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SURGICAL ONCOLOGY
THORACIC
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TRAUMA & CRITICAL CARE
VASCULAR



THE STITCH

The Newsletter of the
Department of Surgery



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY
MEDICAL COLLEGE
OF GEORGIA

December 2025



Chatter with the Chair

Excellence in Every Endeavor

Excellence as Our Guiding Star

As the holiday season approaches, we are reminded that excellence is not just a goal—it is a gift we give to our patients, our colleagues, and our community. Excellence shines through the precision of our clinical care, the rigor of our research, and the dedication we bring to teaching. Just as the Christmas lights brighten the winter nights, our commitment to excellence illuminates the path forward for our department.

Celebrating Achievements

We see some examples in this month's newsletter with a Dean's Research Award won by Research Resident Zack Aldaher who is working with Dr. Erika Mabes. The pair are traveling the state to promote Trauma readiness through simulation scenarios. Excellent!

Our Thoracic surgery section had excellent presentations at the Southern Thoracic Surgery Association meeting in Florida. Dr. Miller led our surgery resident, Mikenzie Sturdivant and our MCG student Neel Kulkarni in presentations that displayed our

clinical work. Dr. Miller has also secured a grant from Unite in the Fight to study a novel chest drainage system that allows for early discharge after lung surgery.

Our Transplant team, led by Dr. Angello Lin, has successfully restarted our pancreas transplant program with the second combined kidney and pancreas transplant only a few weeks ago. Another step towards our department's pursuit of excellence on many levels.

Finally, our own Augusta University used the national stage of the in-state college football rivalry to showcase our medical pursuits in education and treatment. Dr. Renee Hilton along with Drs. Monte Stewart, Sherita King and Scott Rahimi reminded the football viewers of the excellence that we have at the Medical College of Georgia in promoting health for all our patients.

Living Our Values

Excellence is not only measured in accolades but in the quiet, consistent pursuit of doing our best. It is found in:

- The extra time spent mentoring a resident.
- The careful review of a case at M&M conference.

■ The courage to ask hard questions and seek better answers.

These daily acts of excellence build trust, inspire growth, and strengthen our collective mission.

Closing Reflection

Excellence is our hallmark, and during this season of light, it shines brighter than ever. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our mission and for making excellence a tradition worth celebrating.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with continued success and joy.

William D Jordan, Jr., MD

Professor and Chair,
Department of Surgery
Medical College of Georgia
Surgeon in Chief



AFFILIATED WITH MEDICAL COLLEGE OF GEORGIA

CONGRATULATIONS

■ Our **Transplant Team** helped transform another life! This time a patient received a simultaneous kidney pancreas transplantation on November 23rd and left the hospital on December 1st, insulin and dialysis free!



■ **Dr. Zackery Aldaher** was selected to receive the Dean's Graduate Medical Education Research Award from the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University. The proposed project seeks to evaluate the Rural Interactive Trauma Simulation (RITS) Outreach Curriculum as a strategy to address disparities in trauma readiness across rural Georgia. In addition, Dr. Aldaher will be recognized as an award recipient at the MCG Annual Faculty Senate Awards Ceremony.



■ **Dr. Valia Bravo Egana** was this month's Spotlight of Excellence for ACHI (American College of Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics). Thank you for placing our institution on the national stage of professional quality!

■ Congratulations to **Dr. Dan Miller** for successfully receiving a grant award for our Mobile Digital Drainage System Discharge Home Program after Lung Resection! This program will offer less restrictive recovery pathways and reduced hospitalization.



■ **Dr. Renee Hilton** was featured in MCG's national halftime commercial during the Georgia vs Georgia Tech football game. The commercial shows a few of the ways we are committed to a healthier Georgia. https://youtu.be/G_5k0ijWu-k



■ Our Thoracic Surgery Section represented us well at the 72nd Annual Meeting of the Southern Thoracic Surgical Association. Amelia Island, Florida in November. **Neel Kulkarni, MS**, and **Mikenzie Sturdevant, PGY-4**, presented at the conference. <https://stsa.org/>

• **Kulkarni N, Aldan R, Dhiman A, Doddala B, Kuckleman J, Miller D.** Intercostal Nerve Cryoablation Reduces Postoperative Atrial Fibrillation After Minimally Invasive Thoracic Surgery Procedures.

• **Sturdevant M, Weiner A, Eskandari S, Shah D, Ivan N, Radi I, Switzer E, Miller D.** Chest Wall Reconstruction of an Infected Open Fracture of the Costal Arch.

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Save the Date!



**2026 MORETZ
SURGICAL SOCIETY
MARCH 13-14**