



# EMORY

**Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery**

ANNUAL ALUMNI NEWSLETTER 2021



**EMORY**  
UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF  
MEDICINE

Department of Surgery



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are happy to provide you with our third annual alumni newsletter for Emory Cardiothoracic Surgery. Our goal with each edition is to keep all Emory Cardiothoracic Surgery alumni engaged in our program, and to provide updates about changes and events occurring here at Emory. We hope you'll find this edition informative, inspiring and engaging.

Despite the challenges we've all experienced this year with COVID, Emory Cardiothoracic Surgery remains one of the most successful academic-medical training programs in the country. Our faculty, fellows and residents continue to stay focused on innovative research and education while simultaneously ensuring superior patient outcomes all in the midst of a global health crisis. I am trilled to announce that we are graduating 3 outstanding residents and we have added four new faculty members. I would also like to personally thank all of you who contributed to the Robert A. Guyton Resident Education fund, which helps support resident educational activities and I look forward to your ongoing support.

It is a great source of pride among the faculty and staff that our alumni stay engaged with our program and keep us up-to-date on their personal and professional successes. We enjoy hearing from you so please continue to send us updates. We look forward to keeping in touch with all of you and hopefully can see everyone again in person at next year's STS meeting.

Sincerely,  
**Michael Halkos, MD**

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**Department of Surgery**



## NEW FACULTY



### **Woodrow Farrington, II, MD**

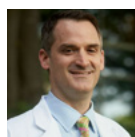
'Woody' is an adult cardiac surgeon, who specializes in complex aortic disease and

aortic aneurysms. He completed his cardiothoracic surgery and advanced cardiovascular/aortic aneurysm surgery fellowships at New York Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical College. Dr. Farrington will be based at Emory Saint Joseph's campus.



**Alison F. Ward, MD** is an adult cardiac surgeon, whose clinical interests include hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and total

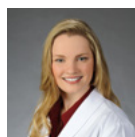
arterial revascularization for coronary artery disease. She received her medical degree from the University of Maryland School of Medicine, and completed an integrated general surgery/ cardiothoracic surgery residency and cardiothoracic surgery fellowship at NYU Langone Health. Prior to joining Emory, Dr. Ward was an assistant professor of cardiothoracic surgery at Medical College of Georgia in Augusta, Georgia. Dr. Ward will be based at Grady Memorial Hospital and Emory University Hospital Midtown.



### **Joshua Rosenblum, MD, PhD**

is a cardiac surgeon, who specializes in congenital heart disease. His clinical focus is

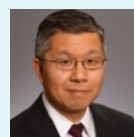
in complex adult congenital heart disease, connective tissue disorders in children and pediatric heart failure and transplantation. He received his PhD and MD from Case Western Reserve University and completed his general surgery and cardiothoracic surgery residencies followed by his fellowship in congenital cardiothoracic surgery at Emory. Dr. Rosenblum will be based at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and Emory University Hospital.



**Amalia Jonsson, MD** is an adult cardiac surgeon, who specializes in minimally invasive and robotic-assisted cardiac surgery.

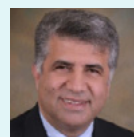
Her clinical focus is on coronary and valvular heart disease with an emphasis on robotic-assisted mitral valve surgery and robotic-assisted coronary artery bypass surgery. She received her medical degree from the University of Utah and completed the integrated general surgery/ cardiothoracic surgery residency program at Emory University. Dr. Jonsson's primary practice location will be at Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital.

## DEPARTING FACULTY



After 16 years in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, **Dr. Edward Chen** accepted a well-deserved leadership role as the Chief of the Division of

Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery at Duke University, one of the most prestigious and legacy cardiothoracic surgery programs in the United States. Dr. Chen joined the faculty at Emory University in the Department of Surgery in 2004 after completing his cardiothoracic surgery residency at Emory. He started the Aortic Surgery Program in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery which has become one of the top 5 programs in the United States. Under his leadership, Emory's Aortic Center evolved into a collaborative multispecialty program across Emory Healthcare, which is one of the leaders in the country in aortic surgical and endovascular case volume, clinical trials, innovation, and quality.



After 35 years at Emory, **Dr. Omar Lattouf** decided to retire from his position at Emory and move to New York City to be closer to his family and

grandchildren. Dr. Lattouf was a vital contributor to Emory's Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery. He was part of the team performing Georgia's first domino heart transplant, he helped implant the state's first Abiomed biventricular assist system, and he performed the world's first totally endoscopic left ventricular resynchronization. Dr. Lattouf is currently working at Mount Sinai in New York City.

### STS 3-Star CABG:

For the third year in a row, Emory Cardiothoracic Surgery has received a 3-star quality rating for CABG from the Society of Thoracic Surgeons. The 3-star rating, which denotes the highest category of quality, places Emory Cardiothoracic Surgery among the elite for coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery in the United States and Canada. Emory is the only health system in Georgia to achieve this rating for 3 consecutive years.



### Mitral Valve Repair Reference Center:

The American Heart Association and the Mitral Foundation have designated Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital as a Mitral Valve Repair Reference Center, a recognition awarded to high volume mitral repair hospitals that have shown excellence in clinical outcomes and performance in mitral valve repairs. Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital is the first and only hospital in the southeast to receive this designation.

### STS 3-Star MVRR:

For the second year in a row, Emory Cardiothoracic Surgery has earned the distinguished 3-star rating from the Society of Thoracic Surgeons for its patient care and outcomes in isolated mitral valve replacement and repair (MVRR) surgery. The 3-star rating places Emory Cardiothoracic Surgery among the leading institutions for MVRR surgery in the United States and Canada.

### CVSA Resident Prize:

Kanika Kalra, MD, Emory Cardiothoracic surgery fellow, was recognized at the American Heart Association's 2020 Scientific Sessions with the Council on Cardiovascular Surgery and Anesthesia Resident Prize. Each year, the CVSA selects 4-6 trainees or early career faculty as finalists for the award based on the quality of abstracts they submitted to the Scientific Sessions and the winner is chosen following the finalists' presentations at the conference. Specifically, the prize acknowledged Dr. Kalra for the excellence of her abstract "Papillary Muscle Tip Approximation in Repair of Ischemic Mitral Regurgitation in a Chronic Swine Model," which was based on research she performed at the Structural Heart Research and Innovation Laboratory in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery. The lab is directed by Muralidhar Padala, PhD.





Kim Baio, MSN  
Milad Sharifpour, MD  
Brad Leshnow, MD


### COVID Trial:

In August 2020, cardiothoracic surgeon Brad Leshnow and anesthesiologist Milad Sharifpour teamed up as principle investigator and co-investigator on the international ACTIV-3: Therapeutics for Inpatients with COVID-19 Phase 3 clinical trial. Kim Baio, director of clinical trials for the Department of Surgery, managed the trial's patient enrollment, clinical coordinator oversight, allocation of resources, regulatory and compliance adherence and day-to-day operations.

This study is one of four trials in the National Institutes of Health's Accelerating COVID-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines (ACTIV) program, a public-private partnership for facilitating development of the most promising treatments and vaccine candidates for the virus. The trial also received support from Operation Warp Speed, the federal government's multi-agency effort to develop, manufacture and distribute medical countermeasures to fight COVID-19.

Emory was one of the first four sites to open and start randomizing enrollees. A few months after initial trial start-up, the research team received correspondence from Janet Woodcock, director of therapeutics for Operation Warp Speed, and Francis Collins, director of the NIH, congratulating them on their performance and participation in the trial. In particular, Kim Baio's organizational and recruiting skills were praised.

The randomized, controlled study looked at the safety and effectiveness of monoclonal antibodies in treating patients hospitalized with COVID-19. Participants were randomized to either the study drug plus standard of care, including the antiviral drug remdesivir, or placebo plus standard of care.



**EMORY  
TRANSPLANT  
CENTER OFFERS  
PATIENTS A  
NEW OPTION  
FOR HEART  
TRANSPLANT**



Emory was one of the first five hospitals to join a groundbreaking new clinical trial involving hearts reanimated from donors that experienced circulatory death (DCD). The study, Donors After Circulatory Death Heart Trial, utilizes TransMedic's Organ Care System (OCS) to resuscitate and preserve hearts after DCD.

TransMedics Organ Care System (OCS) has been used in prior research for other types of transplants, however, its use with hearts from donors after circulatory death is novel. Researchers believe this new technology could mean a 30% increase in donated organs available for transplant and Emory Healthcare is the only healthcare system in Georgia where this approach is being explored.

"This is the forefront of heart transplantation, globally. We're excited to be part of this trial. We're performing transplants for patients who otherwise may have been waiting much longer for suitable organs," says Mani Daneshmand, MD, the trial's principle investigator and Director of Heart and Lung Transplantation and Mechanical Circulatory Support. "Being one of five centers to date in the country doing this groundbreaking research is exciting and in line with the missions of both Emory Heart & Vascular and Transplant Centers."

To date, the Emory clinical trial team has performed seven heart transplants using organs from donation after circulatory death as part of the study. All patients have recovered well.

## Dr. Douglas Murphy featured in US News & World Report

Cardiothoracic surgeon Douglas A. Murphy, MD, general and GI surgeon Ankit Patel, MD, and former resident Vivian Wang, MD, were featured as positive examples of structured robotic surgery training in a U.S. News & World Report story on the lack of standardized training curriculum or unified credentialing for robotic surgery in the U.S.

The article reports, standardized training and unified credentialing for robotic surgery are non-existent in the U.S. Credentialing is done separately by hospital, which results in standards that vary wildly across the country. Consequently, robotic surgery has become a highly scrutinized endeavor with some recent controversies, such as the FDA-issued safety warning against the use of robotic devices in mastectomies.

Dr. Murphy emphasizes that most of the negative incidents associated with robotic surgery are the result of poor training. The article highlights that he trains mid-career cardiac surgeons and surgical teams at Emory St. Joseph's Hospital and other hospitals in the U.S., Europe, and Japan, and believes that proper robotic training requires time, patience and humility.

Dr. Murphy's expertise is derived from his more than 3000 operations, mostly mitral valve repairs and replacements, which is more than any other cardiac surgeon in the world.

The article references Emory's strict robotic credentialing standards, which require completion of a course facilitated by Intuitive; training on a simulator; and proof that the surgeons have prior experience with other minimally invasive techniques. Surgeons new to robotics are monitored by an experienced colleague before they can operate on their own.

Full article from U.S. News & World Report here: <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthcare-of-tomorrow/articles/2019-12-13/training-for-robotically-assisted-surgery-evolves>







## Dr. Manu Sancheti Utilizes Intuitive ION Technology to Diagnose & Treat Lung Cancer

Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital became one of the first hospitals in the southeast to use Intuitive ION technology to diagnose lung cancers earlier and less invasively. With its ultra-thin and maneuverable catheter, the ION robot is capable of reaching deep into the peripheral areas of the lung, where the robot allows doctors to biopsy suspicious tissue. The real-time information about whether the tissue is cancerous allows surgeons to diagnose and potentially proceed immediately to surgical treatment.

“Early stages of lung cancer can be challenging to diagnose since tissue samples are needed from difficult-to-reach places deep within the lung,” says Manu Sancheti, MD, assistant professor of surgery, chief of thoracic surgery and medical director of perioperative services at Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital. “The new ION robot will allow us to access those areas of the lung more easily and biopsy suspicious nodules with precision and in a minimally-invasive way.”

During the robotic-assisted bronchoscopy, a doctor uses a controller with a heads-up display to navigate the camera-

equipped catheter along a pre-planned path through the lung airways. With its 3.5 millimeter size and ability to articulate 180 degrees in any direction, the ION is capable of reaching all 18 segments of the lung. Once the targeted area is reached, a flexible needle is used to biopsy the tissue.

“When used in Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital's state-of-the-art hybrid operating room alongside Intuitive's da Vinci surgical robots, the ION will allow us to diagnose early-stage lung cancers and treat them all in the same surgical session,” Sancheti says. “This really revolutionizes the treatment process, allowing us in some cases to shave weeks off the treatment regimen, which typically involves multiple appointments.”

## IN MEMORY

# REMEMBERING CHARLES R. HATCHER, JR., MD

Charles Ross Hatcher Jr., MD, former vice president for health affairs at Emory University and director of Emory's Woodruff Health Sciences Center, passed away peacefully at Emory University Hospital on March 27, 2021, at the age of 90.

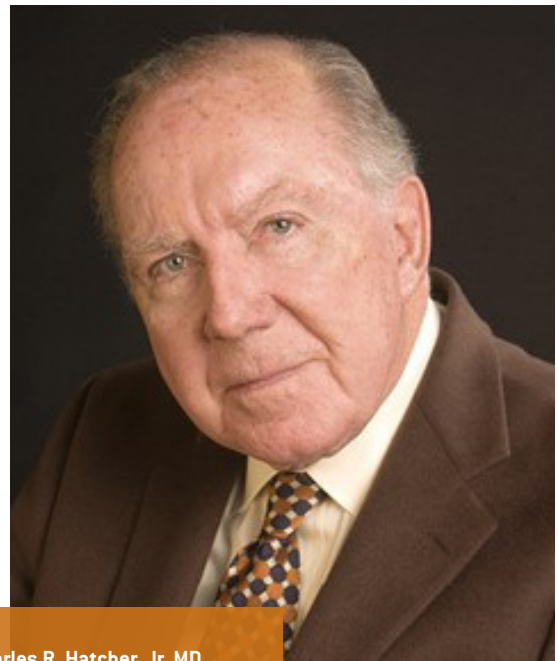
Dr. Hatcher graduated from the University of Georgia's School of Medicine, later renamed the Medical College of Georgia, and chose a career in cardiac surgery. He joined Emory in 1962 as an instructor in surgery in the Emory University School of Medicine and a surgeon in the Emory Clinic. On his second day on the job he performed Georgia's first successful "blue baby" operation, ushering in a new era of open-heart surgery for Georgia. He performed the state's first double-, then triple-valve replacements and, in 1970, the state's first coronary bypass, all at Emory University Hospital. By 1971, Hatcher, then 41 years old, was named chief of cardiothoracic surgery. As chief, he was the driving force behind Emory's rise in prominence as one of the largest and most respected heart surgery programs in the nation.

Among Dr. Hatcher's most impactful achievements, of which he declared himself most proud, were the creation of the Rollins School of Public Health, Georgia's first; the expansion of the Yerkes National Primate Research Center; establishment of a 30-year contract between Emory's School of Medicine and Grady Memorial Hospital; assistance in the formation and accreditation of the Morehouse School of Medicine; establishment of the Carlyle Fraser Heart Center at Emory University Hospital Midtown; and the establishment of Emory Healthcare, of which he would later be CEO.

Dr. Hatcher's storied career as a cardiac surgeon also includes an impressive roster of activity within his chosen field. He served as president of the Georgia Heart Association, the Southern Thoracic Surgical Association, the Society of Thoracic Surgeons and for seven years as finance committee chair for the American Board of Thoracic Surgery.

He received countless honors during his life, including the Robert W. Woodruff Medal, establishment of the Charles Ross Hatcher Jr. Distinguished Professorship of Surgery, and the Charles Hatcher Jr. Award for Excellence in Public Health, presented annually by the Rollins School of Public Health to a faculty member in recognition of a lifetime of achievement in public health. He also received the Distinguished Service Award from Emory University School of Medicine, the Distinguished Service Award of the Emory University School of Dentistry, and the Distinguished Leadership Award from the Morehouse School of Medicine.

A few months before his passing, Dr. Hatcher told long-time WHSC vice president, Gary Teal, that he would simply like to be remembered as someone who loved Emory University, the Woodruff Health Sciences Center and his home state of Georgia.



Charles R. Hatcher, Jr. MD



## The Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery currently has 20 trainees

5 independent (3 year) residents, 10 (6 year) integrated residents and 5 international/sub-specialty (1-2 years) fellows.

### June 2021 Graduates:

Amalia Jonsson, MD, David Cervantes, MD,  
Nakul Valsangkar, MD



## Robert A. Guyton, MD, Resident Education Fund



To honor **Dr. Robert Guyton** and to provide direct support to cardiothoracic resident education and training, the Robert A. Guyton, MD Resident Education Endowment has been recently established. Emory's CT surgery residency program accounts for approximately 5% of all active cardiothoracic surgeons in the country today. Dr. Guyton has been responsible for the education of some of the most accomplished and successful CT surgeons in the field and has personally trained more than 140 resident physicians. The Guyton Resident Education Fund will help Emory stay in the vanguard of medical training and patient-centered care by funding residents' attendance at national conferences, as well as, their research.

*Thank you for considering a donation to the Robert A. Guyton Resident Education Fund. Please click the following link to make a contribution:*  
[engage.emory.edu/Guyton21](https://engage.emory.edu/Guyton21)





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