

On  
The  
Cutting  
Edge

AN UPDATE FROM THE  
DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY  
IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19







## Message from the Chair

Kenneth Azarow, M.D., F.A.C.S., F.A.A.P.  
Mackenzie Professor and Chair

### Spring has arrived like no other in over 100 years.

The Spanish flu of 1918 was the last pandemic illness to hit our country. The national response has been remarkable and diverse.

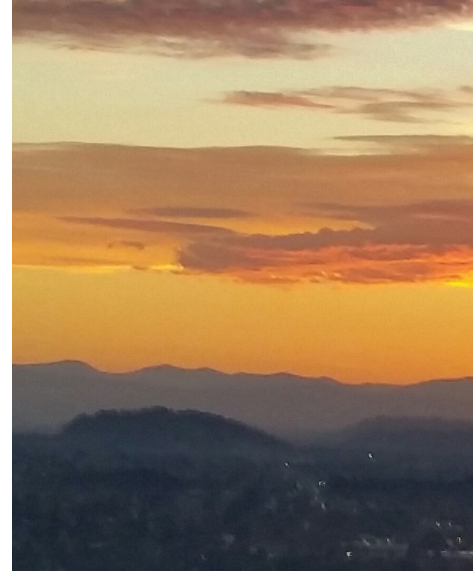
Oregon was one of the first states to document a Covid-19 positive patient, yet we have bonded together to implement mitigation strategies perhaps better than any other state in the union. Estimates on the number of Oregonians that will be spared this illness due to all of the actions taken range as high as 60 percent of the population. We are now in the process of figuring out how to maintain these strategies over the course of the next year as we await the development of a vaccine or a therapeutic agent that will diminish the severe morbidity this virus causes in approximately 15 percent of those infected. We as Oregonians should be extremely proud.

On the financial front our economy has shut down and Oregon will be affected just like every other state. Unemployment has skyrocketed across the country and despite a phased federal bailout it is clear that some businesses will not survive. There are well over 20 million new unemployment insurance claims and that number is increasing. The nation is heading into a recession. This will result in massive shifts in healthcare insurance participation. Hospitals have emptied in order to prepare for surges and these have been dramatic in several hotspots across the nation. Due to the need to preserve ventilators (thought to be the rate-limiting piece in combating this virus at the onset of the pandemic) elective surgeries were stopped across the country. While a necessary move to create hospital capacity, this has resulted in a major loss of income for health care systems, OHSU included.

To combat this financial crisis - just like we are doing with the virus itself - OHSU has taken the lead and set the example. While health care systems nationally are announcing layoffs and furloughs, our leadership has a strategy where we will preserve jobs. The way this is being accomplished is that all employees will be contributing. Faculty and non-union employees will be taking pay cuts across the board starting 1 July, and unions are currently negotiating how their employees may be able to contribute as well. Just as we acted in synchrony to mitigate the spread of the virus, OHSU is acting as one to transition us out of the resulting recession. I for one have never been prouder to be part of any organization.

**Despite all that I have just described, OHSU and the Department of Surgery are still forging ahead and accomplishing amazing things.**

In early March the first EXIT (ex utero intra partum treatment) procedure to be done in Oregon was performed on a young lady whose fetus had a massive tumor of the neck compressing the airway. A few weeks later





A sunrise view of Mt. Hood from the OHSU aerial tram looking over a city in quarantine

we performed the first heart transplant in the state in over 18 months, demonstrating the successful reactivation of our heart transplant program that took place last summer. Individually, I would like to point out **Mubeen Jafri, M.D.**, and **Fred Tibayan, M.D.**, who led the multidisciplinary teams involved in these two notable accomplishments.

Our current environment not only has challenged us on the clinical front but has required an innovative approach to our education and research missions. To this end OHSU has graduated approximately two-thirds of its medical students ahead of the normal time course, demonstrating that our competency-based curriculum is actually working as planned. Likewise, our amazing residency class of 2020, led by **Karen Brasel, M.D., M.P.H.**, has stepped up and responded in every way possible. From managing alternative schedules for their teams while maintaining duty hour restrictions, to preparing virtual conferences, we are extremely proud of you.

An extra cause for celebration: Dr. Brasel has been awarded this year's **Master Educator Award** by the Association for Surgical Education.

**While still very much in crisis-mode there remains the need to positively look forward.**

To this end, let me announce that we have had a very successful recruiting year in general surgery, thoracic surgery, transplant surgery, surgical oncology, and trauma critical care. We anticipate

our new faculty will all arrive this summer and be critical as we rebuild our surgical enterprise. Our new Vice Chair for Research, **Jonathan Brody, Ph.D.**, from Jefferson Medical University in Philadelphia will be moving to Portland and physically joining us by the end of this academic year. He has already been participating in many of our activities virtually from the east coast.

We are also in the midst of two major recruits that are ongoing. We hope to announce the completion of our Surgical Oncology Division Head search this summer. Our final round of interviews were put on hold due to the travel ban implemented by their and our universities. We anticipate resuming as soon as travel is once again feasible. In addition, we are continuing our search for a fetal surgeon. With the EXIT procedure as an example, this program will be life-saving for two patients at once and will be a program that we can provide to Oregonians for the first time.

Let me end by saying that it is not how you act when times are easy, but how you respond to the challenges that are thrown your way – this determines one's true value to society. It is my honor to serve as your chair. There is no group that I have ever been prouder to lead!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth Jarow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

-Ken



# Critical Roles in Res

## The Surgical Triage Officer

The role of the Surgical Triage Officer (STO) is nothing new. The position exists to assist the OR and surgeons with case prioritization based on surgical urgency, OR availability, staffing and resources. However, the current coronavirus pandemic has added a significant layer of complexity, requiring surgeons to be more stringent on which cases to proceed with in an effort to prepare for potential surges in COVID-19 patients and reduce PPE use.

During the initial stages of pandemic response, it became clear that triaging surgical cases would be an extraordinarily challenging task. Even under normal circumstances, it's a heavy responsibility to identify urgent cases and procedures that would lead to patient harm if delayed too much.

From the pandemic outset, our surgeons, anesthesiologists and OR staff made it a priority to band together as a highly functioning team of STO's to help manage case selection. Such a multidisciplinary approach has cultivated ongoing clinical discussions and professional relationships that will benefit patient care well into the future.



## Stronger Together

*“Throughout this process, not only was I able to assist with case selection as STO, but I gained personally as well. This crisis allowed me to learn clinical intricacies of surgical disciplines that I was unfamiliar with. And, it helped foster professional relationships with surgeons that I have had limited rapport with up to now, all of which has strengthened bonds to colleagues and helped me communicate with other STO members.”*



-General Surgeon and STO **Sean Orenstein, M.D.**

# Response to a Pandemic



## The Department IT Manager

### One Step Ahead

When surgery department **IT manager Ed Wolf** first heard of Covid - and while the stay home orders were still pending - he and **fiscal manager Jennifer Merrill** immediately kicked into high gear. From a technology perspective, they were already anticipating the challenges ahead. As of March 16, the entire department comprised of over 300 faculty and staff was advised to work from home if at all possible. The race was on to match remote technological efficiency with the continuous demands of the department and educational programs.

It took Ed less than a week to get the majority of the department home. Beyond remote and VPN network access for every individual, it was clear that if this model was going to work for longer than a couple of weeks, people were going to need more than their home set up. Ed went so far as to personally deliver OHSU desktop computers to the homes of our staff and faculty in order to support stay-home orders. He found resources for individuals who depend on a more ergonomic sit/stand desk in order to work efficiently throughout the day.

What was less straightforward was the transition of in-person meetings, interviews and conferences to an entirely virtual experience. OHSU had quickly authorized a meeting platform called WebEx and although it was still in the Beta stage, our department was allowed to join early. A good thing because most urgently Pediatric Surgery had scheduled fellowship interviews with over 10

candidates in mid-March that could not be delayed.

That first week, Ed worked tirelessly with **Pediatric Surgery Fellowship Program Director Sanjay Krishnaswami, M.D.**, and **coordinator Ann Thompson** to set up 10 separate laptop stations to act as a host for each interviewee. It wasn't glitch-free but it worked. Following that initial learning curve, Ed worked to ensure that the department carried on with business as "usual." Since March, we've held countless interviews and conferences with meaningful interaction - in fact, attendance has actually increased with faculty and residents able to remotely participate in more educational opportunities and clinical discussions than they would have been able to in person.

Now nearly 2 months into our remote operations, Ed reflects back on those crazy first couple of weeks:

**"I enjoy crisis mode work - it makes you think fast and resolve efficiently. The first two weeks of this stay-at-home adventure were chaotic and scary but at the same time rewarding. It was impressive to see our work force transitioning to a new model and functioning well in such a short period of time."**

While our surgeons, residents and practitioners are bravely battling Covid on the healthcare side, we would not have so seamlessly supported our educational and administrative missions without the work of Ed and so many others on our team.





*Erin is the key to the craziness that is surgery residency. She somehow always has the answers; and amongst the chaos never fails to remind us what to do, where to be, and most importantly, when to show up! She is an invaluable asset to this program and has clearly shown her dedication to promoting the well-being of residents. We couldn't be more appreciative of the multiple jobs she does everyday with such grace and kindness.*

*-Lye-Yeng Wong, M.D., PGY-1*

# 20/20 Foresight

Education Manager Erin Anderson reflects on 20 years of resident training

**WHEN YOU'VE BEEN WITH OHSU FOR OVER 20 YEARS, IT BECOMES A SECOND HOME.** Erin Anderson first walked through the double doors of Mackenzie Hall in the summer of 1999 as general surgery's newest PAS Specialist. Shortly thereafter, she took on the role of medical student coordinator and assistant to then-residency program director **Karen Deveney, M.D.** She didn't know it then but her course had been set. 21 years later, Erin now oversees all aspects of resident training as the Department of Surgery's Education Manager.

It's a position that benefits from experience and that's something Erin has in spades. To put her career into perspective, it was **Donald Trunkey, M.D.**, who was at the helm of the department when she first arrived. Dr. Deveney was only mid-way through her 25-year-legacy as residency program director. Erin saw the arrival of new surgery chairman **John Hunter, M.D.**, in 2001 followed by **Kenneth Azarow, M.D.**, in 2018. She was there for Dr. Deveney's lauded retirement and welcomed new **Program Director Karen Brasel, M.D., M.P.H.**, in 2014. And the number of surgery residents Erin has seen graduate so far? 225.

*"Erin and Dr. Deveney have taught me all that I know about this job. She knows everyone, on campus and off, and can figure out ways to get anything and everything done. She is incredibly patient and has more compassion than anyone I have ever met. The residency would not run at all without her, and I am grateful for her every minute of every day."*

*-Karen Brasel, M.D., M.P.H., Program Director*

As Erin has grown into her current role, OHSU itself and the surgery training program have grown as well. Erin witnessed firsthand the building of the Kohler Pavilion, the aerial tram installation and the entire south waterfront extension of OHSU. In 1999, our graduating class was 10 residents. 21 years later, our program has grown by 50 percent to a class of 15.

Major programmatic developments such as the introduction of surgical simulation in training and construction of VirtuOHSU took place during Erin's watch. Her coordination of training efforts while helping residents keep pace with the ever-increasing clinical demands of the hospital have been a constant challenge. Currently, Erin is

When asked how she holds everything together with such a cool head, Erin immediately credits her “rock star” team. The unofficial title for her coordinators Molly Barron and Rachel Bassett is Technological Heroes. Erin also mentions her predecessor and mentor Robin Alton, who held Erin’s job up until her retirement in 2017. In addition, Erin works in hand with Marci Jo Ashby, medical student surgery clerkship coordinator.



**Erin Anderson**

Department of Surgery Education Manager

looking ahead to the incorporation of robotics education and further curriculum development that will ensure our residents stay ahead of the curve.

In addition to matching surgery innovation with training, Erin has had a front row seat to some of the more holistic approaches OHSU and programs across the country have adopted. She’s pleased to see a much greater emphasis on wellness and self-care for residents - a movement that’s supported at a departmental and institutional level here at OHSU. Balancing the personal and educational needs of residents is something Erin is particularly adept at and appreciated for.

Erin is equal parts manager and mentor. She’s calm under pressure, an expert juggler of resident schedules and life happenings and essential to the success of our program.

*“Erin has been a cornerstone of the Surgical Education Team for many years and is an invaluable resource for so many residents. She works tirelessly to make our large residency program run smoothly. I appreciate how often she addresses issues behind the scenes so residents can focus on clinical care and education rather than navigating complex scheduling and administrative issues. Her caring nature for our entire resident team is always apparent and her dedication has had a lasting impact on so many residents. We cannot thank her enough for all the things she has done for us. Future residents will be lucky to have her as part of the team for years to come!”*

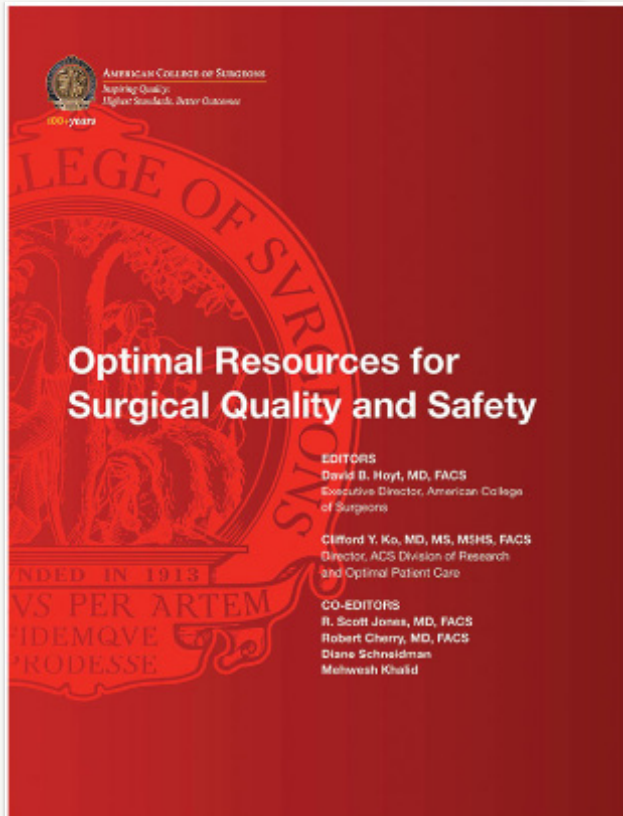
*-Sawyer Smith, M.D., PGY-4*

*It cannot be emphasized enough how important Erin is to our program. Her commitment and genuine interest in the success of all of us residents is unmatched. When you need an urgent fix, Erin finds a solution with compassion and timeliness. When things go great, Erin cheers you on the loudest. She is the heart of our program.*

*- Kate Watson, M.D., PGY-4*

# A Culture of Quality

OHSU Serves as Pilot for ACS Red Book Site Visit



*The “Red Book” - otherwise known as the ACS Optimal Resources for Surgical Quality and Safety - is a blueprint to create an infrastructure for a culture of quality, safety and high reliability across all surgical specialties. Given our leadership in this field OHSU was asked to participate in the pilot phase of this program. The Red Book program will ultimately become a national and global ACS effort to standardize and verify the highest standards of care for surgical patients.*

*As Vice Chair for Clinical Operations and Quality, **Brett Sheppard, M.D.**, seized this opportunity to improve upon our already well-regarded program for surgical quality and safety. He welcomed the ACS team to OHSU this past October...*

...this team, lead by ACS President **David Hoyt, M.D.**, and **Clifford Ko, M.D.**, (ACS Director for Research and Optimal Patient Care) provided an unprecedented level of scrutiny for our program. For 2 days, they examined our leadership structure, resources for support of our quality efforts, disease-based management systems, processes of care in and out of the OR, peer review and our Mortality and Morbidity conferences.

In-depth interviews were coupled with in-depth chart reviews leaving no stone unturned. The purpose: to enable a fair and transparent review of our strengths and our opportunities for improvement.

At the visit’s conclusion, OHSU was granted verification of its surgical quality program meeting all ACS criteria for a highly reliable safety culture and organization. A re-verification can be expected in 3 years. During this interval **Dr. Sheppard** will be working with **Dr. Ken Azarow** and hospital

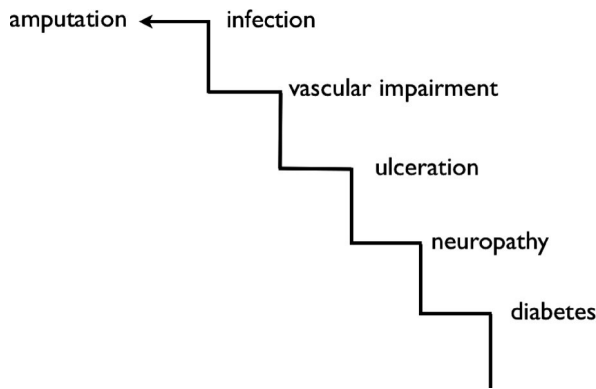
leadership to optimize some of our processes based on ACS recommendations. The role of an inter-departmental Surgical Quality Officer and a pan-surgical caucus to improve collaboration and problem solving across OHSU surgery is under active discussion along with other ideas to enhance patient outcomes.

In particular we will be aligning our focus with the hospital wide initiative to improve the care of sepsis.

## The Surgical Quality Officer

- ✓ Monitor surgical mortality and adverse event rates
- ✓ Address clinical practice variations
- ✓ Establish quality and safety standards, guidelines, and surgery-related policies
- ✓ Monitor primary data and data reports to identify consistent, cross-cutting surgical issues



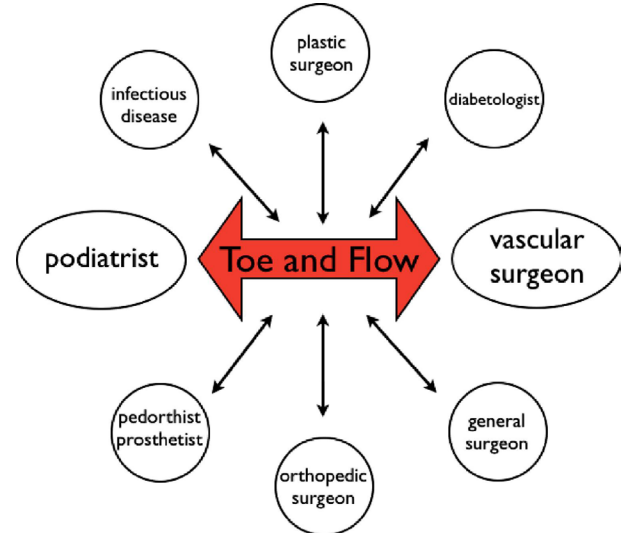


# Toe and Flow

New Faculty David Griffin, D.P.M., is the first podiatrist to join the Department of Surgery

This past fall, we welcomed a unique and specialized asset to our vascular surgery team: Podiatrist **Dave Griffin, D.P.M.** He is co-director along with **Greg Landry, M.D.**, in the Functional Limb Preservation Program here at OHSU. Together they focus on the teamwork of Podiatry (Toe) and Vascular Surgeons (Flow).

At its best, the “Toe and Flow” model of treating diabetic patients with peripheral arterial disease (PAD) begins with a podiatrist and partners with a vascular surgeon for limb preservation. Dr. Griffin evaluates and treats patients with foot ulcers or infections, the precursors to potential foot amputation in high risk populations - often a combination of diabetes and PAD. When caught early, an experienced podiatrist in collaboration with a vascular surgeon can create a comprehensive wound-healing plan and keep infections and major amputations at bay.



With Dr. Griffin on board, OHSU’s Knight Cardiovascular Institution provides preventive, comprehensive and multidisciplinary care for PAD. Patients are treated early to decrease amputations that lead to diminished quality of life, increased medical costs and a lower life expectancy.

Prior to his recruitment to OHSU, Dr. Griffin practiced for 23 years with Kaiser Permanente as a podiatrist, including roles as the Department Chief and co-director of the Toe and Flow program with Vascular Surgery. Dr. Griffin’s partnership with providers at OHSU creates a multidisciplinary functional limb preservation program. Treatment of PAD through a core approach of vascular surgery and podiatry (Toe and Flow) allows everyone to move through the world a little easier.

## Division of Surgical Oncology



Arpana Naik, M.D., surgical oncologist, in our new state-of-the-art cancer treatment center at CHH2

# OHSU Center for Health & Healing 2.0

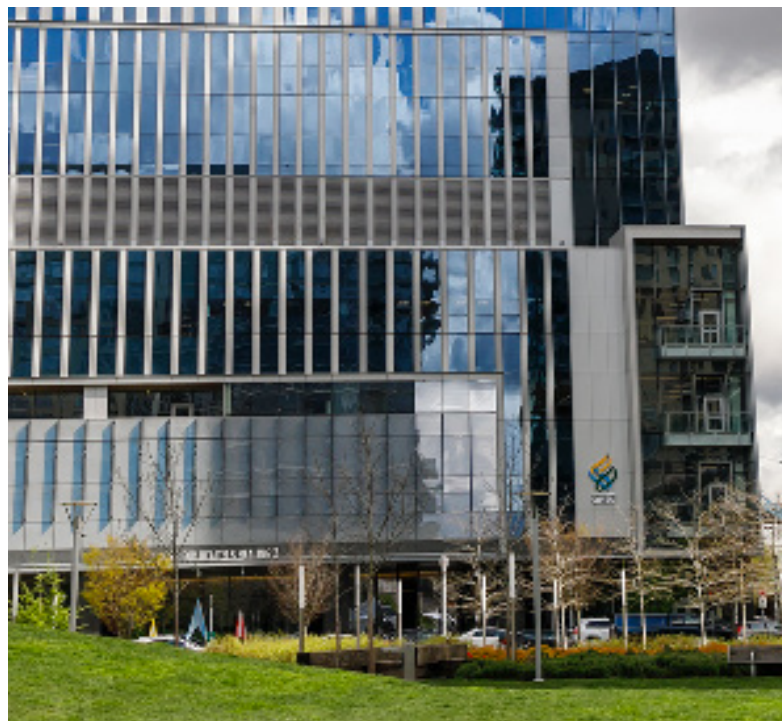
## *A Newly Constructed Approach to Cancer Treatment*

The biggest change for our surgical oncology team this past year was its relocation to CHH2. OHSU's new south waterfront facility, the Center for Health and Healing 2, was completed in April 2019. In addition to operating as an outpatient procedure unit and clinical care hub, CHH2 brings together cancer treatment specialists across departments and institutions - no easy feat.

Specifically, OHSU's breast and mammography program, the Thyroid Cancer Program and the Head and Neck Cancer Program merged to create a centralized clinical experience for patient care.

As an academic hospital, it can often be challenging to maintain departmental lines behind the scenes while providing a convenient and logical patient experience. Merging these 3 oncology programs required coordination with the Department of Surgery, the Department of Otolaryngology, the Department of Radiology and the Knight Cancer Institute. The new construction of CHH2 allowed our providers to work together and determine the layout and parameters needed for a successful merger.

In addition to unifying providers, CHH2 allowed the opportunity to re-work patient flow to optimize exam room utilization. It has been a tremendous year of focusing not only on treating cancer, but making that treatment more accessible to patients.



CHH2 opened April 2019 and welcomes approximately 600 patients each day



# Expanding Services to our Affiliate Partners

Farah Husain, M.D., named Vice Chair of Surgical Strategy and Regional Operations



It's an exciting indicator of the growth of our department and its expanding affiliations that we announce the creation of a new Vice Chair position: Vice Chair of Surgical Strategy and Regional Operations. An internal search was conducted and chaired by Karen Deveney, M.D., and included internal OHSU leaders and members from our affiliate institutions. Dr. Azarow and the search committee are very pleased to announce the appointment of **Farah Husain, M.D.**, to this new role.

As Vice Chair for Surgical Strategy and Regional Operations, Dr. Husain will work with the Department of Surgery Chair and Division Heads to oversee the Department's strategy to expand services to our affiliate partners and deliver safe, high-quality, compassionate, and efficient clinical care. This includes OHSU Tuality Healthcare, OHSU Adventist Health Portland, Mid-Columbia Medical Center (The Dalles) and Columbia Memorial Hospital (Astoria). She will assist the Department with the integration and alignment of system provider partners and help build a culture of camaraderie and collaboration.

As OHSU's reach continues to expand, Dr. Husain will be pivotal in strengthening partner relationships in order to create a congruent quality of care in all locations. Her dedication to improved outcomes and the finesse with which she exacts positive change is an inspiration and we look forward to her continued leadership.

## Welcome Jonathan Brody, Ph.D., Vice-Chair for Research

After a months-long national search with many exceptional candidates, **Jonathan Brody, Ph.D.**, has joined us as our new Vice Chair for Research.

Dr. Brody most recently served as the Director of Surgical Research and Co-director of the Jefferson Pancreatic, Biliary, and Related Cancer Center in Philadelphia. He was also a member of the Kimmel Cancer Center (with a leadership role in the GI Program) and a Professor within the departments of Surgery and Pathology.

Due to travel restrictions related to the Covid-19 outbreak, we look forward to Dr. Brody's delayed arrival to campus later this summer. In the meantime, he is effectively working remotely with our research team and PI's.

Dr. Brody received his Ph.D. from The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and his thesis specialized in studying the molecular aspects of cancer and cancer genetics. He patented, with Dr. Scott Kern, novel buffers for DNA identification (DNA electrophoresis buffer), that have changed the format of this molecular biology technique used to detect DNA. He was elected Chair of the Cancer Research Program (PRCRP), Department of Defense Council and serves on many international study sections, including currently being the Chair of the Tumor Biology and Genomics study section for the American Cancer Society and a permanent member of an NCI study section panel.

Dr. Brody's lab focuses on many molecular aspects of pancreatic cancer, including developing ways to target a novel pro-survival network in pancreatic cancer cells and optimizing current targeted therapies used in the clinic. His also has an interest in personalizing therapy for pancreatic cancer patients (PanCAN, RAN grant PI).

We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to **Bruce Wolfe, M.D.**, who has worked tirelessly for over a decade as our previous research vice chair. We look forward to Dr. Brody's support of our already exceptional research program and its continued growth.





# On The Cutting Edge



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Questions or comments? Email *On the Cutting Edge* Editor Sara Szymanski at [szymanss@ohsu.edu](mailto:szymanss@ohsu.edu) – we’d love to hear from you.

Oregon Health & Science University is a nationally prominent research university and Oregon’s only public academic health center. It educates health professionals and scientists and provides leading-edge patient care, community service and biomedical research.

Change can’t happen if we see things just one way. That’s why diversity is so important to OHSU.