



AUGUST 2025

# NEUROLOGICAL SURGERY MOMENTS

News and Updates from the University of Washington  
Department of Neurological Surgery



## Message from the Chair

RICHARD G. ELLENBOGEN, MD

It was an exciting few months of activity in our department. We welcomed new residents, fellows and faculty. We said our wistful goodbyes to our graduates, ready to expand their field of vision and launch their brilliant careers. Our NIH R-25 undergraduate summer school students inspired us and reminded us that there is an ever-hopeful future for the next generation of neuroscientists and clinicians. And, a team of skillful neurosurgeons and disruptive neuroscientists at the UW under the direction of Jeff Ojemann, implanted a cutting-edge brain stimulation device aimed at helping stroke patients regain their motor function. And lastly, we say a melancholy goodbye to a department favorite, Rob Buckley, MD, who was recruited away to run the epilepsy program at Nicklaus Children's Hospital at Miami. We shall miss his enviable work ethic, endless energy, and selfless dedication to his patients, students and colleagues.



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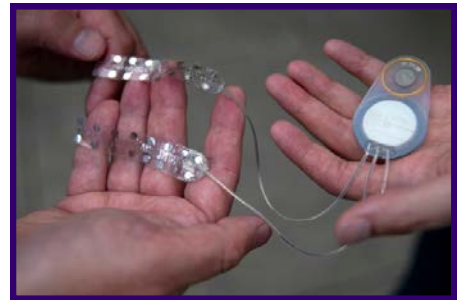
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## Innovative Brain Stimulation Study for Stroke Recovery



Neurosurgeons at the University of Washington School of Medicine have implanted a cutting-edge brain stimulation device aimed at helping stroke patients regain lost motor function. The device was implanted on July 22, 2025, in a 52-year-old patient whose strokes had severely impacted his arm and leg mobility. Drs. Andrew Ko and Ben Grannan performed the first of its kind in the world surgery under the watchful eye of the NIH Principal Investigator Dr. Jeff Ojemann.

The study uses electrical impulses to stimulate the brain during rehabilitation, encouraging neurons to rewire and strengthen connections. The implant, developed by CorTec GmbH in Germany, marks its first use in a human and represents a major milestone in neurotechnology.

The device consists of silicon sheets with electrodes placed on the brain's surface, connected to a skull-implanted unit that wirelessly communicates with external systems. Dr. Jeffrey Herron, an expert in brain-computer interfaces, will oversee the engineering aspects of the study.

Funded by the National Institutes of Health, the five-year trial will initially enroll four patients, followed by eight more in a subsequent phase. The device will be removed after approximately nine months, with the goal of achieving lasting improvements through enhanced rehabilitation.

Read KUOW's story titled "[This electric brain implant could help stroke victims recover. The first patient: A Seattle-area mechanic](#)" which further details this groundbreaking medical advancement.





## NEW FACULTY MEMBER



Dr. Matthew Recker, our former pediatric fellow, joined the department as Assistant Professor of Neurological Surgery based at Seattle Children's Hospital on July 1st. Dr. Recker earned his medical degree from Drexel University College of Medicine, where he was inducted into the prestigious Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society and received multiple accolades for academic excellence and research. He completed his residency in Neurological Surgery at the State University of New York

at Buffalo, where he also pursued an enrolled fellowship in Functional and Stereotactic Neurosurgery.

During his residency and fellowship training, Dr. Recker earned recognition for both his technical excellence and his leadership. His Chair, Elad Levy, MD and our former fellow Renee Reynolds, MD, Residency Director, sung Dr. Recker's praises throughout his training. His clinical and research accomplishments have been recognized through multiple awards, peer-reviewed publications in high-impact journals, and podium presentations.

Dr. Recker's honors include election to the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society, recognition as Resident of the Year at the University at Buffalo Neurosurgery Program, and receipt of the prestigious Alpha Omega Alpha Carolyn L. Kuckein Student Research Fellowship. He also received the Chancellor's Undergraduate Research Award from the University of Pittsburgh and the Surgicorps International Student Scholarship for his contributions to international surgical outreach. These distinctions reflect his academic rigor, service-oriented mindset, and commitment to advancing the field of neurosurgery.

Dr. Recker served with distinction during his fellowship at Seattle Children's Hospital, where he quickly became a valued member of the surgical team. His skill, composure in the operating room, teaching ability and academic mindset made him an excellent recruit.





## MEET OUR NEW FELLOWS

### **Andre Cote, MD**

Originally from Fresno, California, Dr. Cote earned his medical degree with distinction from the University of California, San Francisco. He went on to complete his Master of Public Health degree at Hofstra University School of Public Health and then completed a medicine internship at Hofstra University School of Medicine. He completed his residency in Neurology at the University of Washington followed by a Vascular Neurology Fellowship at UCLA. In 2024 Dr. Cote was a Neurointerventional Fellow in the Department of Radiology at UW. He is currently an Endovascular Fellow with us.



### **Chase H. Foster, MD**

A spine fellow, Dr. Foster is interested in all facets of spine surgery including minimally invasive techniques and deformity correction as well as peripheral nerve surgery including nerve repair, nerve transfers, and peripheral nerve tumors. A Texas native, he received his BS in Exercise Physiology at Texas A&M University and then his MS in Medical Science at University of North Texas Health Science Center. He earned his medical degree at Texas Tech's Foster School of Medicine and performed his residency at The George Washington University which included an enrolled fellowship in peripheral nerve surgery at Johns Hopkins.

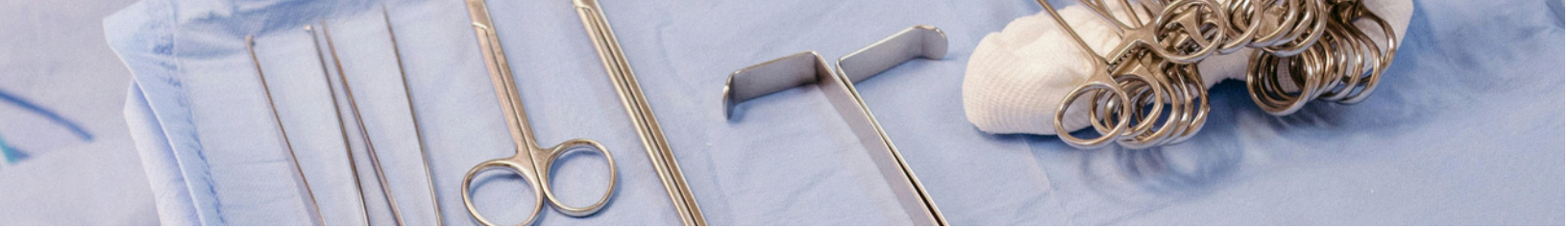
### **Gabriel Friedman, MD**

Our current Functional & Stereotactic Neurosurgery Fellow, Dr. Friedman obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Neuroscience from Pomona College and his Doctor of Medicine degree with Honors from Harvard Medical School. During medical school, he received the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Research Fellowship to support his work in the Ziv Williams Lab at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). He then completed neurosurgery residency at MGH and Harvard Medical School.



### **Ascher Kaufmann, MD**

Currently a Spine Fellow, Dr. Kaufmann is a proud Texan and alum of the University of Texas. He is also a former collegiate rugby player. Dr. Kaufmann earned his Medical Doctorate from Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans and completed his residency in the division of Neurological Surgery at Michigan State University/Ascension Providence in East Lansing, Michigan.



## MEET OUR NEW FELLOWS - cont'd

### **Tyler Lazaro, MD**

Our current CV-Skull Base Fellow and former endovascular fellow, Dr. Lazaro graduated Summa Cum Laude with a BA in Neuroscience from Boston University where he also earned his Medical Doctorate in 2017. He performed his residency in neurosurgery at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, TX.



### **Ajay Ramnot, DO**

Dr. Ramnot, a Spine Fellow, was born and raised in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and spent his childhood on the beach and immersed in nature. Dr. Ramnot earned his Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree from Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale and completed his residency in Neurological Surgery at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton, California.

### **Christopher Seward, MD**

Dr. Seward, also a CV-Skull Base Fellow, was born and raised in Minnesota. Dr. Seward earned his Medical Doctorate from St. George's University School of Medicine in Grenada, West Indies. He then completed an internship in general surgery at the University at Buffalo and went on to complete his neurosurgery residency at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson where he subsequently completed an Endovascular Fellowship.



### **Sudhir Suggala MBBS, MS, MCh**

Dr. Sudhir Suggala was born in India and completed his medical education across multiple regions of the country. He earned his M.B.B.S. and M.S. in General Surgery before pursuing M.Ch. Neurosurgery at G.B. Pant Hospital, Delhi University, India. He is an Endovascular Fellow.

## PROMOTIONS



Jeffrey Herron, PhD was promoted to Associate Professor of Neurological Surgery as of July 1, 2025



Mahesh Karandikar, MD, PhD was promoted to Clinical Associate Professor of Neurological Surgery as of July 1, 2025

## NEW RESIDENT



We are pleased to extend a warm welcome to Dr. Derrick Lewis who transferred to our program as a PGY-3 from the University of Florida. Dr. Lewis earned his M.D. from the Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine, where he also received a Certificate in the Science of Healthcare Delivery. His academic path includes a Master's in Medical Sciences from Boston University and a Bachelor's in Physics, complemented by minors in Biology and Chemistry.

His many accolades include induction into the Gold Humanism Honor Society, the Minnesota Medical Association Advocacy Champion Award, and the AAMC/Darrell G. Kirch, MD Scholarship, among many others.

His research spans neurosurgery, epilepsy, oncology, and health equity, with publications in Neurosurgery, Academic Medicine, and Minnesota Medicine. He has presented his work at prestigious national and international conferences, contributing to advancements in brain connectomics and robotic surgery outcomes.

Beyond the lab and clinic, Dr. Lewis is a passionate advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. He co-founded mentorship programs for underrepresented students and single mothers, led curriculum audits to improve DEI in medical education, and served on multiple leadership boards, including the Minnesota Medical Association Board of Trustees.

His clinical experience is equally impressive, having served as a paramedic and EMT, and as an instructor in advanced life support.

Fluent in French and conversant in Italian and Spanish, Dr. Lewis also finds time for weightlifting, yoga, piano, and basketball.





## NEW GRANTS AND AWARDS



Dr. Patrick Fillingham was awarded a Brain Aneurysm Foundation (BAF) grant in the amount of \$50K for his project “An automated computational method for evaluating cerebral aneurysm coiling strategies.” As part of the award, Dr. Fillingham will present his project in September at the BAF’s Research Symposium hosted by the Barrow Neurological Institute in Scottsdale, AZ. The Research Symposium Scientific Session is a unique event with the top brain aneurysm researchers from the US and Canada all in one room to share, collaborate, and get a step closer to saving lives and reducing disabilities caused by brain aneurysms.

Dr. Julian Clarke’s proposal, “The role of brain capillary pericytes in delayed cerebral ischemia after aneurysmal subarachnoid hemorrhage,” was selected to receive the \$15,000 Robert J. Dempsey, MD Cerebrovascular Resident Research Award, established to honor Dr. Dempsey for his mentoring of young physicians by the AANS/CNS Cerebrovascular Section.



Dr. Malia McAvoy’s abstract, “A drug-loaded flow diverting stent for delivery of gene therapy to intracranial aneurysms,” was selected to receive the Cerebrovascular Section Best Basic Scientific Paper Abstract Award Resident/Fellow at the 2025 AANS Annual Scientific Meeting in Boston this past April.

## IT'S A WRAP



It was a banner day for the UW Department of Neurological Surgery! The Department's NIH-funded R-25 Neuroscience Summer School Program (NSSSP) students made their research presentations on Friday, August 15<sup>th</sup> at a well-attended symposium at Harborview Medical Center's Research & Training Building. The NSSSP provides true "Bench to Bedside" exposure in the field of neuroscience.

Established in 2008 by the UW Department of Neurological Surgery, the program provides college students opportunities to explore basic and clinical neurosciences through laboratory research and clinical observation. Our vision and hope are that students will be inspired by their experience to pursue a career in research and/or medicine. So far over eighty of our graduates have done just that! Participation in this unique summer program includes an eight-week lab placement in one of our neuroscience labs, neurological surgery OR observations, weekly neurological surgery Grand Round lectures, and weekly neuroscience faculty lectures, culminating in student presentations of their individual program's focus. The fourteen students representing eleven different scientific labs gave inspiring talks. They were cheered on by their lab and clinical mentors as well as, in some cases, their parents. Christine Mac Donald, PhD, Professor and Vice Chair of Research for Neurological Surgery, James and Gaye Pigott Endowed Chair, along with Richard G. Ellenbogen, MD, Chair of Neurological Surgery presided over the scientific presentations and were inspired by the students work, presentation styles, poise, attitude and comprehension of their complex and well-reasoned projects. Every year it seems that the best and brightest who represent this program manage to surpass all expectations.

It was a day to celebrate science, hope and a future that is well represented by these amazing students.





## FOND FAREWELLS

It is with mixed emotions that we share the news that Dr. Robert T. Buckley will be leaving us at the end of August to begin his next adventure. He was heavily recruited and offered a position at Nicklaus Children's Hospital in Miami where he will serve as a pediatric neurosurgeon and Medical Director of Surgical Epilepsy. This is one of the busiest, longstanding, and renowned pediatric epilepsy programs in the country.



Dr. Buckley has been a member of our UW family since June 2012 after he graduated with distinction from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. He graduated the UW Medicine neurological surgery residency program in June 2019, receiving the "Courage to Lead Award" given annually to recognize a resident who exemplifies the character traits of leadership, selfless sacrifice, perseverance, devotion to patients and colleagues, and innovative thinking. These are qualities he continued to demonstrate while a pediatric fellow and then as a faculty in our department. Dr. Buckley's work ethic is one of tireless devotion to his patients, an indefatigable level of energy and an admirable commitment to his colleagues and his craft. He is exceptionally intelligent, compassionate, a superb teacher, and a talented and undaunted surgeon. He is admired by faculty, residents, and patients equally. Needless to say, Dr. Buckley will be sorely missed; we are so proud of him and wish him the best!



On Friday, June 20th we celebrated and said goodbye to Dr. Kate Carroll, Dr. Jessica Eaton and Dr. James Pan. We are excited for their promising futures!

Dr. Kate Carroll who is set to marry former resident Guil Barros in September will spend her fellowship year with the neurosurgeons of the combined pediatric neurosurgery service of Weill Cornell Medicine and Columbia University.

Dr. Jessica Eaton is now a Skull Base Fellow at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester and is well prepared for the clinical rigors and enjoying the challenges of the world-renowned Mayo Clinic.

Dr. James Pan is currently undertaking a spine fellowship at Stanford University where he completed medical school. He is also interested in designing technologies that help both physicians and patients interact with healthcare systems.