UPSTATE FOUNDATION Endowment Update

Providing permanent support for research, education and patient care.

JANUARY 2025

Eileen M. Pezzi, MPA
Vice President for Development
Upstate Medical University

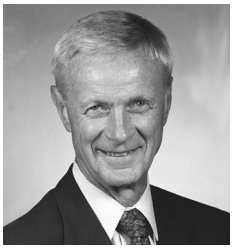
Welcome to the 2024 edition of Endowment Update, the Upstate Foundation's annual newsletter highlighting the vital impact of endowments on the work and mission of Upstate Medical University. The Upstate Foundation and entire Upstate community dedicate this issue to a well-respected colleague, Dr. David G. Murray, and his family. Dr. Murray passed away this past October at age 94. When he began his 30-year tenure as chair, he was one of the youngest chairs of an Orthopedic Surgery department in the country. Under his leadership, the department would become one of the most highly regarded in the nation with one of the most sought-after residency programs. Dr. Murray trained more than 120 orthopedic surgeons. His distinguished legacy as a renowned surgeon-scientist includes the development of the artificial knee, many of his design features still part of today's replacement knee.

The Upstate Foundation is proud to serve as the steward to the David G. Murray, MD, Endowed Professorship in Orthopedic Surgery, which was established to ensure ongoing research related to musculoskeletal cancer.

This newsletter celebrates the legacies of respected surgeons, scientists and loved ones through our endowments, including those honoring Dr. Murray and others whose contributions have shaped their respective fields. These funds, made possible by generous donors like you, support the important work of those continuing the missions of these Upstate icons. We hope you enjoy reading about their accomplishments. We are also proud to announce the new Dr. Charles J. Hodge Endowed Professorship in Neurosurgery, furthering his lasting impact on the field.

CELEBRATING 37 YEARS

David G. Murray, MD, Endowed Professorship in Orthopedic Surgery



Dr. David G. Murray pioneered the development of total knee replacement, the technique that revolutionized the course of treatment for arthritis victims. Dr. Murray was named the first chairman of Orthopedic Surgery at Upstate Medical University in 1966. A gifted clinician, teacher and physician-scientist, Dr. Murray's accomplishments included research on knee joints, prostheses and arthroplasty which attracted significant grant support. He earned the Distinguished Service Award from the Association for Academic Surgery, among numerous other national honors.

The **David G. Murray, MD, Endowed Professorship in Orthopedic Surgery** supports research related to musculoskeletal cancer in the Musculoskeletal Science Research Center at the Institute for Human Performance, as well as intra-institutional and multi-institutional collaboration.

Research is focused on three primary areas:

1. effects of radiotherapy on bone fragility in adult and pediatric patients with cancer;
2. fracture risk prediction and surgical treatment in cancer patients with spread to bone; and
3. treatment of pediatric bone sarcomas, including osteosarcoma and Ewing sarcoma.

Timothy A. Damron, MD

Currently, four faculty members collaborate on active NIH grants from the National Cancer Institute or the National Institutes of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS). These include Timothy A. Damron, MD; Jason A. Horton, PhD; Kenneth A. Mann, PhD; and Megan E. Oest, PhD. In related work, grants obtained in part due to support from the Murray Endowment include those from the Carol Baldwin Breast Cancer Research Foundation, Jim and Juli Boeheim Foundation, Orthopaedic Research and Education Foundation, the Page Foundation and the Musculoskeletal Tumor Society.

Also, through the endowment and related research, three research fellows have completed post-doctoral study, and one master's and five doctoral candidates have successfully defended their theses. Since the establishment of the Murray Endowment, laboratory members have produced nearly 100 peer-reviewed publications and participated in over 100 presentations at national and international meetings.

CELEBRATING FIRST YEAR

Charles J. Hodge, MD, Endowed Professorship in Neurosurgery

Jonathan Miller, MD, named inaugural Hodge professor

The **Charles J. Hodge Endowed Professorship in Neurosurgery** has been established at the Upstate Foundation. In addition, Jonathan Miller, MD, has been appointed as its first endowed professor. The announcements were made by Eileen Pezzi, vice president for development at Upstate, and Lawrence Chin, MD, dean of the Alan and Marlene Norton College of Medicine.

"The time frame in which this endowment campaign was conducted is the briefest in recent history at the Foundation, which is testimony to the reverence and respect so many have for Dr. Hodge as a physician and teacher," Pezzi said.

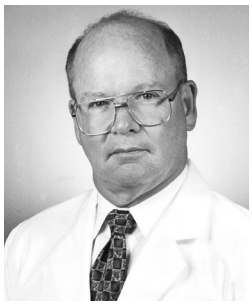
Chin added, "It's a pleasure to bestow Dr. Miller with this honor. He has dedicated his career to advancing knowledge and treating patients with functional disorders in neurosurgery. His commitment to neurosurgical training and excellence best exemplifies Dr. Hodge's legacy at Upstate."

"Dr. Hodge is an outstanding role model who established our department's legacy as a true academic program through robust and demanding educational standards," said Miller. "To serve as the inaugural recipient of the professorship is a tremendous honor, and I am looking forward to building on his tradition of superior clinical training through meaningful exposure to research, problem solving, and the diverse ethical and technical aspects of neurosurgery."

Mantosh Dewan, MD, president of Upstate Medical University, cited the importance of endowed professorships to academic institutions. "Building a strong base of faculty talent enriches the academic environment, which attracts the brightest students. Endowed professorships support faculty already performing at a high level, enabling them to make even more significant contributions to the institution as well as their respective fields."

Hodge's path to neurosurgery took some early twists and turns. As a young man, Hodge spent summers in Wyoming and wanted to become a rancher. He pivoted and began college as an architecture major. One semester at Princeton, he read Sinclair Lewis's "Arrowsmith" and was fascinated by the world of the brilliant scientist. From that point on, he pursued the field of medicine from Princeton to Columbia for medical school, to Presbyterian Hospital for internship and Yale for general surgery, and ultimately, to Upstate Medical University, where he studied under Dr. Robert King.

"Dr. King's scientific approach was wonderful," said Hodge. "That is what I emulated. I felt there was tremendous importance in doing research, partially for the discoveries, but more for learning how to think through problems. I think that is something at which the Upstate program excels. It's not the magic hands, it's the magic judgment that makes a great surgeon."



Charles J. Hodge, MD

Jonathan Miller, MD

Hodge says he thrived under King's tutelage, and over time he, too, became a revered teacher to countless neurosurgery residents.

"Dr. Hodge has had the greatest influence on my neurosurgical operative skills," said Saeed Bajwa, MD, FACS, FAANS, clinical professor emeritus. "He had passion for teaching and always expected the best out of his trainees. He was very strict in the OR, but I knew that propelled me to my highest skill level."

Hodge was a dedicated academic neurosurgeon active in both research and clinical practice. His laboratory, a basic science experience for numbers of residents, focused on the neuroanatomy and physiology of pain processes, and later was active in neural plasticity and the use of optical imaging techniques, areas funded by NIH grants. His clinical work included general neurosurgery with special interest in vascular diseases, neoplasia, seizure disorders and Gamma Knife Radiosurgery (the first in New York state). He was instrumental in resurrecting the MD-PhD program at Upstate.

At a national level, Hodge served on the American Board of Neurological Surgery for six years; was president of the Society of University Neurosurgeons; editor for the Journal of Neurosurgery; director of a yearly neuroscience course for neurosurgery residents in Woods Hole, MA; member and president of the Society of Neurological Surgery (a group dedicated to neurosurgery education from whom he received its distinguished service award); and vice president of the American Association of Neurosurgeons.

He received a Grass Foundation Award for neurosurgery research, as well as the University of Michigan Elizabeth Crosby Prize for research. Dr. Hodge is most proud of his role in setting demanding educational standards and for helping train residents in the critical art of rational clinical management, clinical judgment and technical surgical skill.

"I had intense relationships with the residents," Hodge recalled. "It wasn't always easy for them or for me, but in time, the pain of being corrected can be overcome. I am honored, obviously, and even a little surprised."

CELEBRATING 28 YEARS

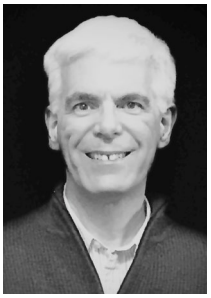
E. Robert Heitzman, MD, Endowed Professorship in Radiology Research

E. Robert Heitzman, Jr., MD, was a dedicated teacher and inspiring mentor to those who knew him and learned from him during his 40-plus years on Upstate's medical faculty. He impressed upon students a commitment to the art of careful study, analysis and inquiry, leading them to form opinions based purely on evidence. His lifetime of significant accomplishments was honored with the establishment of this endowed professorship.

The Department of Radiology is home to state-of-the-art CT scanners that are dedicated to clinical service. All patients who have CT examinations of the chest have scans that include high-resolution images. In most cases the image (slice) thickness is less than one millimeter. All chest CT scans are made during breath-holding, to eliminate motion due to respiration. Some chest scans are also obtained using cardiac gating, which eliminates motion blurring in the lung adjacent to the beating heart.

Every chest CT scan is acquired as a seamless volume of data. Because the CT slices are so thin, the spatial resolution of the images in the scanning plane (in-plane resolution) is almost the same as the spatial resolution in the perpendicular direction (through-plane resolution). With previous generations of scanners, the through-plane resolution was always worse than the in-plane resolution. So, our scanners produce images having in-plane resolution that is essentially the same as through-plane. This capability makes it possible to examine the volume of CT data in any direction without loss of spatial resolution.

Radiologists typically interpret CT scans, including chest CT scans, in a two-dimensional format. However, because we have motion-free, high-resolution volumes, images now can be displayed with high fidelity in three dimensions. This process is known as 3D rendering. 3D rendering has become common in radiologic practice for visualizing the anatomy and pathology of a variety of larger structures such as blood vessels. On the other hand, we are just beginning to use 3D rendering to explore the anatomy of the lungs.



Ernest Scalzetti, MD

Dr. Ernest Scalzetti is bringing this technological advance to bear on educational applications. Radiology residents can come to an understanding of the spatial organization of the lung, by means of 3D rendering, in ways that previously were impossible. Research applications could grow out of this technology to impact the clinical practice of radiology. The intention is to build on Dr. Heitzman's pioneering work in radiologic-pathologic correlation – defining the imaging appearance of normal lung anatomy, and the appearance of anatomy as impacted by disease.

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS

Robert B. and Molly G. King Endowed Professorship in Neurosurgery

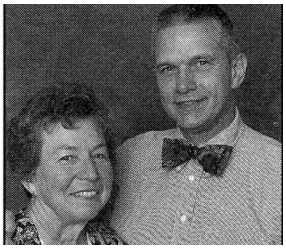
Dr. Robert B. King was an internationally recognized leader in American neurosurgery and neurosurgical graduate education. He imbued his students with a dedication to patient care and commitment to research. He served as chair of the Neurosurgery Department from 1966 to 1988. He was also the first medical director of Upstate University Hospital. He was president of several national medical associations. Dr. King died in 2008 with his wife of 57 years, Molly, by his side. Mrs. King continues to support the work of the Upstate Foundation.

The **Robert B. and Molly G. King Endowment** supports the work of Dr. Lawrence Chin who is starting his fifth year as Dean of the Norton College of Medicine and continues to work with his collaborator Dr. Li-Ru Zhao in the Neurosurgery Research Laboratory. They study the effect of stem cell growth factors on mechanisms of brain repair in a mouse model of traumatic brain injury. This work has led to numerous papers and extramural funding including an NIH R01. In addition to research, Dr. Chin continues to serve as dean and on numerous national committees. Most notably he is a member of the administrative board of the Council of Deans (COD) at the Association of American Medical Colleges, which is the primary voice of advocacy for medical schools and their hospital partners. He also serves as the chair of the COD Fellowship committee and speaks nationally on topics related to medical education and workforce.

Lawrence S. Chin, MD, FACS

CELEBRATING 26 YEARS

John K., MD, and Mitzi Wolf Endowment for Neurological Education



"This fund can provide both science and humanity to a busy learning world," said Dr. John K. Wolf upon the creation of this endowment. The fund continues Dr. Wolf's legacy of more than 30 years at Upstate as an enthusiastic medical educator and compassionate physician. Dr. Wolf was recognized for his high quality, innovative and effective patient care with a particular interest and expertise in multiple sclerosis diagnosis and treatment.

The **John K MD and Mitzi Wolf Endowment for Neurological Education** supports Neuroscience Grand Rounds at Upstate Medical University. We met weekly from September 2023 through June 2024. The Neurology and Neurosurgery departments collaborate on content. Our audience includes faculty, residents, advanced practice providers, medical students and staff from both departments.

During the 2023-24 academic year we hosted 11 extramural speakers. Dr. Ann Tilton, professor of neurology and pediatrics at Louisiana State University Health, spoke on "The Power of Belief," taking a deep dive into the placebo effect and touching on voodoo and other unconventional topics. Dr. Misha Pless, professor of ophthalmology at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Jacksonville, FL, shared "The Mistakes I have Made. Pearls and Perils in the Management of Myasthenia Gravis." We were delighted to welcome our neighbor, Dr. Robert Holloway, MD, MPH, chair of neurology at the University of Rochester School of Medicine for an in-person visit. He tackled the difficult topic of neuropalliative care, a subject he has written on extensively. Neurosurgeon Asif Bashir, MD, a graduate of the Upstate Neurosurgery Residency Program spoke on "Physicians as Leaders." Stacy Clardy, MD, PhD, associate professor of neurology, University of Utah, brought us up to speed on the burgeoning topic of treatable brain diseases, "Autoimmune Encephalitis." Dr. Raymond Price visited this spring from the University of Pennsylvania where he is the Residency Program director, vice chair for education and director of the Neurohospitalist Division. He spoke about "How to Build a Neurohospitalist Program."

We also heard from several of our own esteemed faculty, notably Dr. Frank Middleton, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Amy Tucker and new chair of neurosurgery, Dr. Jonathan Miller. In addition, we held important clinical sessions such as Morbidity & Mortality Conference, Clinicopathologic Correlations and quality improvement updates from the neurology residents. Finally, our fellows and graduating residents presented at Grand Rounds as their capstone teaching experience.

As a former student and devotee of Dr. Wolf, I continue to be grateful for his legacy in the Department of Neurology.

– Deborah Bradshaw, MD

CELEBRATING 17 YEARS

The Dr. Michael & Rissa Ratner Endowed Professorship in Pediatric Surgery

The Dr. Michael & Rissa Ratner Endowed Professorship in Pediatric Surgery honors the Ratners for their outstanding service to Upstate Medical University and the Central New York community. Both devoted their careers to children, Michael as a distinguished Upstate pediatric surgeon, and Rissa as a teacher in the Fayetteville-Manlius School District. Dr. Ratner practiced in Syracuse for more than 40 years and served as chief of the Division of Pediatric Surgery at Upstate.

The Division of Pediatric Surgery at Upstate provides tertiary care for children across the region. As an American College of Surgeons-accredited Pediatric Level 1 trauma center, it remains the largest pediatric trauma facility in New York, offering exceptional care for injured children.

Dr. Andreas Meier, the inaugural Ratner Endowed Professor, led the Pediatric Surgery division and Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital as Surgeon-in-Chief from 2012 until January 2024, when Dr. Tamer Ahmed assumed these roles. Dr. Ahmed also serves as the Upstate liaison surgeon for the Children's Oncology Group, the national organization overseeing cancer care for children. In addition, he participates in American Pediatric Surgical Association (APSA) committees.

Andreas H. Meier, MD, MEd

Dr. Meier continues as the general surgery residency program director and vice chair for education in the Department of Surgery. His academic focus on surgical education involves multi-institutional research projects, and he is a key member of the Academy of Upstate Educators, the "Build Excellent Skills for Teaching" (BEST) program. He also serves as reviewer of multiple surgical journals, is a member of the editorial board for the Journal of Surgical Education and is an examiner for the certifying examination of the American Board of Surgery.

Dr. Kim Wallenstein, medical director of the pediatric trauma program, led its recertification by the American College of Surgeons in December 2023. She oversees the region's only Level 1 accredited pediatric trauma center and covers the entire mid-portion of upstate New York from the Canadian

***RATNER** continued on back page*

CELEBRATING 27 YEARS

John A. Hoepner, MD, Endowed Professorship in Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences

(formerly Vision 2000 Endowment)

Dr. John A. Hoepner began his esteemed career at Upstate in 1973 and was appointed department chair 11 years later. In 1997, Hoepner co-founded Upstate's Center for Vision Research which is now an internationally recognized research program. The Hoepner endowed professorship was the result of more than two decades of collaboration between the Upstate Foundation and the Department of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences, beginning with a successful $1 million campaign called Vision 2000 and enhanced by support from the local Lions Club District 20-Y1 and patients expressing their gratitude for Dr. Hoepner's care.

Dr. William Brunken, director of the Center for Vision Research (CVR), reports a transformative year for the center. We achieved a new record in extramural funding, surpassing $6.25 million in federal and foundation support, positioning us among the top 30 nationwide. Notably, we submitted a pioneering institutional training grant application to the National Eye Institute (NEI), aimed at training the next generation of vision researchers. If awarded, this grant will fund the pre-doctoral and post-doctoral studies of four fellows and represents the first such application from Upstate in recent history.

Another significant milestone was receiving our eighth NEI grant, an R01 award of $2,070,000 over five years to associate professor Andrea Viczian. This grant supports her research on the genetic regulation of retinal blood vessel development and disease. With this award, we are now eligible to apply for an NEI Center Core Grant, which supports the infrastructure of leading ophthalmic research groups. Our application for this grant was submitted in October 2024.

Supported by our Foundation partners and the University, we expanded our faculty with the recruitment of Dr. Levi Todd in October 2023. Dr. Todd, an expert in retinal development and single-cell genomics, is exploring ways to reopen the developmental window to aid retinal regeneration. His research could also advance our understanding of glial proliferation in glioblastoma, a severe brain cancer.

Peter D. Calvert, PhD

The **John A. Hoepner, MD Endowed Professorship**, established two years ago, is held by Professor Peter Calvert. His research on blinding diseases is backed by three NIH grants. This year, he utilized the Hoepner endowment to acquire a state-of-the-art confocal microscope (Nikon AXR) with AI capabilities for 3D super-resolution imaging, enabling unprecedented insights into cellular mechanisms.

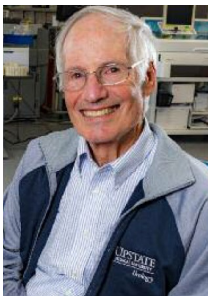
The CVR website is frequently updated with our latest research and results. Our substantial funding portfolio also has a significant positive impact on the Central New York economy, employing nearly 60 local staff.

CELEBRATING 34 YEARS

David B. Jones / Robert F. Rohner Endowed Professorship in Pathology

Dr. David B. Jones was a pioneer in electron microscopy, an international expert in kidney pathology and author of over 90 articles for professional journals. He founded the cytotechnology program in the College of Health-Related Professions. In 1988 he was named New York State Distinguished Pathologist of the Year. Dr. Robert F. Rohner taught human pathology at Upstate Medical University for more than 40 years, and always did it with panache. He is remembered for his passion for the medical profession and his energetic and humorous teaching style.

As the first **Jones-Rohner Endowed Professor**, I have continued my work in pathology education, the molecular tumor board, continuing patient consultations and clinical cancer research. I have also continued my role in basic pathology Upstate medical student education. My continuing research work focuses on matching the genomic alterations in the malignant tumors of cancer patients to the latest approved targeted therapies and immunotherapies as well as guiding them to potential mechanism-based clinical trials that have potential to improve their survival and overall clinical outcome. The recent development of new anti-cancer drugs has fueled this type of approach for cancer patients especially for those patients with clinically advanced disease. A major advance in the genomic sequencing for cancer patients has been the growth and development of "liquid biopsies" enabling the testing to be done on a blood sample rather than an actual portion of their tumor obtained by biopsy or surgical resection. We are also beginning to use molecular methods to monitor solid tumors similar to the way that we monitor hematolymphoid malignancies.



Jeffrey S. Ross, MD

– Jeffrey Ross, MD

John Bernard Henry, MD, Endowed Professorship in Experimental Pathology

John Bernard Henry, MD, is best known for editing seven editions of a textbook used by physicians and medical technologists worldwide. Dr. Henry served in many roles at Upstate Medical University and in 1971, he organized the College of Health-Related Professions and became its first dean. His time as the institution's fourth president from 1985 to 1992 was marked by significant growth in campus facilities and programs.

The **John Bernard Henry, MD Endowment** was established in 1998 to enhance research in the Department of Pathology to faculty who are committed to investigative activities. Several research studies are underway.

Robert J. Corona, DO

Title of Project: Improving Patient Tests Quality

Principle Investigator:
Zhimin Tim Cao, MD, PhD
Co-Investigator: Matthew Elkins, MD, PhD

During the 2023-24 academic year, we continued to analyze and characterize over 1,000 questionable patient results. We shared our findings with nurses and other health care professionals, recommending strategies to minimize future occurrences, such as hosting virtual nursing grand rounds at Upstate Medical University hospitals in November 2023, along with several email communications. Additionally, we presented our findings virtually to the CDC's Division of Laboratory System as part of the "Let's Talk" seminar series in September 2023, and to the Upstate University Hospital Quality & Patient Safety Council on May 23, 2024. We are currently preparing a manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

Title of Project: The Potential Role of Creatinine in Semen Cryopreservation

Principle Investigator: Kazim Chohan, PhD

Study in progress, update will be provided in next report.

Title of Project: Validate "new" antigen in membranous lupus nephritis and correlate with patient's clinical prognosis"

Principle Investigator: Liye Suo

In 2024, we made significant progress toward completion of the project. We have finished scoring of Exostosin-1 (EXT1) and Exostosin-2 (EXT2) immunohistochemical stainings performed at Drs. Cooney and Meng's lab in total of 33 patients. That includes 29 patients having membranous lupus nephritis (LMN) with four patients having PLA2R-mediated membranous nephropathy. Two out of 29 patients having LMN showed positive EXT1 staining, of which both patients had pure LMN with no component of active lupus nephritis. All PLA2R-mediated membranous nephropathy had negative EXT1 staining. No patient showed EXT2 staining. Both patients with positive EXT1 staining were women with mean age of 50.2 and higher chronicity score in the histology; while patients with negative EXT1 staining were 22 women and five men with a female to male patient ratio of 4.4:1 and mean age of 37.5 and lower chronicity score in the histology. These findings may be suggestive that EXT1 can be positive in a small subgroup of patients with pure LMN. Our result will be submitted to ASCP 2025 for presentation.

Title of Project: Characterizing ethnicity differences in the prostate cancer methylome

Principle Investigator: Scott C. Smith, PhD, DABMGG

Since purchased tumor specimens are precious, successfully establishing tissue processing protocols is necessary before processing the tumors. Unfortunately, personnel have been a significant challenge and prevented a protocol from being established so far. Fortunately, a related portion of the project has seen success: an abstract of in silico cohort data identifying molecular differences between ancestral backgrounds in prostate cancer was submitted to a national meeting and selected as a platform presentation. The abstract co-author, Amy Brady, DO, presented the work at the Cancer Genomics Consortium in August 2024, and received a trainee award for the work.

Title of Project: Whole Exome Sequencing in High Grade Osteosarcoma

Principle Investigator: Dr. Daniel Zaccarini
Co-Investigators: Drs. Dana Hariri, Steven Sperber, Ratilal Akabari, Cory Broehm, and Michel Nasr

We have performed molecular testing (whole exome sequencing) on two cases of high-grade radiation associated osteosarcoma in adults. An abstract of our work has been accepted as a poster publication at the upcoming International Academy of Pathology Congress (IAP 2024) meeting.

Title of Project: Effects of Inhalation of methyl methacrylate particulates – demonstration in lungs using Raman spectroscopy

Principle Investigator: Jerrold L. Abraham, MD
Co-Investigator: Matthew Lesko, MS [SUNY Upstate Medical University MD/PhD program and Syracuse University Department Biomedical and Chemical Engineering] and Professor Jay Thomas, PhD, Syracuse University, Dept. of Earth & Env. Sciences

We used funds from the John Bernard Henry, MD, Endowment to investigate manufactured "quartz" countertops. The manufactured stones are commonly composed of aluminosilicate minerals (e.g., quartz (SiO_2), gibbsite ($AlOH_3$), corundum (Al_2O_3), and other) mixed with methyl methacrylate (MMA) to form solid composite materials. Process-related dust particles cause lung diseases.

***HENRY** continued on back page*

CELEBRATING 4 YEARS

Phillip Capozzi, MD, Endowed Professorship in Urology

Phillip Capozzi left a successful real estate career for medicine and was accepted at New York Medical College in Valhalla, NY, at the age of 39. He has been an anesthesiologist in Syracuse for more than 20 years. He established this endowed professorship as a patient, though, grateful for the care he received at Upstate.

The **Phillip Capozzi, MD, Endowed Professorship in Urology** is held by Gennady Bratslavsky, MD, professor and chair of the Department of Urology. Dr. Bratslavsky, left, was also Dr. Capozzi's surgeon, performing a radical prostatectomy and extended lymph node dissection a few years ago.

According to Dr. Bratslavsky: The endowment by Dr. Phillip Capozzi was created through his gratitude for the care he received at Upstate University Hospital after being diagnosed with metastatic prostate cancer. Using every resource possible, including modern surgery, postoperative imaging, genetic testing and treatment by a multidisciplinary team, we are thrilled to see Dr. Capozzi doing well, now without any sign of residual disease, and off every treatment modality.

His endowment will help allow improvements in diagnostics and treatment of prostate cancer as well as prostate cancer research.

Ongoing progress in care for prostate cancer patients has allowed Upstate Urology to be recognized as having one of the top performing prostate cancer programs as well as being one of the top performing urology departments in the United States. Endowments created by generous donors like Dr. Phillip Capozzi allow many of us to carry the mission of high-quality research and care that we are so proud to provide in the Department of Urology.

In addition to having an outstanding standard of care, the Department of Urology is one of the world leaders in clinical trials for many genitourinary cancers, with many patients with either localized or metastatic prostate cancer benefiting from having access to the most modern treatment strategies. Generous donors like Dr. Capozzi are important in helping to recognize physicians at Upstate who provide world-class care to our patients.

CELEBRATING 3 YEARS

Paige Yeomans Arnold Endowed Professorship in Pediatric Oncology

To mark the 25th anniversary of Paige's Butterfly Run, this endowed professorship was established, primarily with event proceeds. The event is an enduring tribute to Paige Yeomans Arnold, who succumbed to leukemia at the age of 8. It is organized by her parents, Chris Arnold and Ellen Yeomans, with assistance from the Upstate Foundation. While over the years funds have helped with many short-term priorities, the endowed professorship was a long-term goal for the family.

Melanie Comito, MD

The **Paige Yeomans Arnold Endowed Professorship in Pediatric Oncology** is held by professor Dr. Melanie Comito, chief of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital. The program has emerged as a premier pediatric hematology/oncology center serving children, adolescents and young adults with cancer and blood disorders in the greater Syracuse area and surrounding 20-county region of central and northern New York.

The Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology offers comprehensive, multidisciplinary care for various conditions including childhood cancer survivorship, pediatric neuro-oncology, and genetic predisposition to cancer. It also operates as the regional sickle cell and hemophilia center and manages pediatric vascular anomalies. The Center for Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders at Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital is an active member of the Children's Oncology Group (COG), the world's largest pediatric cancer research organization. This affiliation enables Upstate to offer cutting-edge therapies while keeping patients close to their families. Patients participate in Phase II and III clinical trials, biological studies, and research on cancer control and late effects. Additionally, the division is involved in the NEXT consortium for brain tumor studies and NACHO for Langerhans cell histiocytosis.

Dr. Comito has significantly contributed to expanding pediatric clinical research and enhancing patient safety by participating in national initiatives. One of her major achievements when becoming chief was the formation of the Thruway Pediatric Hematology/Oncology collaboration in 2018, which includes four upstate New York programs. This collaboration, which holds annual meetings and subgroup discussions, has led to numerous research projects and publications. Notably, Dr. Comitos' team published a significant paper on tumor mutational burden in pediatric central nervous system tumor patients. Upstate was the host site for the 2023 meeting which was held in Weiskotten Hall.

The Paige Yeomans Arnold Endowed Professorship is crucial for attracting and retaining leaders in Pediatric Oncology to upstate New York.

"Building a strong base of faculty talent enriches the academic environment, which attracts the brightest students. Endowed professorships support faculty already performing at a high level, enabling them to make even more significant contributions to the institution as well as their respective fields."

– Mantosh Dewan, MD, president of Upstate Medical University

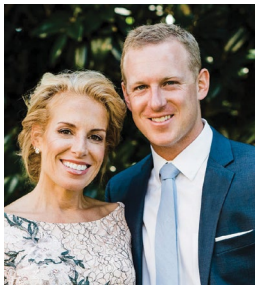
CELEBRATING 19 YEARS

Michael E. Connolly Endowed Professorship in Lung Cancer Research

Michael E. Connolly

Binghamton native Michael Connolly, a nonsmoker, died of lung cancer in 2002 at the age of 39. He was a husband and father, volunteer coach and star Binghamton North High School football and baseball player. His wife Penny and son Ryan created a research endowment and in 2020, the endowment reached the $1.5 million level to establish the Michael E. Connolly Endowed Professorship in Lung Cancer Research.

The first grant from the original **Michael E. Connolly Endowment for Lung Cancer Research** was awarded in March 2008. Since then, the endowment has funded eight pilot research studies in the quest for a cure for lung cancer, the nation's leading cause of cancer death.



Penny and Ryan Connolly

"Upstate has an outstanding multi-disciplinary clinical program in lung cancer that includes medical oncology, radiation oncology and thoracic surgery oncology," said Dr. Robert Cooney, professor and chair, Department of Surgery. The Connolly endowment will allow the department to recruit a top notch researcher to develop a translational lung cancer research program in the Upstate Cancer Center. The recruitment was paused to allow the endowment to recover from the financial downturn in 2022. It is anticipated that the addition of Dr. Jade Homsi, the new chief of medical oncology at Upstate who started in the fall, to be instrumental in helping identify and attract outstanding researchers to join this busy clinical program.

HENRY *continued from page 6*

We used Raman spectroscopy, electron microscopy, and X-ray analysis to identify mineral species and MMA in manufactured countertops, process-related dust, and lung tissue obtained from workers. In summary, Raman spectroscopy unequivocally shows that dust particles collected from manufacturing processes are identical to manufactured countertop materials. One goal is to correlate lung disease to minerals and MMA. Raman spectroscopy has sub-micrometer spatial resolution and can unequivocally identify all materials in manufactured countertops thus it is an ideal analytical method for correlating lung disease to specific materials in tissue samples. However, fluorescence caused by formaldehyde-containing fluids precludes using Raman spectroscopy for in situ analyses. Ongoing Raman research focuses on physically separating and cleaning inhaled dust particles from lung tissue to remove fluorescence-causing fluids and expanding analytical methods to use Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy, both of which may permit in situ correlations between materials and disease.

RATNER *continued from page 4*

to the Pennsylvania borders. She also represents the trauma program at the regional and state levels, and nationally she is involved in committees for the American Pediatric Surgical Association (APSA).

Dr. Jennifer Stanger, director of pediatric surgical quality, manages the Pediatric National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (Peds NSQiP) and the Performance Improvement and Patient Safety (PIPS) committee. She continues to play a major role in our efforts to become an accredited level I Center of Pediatric Surgery Excellence, a program developed by APSA and the American College of Surgeons. Dr. Stranger also works together with Kristen Conolly, the program manager, and together will work on accreditation in the upcoming years. Since 2023 Dr. Stanger has taken on the role as program director for wellness within the general surgery residency program; she has participated in additional training on developing wellness curricula and has already integrated her expertise into the core curriculum for our residents.

Dr Michaela Kollisch-Singule is the fifth member of the division. Besides being a busy clinical pediatric surgeon, she also directs the pediatric surgery basic science laboratory. She has already established herself as an excellent clinician and has brought new surgical techniques to Upstate. She spends half of her time on basic science research. Her projects involve the study of sepsis and neonatal diseases resulting in sepsis as well as treatment strategies thereof. Her specific interest lies on exploring the role of the microbiome and exosomal miRNA signaling in disease propagation. She has already published and submitted multiple manuscripts, has been successful in getting external grant funding and she is actively pursuing additional external research grants.

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