DEAR COLLEAGUES,

We are pleased to share with you the first iteration of the Operative Word, brought to you by the University of Chicago Medicine’s Phemister Society. It is our hope that, through this electronic communication, our department will keep alumni apprised of the latest developments in the Department of Surgery.

On the following pages, you will find compilations of upcoming lectures and events and faculty honors and awards, as well as the latest updates in our educational and research endeavors.

In this issue of the Operative Word, we are particularly proud to share the story of a breast cancer survivor who participated in one of our pioneering neoadjuvant therapy clinical trials.

We are also excited to share one of many surgical research milestones. Donald Vander Griend, PhD, assistant professor of surgery in the section of urology and director of urological stem cell research, received significant federal funding to conduct innovative prostate cancer research. Through each of these stories, we hope to demonstrate our faculty’s ongoing commitment to advancing medicine through surgical research and clinical innovation.

If ever you would like to learn more about our department’s clinical, academic or educational efforts, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us. On behalf of Jeffrey B. Matthews, MD, Dallas B. Phemister Professor of Surgery and chairman of the department of surgery, we look forward to communicating and engaging with our alumni around the globe.

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER SKELLY, MD
Associate Professor of Surgery
Chief, Vascular Surgery and Endovascular Therapy

MARK FERGUSON, MD
Professor of Surgery
Section of Cardiac and Thoracic Surgery

EDWIN KAPLAN, MD
Professor of Surgery
Section of General Surgery
In the fall of 2012, Colleen Bokor was just 27 years old when, while on a business trip in Las Vegas, she performed a breast self-exam and discovered a suspicious lump in her right breast. Since she was young, in good health and had no family history of breast cancer, the devastating disease was the last thing she expected to happen. From miles away, her family tried to ease Bokor’s mind: “It’s probably fibrous tissue. Just focus on work.” The following week, test results confirmed her worst fear: She was diagnosed with breast cancer.

The search for the right breast cancer team

At the recommendation of her primary care doctor, Bokor consulted a breast surgeon at a local hospital. However, she was not getting the care, attention and answers she needed as a new cancer patient. “After the surgeon’s recommendation for double mastectomy and total lymph node removal, I learned that I have triple negative breast cancer, which plays an important role in the type of treatment I receive,” Bokor said. “So I asked this breast surgeon whether my triple negative diagnosis changes the treatment plan or if I should see an oncologist; he said no. I also asked him about neoadjuvant therapy and chemotherapy, and he was not available to answer my questions. Something about this [lack of communication] didn’t feel right to me.”

Bokor had been searching high and low for the right breast surgeon for a month when, finally, a tip came through: Her mother’s work acquaintance suggested Bokor go to the University of Chicago Medicine to see Nora Jaskowiak, MD, associate professor of surgery, for a second opinion. “At my consultation with Dr. Jaskowiak, I felt confident for the first time that she and her team were going to take care of me and craft the best plan for me: Colleen Bokor, age 27, with triple negative breast cancer,” Bokor said.

UChicago Medicine: More than cutting-edge care

At the consultation, Dr. Jaskowiak connected Bokor to medical oncologist Rita Nanda, MD, who would see her and her family the next day. Very soon after, Bokor was connected with other experts across the spectrum of breast cancer care: nurse Jean Gibson and breast reconstruction surgeon David Song, MD. The medical team collaborated very closely on Bokor’s unique cancer case, discerning which treatments were best suited for her, including a cutting-edge clinical trial called I-SPY 2.
The I-SPY 2 clinical trial is a unique option that tests whether adding one of five investigational drugs to standard chemotherapy is better than standard chemotherapy alone prior to having breast cancer surgery. Principal investigators hope the trial will help researchers more deeply understand how neoadjuvant therapy can be tailored to unique tumor characteristics and improve the pathological response of breast tumors in women. The clinical trial is the first of its kind, and UChicago Medicine is only one of two hospitals in Illinois recruiting patients to this novel trial.

“For me, it was not about getting Colleen into this clinical trial. It was about figuring out which route was best for her,” Dr. Jaskowiak said. “Colleen's journey until that point left an impression on me, and I was going to make sure our team would do everything we could, clinically and emotionally, for her and her family.”

Six months after starting the I-SPY 2 trial, physical exam and MRI scans showed Bokor had an excellent response to neoadjuvant therapy. Later pathology results revealed negative sentinel lymph nodes and a near-complete pathologic response to treatment. Because geneticists at UChicago Medicine discovered Bokor has a genetic mutation, the entire team, including Bokor, decided to proceed with mastectomy plus reconstruction. Dr. Jaskowiak and Dr. Song performed the joint case in May 2013. Bokor is now free of disease.

Excellence in breast cancer care

UChicago Medicine has a long history of excellence in breast cancer care. Dr. Jaskowiak and breast surgeons Swati Kulkarni, MD, and Asha Chhablani, MD, offer the full range of surgical options, including standard mastectomy, skin- and nipple-sparing mastectomy, lumpectomy as well as axillary surgery, including sentinel node biopsy and complete axillary dissection. However, every cancer case is unique, and the breast surgeons at UChicago Medicine aren’t afraid to suggest that nonsurgical options may be the way to start for some women.

“We truly approach each patient as an individual—as a unique person with a unique cancer situation,” Dr. Jaskowiak said. “Many treatment options and sequences are considered, and the best one is chosen with the patient.”

That’s where the multidisciplinary approach makes a difference. Their combined expertise means breast cancer patients truly receive the best care possible.

A new lease on life after breast cancer

It’s been two years since Bokor received her breast cancer diagnosis. Since her treatment at UChicago Medicine, Bokor, compelled to take action after her cancer experience, left her corporate job and is back in school to pursue a career in nursing.

“I feel rejuvenated about what my future can hold, and working towards this new goal in nursing is helping me keep fears of recurrence at bay,” Bokor said. “It all ties back to taking my experience with cancer and changing myself in a positive way.”

Looking back, what Bokor cherishes most about her experience at UChicago Medicine was the special attention she received as a patient.

“At the University of Chicago Medicine, I didn't feel like I was at another ‘cookie cutter’ hospital. All of my doctors were very much in sync, marching toward the same goal, and, as a patient, their constant collaboration helped me feel confident,” Bokor said. “You’re making major decisions about your body and life, and you have this team that has your back and best interest in mind.”
Despite the NIH’s shrinking budget, the University of Chicago Medicine has been able to secure federal funding to continue laboratory support for a wide range of research projects.

Donald Vander Griend, PhD, assistant professor of surgery in the section of urology and director of urological stem cell research, is among the investigators who were able to do so. Earlier this year, Dr. Vander Griend received a young investigator grant from the Department of Defense that would help his laboratory continue research based on a comparative study of the seminal vesicles and prostate gland. The seminal vesicles and the prostate are functionally and developmentally similar, yet the seminal vesicles rarely become diseased while the prostate is highly prone to enlargement and cancer.

Dr. Vander Griend and his colleagues utilized a global expression analyses approach to compare prostate and seminal vesicle, in order to highlight key differences between these organs and identify new gene targets that can be modulated for prevention and therapy.

“We are looking at all the genes expressed between the two reproductive organs to elucidate what could be determining these innate qualities,” Dr. Vander Griend said. “My theory is that the prostate becomes diseased because of how it develops and, likewise, the seminal vesicles do not become diseased because of how they develop at the cellular level.”

Building upon this foundation of research, the DOD funds would allow Dr. Vander Griend’s lab to conduct further studies into one pathway involved in organ patterning and control of gene expression: the Hox gene family of transcription factors. Members of this pathway have been found to be mutated in a number of cancers, but it’s unclear how they function in both normal and cancer cells.

The National Institutes of Health has also extended financial support that would allow Dr. Vander Griend and his colleagues to continue their work investigating embryonic stem cell regulator Sox2.

Several genes are involved in embryonic stem cell identity and function to dictate what the cells will become in the body. Of a small group of stem cell genes that control embryonic stem cells, Dr. Vander Griend and his team discovered the Sox2 gene has a particularly important role in how the prostate forms and develops, and also has a role in prostate cancer initiation and progression.

For example, Dr. Vander Griend and his colleagues have found that expression of Sox2 enables a prostate cancer cell to become resistant to hormone therapy. Their goal is to understand how Sox2 works in order to identify new drug targets to help the fight against prostate cancer.

“Studying the prostate has driven me to keep asking the important questions: Why do so many men develop prostate cancer? When it forms, why is it aggressive in some men and not in others? Can we somehow discern indolent tumors from aggressive ones by using stem cell gene expression? Sox2 regulates other genes; what is it regulating in the prostate? Does Sox2 have unique and novel functions in the prostate that we can exploit for therapeutic benefit?” asked Dr. Vander Griend.

Once researchers understand the mechanisms of cancer development in the prostate, steps can be taken to ultimately prevent prostate cancer from developing in the first place, he added.
Neil Hyman, MD, has been named chief of the newly formed section of colon and rectal surgery. Dr. Hyman joins the University of Chicago Medicine from the University of Vermont College of Medicine where he served as Samuel B. and Michelle D. Labow Green and Gold Professor of Colorectal Surgery.

Ross Milner, MD, professor of surgery, and Christopher Skelly, MD, associate professor of surgery, attended the Midwestern Vascular Surgery Society Annual Meeting in Iowa City, IA. At the meeting, Dr. Milner was appointed as co-chair of the program committee for the society.

Marco Patti, MD, professor of surgery, released the second book in his three-book series—“Esophageal Diseases: Evaluation and Treatment.” This is the follow up to the 2013 book “Surgical Management of Benign Esophageal Disorders: The Chicago Approach.” In 2015, the third and final installment—“Atlas of Esophageal Surgery”—will be published.

Assistant professor of surgery, Robert Steppacher, MD, received a 2014 Bucksbaum Institute Pilot Grant Award for his proposal on improving utilization of screening for abdominal aortic aneurysms. His research abstract will be published in April 2015.

Department Chairman and Dallas B. Phemister Professor of Surgery Jeffrey Matthews, MD, was named to the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education’s Surgery Residency Review Committee.

The section of vascular surgery and endovascular therapy launched the Dare to C.A.R.E. screening program, a national program designed to improve the vascular health of our community. Through Dare to C.A.R.E., the University of Chicago Medicine will offer ongoing complimentary vascular disease screenings for local area patients.

Faculty members from the section of cardiac and thoracic surgery co-organized the third annual National Annual Congress of Cardiac Surgery in Kazakhstan. Valluvan Jeevanandam, MD, Husam Balkhy, MD, and Gerhard Ziemer, MD, were among those who represented the department at this conference.

In August, we welcomed Nikunj Chokshi, MD, assistant professor of surgery, to the section of pediatric surgery. Dr. Chokshi completed his medical training at the University of Illinois at Chicago and his residency training in general surgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin and the University of Southern California. He also completed a research fellowship studying the pathophysiology of necrotizing enterocolitis and other childhood diseases at the Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles. Dr. Chokshi most recently completed a clinical fellowship in pediatric surgery at Saint Louis University.
UPCOMING LECTURES/EVENTS

The 42nd Annual Dr. Alfred A. Strauss Memorial Lecture
R. Matthew Walsh, MD
March 17–18, 2015

22nd Annual Charles B. Huggins Research Symposium
Wednesday, March 18, 2015

The 48th Annual Dallas B. Phemister Memorial Lecture
Gayle Woodson, MD
April 28–29, 2015

RECENT LECTURES

The 10th Annual Dr. David B. Skinner Memorial Lecture: New Frontiers in Fetal Therapy
April 8, 2014
Diana L. Farmer, MD
Chair and Pearl Stamps Stewart Professor
Department of Surgery
UC Davis Health System

The 41st Annual Dr. Alfred A. Strauss Memorial Lecture: Service and Surgery
April 29, 2014
Jo Buyske, MD
Associate Executive Director and Director of Evaluation
American Board of Surgery

The 47th Annual Dallas B. Phemister Memorial Lecture: The Remarkables: Endocrine Abnormalities in Art
May 13, 2014
Orlo Clark, MD
Professor Emeritus of Surgery
University of California-San Francisco

The 11th Annual Dr. David B. Skinner Memorial Lecture: Optimal Healthcare – Perspectives from A Vertically Integrated System
September 30, 2014
Glenn D. Steele, Jr., MD, PhD
President and CEO
Geisinger Health System

John and Joyce Benfield Lecture in Thoracic Surgery: Defining Quality in Thoracic Surgery
October 9, 2014
David R. Jones, MD
Professor, Vice Chair
Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center

1st Annual Donald Liu Visiting Professor Lecture: Biliary Atresia
October 15, 2014
Mary L. Brandt, MD
Professor of Surgery and Pediatrics Texas Children’s Hospital

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FALL 2014
RESEARCH AND CLINICAL TRIALS HIGHLIGHTS

Alverdy, R01: “Gut pathogen virulence and its therapeutic modulation during surgical injury”

Suskind, Hemenra Regnant Foundation: “Thirty Million Words”

Suskind, PNC Foundation: “Thirty Million Words: Longitudinal Study”

Reid, Chicago Biomedical Consortium: “Craniofacial Tissue Engineering with Citric Acid-Based Nanocomposite Scaffolds”

Collier, R21: “Modular biomaterials for targeted anti-cytokine immunotherapies”

Vander Griend, R01: “Function of the Stem Cell Transcription Factor Sox2 in Prostate Cancer”

Jeevanandam, HeartWare: “A Multi Center, Post Approval Study Providing Continued Evaluation and Follow-up on Patients who Received a HeartWare Ventricular Assist System during IDE Trials for the Treatment of Advanced Heart Failure”

Gluth, Otonomy: “A Prospective, Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled, Multicenter, Phase 2b Study of OTO-104 Given as a Single Intratympanic Injection in Subjects with Unilateral Meniere’s Disease”

Millis, Ethicon: “A Phase III Randomized, Controlled, Superiority Study Evaluating EVARREST Fibrin Sealant Patch Versus Standard of Care Treatment in Controlling Parenchymal Bleeding During Hepatic Surgery”

Witkowski, Dompe: “A phase 2/3, multicenter, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, parallel assignment study to assess the efficacy and safety of reparixin in pancreatic islet auto-transplantation”

Steinberg, ColdGenesys: “An Integrated Phase II/III, Open-Label, Randomized and Controlled Study of the Safety and Efficacy of CG0070 Oncolytic Vector Regimen in Patients with Non-Muscle Invasive Bladder Carcinoma in situ Disease and who have failed BCG Therapy and Refused Cystectomy.”

Milner, Bolton: “A Phase II Clinical Study of the Safety and Performance of the Treovance Stent-Graft with Navitel Delivery System for Patients with Infrarenal Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms”

NEW INTERNS

GENERAL SURGERY
Resident     Victoria Bass     University of Maryland
Resident     Martin Coronel     Universidad de Cuenca
Resident     Sara Gaines       Tulane University
Resident     Theodore Hart     University of Chicago
Resident     Abdul Mikati       American University of Beirut
Resident     Elizabeth Poli     University of Chicago
Resident     Ashley Suah       Indiana University
Resident     Lai Xue           University of Chicago

NEUROSURGERY
Resident     Valentina Vasenina  University of Toledo

OTOLARYNGOLOGY
Resident     Benjamin Lee Chiu  Virginia Commonwealth University
Resident     Marianella Paz-      Central University in Caracas
             Lansberg

PLASTIC SURGERY
Resident     Maureen Beederman  University of Chicago
Resident     Jesse Smith        Georgetown University

UROLOGY
Resident     Blake Alberts      Columbia University
Resident     Richard Fantus     Baylor University
## GRADUATES

### CARDIAC AND THORACIC SURGERY
- **Fellow** Sampurna Tuladhar
  - Graduate
  - Kathmandu, Nepal

### GENERAL SURGERY
- **Resident** Erica Carlisle
  - Graduate
  - Pediatric surgery fellowship at the University of Chicago Medicine

- **Resident** Michelle Cowan
  - Graduate
  - Colon and rectal surgery fellowship at Washington University-St. Louis

- **Resident** Ian Daniel
  - Graduate
  - Private practice in Dallas, TX

- **Resident** Eleanor Drew
  - Graduate
  - Critical care fellowship at Barnes-Jewish Hospital, St. Louis, MO

- **Resident** Richelle Williams
  - Graduate
  - Surgical oncology fellowship at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Boston, MA

- **Endocrine surgery fellow** Sapna Nagar
  - Graduate
  - Private practice

- **Surgical oncology fellow** Jennifer Gnerlich
  - Graduate
  - Attending, Presence Saint Joseph Hospital, Chicago

- **Surgical oncology fellow** Haejin In
  - Graduate
  - Attending, Montefiore-Albert Einstein, New York, NY

- **Colon and rectal surgery fellow** Lisa Cannon
  - Graduate
  - Attending, University of Chicago Medicine

### NEUROSURGERY
- **Resident** Ricky Wong
  - Graduate
  - Skull base fellowship at the University of South Florida

### OPHTHALMOLOGY & VISUAL SCIENCE
- **Resident** Katherine Chen
  - Graduate
  - Cornea fellowship at the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins

- **Resident** Cheryl Wonrong Lee
  - Graduate
  - Medical retina fellowship at the University of Kentucky

- **Resident** Patrick Sassani
  - Graduate
  - Surgical retina fellowship at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

- **Fellow** Jose Garcia-Gonzalez
  - Graduate
  - Private practice in Des Plaines, IL

### OTOLARYNGOLOGY - HEAD AND NECK SURGERY
- **Resident** Riddhi Patel
  - Graduate
  - Attending, Adventist Health Partners

- **Resident** Kristal Brown
  - Graduate
  - Private practice in Wailuku, HI

### PEDIATRIC GENERAL SURGERY
- **Fellow** Anthony Hogan
  - Graduate
  - Attending, University of Miami

- **Fellow** Juan Carlos Pelayo
  - Graduate
  - Attending, Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles

### PLASTIC AND RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY
- **Resident** Jonathan Bank
  - Graduate
  - Microsurgery fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania

- **Resident** Grant Kleiber
  - Graduate
  - Hand fellowship at Washington University-St. Louis

- **Fellow** Edward Teng
  - Graduate
  - Attending, Carolinas Healthcare System, Charlotte, NC

### TRANSPLANT SURGERY
- **Fellow** Jerome Byam
  - Graduate
  - TBD

### UROLOGY
- **Resident** Charles Chang
  - Graduate
  - Private practice in Washington

- **Resident** Pankaj Dangle
  - Graduate
  - Pediatric urology fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh

- **Resident** Olufenwa Milhouse
  - Graduate
  - Female and reconstructive urology fellowship at the University of Minnesota

- **Fellow** Kyle Richards
  - Graduate
  - Attending, University of Wisconsin

- **Fellow** Rodrigo Rojas
  - Graduate
  - Attending, Catholic University of Chile

### VASCULAR SURGERY
- **Fellow** Trissa Babrowski
  - Graduate
  - Attending, University of Chicago Medicine