



SEPTEMBER 2026

NEUROLOGICAL SURGERY MOMENTS

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

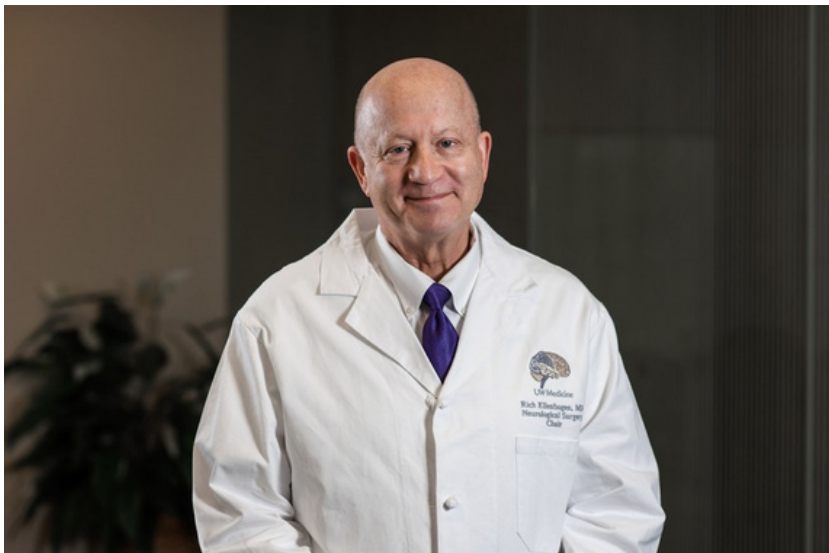
Message from the Chair

RICHARD G. ELLENBOGEN, MD

It has been an exciting Summer! Although all our neurological surgeons are “Top Docs,” 13 were voted into the prestigious list by Seattle Magazine. Our NIH R-25 program to mentor and inspire the next generation of college students to pursue neuroscience and medicine careers graduated yet another class of tremendously talented students. Thank you to their mentors!

We celebrated the graduation of 3 amazing newly board eligible neurosurgeons who successfully completed 7 years of challenging and inspired work. We admire and celebrate Drs. Scott Boop, Maggie McGrath, and Evgeniya Tyrtova. We are so proud of their resilience and talent. All three are pursuing first-rate fellowships. Our nationally recognized neurological surgery program continues to produce the best and brightest.

We recruited a superb new spine oncology surgeon, and we promoted 4 great academic neurological surgeons to their next rank. Our beloved Christine MacDonald, Vice Chair of Research, was awarded a remarkable Endowed Chair in Traumatic Brain Injury. Two of our residents were awarded noteworthy grants and we welcomed 7 new post graduate fellows to train. Lastly, we celebrated Tram Tran, our forever tireless and intelligent administrative leader, 30 years of Service to the University of Washington.



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TOP DOCS 2026

PEER NOMINATED. REGION'S BEST.

[VIEW FULL LIST](#)

Our Docs are Tops!

Congratulations to members of the department who were voted Top Doctors in the Puget Sound region for 2026 by Seattle Magazine. For more than two decades, *Seattle* magazine has published a list of the region's top doctors. None paid to be included and all were nominated by their peers. Find the complete list [here](#).



Robert H. Bonow, MD



Samuel R. Browd, MD, PhD



Richard G. Ellenbogen, MD



Manuel Ferreira, MD, PhD, MBA



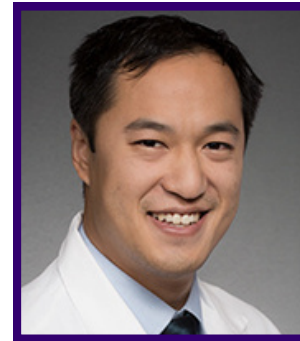
Christoph P. Hofstetter, MD, PhD



Stephen C. Houston, MD



Louis J. Kim, MD, MBA



Andrew L. Ko, MD



Amy Lee, MD



Michael Levitt, MD



Jeffrey G. Ojemann, MD



Ali C. Ravanpay, MD, PhD



Fangyi Zhang, MD



NEW FACULTY MEMBER



Dr. Kevin Cross joined the department as Assistant Professor of Neurological Surgery based at both the Montlake and Northwest campuses of the University of Washington Medical Center on July 1st. Dr. Cross completed his undergraduate education at Vanderbilt University and earned his M.D. from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. He then completed a rigorous neurosurgery residency at Washington University/Barnes-Jewish Hospital, one of the nation's premier training programs. Following residency, he pursued advanced sub-specialty training in Neurosurgical Spinal Oncology at MD Anderson Cancer Center, where he completed both a research fellowship and a clinical fellowship. This exceptional training pathway has provided him with deep expertise in complex spinal tumor surgery, multidisciplinary oncologic care, and the integration of clinical and translational research.

Clinically, Dr. Cross has developed advanced expertise in complex spinal oncology, deformity and reconstruction, and multidisciplinary tumor care. His fellowship at MD Anderson — one of the highest-volume spinal oncology centers in the world — has prepared him to manage technically demanding and high-acuity cases with precision and sound judgment. He demonstrates strong operative planning, thoughtful intraoperative decision-making, and clear communication with patients and colleagues which will meaningfully strengthen our spine service.

Dr. Cross also brings a strong foundation in academic neurosurgery. He has authored multiple peer-reviewed publications, contributed to impactful translational research, and was supported by an NIH R25 training grant during his development as a surgeon-scientist. His scholarly work reflects intellectual rigor and a sustained commitment to advancing neurosurgical knowledge. While early in his faculty career, he has demonstrated clear potential to develop into a productive academic spine surgeon with ongoing contributions in spinal oncology research and innovation.

PROMOTIONS as of July 1, 2026



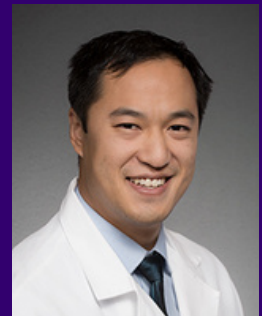
Anubhav G. Amin, MD
was promoted to
Associate Professor of
Neurological Surgery



Robert H. Bonow, MD
was promoted to
Associate Professor of
Neurological Surgery



Hannah E. Goldstein, MD
was promoted to
Associate Professor of
Neurological Surgery



Andrew L. Ko, MD
was promoted to
Professor of
Neurological Surgery



Summer Student R25 receives Perfect Score on Competitive Renewal!

Previously known as NSSSP, the Mentorship and Inspiration in Translational Neuroscience for StuDents (MINDS) program under the leadership of contact PI, Christine Mac Donald, PhD and MPI Richard G. Ellenbogen, MD received a perfect score on their competitive renewal of their NIH NINDS funded grant application welcoming in another five years of program funding and support. The MPIs thank Dedra Buchwald, MD and James Pridgeon, MHA, along with Margaret DeZelar, MS for their incredible support all co-writing this application together with program leadership. Truly a team effort.

The MINDS program seeks to empower and encourage undergraduate students to pursue careers in the clinical neurosciences. To accomplish this overall objective students are exposed to a wide array of didactic and experiential clinical, surgical, neuropathological, and research activities following a project-based learning model with emphasis on responsible conduct in research. The MINDS program approach promotes a sense of belonging in clinical neuroscience through this 8-week experience. Congratulations to the entire Executive Committee and Administrative Team for their incredible accomplishment!



The UW Department of Neurological Surgery celebrated another successful Neuroscience Summer School Program with a student research symposium at Harborview Medical Center on Friday, August 14th



MEET OUR NEW FELLOWS

Abdulrahman Almansouri, MB.BCh, BAO(Hons), MSc

Dr. Almansouri is a fellow in Skull Base and Cerebrovascular Surgery at the University of Washington. He earned his medical degree from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), graduating with First Class Honours. Dr. Almansouri completed his neurosurgery residency at McGill University/Montreal Neurological Institute-Hospital. During residency, he earned a master's degree in Experimental Surgery focusing on surgical education and the development of ex vivo simulation models for neurosurgical training. Upon completion of residency, he received the 2026 Penfield-McNaughton Award in Neurosurgery. His clinical interests include the management of complex cranial conditions, including cerebrovascular disorders, primary and metastatic brain tumors. His research interests include clinical outcomes in primary and metastatic brain tumors, as well as surgical simulation in neurosurgical education.



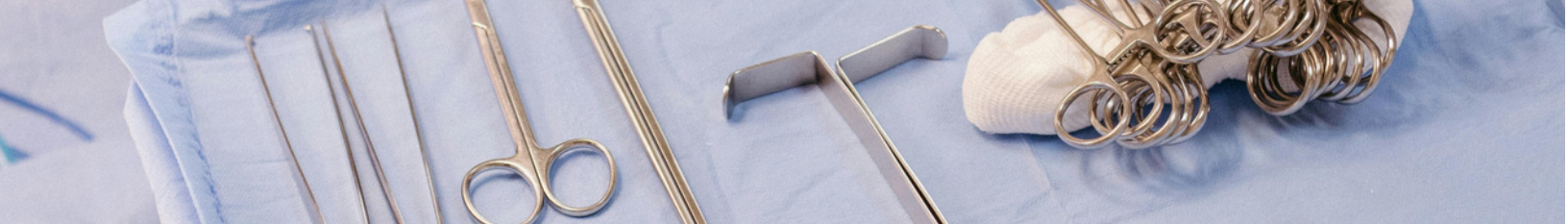
Joseph P. Antonios, MD, PhD

Dr. Antonios is a neurovascular neurosurgery fellow at the University of Washington. He completed his neurosurgery residency at Yale and received his MD and PhD in Neuroscience through the UCLA-Caltech Medical Scientist Training Program. His early research focused on glioblastoma immunology and immunotherapeutic strategies, with work published in **PNAS**, **Neuro-Oncology**, **JCI Insight**, and other journals. During residency, his research interests shifted toward cerebrovascular disease, with a focus on the immune mechanisms underlying intracranial aneurysm formation, progression, and rupture. His recent work using endoluminal biopsy and single-cell immune profiling of intracranial aneurysms was published in **Neurology** and recognized with the CNS Resident Award. He has also received the Cerebrovascular Section Best Basic Scientific Paper Abstract Award and the New England Neurosurgical Society Matson Resident Basic Science Award. Clinically, he is pursuing advanced training in cerebrovascular surgery, with interests in aneurysms, vascular malformations, stroke, and translational neurovascular.

Joshua M. Diamond, MD

Dr. Diamond is a fellow in functional neurosurgery and epilepsy at the University of Washington, training at UW Medical Center and Harborview Medical Center. He completed his neurosurgery residency through the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center / University of Virginia program, where he served as education chief resident and trained with Dr. Kareem Zaghloul at NINDS. Dr. Diamond earned his MD from the University of Virginia and his BS in neuroscience, magna cum laude, from the University of Southern California. His research investigates the spatiotemporal dynamics of human focal epilepsy, using intracranial microelectrode and subdural recordings to characterize traveling waves of ictal and interictal activity and localize the seizure source — work that has produced first-author publications in *Brain* and *Nature Communications*. He has been recognized with the Mark E. Shaffrey Excellence in Research Award and the CNS Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery Resident Basic Science Award, and was selected as one of two clinical fellows to deliver the NIH Clinical Fellows graduation address in 2026.

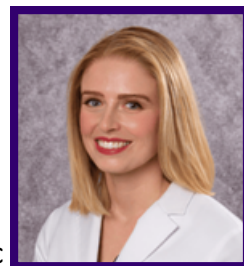




MEET OUR NEW FELLOWS - cont'd

Rebecca Houston, DO

Dr. Houston is currently completing the Spine Fellowship at the University of Washington. She obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Economic Policy and Physics from New York University-Stern where she played center midfield for the soccer team. Dr. Houston went on to receive her medical degree from Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Stratford, NJ. She completed her neurosurgery residency at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton, CA. During residency, she received recognition for her spine-trauma and neurosurgical socioeconomic research at the national level, winning the Robert C. Erwin Annual Literary Award for Outstanding Scientific Manuscript as well as the California Association of Neurological Surgeons annual resident award. Her early research as a resident cast a broad net in cranial and spinal neurosurgical topics, with work published in the Journal of Neurosurgery, World Neurosurgery, Epilepsia, and more.



Gurkirat S. Kohli, MD

Dr. Gurkirat S. Kohli is currently completing the Skull Base and Cerebrovascular Fellowship in the Department of Neurological Surgery at the University of Washington. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Biology, Magna Cum Laude, from The College of New Jersey, and his Doctor of Medicine degree from Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, where he was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society. He subsequently completed his neurosurgical training at the University of Rochester. During residency, he pursued an enfolded clinical and research fellowship in neuro-oncology at the University of Indiana followed by a CAST Neuro-Endovascular Fellowship at the University of Rochester. Dr. Kohli's training reflects a commitment to mastering the full spectrum of complex open and endovascular neurosurgery.

Ryan Turner, MD

Ryan Turner, MD, is a fellow in Complex Spine Surgery and Spine Endoscopy at the University of Washington. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Economics, magna cum laude, from Texas Christian University and received his medical degree from the University of Texas Medical Branch. He completed residency in neurological surgery at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, where he also earned a Certificate of Advanced Training in Spinal Neurosurgery. His clinical and research interests are centered around minimally invasive and endoscopic spine surgery. His academic work has included research and presentations on robotic spine surgery, spinal tumors, and spinal trauma.



Olindi Wijesekera, MD, MS

Dr. Wijesekera, is a clinical fellow in the Endoscopic and Complex Spine Fellowship at the University of Washington. She earned a combined Bachelor of Arts and Master of Science in Neuroscience from Johns Hopkins University in 2013 and received her medical degree from Boston University School of Medicine in 2019. She completed neurosurgery residency training at Case Western Reserve University/University Hospitals, where she also completed enfolded CAST fellowships in Neurocritical Care in 2023 and Complex Spine in 2026. Her clinical and research interests include neurotrauma, complex and minimally invasive spine surgery, endoscopic spine surgery, and fostering inclusive mentorship and training environments in neurosurgery. She is committed to providing compassionate, high-quality, patient-centered care. Outside of medicine, she enjoys spending time with her husband and two children, exploring new foods and traveling.



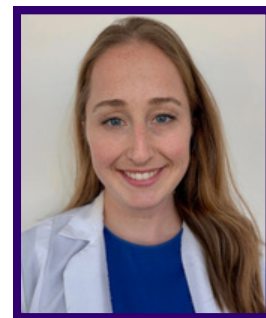
New Endowment, New Endowed Chair



Congratulations to Christine Mac Donald, PhD who has been appointed the inaugural holder of the Department of Neurological Surgery's Endowed Chair in Traumatic Brain Injury Research. Funds from this endowment support Dr. Mac Donald's research efforts, which include using advanced imaging techniques to evaluate concussion in the U.S. military, severe brain injury in adult civilians and the spectrum of brain injury in children with specific emphasis on co-occurring mental health conditions. She has particular expertise in advanced MRI methods and the application of these imaging methods to concussion and traumatic brain injury.

Eliza Baird-Daniel receives the NREF's 2026 Hoi Sang U Honor Your Mentor Fund Award

The Hoi-Sang U Honor Your Mentor Fund was established in 2018 to support research into the molecular mechanisms of neurosurgical diseases with a focus on neurotrauma, neuro-oncology or aging. Dr. Baird-Daniel is one of three recipients of a \$3000 award to supplement research expenses, such as publishing costs, travel, etc.



Malia McAvoy receives NIH Loan Repayment Award

Dr. Malia McAvoy, a resident in the Department of Neurological Surgery, has been awarded a two-year NIH Loan Repayment Program (LRP) award from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute in the Research in Emerging Areas Critical to Human Health (REACH) category.



Dr. McAvoy's research develops a new generation of intracranial stents with engineered surfaces designed to prevent the complications that limit endovascular aneurysm treatment today. The metal stents currently in use trigger protein adsorption and cell adhesion at the blood-device interface, which drives thrombosis and commits patients to prolonged dual antiplatelet therapy. Dr. McAvoy is developing stents coated with zwitterionic carboxybetaine polymers — nonfouling surfaces that resist protein and cell adhesion — combined with drug-eluting formulations targeting vasospasm and neointimal overgrowth.

The work is conducted in the Department of Bioengineering with Buddy Ratner, PhD, and in the Department of Neurological Surgery with Michael Levitt, MD.

The LRP award supports early-career investigators by repaying a portion of their educational debt in exchange for a commitment to biomedical research. For Dr. McAvoy, it provides two years to build toward an independent NIH career development award — a critical bridge in her training as a neurosurgeon-scientist.

MILESTONE

RESIDENT GRADUATION



On Thursday, June 18th we celebrated and said goodbye to Dr. Scott Boop, Dr. Maggie McGrath and Dr. Evgeniya Tyrtova. We are excited for their promising futures!

- Dr. Boop is now at Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago where he is a pediatric neurosurgery fellow.
- Dr. McGrath is a Neuroendovascular Fellow at Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix.
- Dr. Tyrtova is currently undertaking a spine fellowship at Stanford University.

30TH ANNIVERSARY



Congratulations to Tram V. Tran, our Associate Director for Finance and Research, on an extraordinary 30 years of service to the University of Washington! Tram brings to our department a combination that is difficult to replicate: a deep experiential knowledge base, remarkable dedication and effort, fierce loyalty to UW and our mission; and a sense of humor that makes even the complexities of academic finance a little easier to navigate. Three decades of experience mean that Tram often knows not only what we should do, but why we do it, what we tried before, and where the pitfalls lie. We are enormously fortunate to benefit from her wisdom, commitment, good humor and institutional memory. Congratulations, Tram, and thank you for 30 remarkable years!