Emory Surgery Clerkship receives high ratings from medical students

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Graduation Questionnaire is annually administered to graduating medical students as a tool for improving medical education at the local level as well as for creating a repository of data for research on national trends in medical education. In the recently published results for the 2010 national class, two-thirds of Emory's graduates rated the Surgery Clerkship as excellent, a ranking made all the more impressive by the fact that less than half of the students at all other schools rated their particular clerkships so highly.

Dr. Barbara Pettitt, Associate Professor of Surgery and Chief of Surgery of the Hughes Spalding Campus of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, began directing the Emory Surgical Clerkship (M3) in 2002 and the department's M4 Programs in 2004. In addition to her directing duties, she gives M3 lectures, is an instructor for suture labs and advanced vascular access labs, and is the director and instructor of the M3 Trauma Evaluation and Management ACS course.

Dr. Pettitt considers the rating "a tribute to the dedication of our faculty and our housestaff to teaching. We know that a student's experience in the surgery clerkship, including whether they seriously consider surgery as a career, is in large part a function of their interactions with surgery faculty and housestaff. Even if students don't choose surgery as a career, it is very important that they have a good experience with us. No matter what specialty they enter, they are probably going to be interacting with surgeons and evaluating patients with possible surgical problems."

While indisputable that the quality of the program is sustained by the excellence of the faculty and residents, Dr. Pettitt has clearly been the force and the energy that has driven the clerkship to its current status. In 2007, she spearheaded the development of teaching sites for both medical residents and surgical residents.
on Blackboard, and now there are over 19 such sites on the system spanning numerous specialties and curriculum requirements. She has also developed curriculum, assessment tools and a Blackboard site for the M4 Surgical Sub-Internship; created learning objectives, instructional guidelines, and assessment checklists for several simulation training modules of the National Medical Student Skills Curriculum; and developed and added simulation scenarios in trauma and other surgical emergencies using full-body simulators to the M4 Surgical Anatomy and Operative Techniques Course.

Dr. Pettitt's commitment to surgical education beyond the boundaries of the department has attracted the best students to our program. She has been active in refining the SOM curriculum, witnessed by her service as co-chair of the Competency and Assessment Committee and member of both the Applications and Translations committees, and is a recognized figure on the national scene through her publications, lectures and various appointments in the Association of Surgical Education (ASE), including Chair of the Faculty Development Committee, founder of the Clerkship Directors Committee and member of the Executive Committee. In 2009, the ASE awarded her the Philip J. Wolfson Outstanding Teacher Award in recognition of her "expert knowledge, innovation, enthusiasm and stimulation of interest, encouragement of problem solving, ability to provide feedback and effective evaluation, role modeling of professional characteristics and accessibility and openness to new ideas."

"Last year, more than 20 students chose to pursue surgical careers and this year a similar number have chosen the same route," says Dr. Keith Delman, Program Director of the General Surgery Residency. "This is a direct reflection on Dr. Pettitt's success in building one of the favorite rotations in the 3rd year."

Lynda Watts retires

Bringing to a close 23 years of employment at Emory, Lynda Watts retired from her position as Program Administrator of the General Surgery Residency on July 31, 2011, a position she had held since 1993. Prior to that, Lynda had worked in the surgical oncology labs of the then-Division of Urology of the Department of Surgery (Urology became an autonomous department in 1998).

Lynda graduated summa cum laude from Florida State University with a major in history and religion. She came to Emory in 1975 and was a graduate student in history, earning an MA in 1977. During her time at FSU and Emory she was a Dupont Scholar, a Ford Fellow, received the Francis Benjamin Prize in Research and Writing and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

When she began working in the residency office, Lynda's primary responsibility was to insure that resident case loads aligned with ACGME standards. As the position expanded and she became acclimated to the myriad components of the general surgery residency experience, the primary function of her office evolved into maintaining the program's accreditation with the ACGME, a labyrinthine task that encompasses documentation and monitoring of program goals and objectives; required curriculum; faculty qualifications and responsibilities; facilities; duty hours and call; outpatient, inpatient, and surgical experience; resident research; resident evaluations; board examination passing rates; and many other topics. She also became a type of counselor to the residents, not only advising them on how to best navigate the system and adhere to proper polices and procedures, but also lending a sympathetic ear.

For Lynda, the most persistent difficulty encountered by residency administrators is maintaining balance. "My major challenge was reconciling the
needs of the residency program related to maintaining accreditation with the needs of the individual residents, their attendings and the facilities they worked at, especially as I grew to care about these people and places," she says. "That said, the bottom line always made whatever decision I had to make very clear: the requirements of the residency had to come first."

Reflecting on all the changes and developments she’s seen in surgical education, Lynda is excited about the future. "The emphasis on new technologies in both practice and training is thrilling. What were once marvels are becoming more status quo, like simulation, robotics, tele-proctored training, while other wonders are being developed that will gradually mainstream, all with the purpose of training residents how to use their hands. I love that contrast."

Dr. Tom Dodson, program director of the residency during her tenure, says, "Lynda had the work ethic of a general surgery resident, the intellectual skill of a chief resident in internal medicine, the doggedness of a competitor in the Tour de France and the caring of a mother tending her children," he says. "Probably the thing I most admired about her was that she always said ‘my residents’.”

New research awards: Andrew Adams, Muralidhar Padala and Lily Yang

Second-year transplant fellow Dr. Andrew Adams was selected as a recipient of the first ever Woodruff Scholar Early Independence Award. The purpose of the award is to help develop the Emory-based careers of new faculty and to encourage their research. Dr. Adams will receive $50,000 to use at his discretion to support his research, which focuses on the development of novel therapeutics to prevent allograft rejection and promote transplantation tolerance. This work will be performed at the Emory Transplant Center's basic science research laboratories and Yerkes National Primate Research Center.

Dr. Muralidhar Padala, Assistant Professor in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery and principal investigator of the heart valve research laboratory, was awarded a Wallace H. Coulter Translational Research Award of $100,000 for "MitraCath – Development of a Transcatheter Heart Valve Replacement System." Coulter translational awards assist biomedical engineering investigators in establishing their academic careers while also supporting research directed at promising technologies with the goal of progressing toward commercial development and entering clinical practice.

Dr. Lily Yang, Nancy Panoz Chair of Surgery in Cancer Research, and Dr. Hui Mao, Associate Professor of Radiology, are Co-PIs of "MRI Capable Receptor Targeted Drug Delivery for Pancreatic Cancer," which received an NIH R01 grant of $1,037,000 over five years. The R01 is the NIH's original and historically oldest grant mechanism. In this project, Drs. Yang and Mao propose to develop and test a multi-functional imaging-delivery magnetic nanoparticle platform that combines the capabilities of demonstrated MRI contrast enhancement, receptor specific tumor targeting, and optimized drug loading and release for MRI-guided systemic delivery of chemotherapy drugs into pancreatic tumor lesions.
International Aortic Summit unites world leaders in aortic surgery

The first annual conference of the International Aortic Summit was held June 23-25 in Venice Lido, Italy. "It was a very gratifying experience and a great success," says Emory vascular surgeon and researcher Dr. Joseph Ricotta, who founded the IAS as a global forum for addressing, examining and evaluating the rapid evolution and transformation of aortic surgery. "The countries represented included the USA, Italy, Germany, UK, France, Spain, Turkey, Macedonia, Greece, Japan, Israel, Egypt and Brazil. We've already started making plans for next year's meeting, which will have more of an Emory presence."

As meeting chairman of the IAS, joined by co-chairs Dr. Joseph Lombardi (Camden, NJ), Dr. Franco Grego (Padova, Italy) and Dr. Andrea Stella (Bologna, Italy), Dr. Ricotta assembled an impressive roster of international leaders in vascular and endovascular surgery to discuss the latest advances in aortic surgery. The summit was divided between sessions featuring faculty lectures, local and international attendees submitting case presentations for discussion by IAS faculty panels, and hands-on sessions with both open and endovascular simulators. The simulation scenarios were designed to familiarize surgeons with new products and assist vascular trainees in gaining experience with handling, suturing and delivery of aortic grafts. In addition to presiding over the congress, Dr. Ricotta co-moderated the thoracic aorta and thoracoabdominal aorta sessions and presented a lecture entitled "Fenestrated Grafts for the Treatment of Juxtarenal Aortic Aneurysms" as part of the advanced abdominal aortic aneurysms session. Click here to view a PDF of the event's final program.

"An immediate result of the meeting is that it has attracted several international visitors to Emory to observe our vascular surgery program and the fenestrated-branched endograft program in particular," says Dr. Ricotta, who was instrumental in establishing Emory's fenestrated and branched aortic endograft service in 2010. "So far, we've been visited by physicians from Italy, Greece, Germany, China and India and two vascular surgeons from the University of Padua in Italy are scheduled to come to Emory for two weeks in September."

Another attendee of the June summit, German vascular surgeon Dr. Nikolas Tsilimparis, began doing outcomes research here on August 1st as Emory Surgery's first international clinical research fellow in vascular surgery. Dr. Ricotta, who directs the Vascular Surgery Clinical Research Program and the International Vascular Surgery Research Fellowship, has already confirmed the
2012 research fellow, Dr. Enrico Galito, a vascular surgeon from the University of Bologna in Bologna, Italy, the oldest medical school in the world.

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**Emory team competes in Lake Placid Ironman Triathlon**

After training for more than a year, an Emory team composed of John Puskas, MD, Daniel Weiland, PA-C (CT Surgery, EUH), Amanda Wade, RN (CT ICU, EUH), and Richard Heimbecker, PA-C (formerly CT Surgery, EUHM, now relocated to Boston), competed in the Lake Placid Ironman Triathlon in Lake Placid, NY, on July 24 and finished its challenging, back-to-back 2.4 mile swim in Mirror Lake, 112 mile bike-ride through the Adirondack Mountains, and 26.2 mile run. Among approximately 2,000 competitors, the Emory group’s completion of the prestigious endurance event was clearly a triumph of team spirit and mental and physical stamina. The Ironman Triathlon series was established in 1978, has grown to 28 events per year, and is capped by the Ford Ironman World Championship held every October in Kona, Hawaii.

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**New arrivals**

**STAFF**

*(Lead Multimedia Developer, Department of Surgery)* Michael Konomos is a certified medical illustrator whose primary media are medical animation, illustration and 3D reconstruction of imaging data. The audiences he instructs include patients, residents, students, allied health professionals and physicians. Michael previously served the Cardiovascular Center of Excellence at Georgia Health Sciences University. He earned a Master of Science degree at the Medical College of Georgia (now GHSU) in 2006 and a BFA from the University of Georgia in 2004. His specific areas of professional interest include 3D animation, realistic 3D modeling and texturing, digital illustration, surgical anatomy, cardiovascular medicine, patient education and visual medical education of the developing world.

**FACULTY**

*Division of General and GI Surgery*

*(Assistant Professor of Surgery)* Dr. Virginia Shaffer joins us after completing her colorectal surgery fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic Florida. She earned her MD from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and did her general surgery internship and residency at Emory. Her clinical specialties are laparoscopy, colon and rectal cancer, anal cancer, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, inflammatory bowel disease, pouchitis, anorectal pathology, hereditary polyposis syndromes, rectal prolapse, pelvic floor disorders and anal fistula, and her research interests are inflammatory bowel disease immunology, cancer treatment, outcomes research and transplant immunology.

*(Assistant Professor of Surgery)* From 2005-2008, Dr. Ashley Slappy held several appointments at the Naval Hospital, Charleston, SC, including Chief of the Medical Staff; Chair, Executive Committee of the Medical Staff; Department Head, General Surgery; and Officer in Charge of the Shipboard Surgical Team. He joined Emory Johns Creek Hospital in 2008 and chaired the Education and Cancer committees, was involved with establishing the hospital's Breast Cancer
Center, and participated in implementing updated peer review processes and protocols for blood product-use. His clinical interests are advanced laparoscopy/endoscopy and acute care surgery, while his research focuses on process design, lean/six sigma implementation and information technology in healthcare.

(Assistant Professor of Surgery) Dr. Patrick Sullivan received his MD from the Stritch School of Medicine, completed his general surgery internship and residency at Emory (he was administrative chief resident in 2010) and did his colorectal surgery fellowship at the Mayo Clinic. Dr. Sullivan will be using the “enhanced Patient Care Protocol” for colorectal surgery in order to significantly reduce potential delay in patient recovery. Key elements of the protocol are maintaining metabolic control and homeostasis, the core principles of which are to minimize invasive surgery and optimize pain control, gastrointestinal function and mobilization.

Division of Vascular Surgery

(Assistant Professor of Surgery) Dr. Ravi Rajani comes to Emory from the Cleveland Clinic after completing his vascular and endovascular surgery fellowship. He attended medical school at the University of Michigan, completed his general surgery training at the Cleveland Clinic and did his surgical critical care residency and trauma fellowship at Emory. Dr. Rajani will be the Director of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery at Grady Memorial Hospital. He is interested in potential endovascular management options for victims of trauma and is involved with outcomes analysis for patients who have suffered blunt aortic injury. Having obtained his RPVI degree and served on the National Ultrasound Faculty of the American College of Surgeons, he is also interested in continuing to expand the role of ultrasound in peripheral vascular assessment.

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Save the date: Emory Surgery ACS Reception

The Department of Surgery will host an Emory Surgery Alumni Reception at the American College of Surgeons 97th Annual Clinical Congress, October 23-27, 2011, in San Francisco. The reception will be held on October 25 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM in the Borgia Room of the Westin St. Francis Hotel. Former and recent graduates are encouraged to attend.

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Upcoming

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<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
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<th>LOCATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>SURGICAL GRAND ROUNDS Generational Differences in Academic Medicine</td>
<td>7:00-8:00 AM, August 11, 2011</td>
<td>Auditorium, EUH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surgical Grand Rounds</td>
<td>Lower Extremity Reconstruction</td>
<td>7:00-8:00 AM, August 18, 2011</td>
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<td>Presented by Mark D. Walsh, MD</td>
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<td>– Assistant Professor of Surgery, Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Department of Surgery, Emory University School of Medicine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surgical Grand Rounds</td>
<td>Current Management of Neonatal Bile Duct Abnormalities</td>
<td>7:00-8:00 AM, August 25, 2011</td>
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<td>Presented by Matthew S. Clifton, MD</td>
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<td>– Assistant Professor of Surgery, Division of Pediatric Surgery, Department of Surgery, Emory University School of Medicine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surgical Division Chiefs Meeting</td>
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<td>5:30-7:00 PM, August 30, 2011</td>
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<td>Surgery Faculty Meeting</td>
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<td>5:30-7:00 PM, October 25, 2011</td>
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**FALL TERM CLASSES BEGIN**
August 24, 2011
Allied Health, Business School, Emory College, Graduate School, Nursing School, Oxford College, Public Health, Theology School and Medical School