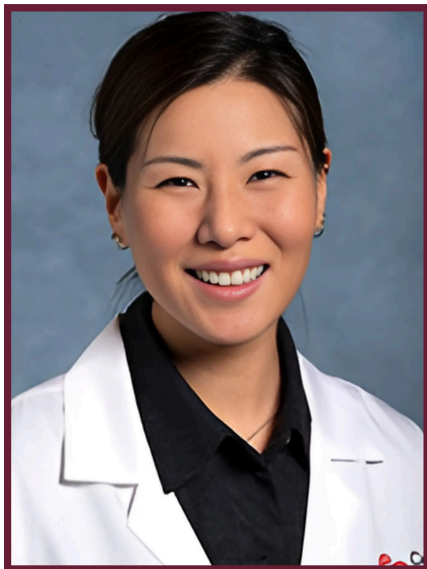
I originally wanted to be a pediatric surgeon, but immediately changed my mind after my transplant rotation my intern year at Tufts, watching Rick Rohrer, Rich Freeman, and Jeff Cooper in the operating room and on the ward. Technically masterful, incredibly hard-working, and dedicated to their patients, nothing seemed to frighten them in the operating room. I was so moved by their example, and immediately pivoted my career to transplantation.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

Carlos Esquivel, without a doubt, became the most influential person in my professional career. Generous to all his fellows in what we were allowed to do in the operating room, Dr. Esquivel was also constructively critical- compelling us to ask ourselves how every case could be improved, to train ourselves to be our own harshest critics. After I finished fellowship, I have sought his counsel on a number of professional matters because I feel he always has my best interest at heart and will provide a succinct and thoughtful response.

Andrew Klein, the former director of transplant at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, taught me about effective leadership and although Dr. Klein is a liver transplant surgeon, he always had a firm handle on all of the transplant programs, both thoracic and abdominal. I credit the steady growth of our transplant program to Andy's patient and relentless vision, which I hope to continue in his place.

Lastly, Stan Jordan, our Director of Kidney Transplantation and Transplant immunology, continually inspires me by his scientific curiosity and dedication to patients. Following his direction, he helped me establish my research interests in HLA-sensitization, which was crucial in my research career.



What are you passionate about other than transplant?

Before I sleep at night, even for 1 minute when I am dead exhausted, I try to read a page out of a book. I'm currently reading the writings of Wallace Stegner, an American novelist whose observations on human behavior and relationships feel timeless and relevant, even though his characters lived in previous eras. Running brings me joy and I try to run 6 miles/day. I didn't grow up playing sports and my partner, Tsuyoshi Todo, tells me that I'm a late bloomer athletically, which I suppose is true. Hope starting late means I get to run until I'm 100.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

Just going with the first memory that comes to mind... I was a junior attending and I accepted a right trisegment and kidney for a patient coming in from home for HCC who was also on dialysis. I did the liver transplant and a partner did the kidney transplant and inexplicably, both grafts thrombosed immediately, probably from some crazy immunological event (transplant is so humbling). The liver had to be explanted, something we had done in fellowship but this was the first time I had to do this as an attending, and my senior partner helped me create a portocaval shunt and he had to go on V-V ECMO. Telling the family that their father, who had otherwise been well, might die was one of the most difficult conversations I've had in my life.

The patient was relisted as a status 1A, and I was willing to accept anything, HIV, HepC, ABO-incompatible- I felt so desperate, delirious, culpable, all of it, and I was driving the local OPO crazy by calling them every hour to see if a potential donor was being worked up. By the grace of god, a donor became available, a terrible postpartum tragedy that brought me to tears, and I got on a plane to retrieve the grafts (both liver and kidney were again offered), and we retransplanted the patient on ECMO. I had been up for 72 hours at this point. I got into a huge fight with my partner who was slated to do the kidney transplant, and I stubbornly insisted that I do that case as well. Our patient suffered greatly but made a remarkable recovery and I wept when his daughter sent me a beautiful photo of them two years later with him walking her down the aisle at her wedding.

Since then, I've had harrowing cases like all my colleagues reading this story, but there's something so impressionable about when an event like this happens early in one's career. The support from my partners during this ordeal- that we were in this together and committed to saving this man's life. The grace of the surgeon I got into a fight with, who I reconciled with once we were both rested and sane. The faith of the patient's family in me to allow me to operate again on their father/husband. And finally, the humbling technical and medical lessons learned that are forever etched in my memory that offer potential solutions when faced with repeat scenarios. All of it, I am so thankful for. Transplant is so beautiful.



What would your advice be to the next generation?

Be your true authentic self.

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

The American Lung Association named me as a recipient of the "Outstanding Mother" award, which I'm sure my children would vehemently disagree with, but being a mom is a challenge unto itself. Mothers get shit done as mamas do, and that's an accomplishment I am truly proud of.

What is something people might not know about you?

I'm a huge Francophile and one of my favorite movies is the 90s-2000 film "Before Sunset" with Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke. I gave both my kids French names ("Sylvie" and "Maxime") and I lived in Paris for a year during medical school. If my husband Tom lets me have my way, I would love to retire there someday.



———— “ ” ————

All of it I am so thankful for. Transplant is so beautiful.

———— “ ” ————



Family





Daniela Ladner, MD, MPH

Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

John Benjamin Murphy Professor of Surgery, Vice Chair of Research & Innovation, Department of Surgery, Founding Director Northwestern University Transplant, Outcomes Research Collaborative (NUTORC), Associate Surgical Director, Liver Transplant & Hepatobiliary Surgery

What drew you to transplant?

I love technically complex surgery, the medical complexity, the team aspect of transplant, the opportunity to amazing research and importantly the opportunity to save a person's life.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

I had many wonderful mentors throughout my career. Two in particular were Dr. Carlos Esquivel at Stanford who inspired me to become a transplant surgeon and is a mentor and sponsor (e.g., he allowed me to pursue a MPH at Harvard during fellowship!). Dr. Michael Abecassis after recruiting me to Northwestern, surrounded me with crucial clinical and research mentorship to allow growth in both disciplines and is a steadfast mentor and sponsor.

What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

To me transplant surgery feeds my soul, research engages my brain, and my family and mentees fill my heart. I decompress with my kids, partner, and friends. We enjoy hiking, skiing, and traveling. I also enjoy all well-prepared food, reading multiple newspapers and listening to books.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

The first time I saw Dr. Esquivel operate it was like watching 'poetry in motion.' This motivated me to strive every day to reach that level of technical expertise.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplantation surgeons?

Pursue your passion. As surgeons we are extremely privileged – no matter what the path might have been to arrive. Most people in the world do not get to determine their path. Because we do, I believe we have an obligation to pursue our passion, so we can do the best job possible - even if it seems hard or unattainable at first. My advice is to (1) really look inside to know what makes you tick, then (2) don't let anyone tell you that you cannot do it (especially if they haven't done it themselves).

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

I am most proud of the success of my mentees. Moving trainees through different stages of skill and then seeing them go and excel is the most satisfying and fulfilling part of my career. In that vein, I am most proud of the mentorship awards I have received, especially the Northwestern Mentor of the Year Award and the ASTS Pipeline Award.

What is something most people might not know about you?

There was no daycare in Switzerland where I grew up, but there was ski school. So, I have been skiing from the time I could walk.

Learn More About Dr. Ladner:

- [Feinberg 2023 Mentor of the Year](#)
- [Northwestern University Transplant Outcomes Research Collaborative \(NUTORC\)](#)



Praise Matemavi, DO University of Mississippi Medical Center

Associate Professor of Surgery, Surgical Director of Kidney and Pancreas Transplant

What drew you to transplant?

I first came to understand the profound impact of kidney transplant surgery when I was a 10-year-old girl growing up in Zimbabwe. The tragic death of Sally Mugabe, the wife of our president, from kidney failure deeply affected me. I had the privilege of attending her funeral, and it sat with me for a long time, though I did not quite understand what transplantation was. It was reported that she had been too unwell to receive a transplant, and at that time I never thought of transplantation as a reality.



Years later, during my second year as a medical student, I rediscovered the remarkable field of transplantation. I learned about a transplant surgeon at The University of Nebraska Medical Center, Dr. Alan Langnas, whose specialty was liver and intestinal transplants. I was thoroughly fascinated and made it my goal to one day train in Nebraska! The multidisciplinary teamwork

involved in transplantation, the intricate attention to detail required in the day-to-day care of the patient, the complexity of the patients, and the complicated surgeries all drew me to this field of surgery.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

I have had the privilege of having many mentors in my life along the way. One of my mentors is Dr. Jason Sample, a trauma critical care surgeon at New York Presbyterian Queens Hospital, where I did my general surgery training. His dedication to patients and surgery inspired me greatly as a trainee. My dream came true of being trained by Dr. Alan Langnas in Nebraska, and I was privileged to be taught by Dr. Wendy Grant and Arika Hoffman, who are excellent teachers and coaches and are constantly finding ways to serve patients better and advance the field of transplantation while also feeding into the pipeline. I am again privileged to have excellent mentors in my partners at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

What are you passionate about other than transplant?

I am passionate about serving in resource-poor countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. I am privileged to use my vacation time to serve there, doing general surgery in those low-income countries.

I love to write and have authored two books, a non-fiction "Passion and Purpose: Black Female Surgeons" which is a collection of stories from 74 black female surgeons from around the world, and the other a fiction historical fiction "Warrior Queen" which is part of a trilogy. I took to heart what Toni Morrison said when she said, "If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it." And I did. As a lover of historical fiction, I could not find a historical fiction novel that was based in Southern Africa so I wrote one.

As a storyteller at heart, I had the honor of being an executive producer in a recent documentary called "Clear the List," which focuses on the stories of 14 patients, both living kidney donors and recipients, in a seven-way kidney swap.

I also enjoy traveling and hiking, and my favorite places to hike are Banff and Jasper National Parks in Canada.



What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

Every transplant is unique in its way. I have had the privilege of transplanting a mother and daughter four years apart.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Transplantation is an incredible and rewarding field, offering numerous ways to tailor your career as it is a young field that is growing exponentially.

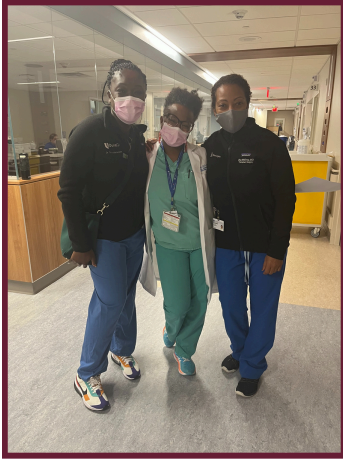
Can you identify an accomplishment your honor you are most proud of in your career?

My humble beginnings as an 18-year-old immigrant teenage mother, surviving domestic abuse, and going through most of my training as a single mother of 2 young children are my most significant accomplishments.

What is something most people might not know about you?

I am shy and an introvert.

[Learn more about Dr. Matemavi!](#)



Lisa McElroy, MD

Duke University

Assistant Professor of Surgery and Population Health Sciences

What drew you to transplant?

I loved everything about it: the characteristics of the patients who suffer from end stage organ disease, transplant surgical procedures, clinical integration of medicine and surgery, multidisciplinary team based care, and system level relevance to health policy.



Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

There was a group of women surgeons at MCW that were incredible and inspired me – Karen Brasel, Kathleen Christians and Kellie Brown in particular were all doing complex surgeries, contributing in administration and research and were supportive and encouraging to the younger women surgeons. Daniela Ladner and Mike Englesbe are both busy clinical transplant surgeons with successful HSR labs who showed me what it means to be a transplant surgeon scientist. they all still inspire me.



What are you passionate about other than transplant?

I'm a political junkie which has its plusses and minuses. I love to read about things unrelated to medicine. I like to bike and go for long walks with my dog to decompress.

Learn more about Dr. McElroy!

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

Too many to recount but I still remember the first liver transplant I ever did--about 10 days into my fellowship with Randy Sung. It was glorious (thanks to Dr. Sung) and I knew I'd picked the right specialty. The patients I remember most are the ones who are sickest before transplant, where we're having conversations about whether it's possible right up to the time of the OR. Working to get them an organ, get them through the transplant and then watching the sequelae of end stage organ disease reverse is a joy and a privilege.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplantation surgeons?

Keep going. Focus on making it easier for people coming behind you rather than your own obstacles and disadvantages, and you'll be much happier.

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

Not one in particular. I do a fair amount of research but I'm most proud of every patient I've transplanted, and the thrill of clinical transplant hasn't diminished for me at all.



What is something most people might not know about you?

I worked as a nurse and helped run a non-profit before I decided to go to med school.





Michelle Nguyen, MD, MPH

Mayo Clinic Arizona

Transplant Surgeon

What drew you to transplant?

What drew me to transplant was the immediacy and gravity of the work—how one operation could completely change the course of someone's life. I was also drawn to the fact that transplant is still a young and evolving field, with space to ask hard questions, push boundaries, and explore new ideas through research and innovation.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

I've been fortunate to have mentors who have shaped my career. One in particular, Dr. Daniel Eiferman, modeled what it meant to be both technically excellent and deeply human in the way he cared for patients. He pushed me to think critically, not just about surgery, but about the kind of surgeon and colleague I wanted to be. I've also been deeply influenced by Dr. Ginny Bumgardner, whose leadership and dedication to building the surgeon-scientist pipeline have been a guiding example. She has shown me what it looks like to lead with purpose, invest in the next generation, and create space for research and clinical excellence to grow hand in hand.



What are you passionate about other than transplant?

Outside of transplant surgery, I'm passionate about mentorship and finding ways to support the next generation of surgeons, especially those navigating the early stages of their careers. It's something that brings a lot of meaning and balance to my work. To decompress, I spend as much time outdoors as I can—hiking, running, or just taking a quiet walk helps me reset. I also love cooking and hosting; gathering people around a table, sharing a meal, and creating space for connection is one of my favorite ways to unwind.



What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

One of the most memorable experiences I've had in transplantation was completing my first liver transplant as an attending. I remember the weight of that moment—the trust placed in me by the patient, the team, and the institution. After years of training, stepping into that role with full responsibility was both humbling and exhilarating.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

More women are entering this field than ever before, and you are part of a growing community that is reshaping what leadership, excellence, and balance can look like. This field will challenge you in ways that are both intense and incredibly meaningful, but don't let the intensity make you question your place in it. Find mentors who see you, build community with those who lift you, and remember that your voice and perspective are not just valid - they're essential. And know that it's entirely possible to build a rich, full life beyond the hospital—including a family—on your own terms and timeline. There's no one way to do this, and that's part of the power you bring.



Can you identify an accomplishment or honor you are most proud of in your career?

Receiving the Dr. Thomas Anthony Dooley Memorial Scholarship in high school was a pivotal moment in my path toward medicine. This scholarship, named in honor of Dr. Thomas Anthony Dooley III, not only provided the financial support necessary for me to pursue higher education but also introduced me to the legacy of a physician who used his skills to make a broad impact through medicine. Dr. Dooley was a U.S. Navy physician whose medical missions in Vietnam and Southeast Asia in the 1950s brought global attention to the health needs of refugees and underserved communities. His work laid the foundation for modern humanitarian medicine. Being a recipient of a scholarship bearing his name not only supported my academic goals but also reinforced my belief in the far-reaching and meaningful role physicians can play in society.

What is something most people might not know about you?

I immigrated to the United States at the age of four, after spending six months in a refugee camp in Bataan, Philippines. My family arrived with limited resources and began the process of rebuilding our lives. The experience of adapting to a new country and culture at a young age shaped my perspective and continues to inform how I approach both life and medicine—with resilience, focus, and a strong appreciation for opportunity and support.



[Learn more about Dr. Nguyen!](#)



Connect with Dr. Ngyuen on X - @MCNguyenMD



Kim Olthoff, MD

University of Pennsylvania and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Donald Guthrie Professor of Surgery, Chief Division of Transplant Surgery; Vice Chair of Faculty Development (just stepped down as Vice Chair), Surgical Director Pediatric Liver Transplant Program

What is your educational background?

I attended undergrad at Calvin College, Grand Rapids MI. and obtained my MD from Pritzker School of Medicine at the University of Chicago. I then did residency, research years, and transplant fellowship at UCLA.



What drew you to transplant?

I always wanted to be a surgeon but had planned on being a plastic reconstructive surgeon using microvascular techniques. Then I rotated on the transplant service my second month of internship and was completely mesmerized by it. It had been just a year since they had done the first liver transplant at UCLA and the field was just beginning, and the excitement was palpable. Transplant surgery combined everything I loved about surgery - the technical challenge, the team approach, the ability to also medically manage the patients, the dramatic change in the recipient after receiving a liver. And the children were, and always will be, my favorites.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

I have been fortunate to have had many exceptional mentors throughout my training and career. I will always be grateful to them for seeing something in me that perhaps I did not see in myself. They encouraged me, pushed me beyond my comfort zone, opened up new worlds of investigation, and told me to always reach for the top.

I think the most important quality of one of my greatest mentors was treating me as an equal and a partner as soon as I finished my fellowship. It was true respect that I value to this day. I also had many women mentors and colleagues outside of my field of transplant who taught me leadership skills and how to survive as a distinct minority in a male-dominated field while maintaining my own approach and personal style.

What are you passionate about other than transplant surgery? What do you do to decompress?

At home, I love to spend time in my garden (and posting pictures of my flowers on IG), and I love to cook for family and friends. And of course, I am exceedingly happy when our sons come home to visit with my 2 new daughters-in-laws and our grand-puppy Murphy...



My other source of joy is traveling the world. I have been so fortunate that my career has led me to travel to so many interesting places with so many dear friends and meet so many wonderful people and experience different cultures. Hiking trails and exploring cities are my go to activities when I travel.



Where can we learn more about you and your professional activities?

I believe there are probably rather boring YouTube videos from our marketing people at Penn and CHOP, and I think there is a video of me when I received an Alumni award from Calvin College. Other than that, I am always happy to chat with

anyone and I suppose you can always Google me :-).

——— “ ———

Never sell yourself short.

——— “ ———

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

After over 30 years it would be impossible to list all my memorable experiences... just way too many!

But one very special memory is sneaking my mom into the OR to watch me doing a living donor hepatectomy. She was a scrub nurse when she was young so understood what we were doing and what was involved in the procedure. She was probably almost 80 or so when she did it, and I think she was so very proud to be there.



What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

- Never sell yourself short
- Remember there is always room at the top
- Compromise is often needed to achieve your goals, but do not compromise your values
- Collaboration is critical to succeed
- Take a leadership course
- Find a friend/partner/soulmate who is always available to hear about your successes, failures, accomplishments, challenges, disappointments. Someone who understands what we do. Someone you can cry with, shout with, cheer with, and just listens to you.



Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career? Obviously being President of the ASTS was something I was incredibly proud about, but probably the highest honor I ever received is when I was given the Pioneer Award from the ASTS. I was absolutely not expecting anything like that and it meant so much to me that the President, Will Chapman, chose me, as a representative of pioneering women in transplant surgery. That was truly special.

One more thing I am very proud of (and truly enjoy!) is establishing the ASTS Dead President's Society - you can learn so much from this group and they have become an exceptional group of friends over the years.

What is something most people might not know about you?

I was featured in one episode of a Lifetime TV Series "Women Docs: A Critical Difference" about 25 years ago...my only starring TV role.

And ice cream is my favorite food :-)



Susan Orloff, MD
**Oregon Health & Sciences University;
Portland VA Medical Center**

Professor of Surgery, Chief, Division of Abdominal Organ Transplantation/Hepatobiliary Surgery; Program Director AHPBA approved HPB Fellowship; Adjunct Professor Dept. of Molecular Microbiology and Immunology

What drew you to transplant?

It is a magical, life sustaining and lovely and challenging operation. The science of investigation and discovery in the field is without bounds, so intellectually stimulating with the potential for broad impact. The patients are the sickest and most in need of urgent complex care, and one is able to help them get to life after near death.

Have you had any mentors who have significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

My key mentor in my General Surgery Career and beyond was Dr. Haile T Debas, who at the time was Chair of Surgery at UCSF - I spent 2 years during my General Surgery Residency as a Research Fellow with an NIH Training Grant in Dr. Debas' GI Physiology and Neuroendocrinology Laboratory. Later, Dr. Debas became the Dean, then the Chancellor at UCSF. He continues to be a mentor, both professionally and personally, as well as a second father to me. Dr. Debas showed me the path to critical scientific thinking, introduced me to Global Surgery, and fostered an environment conducive to learning and to excellence. Haile's enthusiasm is infectious, and he is one of the most gracious human beings I have ever known, as well as one of the most intelligent and committed - he epitomizes integrity and vision.

Drs. Nancy Ascher and John Roberts were my mentors during my Transplant Surgery Fellowship - they demonstrated superb skill and talents in the operating room and in the laboratory. They taught me how to operate at a very high level of complexity, something that I am ever grateful for.

Jay A Nelson, PhD was my research mentor at OHSU during my entire career. He took me on as a mentee with open arms and enthusiasm as a young surgery faculty member at OHSU, as we started our journey studying CMV-accelerated vasculopathy and chronic rejection in a rodent model of heart, kidney and small bowel transplantation that I had developed. We wrote many NIH Grants and manuscripts together, trained many post-docs, surgery residents and fellows and students interested in science. We also had many adventures skiing, hiking, sailing, and just hanging out discussing the verities of life. Sadly Jay passed away January 20, 2024 after a traumatic fall.

Have you had any mentors who have significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have? (Continued)

Last of all, not really a mentor, but a role model is my Mom. Ann Stuart Orloff, MD - wonderful Mother of 6 children, she was double boarded in Internal Medicine and Radiology, retiring at age 80 yrs as a Professor of Radiology at UCSD.



What are you passionate about other than transplant?

Many passions other than Transplant Surgery: Marine Biology, skiing, surfing, wind surfing, paddle boarding, equestrian pursuits - 3-day Eventing, running, biking, music of all types, books, movies, travel, friends and family.

I decompress by doing some form of exercise, experiencing nature, visiting friends, or listening to music with a good book to read.

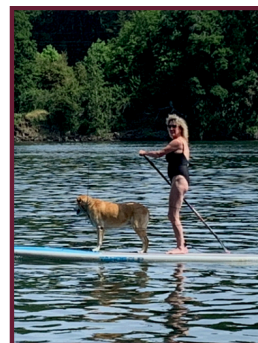
What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

There are too many to mention - here we go with some: All of the successes, lives saved, patients and their families rejoicing with the new life that was bestowed on them through the generous giving from organ donors and their families. Recycle your organs!

One very memorable event: The Taxi for our Organ Procurement Team to bring back various organs for transplantation at OHSU (via a flight from Medford, OR), broke down at 3 am near Grants Pass, OR. With no sign of the Taxi being repaired, I stuck my thumb out with the liver cooler in hand, to hitchhike a ride for our Organ Procurement Team to the Medford Airport. A kind civilian picked us up and got us to where we needed to be. This Good Samaritan was written up in the local newspaper the next day as a hero - quite an experience!

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Stick to your values and morals, and stay focused on the things that will bring you a sense of satisfaction in impacting patients health and lives in the work that you do. Develop a gentle but fierce tenacity and gritty self-reliance. Never give up, work hard and stick to your standards and principles - doing the right thing for the patients and your colleagues. Work hard, play hard - importantly, smell the roses and listen to the birds along the way.



What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

(Continued)

Remain courageous and curious. You don't need to be a 'woman' surgeon, but instead, a surgeon. I will end with: 'The cave you fear to enter, holds the treasure you seek' - Joseph Campbell - poet and philosopher.

Can you identify an accomplishment or honor you are most proud of in your career?

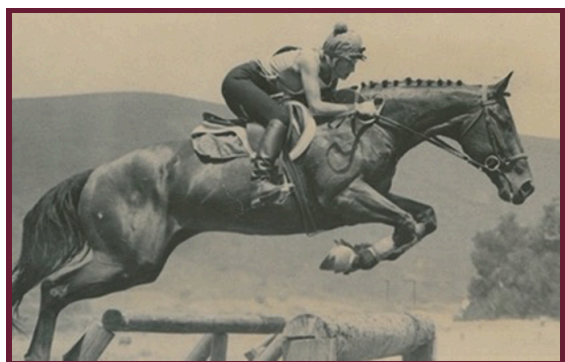
2021 - AHPBA Nonie Lowry Distinguished Service Award

2024 - IHPBA Congress - Invitation to give the Living Legend Presentation

My major accomplishment is having the privilege to take care of and make an impact on so many patients' lives as well as the opportunity to do research and to teach students, residents, fellows, and young faculty. 'A good teacher teaches their students to teach themselves' Idona Grace 1872.

Can you identify an accomplishment or honor you are most proud of in your career?

I fractured C3, 4, 5 and T1, 4, 5, and some posterior ribs during the first month of my 2nd year of Transplant Surgery Fellowship, UCSF - I was required to take a short time off from my fellowship and returned to the OR with a halo - tough times. I was told by the Orthopedic and Neurosurgeon consultants, that I would never operate again due to excessive pain. However, with grit and tolerance I operated for 30 more years with a very fulfilling career in Transplant Surgery.





Elizabeth Promfret, MD, PhD

University of Colorado, School of Medicine

Professor of Surgery, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Center

What is your educational background?

I completed a combined M.D./Ph.D. at Boston University School of Medicine, where my Ph.D. research focused on liver injury and regeneration. Before medical school, I studied chemistry and philosophy (B.S./B.A.) at Boston College, and my early exposure to clinical research at the Dana-Farber

Cancer Institute shaped both my scientific curiosity and my interest in complex disease processes. I then trained in general surgery at the New England Deaconess-Harvard Surgical Service program, followed by a multiorgan transplant fellowship at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. I then completed additional specialized training in living donor liver transplantation (LDLT) under Dr. Christoph Broelsch in Hamburg, Germany, an experience that profoundly influenced my career and helped lay the foundation for establishing one of the largest LDLT programs in the United States.

What drew you to transplant?

My interest in transplant began during a medical school rotation on the liver transplant service. I vividly remember assisting Dr. Roger Jenkins on a deceased donor procurement after flying to Florida on a Lear jet. Much to my surprise (and sheer terror at the time), there were no residents available and the fellow was helping the other attending with the recipient hepatectomy so it was just the two of us. The intensity of the environment, witnessing a procurement for the first time, the precision required, and the emotion surrounding such an extraordinary gift made a lasting impression. Scrubbing on liver transplants further exposed me to a field that demanded exceptional technical skill, calm under intense pressure, and the ability to think creatively when circumstances changed unexpectedly. It was the first time I encountered a specialty where technical excellence, scientific reasoning, and profound human impact converged so seamlessly.



What ultimately drew me to transplantation was the privilege of caring for patients at their most vulnerable and the opportunity to quite literally offer a second chance at life. The field is demanding, humbling, and endlessly challenging—but from the start, it felt like the place where my skills, curiosity, and sense of purpose aligned.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

I have been fortunate to have exceptional mentors at every stage of my career:

Dr. Karen Antman at Dana-Farber ignited my interest in academic medicine and taught me how to ask meaningful scientific questions.

Dr. Roger Jenkins, one of the original trainees of Thomas Starzl, shaped my surgical philosophy and exposed me to the transformative potential of liver transplantation.

Dr. Christoph Broelsch deepened my understanding of living donor liver transplantation and broadened my international perspective.

Dr. Nancy Ascher has been an extraordinary mentor and source of inspiration. As the first woman in the world to perform a liver transplant and a transformative leader at UCSF, she set the standard for excellence, integrity, and innovation in transplantation. Nancy has been a trusted friend who has taught me invaluable lessons about leading with grace and strength, and about balancing the demands of a surgical career with life as a mother.

Each mentor pushed me to pursue excellence, think critically, and perhaps most importantly, believe that innovation and compassion can coexist at the center of surgical practice.



What are you passionate about other than transplant? What do you do to decompress?

Outside the operating room, I'm passionate about spending time with my family, traveling, and reading for pleasure. I decompress by being outdoor, walking on the beach, being out on our boat, doing pilates, reading a great book, or simply taking in quiet moments with my family, friends and dog. I also find joy in mentoring young surgeons and trainees; although it is part of my professional life, it is personally restorative.



What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

Many moments stand out, but one of the most memorable was performing our first adult-to-adult living donor liver transplant in Boston, after training in Germany with Dr. Broelsch. It was a defining experience, an extraordinary combination of preparation, teamwork, and pioneering effort. The gratitude of both donor and recipient, along with the sense of possibility that LDLT could transform access to transplantation in the U.S., remains one of the most meaningful milestones of my career.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Commit yourself to excellence, stay grounded in your values, and understand that leadership often requires courage and resilience. Never be afraid to think boldly—big visions inspire big possibilities. Transplantation advances because people are willing to imagine what doesn't yet exist and pursue it with conviction. The "Paradoxical Commandments" have guided me throughout my career, reminding me to lead with honesty, think boldly, and give my best even when the path is challenging.

One of the greatest joys in our field is seeing potential in others before they see it in themselves. Recognize talent, nurture it, and create space for people to rise. When you invest in others, you strengthen the entire field. Lead with examples that inspire, with integrity that doesn't waver, and with purpose that pulls others forward. Give your very best, freely and without reservation.

**Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?**

Two accomplishments stand out for different reasons:

Being elected President of the American Society of Transplant Surgeons, a tremendous honor entrusted by my peers.

Receiving the ASTS Francis Moore Excellence in Mentorship Award, which is especially meaningful because it reflects the impact I've had on trainees and colleagues—something I consider a core responsibility of academic surgery.

What is something most people might not know about you?

Most people don't know that in high school I had my heart set on becoming a New York Rockette. I even planned to attend the tryouts—until they were cancelled that year when the organization briefly went bankrupt. It seems life nudged me toward a very different stage.



Learn more about Dr. Pomfret:

Information about my work, publications, and leadership activities can be found through:

- The University of Colorado School of Medicine [website](#)
- Professional organizations such as ASTS, ILTS, and AHPBA
- My peer-reviewed publications on PubMed
- Interviews and invited lectures featured through national and international societies

I remain active in transplant education, donor safety initiatives, and evolving surgical technologies.

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Never be afraid to think boldly—big visions inspire big possibilities.

———— “ ” ————



Sara Rasmussen, MD, PhD

Nationwide Children's Hospital

Associate Professor of Surgery at The Ohio State University and as Surgical Director of Pediatric Kidney Transplant, Surgical Director of Transplant Quality, and Associate Surgical Director of Liver Transplant at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

What is your educational background?

I earned my BA in Chemistry from the University of Virginia, then completed my MD and PhD in Microbiology, Cell Biology, and Immunology at West Virginia University. As part of my doctoral training, I received an NIH pre-doctoral cancer research training award and conducted my work in the laboratory of Dr. Wei-Shau Hu in the National Cancer Institute's HIV Drug Resistance Program, where I studied the mechanisms of retroviral reverse transcription and assembly. I then completed a General Surgery residency at the Medical College of Virginia (Virginia Commonwealth University), a fellowship in Pediatric Surgery at Johns Hopkins, and an Abdominal Transplant Surgery fellowship at the University of Virginia.

What drew you to transplant?

While my doctoral research centered on mechanisms of retroviral reverse transcription, I was first introduced to human endogenous retroviruses (HERVs) at the 2002 annual Cold Spring Harbor Retroviruses meeting, where they were discussed as a key hurdle to overcome for the future of xenotransplantation. That moment sparked my imagination in a sustained and indelible way. It set me on my clinical path toward transplant surgery and inspired my career-long pursuit of HERV research as a surgeon-scientist.

During a visiting sub-internship rotation on the Johns Hopkins pediatric surgery service as a 4th year medical student, I also met one of the first pediatric recipients of a three-way paired kidney exchange transplants in the country, which further solidified my desire to dedicate my career to this field.

Have you had any mentors who have significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

I have been fortunate to benefit from extraordinary mentors. At Johns Hopkins, Drs. Paul Colombani and Henry Lau modeled excellence in pediatric transplant surgery and the resilience required for a demanding career.



Have you had any mentors who have significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have? (Continued)

In particularly vulnerable moment, I confessed to Dr. Colombani that I was afraid I wouldn't be taken seriously as a student from WVU, and he reminded me instantly that he was from Kentucky- another poor, Appalachian state. Operating with them was always an empowering experience.



At VCU, Drs. Marc Posner and Adrian Cotterell guided me through the rigor of surgical training and nurtured my early interest in abdominal transplantation. I had many frank conversations with Dr. Posner as I contemplated entering the field of abdominal transplant surgery, and operating with him was always like stepping up to perform a musical piece that required careful preparation.

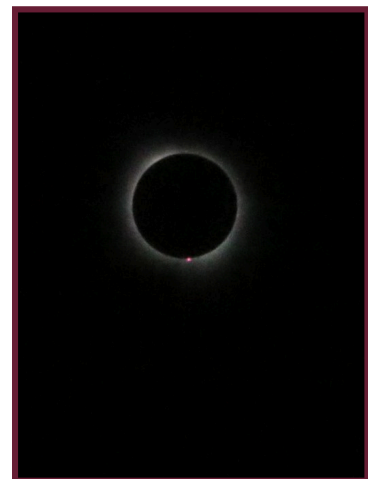
At UVA, Ken Brayman, Avi Agarwal, and Dan Maluf provided both technical training in donor surgery, liver, kidney and pancreas transplantation. They also role-modeled leadership, educating the next generation, and quality improvement work.

Lastly, my interests and skills in pediatric liver transplantation techniques were galvanized by the mentorship from Drs. George Mazariegos and Kyle Soltys at UPMC. Each of these mentors shaped my surgical philosophy and inspired my commitment to mentorship for the next generation.

What are you passionate about other than transplant? What do you do to decompress?

I decompress through a mix of creative, intellectual, and restorative pursuits. I love gardening, hiking, needlework, and astronomy—including nights spent observing the sky with my own telescope.

Just as meaningful to me is maintaining close relationships with the mentees I have counseled, as seeing their growth and success brings me joy and balance.



Where can we learn more about you?

My professional work and publications can be found on PubMed, [through my faculty and research profiles at Nationwide Children's Hospital.](#)

**What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?**

One of my most memorable experiences was performing my first independent kidney transplant at VCU, which reinforced both the responsibility and privilege of being entrusted to perform such intricate operations. Another milestone was my participation in the first split liver transplant at UVA, an operation that highlighted the innovation, collaboration, and technical mastery required to extend the gift of life to more than one recipient.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

I recommend investing in and maintaining the vast the network of connections you will build throughout your training and career. A clear example is how a four-week visiting rotation as a medical student at Johns Hopkins later led to my return there as a fellow—an experience that underscores the lasting power of relationships in medicine. These connections—with mentors, peers, trainees, and colleagues—have shaped my opportunities and sustained me in challenging times.

I believe it is possible to have the life you want while preserving and nurturing the ties you make with those who preceded you and those who will follow you. For me, intention-setting has been essential: being deliberate about where I want to go, who I want to learn from, and how I want to give back. Just as important is taking the time, even during demanding training, to pause and appreciate the unique rewards that each stage of the journey offers. Those lasting relationships and meaningful moments are what I consider my greatest professional achievement.

Lastly, I recommend taking the time throughout your training to connect with your "why" and take the time to enjoy the journey! Enjoy the first time a patient trusts you, the first time you throw a stitch in an anastomosis, and even the umpteenth time you are doing a task you don't love- for you that is a slog, but for your patient it is likely the only time they will experience this part of their care journey. Remember how you show up can make all the difference, and honor that privilege.

Can you identify an accomplishment or honor you are most proud of in your career?

The accomplishments I value most are those achieved in service to others and to the field of transplantation. Serving as an At-Large Member of the OPTN Board of Directors in 2024–2025 allowed me to contribute to shaping national policy and improving equity and outcomes for patients.

Earlier in my career, receiving the Dean's Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Medical Education at the University of Virginia in 2015 affirmed my dedication to teaching and mentorship. And perhaps most meaningful are the moments when I can help a young trainee take the next step in their career, knowing that I am supporting the next generation of surgeons and leaders.

Together, these experiences reflect the service-oriented legacy I hope to continue building.

What is something most people might not know about you?

Most people might not know that I am also a musician. I grew up playing three instruments—piano, violin, and French horn—and as an undergraduate, I was a member of the Virginia Pep Band.

Music has been an important part of my life, shaping my sense of discipline, creativity, and teamwork in ways that continue to influence how I approach surgery and mentorship today. Playing in a large ensemble while weathering the victory or heartbreak of my Virginia Cavaliers has served as a long-standing reminder that it is good to enjoy the work I do, and it is a lasting benefit to enjoy the work I have done with others: the difference we make, and that how I show up every day can have a lasting impact.



Velma Scantlebury, MD

Delaware Health Empowerment Coalition, Inc

Co-Founder, Medical Director

What drew you to transplant?

Transplant rotation as a surgical resident with Dr. Mark Hardy in NYC.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

Dr. Kenneth Forde, a colorectal surgeon at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital. As a medical student and only student of color on surgery, Dr. Forde allowed me to participate in research opportunities that brought my first publication in Surgical Forum.

Dr. Barbara Barlow, Chief of Pediatric Surgery at Harlem Hospital Center, inspired me to become a surgeon and became a sponsor in opening doors to a fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh.

Dr. Thomas Starzl pushed me to be the best I could be as a transplant surgeon amid negativity and discrimination. When others wanted me to shrink, Dr. Starzl provided by with a chair to sit at the table.



What are you passionate about other than transplant? What do you do to decompress?

I love to read and travel. I belong to a book club, and we meet every month for dinner and to discuss the book of the month.

I travel with my husband's college alumni group, which has been doing group cruises for the past 25 years. We have been traveling with them only for the past 10 years, but the group has grown to over 75 people.

For daily decompression, I do weekly workout challenges on Fiton.

Summer time, I am working in my garden and flower garden.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

I still remember the first kidney transplant I did with Dr. Rob Gordon as a new fellow in Pittsburgh. I had not done a transplant since I was a third-year resident, and he left me alone to do the procedure. I am thankful for the visiting surgeon who successfully guided me through the procedure.

As a second-year transplant fellow, while doing a complicated liver transplant with Dr. Tzakis that was hours long, a bloody mess (old days!) and enormous retroperitoneal veins, the right kidney vein was injured, and it was felt that the kidney had to be removed due to uncontrollable bleeding. The team was going to throw it out, but I stood my ground about preserving it. Dr. Shapiro was called in to perfuse it, keep it on ice until the next day and reimplant it in her pelvis. That patient and I remained friends, and it was a talking point for her - having her own kidney reimplanted in her pelvis!



What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

The world of transplantation for women in surgery has improved much since I was a fellow and young attending. I have lived by my motto of being compassionate in the care I deliver, competent in my skills (be the best so no one can question your skills), and confident in my abilities.

While we are all competent as surgeons, our confidence can be undermined by the surrounding circumstances. Find whatever it takes to surround yourself with those who will lift you up when you need it the most.



Can you identify an honor or accomplishment you are most proud of in your career?

I am most proud of the ability to pursue my career as a transplant surgeon and still raise two children and keep my marriage intact. Family is everything and I don't know where I would be without my family.

What is something most people might not know about you?

I look to the God above for daily strength and guidance, as everything I have done, am presently, and will be in the future, is because of His Grace and Mercy.

He has allowed me to be a help to others, and because of that, my husband and I have opened our doors to so many mentees that I now have many "adopted" children from many countries and a host of 'grandchildren' who bring tremendous joy to our lives.

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Surround yourself with those who will lift you up when you need it the most.

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Where can we learn more about you and your professional activities?

I am currently retired from transplant surgery. I am a co-founder of the Delaware Health Equity Coalition. I see chronic disease patients for management of diabetes, hypertension and chronic renal disease.





Saulat Sheikh, MBBS

University of Alabama at Birmingham

Assistant Professor of Surgery

What is your educational background?

I was born and grew up in Saudi Arabia. I moved to Karachi, Pakistan for medical school at the Aga Khan University where I received the Best Graduate Award in 2010. I then matched for General Surgery residency in the United States at York Hospital, York, Pennsylvania. I chose to train in Abdominal Transplantation and Hepatobiliary

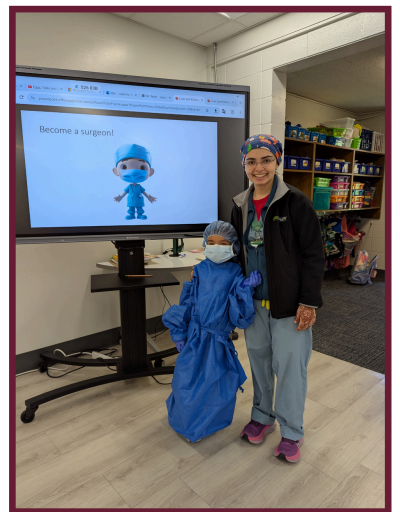
Surgery at the University of Alabama at Birmingham where I transitioned a faculty position in 2020.

What drew you to transplant?

The transformative power of a new organ — the ability to completely change the trajectory of someone's life — never ceases to amaze me. That profound moment when a once-cold, lifeless allograft is reperfused and begins to function again remains the highlight of my day. It's in that instant that all the hard work, the meticulous attention to countless details, and the constant uncertainty that is inherent to transplantation, feels undeniably worth it.

At this stage of my career, I find genuine fulfillment in the complexity of these operations. I thrive on the technical demands and embrace the challenge of performing high-stakes procedures with precision. Remarkably, each transplant still holds a sense of novelty and purpose. My aspiration is to become a master surgeon — someone who confidently tackles the most difficult cases, the ones I might have hesitated to approach earlier in my journey, but now possess the expertise and resolve to pursue for the patients who need it most.

What matters most to me is the lasting impact of this work. I witness, time and again, how deeply my efforts touch the lives of patients and their families. That, above all else, is my greatest achievement.



Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

I've come to understand that sincere and thoughtful hard work, when rooted in the right intentions, never goes to waste. Even if the results aren't immediate, the effort plants seeds that eventually blossom — often in ways we least expect. It builds character, earns respect, and creates lasting impact over time.



What are you passionate about other than transplant?

My family — my children, husband, and parents — are at the heart of everything I do. Being the best mother, wife, and daughter is my most important role in life (though not necessarily in that order, as each one holds equal weight in my heart). Their happiness and wellbeing are deeply tied to my own, and I can't overstate how essential they are to my sense of balance and fulfillment.

I've always loved to read — it's been my favorite way to unwind and escape, even if I don't get to do it nearly as much as I'd like. Swimming is another joy of mine, and something I also wish I had more time for.



These days, most of my free moments are spent playing with my kids. If it entertains a 7- and 3-year-old, I'm in! Whether it's inventing new games like Keepie-Uppie (where the goal is to keep a balloon from touching the ground) or diving into the imaginative world of Dr. Barbie, these are the moments that bring me the most joy right now.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

It's hard to pinpoint a single most memorable moment — my journey in the complex world of transplantation over the past decade has been filled

with countless impactful experiences. There have been rewarding cases, late nights in the OR pushing through delirium that comes with exhaustion, moments of triumph, and others marked by disappointment. Through it all, what stands out most is the profound sense of fulfillment that comes from helping someone who may have felt all hope was lost. Being part of their journey back to health — often when they believed it was no longer possible — is what continues to bring meaning and joy to my work.

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[W]hat stands out most is the profound sense of fulfillment that comes from helping someone who may have felt all hope was lost.

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What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Loving what you do is essential — a truth that applies to many paths in life, but one I feel especially strongly now. Life is too short to spend it doing something that drains you. The work you choose should be meaningful enough to pull you out of bed in the middle of the night, to keep you standing for hours, and to carry you through the inevitable uncertainty. Transplantation is a demanding, highly complex, and deeply collaborative field, with intense hours and high stakes. To truly thrive in it, you have to be driven by a genuine passion — because only that kind of love for the work makes the sacrifices worthwhile.



Can you identify an honor or accomplishment you are most proud of in your career?

I genuinely love teaching. There's a deep sense of pride that comes from watching a trainee or student succeed — whether it's mastering a skill I helped them learn or achieving a strong academic result. Seeing their growth and knowing I played a part in it is incredibly rewarding.

What is something most people might not know about you?

I love fashion — elegant clothes, high heels, and makeup are totally my thing. You'd never guess it, though, from my usual uniform of scrubs, sneakers, and a jacket!

Learn more about Dr. Sheikh



Sheikh, Saulat Sajjad, M.B.B.S. | Surgery

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Linda Sher, MD

University of Southern California

Professor, Surgery

Vice Chair of Research



What drew you to transplant?

My medical school mentor was a vascular and kidney transplant surgeon which first sparked my interest in transplant. Prior to undertaking my residency, I attended an international transplantation meeting and heard Dr. Thomas Starzl's talk on how transplantation has influenced medicine. This highlighted for me the all encompassing nature of transplant and the incredible possibilities ahead. I immediately set my dreams on doing a transplant fellowship in Pittsburgh under Dr. Starzl and worked towards that during my residency.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

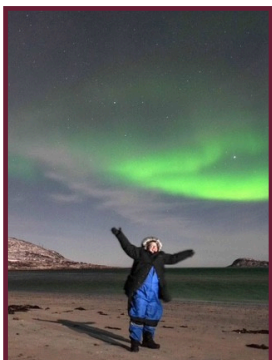
Dr. Harry Schanzer was the first to spark my interest and remained a mentor and friend throughout my residency.

Dr. Thomas Starzl taught me to think outside the box, to always strive to improve and to embrace the possibilities.

Dr. Leonard Makowka became a mentor in Pittsburgh, brought me to my first faculty position where he continued to mentor and support me and gave me an appreciation for research.



By Barry Hogue - Original publication: General media image for UPMC use Immediate source: Dr. Thomas E. Starzl Papers at the University of Pittsburgh, Fair use, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=54061813>



What are you passionate about other than transplant?

I am passionate about my family and my friends. I love to travel and explore new places. I can not get enough of the movies, especially classics. Most of all, I am passionate about my granddaughter who brings me joy and happiness everyday.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

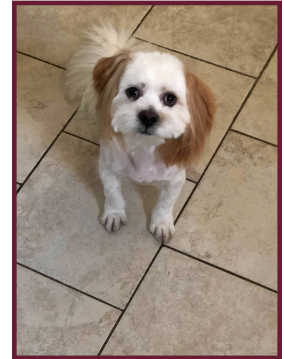
There are so many and they include the days in Pittsburgh where surgeons from all over the globe came to learn and train; my first transplant; the relationships with my patients and my trainees and having participated in the first porcine liver to human transplantation with the team headed by Dr. Leonard Makowka.

What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Keep up your confidence, you can have it all - it just takes planning.

What is something people might not know about you?

I had my daughter when I was a second year fellow - see my uploaded photo from an early Dr. Starzl's Wikipedia page - if you look to his right that is a very pregnant me in 1988.



Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

The success of my fellows and obtaining funding to pursue my research interests.



Latifa Silski, MD, FACS

University Of Cincinnati

Associate Professor of Surgery, UC: Kidney Director The Christ Hospital: Surgical Clerkship Director UCCOM

What is your educational background?

I completed my Transplant Fellowship and Residency at The Ohio State University. I earn my medical degree from The University of Michigan Ann Arbor. I have undergraduate degrees from Case Western Reserve University and Cuyahoga Community College.

What drew you to transplant?

I fell in love with transplant in my preclinical years at University of Michigan. I was fortunate to get a job as an Anesthesia Tech, which afforded me the opportunity to observe many different OR environments, surgery teams, etc. The lightning bolt moment for me was a Champaign liver transplant with Dr. Sonnenday. He did not know I was a student at the time but went on to explain what he was doing in the back-table. His relationship with the anesthesia team seemed like a beautifully choreographed dance and I was hooked. Transplant is the magical place where truly multidisciplinary teams work towards the singular goal to get someone another chance at life, it is often at the crossroads of grace in the face of unspeakable tragedies and second chances.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

I have many many mentors and too many to summarize.

Dr Christie Gooden: She was the Transplant Fellow for my Sub-I. Watching her was truly awe inspiring. She would whirl through the hospital as an efficient tornado that seemed to bring people together with military precision while singing in the hallways. Her care and commitment to excellence in patient care with both medical and surgical knowledge was emblematic of what I wanted to be as a doctor and a surgeon. She did all of that and had a personal life in the midst of it all. This solidified my determination to follow the transplant path.

Dr Rajab: He was my assigned mentor when I joined OSU but became my Soul-Mentor during my time there. His passion to continue to do access work as a form of direct patient education and outreach to decrease barriers to transplant is very inspiring. He and Dr. Pellitier would spend just as much time discussing complex access cases as they did talk about complex kidney transplants. They "walked the walk" proving every patient, every case deserves 100%.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have? (Continued)

Dr Bumgardner brought me to my first transplant Meeting as an Emerging Liver Scholar Travel Awardee in 2012. Thus began a relationship that has evolved over the decade. Her commitment to bringing the next generation along has always resonated with me.

Dr Ken Washburn: He has always been my "Big Picture, Long Game Mentor." He is the picture of courage and dignity under fire. His operative composure and ability to maximize the potential in every team member showed me how great leadership can bring out the best in the team. His confidence in my surgical abilities propelled me to a confidence level that allowed me to further my skills.

Currently my Peer Mentoring Group with some of the most amazing women including but not limited to; Drs Gooden, Matemavi, Dinee Simpson, Lisa Mc Elroy, Arika Hoffman, Mobely, Scantelbury, Linda Chen, and more. This group serves as both inspiration and support for intellectual growth and support.



What are you passionate about other than transplant?

I love to dance. I love to spend time with my family. There is just something soothing about listening to my husband's technical jargon about planes or watches or microphones or his current fascination. I enjoy watching my daughter play video games and demonstrate her latest mastery of skill. Doing homework with her is an all-consuming decompression strategy!

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

I am most proud of receiving the Gold Humanism in Teaching Award and the Resident Teaching Award.





Debra Sudan, MD

Duke University

Professor of Surgery, Chief, Division of Abdominal Transplant Surgery

What drew you to transplant?

Transplantation has a dramatic impact on patient well-being and is life-saving and also technically challenging surgery.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

Mary McCarthy - smart, accomplished leader of Trauma Surgery

during my residency, significantly impacted my view of female surgeons and the potential for my future leadership in Surgery.

Alan Langnas - technical wizard at complex liver transplant surgery and pioneer in intestine transplantation - taught me much of what I have learned in technical aspects of liver transplantation and prompted my pursuit of intestine transplantation during the early development of the field.

Bud Shaw - also technically very accomplished in liver transplant surgery, helping me to gain technical skills during my fellowship and also pioneered transplant specific EMR that was impactful in much of the efforts and recommendations that I and our transplant team at Duke made to the EPIC team as we went live with implantation of the EPIC EMR and facilitated further development of the Phoenix transplant module.

What are you passionate about other than transplant?

I enjoy a wide variety of outdoor activities and love to read. When I want to decompress, I take my dog for a walk, take a trip, read a book or watch TV. I very much enjoy traveling, hiking, and spending time with family and friends.



What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

Performing a living donor intestine transplant for a 9 year old girl who had never been able to eat and then seeing her 1 and 2 years after transplant when she was attending school, eating all of her calories by mouth and had been able to travel on vacation with her family.

What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation (continued)?

This living donor intestine transplant also pushed me out of my comfort zone as I was helping a transplant team establish their intestine transplant program, but the government required an experienced intestine transplant surgeon be on site for their first intestine transplant, which could not be done with a cadaveric graft.



What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Go for it!! It is a great field and although a bit strenuous, very rewarding! No regrets!

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

I was named a Master Surgeon at Duke University in February 2021.

What is something most people might not know about you?

I am an avid Duke Basketball fan and absolutely love to go to the games!!!





Jennifer Verbesey, MD

MedStar Georgetown Transplant Institute

Director, Living Donor and Pediatric Kidney Transplantation

What drew you to transplant?

I matched in plastic surgery! However, as I started to do my general surgery years, I realized that I loved to do the most challenging, open (at the time), and interesting cases - and those were all found in transplant. I also found myself surrounded by an incredible transplant team who were extremely enthusiastic, welcoming, and encouraging. I

loved how transplant combined science, surgery, medicine, and social/ethical issues.

Have you had any mentors who significantly influenced your career path? What impact did they have?

I am lucky to have had the most incredible mentors. Liz Pomfret will forever be incredibly important to me – I am sure she taught me things in the operating room, but what I remember most is her passionate (to put in mildly) talks about how to manage the profession and life outside the hospital. She included me in surgeries, meetings, trips, and always supported and encouraged me. I am forever indebted to her. And, of course, Jim Pomposelli is a master surgeon who taught me a tremendous amount in the hospital and how to get a mortgage, buy a house, etc.

I try to model myself every day after Roger Jenkins, who was the ultimate technical surgeon, but also the most wonderful, caring, compassionate doctor I have ever had the privilege to work for. Being "his" fellow is one of my favorite accomplishments.

Mohamed Akoad also encouraged me every single day, and made fellowship fun and exciting, which I think only a handful of people can say.

Finally, when I was a junior attending, I had the most incredible guidance from Reza Ghasemian, who was a true partner and friend. He was always willing to help me at two in the afternoon or two in the morning. Mentors have played a huge role in my life, and I hope other people are as fortunate as I have been to work with such incredible role models.

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You never know what path will be open in the future.

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What are you passionate about other than transplant?

I fill in my time around transplant surgery with no problem!! I love to travel with my family, and we have had amazing trips skiing and in Europe. My husband is a fanatic Bruce Springsteen fan, and I have recently learned to use this to my advantage as we have traveled all over the world for concerts! Even stayed in the same hotel as Bruce a few times - very exciting! I am a HUGE Duke basketball fan, and I travel down to Cameron Indoor Stadium quite a bit. I am lucky that my son is at Georgetown, so lunch dates with him are easy. Finally, my daughter plays lacrosse at Colby College up in Maine, so my Spring is filled with trying to get to as many of her games as my schedule can allow.



What is a memorable experience you've had in transplantation?

Every other year, Georgetown hosts a Donor Appreciation Night. It never fails to be an amazing evening. We always end with an open mic, and I remember the first year we were nervous about doing that, but we didn't realize that it would be the most special part of the evening every time. Hearing people's stories about either donating or receiving is always inspiring, and recharges my professional and emotional battery every time we hold this event.



What would your advice be to the next generation of female transplant surgeons?

Here's my advice:

1. Do whatever you can to find amazing mentors. They won't always come to you because people are busy and preoccupied. You have to nurture the relationships and be proactive.
2. There is no set path. I did a fellowship in adult liver, and now all I do is kidney and pediatrics. Keep your options broad, try to learn anything you can early on, and be open-minded. You never know what path will be open in the future.
3. Lots of people will say you "can't" do something, but you never know what path you can create for yourself. Be completely dedicated and hard-working early in your career, and you will have greater options later.
4. You can have a terrific family life and be a transplant surgeon, but you may have to adjust your aspirations slightly. Don't be afraid to do that to leave time for both!

Can you identify an accomplishment or an honor you are most proud of in your career?

I am extremely proud of developing a very active and safe living donor kidney program at Georgetown. I have completely immersed myself in this one area for over a decade, and its progress and success are very meaningful to me.

What is something most people might not know about you?

I am an open book! And very talkative! I can't imagine there are too many things about me that I haven't already told most people.

CAMARADERIE



Kari O'Hoff, Nancy Ascher, Tiffany Anthony, Wendy Grant, Denise Adams, Daniela Lohrer, Casey Dangelmaier, Jordana Gausson, and Liz Pouffret at the 2007 Fellows Symposium in Maui

Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco, August 4th, 2026

