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Dear GI Division Colleagues, Fellows, Alumni, Staff, Supporters, and Friends,

It is my great pleasure to share this edition of our Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology newsletter and to celebrate the extraordinary momentum we are building together.

This has been a remarkable season for our division. UC San Diego Gastroenterology and Hepatology has been recognized by the US World News Report as #1 in the world for Gastroenterology and Hepatology research and education, a distinction that reflects the collective excellence, creativity, and dedication of our entire team. This recognition is not simply about rankings—it is about impact. It is about discoveries that change the way we understand digestive and liver diseases, innovations that improve patient care, and a culture that empowers people to do their very best work.

Our success is grounded in the strength of our fellowship training program, the excellence of our faculty, fellows and staff, and the daily commitment of our clinical and research teams. From our fellows presenting and publishing important work, to our faculty shaping national and international guidelines, to our APPs expanding access and excellence in care, every part of this division is contributing to our shared vision and mission.

This newsletter captures the breadth of that mission beautifully: our strong presence at DDW and EASL, the success of our Research Retreat, the Department of Medicine Research Day, our UC San Diego Improvement Excellence Award, exciting faculty publications and grants, SDDRC programs, women in GI leadership, and the celebration of our graduating and incoming fellows. These achievements remind us that excellence is built through teamwork, mentorship, persistence, and a shared belief in what is possible.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to our faculty for their leadership in research, education, and clinical care; to our fellows and trainees for their curiosity, energy, and commitment to growth; and to our staff, whose dedication and professionalism make everything we do possible. Your work is the foundation of our division's success.

To our alumni, thank you for carrying the spirit of UC San Diego GI and Hepatology into the world. Your accomplishments continue to inspire us, and your connection to this division strengthens the legacy we are building for future generations.

To our philanthropic supporters and stewards of GI, thank you for investing in our people, our trainees, and our vision. Your generosity helps provide the resources, opportunities, and experiences that allow our fellows and faculty to thrive and to pursue bold ideas that will shape the future of digestive and liver health.

I also want to acknowledge and express gratitude for the tremendous strategic support provided by the UC San Diego Health System to our division and our faculty. We are thankful to Drs. Borok, Jung, and Carethers for their leadership, partnership, and belief in the mission of our division. Their support has helped create the environment in which our faculty, staff, fellows, and trainees can excel.

Thank you for all that you do. I am honored to serve alongside you, and I am excited for what we will accomplish together in the years ahead.

With sincere gratitude,

Rohit Loomba, MD, MHSc

Professor of Medicine
John C. Martin Endowed Chair
Director, MASLD Research Center
Chief, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology
University of California San Diego



UC San Diego #1
For Best Universities
for Gastroenterology
& Hepatology



#28
Gastroenterology
& GI Surgery

#1 IN THE WORLD

FOR GASTROENTEROLOGY
& HEPATOLOGY

RESEARCH & EDUCATION



2026 U.S. NEWS
BEST GLOBAL UNIVERSITIES RANKINGS

POWERED BY
Clarivate[™]
research metrics



UC San Diego Gastroenterology & Hepatology continues to lead the world in scientific discovery, innovation, education, and patient-centered impact.



BREAKTHROUGH RESEARCH

Advancing science and
changing lives



EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION

Training the next
generation of leaders



COLLABORATION & IMPACT

Partnering to improve
health worldwide



PATIENT FOCUSED

Delivering compassionate,
cutting-edge care

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

INNOVATION

EDUCATION

CLINICAL IMPACT



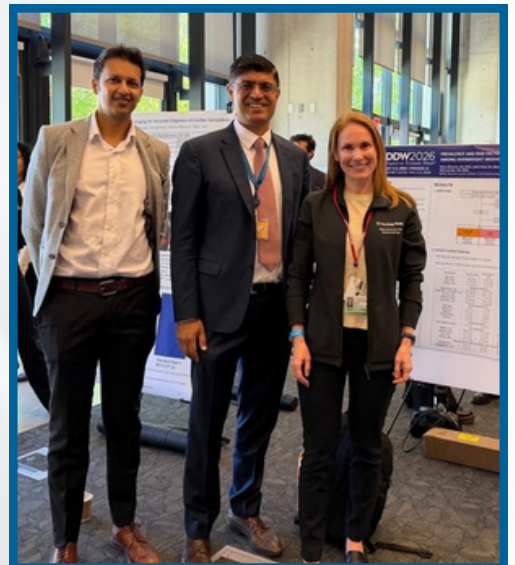
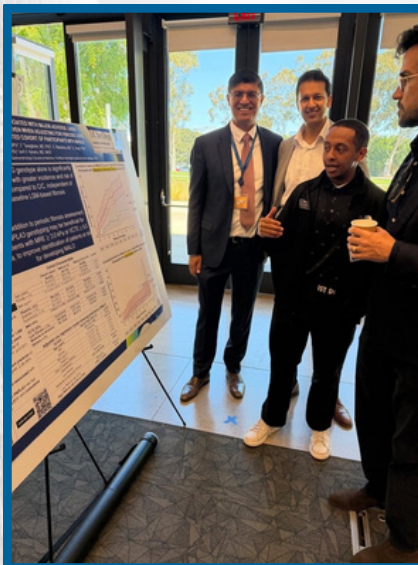
Powered by world-class faculty, trainees, staff, and collaborators,
including multiple **Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers** in GI/Hepatology research.

ucsdhealth.org/gastro



DIVISION EVENTS

2026 DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE RESEARCH DAY



2026 DDW in Chicago



AASLD Liver POCUS

The AASLD Liver Point-of-Care Ultrasound (POCUS) Hands-on Training Program, introduced in 2024 at The Liver Meeting, has rapidly become one of AASLD's most successful educational initiatives. At Digestive Disease Week (DDW) 2026, two hands-on sessions reached capacity shortly after registration opened, reflecting the growing demand for structured liver POCUS training among hepatology providers.

The course is designed to equip hepatologists and gastroenterologists with the knowledge and practical skills necessary to incorporate liver POCUS into routine inpatient and outpatient practice. The curriculum combines concise didactic lectures with supervised hands-on scanning of live models. Learning objectives include understanding ultrasound fundamentals, performing standardized focused liver examinations, recognizing common hepatologic findings, and integrating POCUS into bedside clinical decision-making.

Dr. Kono has served as core faculty since the program's inception, participating in both the didactic and hands-on components of the course. In this role, she provides instruction on ultrasound fundamentals, demonstrates standardized scanning techniques, and offers individualized coaching on image acquisition, interpretation, and clinical integration during supervised scanning sessions.



The curriculum emphasizes practical applications of liver POCUS commonly encountered in hepatology practice, including:

- Standardized liver examination and identification of normal anatomy
- Assessment of fatty liver, and qualitative grading on ultrasound
- Recognition of cirrhosis and sonographic features of portal hypertension
- Detection and semi-quantitative assessment of ascites
- Evaluation of the hepatic vasculature, gallbladder, and biliary system
- Assessment of the inferior vena cava for estimation of intravascular volume status
- Ultrasound guidance for bedside procedures, including paracentesis

A central educational objective of the course is to demonstrate how liver POCUS complements the traditional physical examination and comprehensive diagnostic imaging by providing immediate bedside information that enhances patient assessment, improves diagnostic confidence, and expedites clinical decision-making.

The DDW 2026 liver POCUS training course was exceptionally well attended and highly interactive, reflecting the increasing recognition of liver POCUS as an essential skill in contemporary hepatology practice. Participant evaluations consistently highlighted the value of the small-group format, individualized faculty mentorship, and the opportunity for extensive hands-on scanning. The continued success of this program underscores the growing national interest in liver POCUS and its expanding role in hepatology education. Through her sustained leadership as core faculty, Dr. Kono has contributed to the development and dissemination of a standardized liver POCUS curriculum, helping to advance ultrasound education and improve clinical practice nationwide.

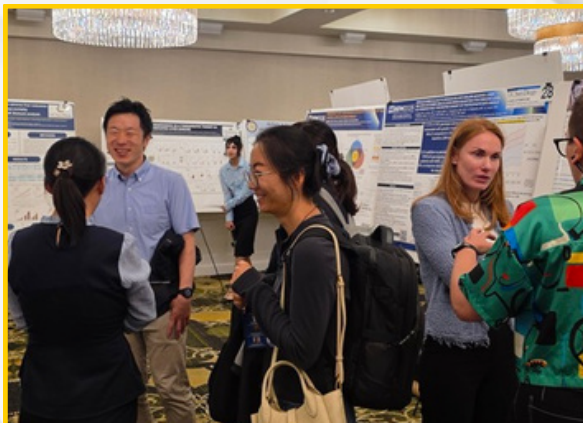


2026 Research Retreat

Estancia La Jolla Hotel & Spa



Our Annual Research Retreat was a tremendous success, drawing more than 100 attendees, 9 exhibitors, and 30 poster presenters. We were also honored to welcome keynote speakers Dr. Andrew Chan and Dr. Amit Singal, who shared insightful presentations that helped make this year's retreat especially engaging and impactful.



Congratulations to all of our award winners from the 2026 Research Retreat! We are pleased to recognize the outstanding contributions and presentations showcased at this year's event.

Award Recipients

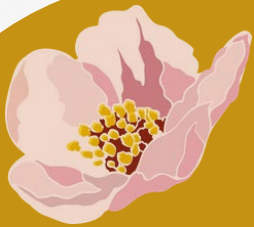
- Best Translational Paper by Postdoc: Marcos Fernandez Fondevila
- Best Basic Science Paper by Postdoc: Stephany Flores Ramos
- Best Basic Science Poster Presentation: Wenchao Wei
- Best Clinical Poster Presentation: Maria Mironova
- Most Poster Submissions: Dr. Ravinder Mittal's Lab
- Best Slides by a Fellow: Harrison Penrose
- Best Presentation by a Fellow: Sristi Saha

A dark blue banner with white text. The text reads "2026 EASL CONGRESS" in a large, bold, sans-serif font, and "Barcelona, Spain" in a slightly smaller, bold, sans-serif font below it. The banner has white triangular shapes at the ends, giving it a ribbon-like appearance.

UCSD Improvement Excellence Award



AGA Western Regional Women in GI



Celebrating Lisa Richards
Happy Retirement!



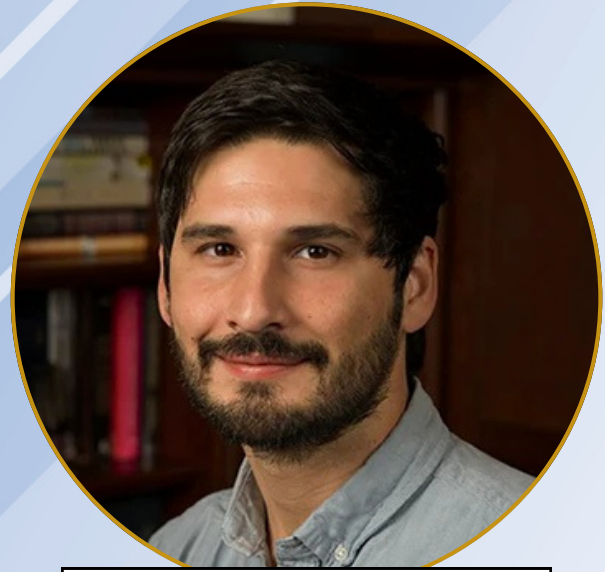
2026 FELLOWS GRADUATION



Research Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Guillaume Urtecho is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology. He earned his PhD in Molecular Biology at UCLA before completing his Howard Hughes postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Systems Biology at Columbia University, where he pioneered methods for the spatial and temporal analysis of microbial communities in the gut. Now at ACTRI, his research team uses computational and experimental approaches to characterize gut microbiomes and understand how microbes influence their host, with the broader goal of developing microbiome-based therapeutics, including probiotics and microbiota transplantation, into personalizable precision therapies for disease and whole-body health.

His current projects center on two questions: how to achieve precise, predictable, and therapeutic microbiota transplantation and how different microbiomes promote or suppress IBD. Recent work has been published in *Science*, *Nature Microbiology*, and *Cell Systems*, and is supported by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and NCCIH, as well as by the mentorship of departmental colleagues Bernd Schnabl, John Chang, Cristina Llorente, and Lars Eckmann. Outside the lab, Guillaume is an avid board game enthusiast who enjoys applying conceptual frameworks from his games to biological systems.



Dr. Guillaume Urtecho, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Medicine



In a recent paper published in *Nature Microbiology*, **Dr. Bernd Schnabl** and colleagues provide new insights into how microbes in the gut can produce alcohol within the body, shedding light on the biological mechanisms underlying auto-brewery syndrome—a rare condition in which individuals become intoxicated without consuming alcohol. By linking specific microbial metabolic pathways to endogenous ethanol production, the study advances our understanding of the gut microbiome's role in human health and disease and highlights potential avenues for future diagnosis and treatment. The findings attracted broad public attention and were subsequently featured in *The New York Times*. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#) and the [NY TIMES FEATURE HERE](#)

Research led by UC San Diego gastroenterologist **Dr. Samir Gupta** was recently published in *JAMA* and highlighted in *The New York Times*. The study found that adults who reach age 75 without a prior cancer diagnosis face a relatively low risk of developing colorectal cancer, while their risk of death from other causes is substantially higher. These findings may help clinicians and older adults make more informed decisions about whether to continue surveillance colonoscopies, particularly as the risks associated with the procedure increase with age and frailty. The research offers important evidence to support more personalized colorectal cancer screening and surveillance strategies for older adults. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE](#) AND [NY TIMES FEATURE HERE](#)



FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS



John Carethers, MD

Awards/Recognitions:

- Judith L. Swain, MD and Edward W. Holmes, MD Chancellor's Endowed Chair appointment
- Received honorary Doctor of Laws degree (honoris causa), Wayne State University

Recent Publications:

- Barnell EK, Levin TR, Gupta S, **Carethers JM**, Shaukat A, Kruse K, Ghannam R, Lieberman DA. Clinical validation of a scrape-free multitarget stool RNA test for colorectal cancer screening. J Clin Gastroenterol 2026. (in press)
- Tseng-Rogenski SS, Koi M, **Carethers JM**. Inflammation drives phosphorylation and acetylation of MutS homolog 3 and interaction with cytosolic HDAC6. J Cancer 17:730-739, 2026.
- Williams CS, Gallagher EJ, Cook DP, Mankoff D, Baron RM, Pittenger C, Vyas JM, Rockey JM, Rockey DC, Steed A, Balser JR, Brown NJ, **Carethers JM**, Epstein JA, Gruber PJ, Scharschmidt TC, ASCI Research Pathway Workshop Planning Group, and Rhee KY. From improvised to intentional: re-imagining the physician-scientist career pathway. JCI Insight 2026 (in press)
- Williams CS, Allen M, Cooper-Byas P, Hawley J, Muglia LJ, Abel ED, Bastarache JA, Calfee C, **Carethers JM**, Cornfield DN, Eickelberg O, Gallagher EJ, Greka A, Gruber PJ, Hollenberg AN, Kong HH, Kazmierczak B, Koretzky GA, Lachs M, Lenschow DJ, Pitt G, Rockey DC, Satlin LM, Sleckman BP, Stoltz DA, Vyas JM, Wang TJ, Rhee KY. Stabilizing and strengthening the U.S. physician-scientist faculty workforce in academic medicine: a proposed institutional framework. JCI Insight 2026 (in press)
- Rashid M, Brim H, Teng S, Adebiyi S, Cruz-Cosme R, Qiyi T, Koi M, Casazza K, Surtees JA, **Carethers JM**, Ashktorab H. Novel African American Colorectal Cancer MSH3 Variants Associate with Major Genomic Instability. Human Mutation 2026 (in press)

Congratulations to John Carethers, MD, Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences at UC San Diego Health, on his appointment as the inaugural holder of the Judith L. Swain, MD, and Edward W. Holmes, MD Chancellor's Endowed Chair in the UC San Diego School of Medicine. Established in 2024, this distinguished endowed chair recognizes Dr. Carethers' outstanding leadership and contributions to academic medicine. His appointment, approved by Pradeep Khosla, is effective March 1, 2026 through February 28, 2031.





FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS



Mario Chojkier, MD

Funding:

- **Proposal/Active Project Title:** *A First-in-Class, Agnostic, Host-Directed Precision Medicine Treatment for Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome*
Proposal/Award Number: HT9425-25-1-0985
Source of Support: DOW
Role: Co-PI
- **Proposal/Active Project Title:** *An Agnostic, Host-Direct Survival Cure MCM for Pulmonary Toxicants.*
Proposal/Award Number: 1R44AI186862-01-Contract
Source of Support: NIAID
Role: Co-PI



Barbara Jung, MD

Funding:

- **Title:** *Mechanisms of activin signaling in acute pancreatitis*
DoD transfer from University of Washington
05/14/2025 - 05/14/2028



Preetika Sinh, MD

Recent Publications:

- Paraj Patel, Omair Iqbal, Divyanshu Mohananey, Saffia Bajwa, Masoud Khani, Jake Luo, Daniel J Stein, Gursimran S Kochhar, Jana G Hashash, Emad Mansoor, Raymond K Cross, **Preetika Sinh**, Safety of biologics and Janus kinase inhibitors in inflammatory bowel disease patients with low cardiovascular risk, *Crohn's & Colitis* 360, Volume 8, Issue 2, April 2026, otag039

FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS



Guillaume Urtecho, PhD

Recent Publications:

- **Guillaume Urtecho***, Liyuan Liu*, Charlotte Rochereau*, Simon Kozlov*, Jiahui Zhao, Jasmine Wang, Yiming Huang, Yiming Qu, Zetian Zhang, Tomasz Blazejewski, Avi Swartz, Sergey Ovchinnikov*, and Harris H. Wang*. "Towards life with a 19-amino-acid alphabet via generative AI design". 2026. Science. 392,eae5171. DOI: 10.1126/science.aeb5171

Funding:

- Grant Info: NCCIH R21AT013617
Title: *Integrative Computational and Experimental Approaches to Assess Metabolic Complementarity for Complementarity for Precision Microbiota Transplantation Therapies*



The Zarrinpar lab has received a significant new R01 award from the National Cancer Institute to develop engineered native bacteria as a durable, programmable platform for colorectal cancer prevention and therapy. This award marks an exciting milestone in the lab's efforts to transform microbiome science from association-based discovery into mechanism-driven therapeutic development.

Building on the lab's pioneering work showing that host-derived native *E. coli* can stably engraft in the gut after a single dose and deliver defined biological functions over long periods of time, this project will test whether engineered bacteria can be deployed as controllable living medicines. The team will engineer native *E. coli* to reshape bile acid metabolism, deliver tumor-localized therapeutic activity, and incorporate safeguards that allow the strains to be selectively cleared after completing their task.

The project brings together complementary expertise across microbiome biology, synthetic biology, medicinal chemistry, and cancer biology. Yousong Ding at the University of Florida will play a key role in engineering bacterial therapeutic functions, including prodrug-activating strains designed to increase local anticancer activity while reducing systemic toxicity. Pradipta Ghosh at UC San Diego will contribute expertise in cancer biology, host signaling, and tumor microenvironment responses. Additional support from UC San Diego's digestive disease, genomics, and cancer center cores will further strengthen the project.

If successful, this work could help establish a new class of precision microbiome therapies: living, self-renewing, controllable medicines that can prevent or treat colorectal cancer with greater durability and specificity than conventional approaches.

MEET OUR FACULTY & FELLOWS



Sitting (L-R): Bernd Schnabl, Samir Gupta, Ravinder Mittal, John Carethers, Heather Patton, Rohit Loomba, Denise Kalmaz, Thomas Savides, C. Richard Boland, Veeral Ajmera

Standing (L-R): Leticia Egea, Nedret Copur, Kay Chen, Jonathan Dounel, Cynthia Hsu, Sa Do Kang, Srishti Saha, Kurren Mehta, Katherine Jordan, Fady Youssef, Eric Low, Yuko Kono, John Chang, Andres Gottfried-Blackmore, Alexander Yang, Maria Abraham, Daniela Mirda, Kelly Torosian, Kelli Liu, Mark Kowalczyk, Maria Mironova, Gobind Anand, Gloria Lin, Kyle Geary, Nivita Sharma, Michael Chang, Preetika Sinh, Rena Yadlapati, Subramanian Sathish, Luis Diaz-Piga, Syed Abbas Fehmi, Lars Eckmann, Amir Zarrinpar



Back Row (L-R): Srishti Saha, Jonathan Dounel, Kurren Mehta, Kelly Torosian, Katherine Jordan, Maria Abraham, Sa Do Kang

Front Row (L-R): Kelli Liu, Daniela Mirda, Gloria Lin, Maria Mironova, Nivita Sharma

(L-R): Harrison Penrose, Juliana da Silva, Kelly Torosian, Kurren Mehta, Srishti Saha



FELLOWS CORNER



SDGI Fellow Research Competition



FELLOWS PUBLICATIONS

Jonathan Dounel, MD

Jonathan Dounel, Luis Antonio Díaz, Ricki Bettencourt, Federica Tavaglione, Egbert Madamba, Lisa Richards, Rohit Loomba, Veeral Ajmera, *Longitudinal Validation of Clinical Care Pathways for MASLD in a Prospective Cohort of Individuals with Type 2 Diabetes*, Gastro Hep Advances, 2026, 101022, ISSN 2772-5723, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gastha.2026.101022>



Maria Mironova, MD, MHSc

Gopalakrishna H, **Mironova M**, Majeed NA, et al. *Noninvasive Markers Associated With Portal Hypertension and Varices in Patients With Noncirrhotic Portal Hypertension*. Clin Transl Gastroenterol. 2026;17(2):e00956.

Townsend EC, Sharma D, Gopalakrishna H, **Mironova M**, Kleiner DE, Heller T. *Exceptionally Long Recurrence-Free Survival in a Male Patient With Fibrolamellar Hepatocellular Carcinoma*. Case Reports Hepatol. 2026;2026:7445319. Published 2026 Feb 8. doi:10.1155/crhe/7445319

Mironova M, Loomba R. *Clinical Use of Noninvasive Testing for Liver Fibrosis in Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatotic Liver Disease*. Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol. Published online April 23, 2026. doi:10.1016/j.cgh.2026.03.014

Lopez A, Gopalakrishna H, Chang S, ... **Mironova M**... et al. *Genotypes of Hepatitis B and D Viruses Among Patients With Hepatitis D in the United States*. J Viral Hepat. 2026;33(7):e70186. doi:10.1111/jvh.70186

Mironova M, Tesfai K, Madamba E, Richards L, Bettencourt R, Docherty M, Loomba R. *Prevalence and risk factors associated with MASLD and advanced fibrosis in overweight individuals: implications for screening guidelines*. Accepted for publication to the American Journal of Gastroenterology.

Harrison Penrose, MD, PhD

Harrison M. Penrose, Saptarshi Sinha, Courtney Tindle, Kameron Zablan, Helen N. Le, Jennifer Neill, Pradipta Ghosh, and Brigid S. Boland, *New approach methodologies in Crohn's disease link molecular disease subtypes to clinical outcomes*, American Journal of Physiology-Gastrointestinal and Liver Physiology 2026 330:3, G322-G329 10.1152/ajpgi.00393.2025



Nivita Sharma, MD

Still, A.R., Wilkoff, M.H., **Sharma, N.D.** et al. *Regional Differences Exist in Gender Representation Among GI Trainees and Faculty in the United States*. Dig Dis Sci (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10620-026-09861-2>



Kelly Torosian, MD

Torosian K, Díaz LA, Tesfai K, Wu W, Cooper KM, Devuni D, Mohamed K, Lim N, Rajan A, Cheung A, Wang K, Shroff H, Kwong AJ, Ajmera V. *Cardiometabolic Risk Factors Impair Recompensation and Survival in Alcohol-associated Liver Disease*. Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol. 2026 Feb 10:S1542-3565(26)00098-4. doi: 10.1016/j.cgh.2026.02.001. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41679525.



FELLOWS CORNER

Kelly Torosian, MD

UCSD

Joining Hepatology Faculty

Srishti Saha, MD

UT Southwestern

Transplant Hepatology Fellowship

Future plans for the
3rd Year Fellows

Juliana da Silva, MD

UCSD

Advanced Endoscopy Preceptorship

Kurren Mehta, MD

Columbia

Advanced Endoscopy Preceptorship

Harrison Penrose, MD, PhD

UCSD

Postdoctoral Researcher

DIVISION OF GASTROENTEROLOGY AND HEPATOLOGY

Incoming Fellows 2026



CHRISTIAN BONILLA
MASS GENERAL
CLINICAL



MATTHEW KUBINA
UNIV OF MICHIGAN
CLINICAL



POOJA PANDITA
UCSD
CLINICAL



LORENZO OLIVE
UT SOUTHWESTERN
CLINICAL



MICHAEL NASH
UCLA
RESEARCH

APP Corner

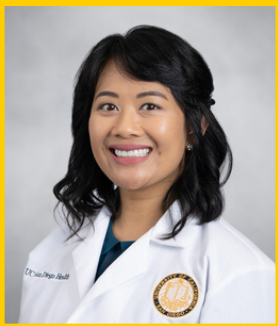
The Advanced Practice Providers (APPs) of UC San Diego Health's Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology are integral members of our care team, providing expert, compassionate care to patients with digestive and liver diseases. Working alongside our physicians and multidisciplinary teams, they help ensure the highest quality care and support throughout each patient's journey.



Abha Bosworth, MPH, MS, PA-C

Abha Bosworth is a Physician Assistant with more than 20 years of experience in Gastroenterology, dedicated to providing compassionate, patient-centered care. At UC San Diego Health, she works closely with the Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) team, caring for patients with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis across all stages of treatment.

Abha is committed to helping patients navigate complex gastrointestinal conditions while supporting their long-term health and quality of life. In addition to her role with the IBD program, she helps improve timely access to care through the Expedited Care Clinic (ECC), where she evaluates and manages patients with a wide range of gastrointestinal concerns. Her extensive clinical expertise and collaborative approach make her a valued member of the gastroenterology team.



Mia Camaquin, NP-C

Currently practices in General Gastroenterology, providing comprehensive care for patients with acute and chronic gastrointestinal disorders.

Special interests include functional gastrointestinal disorders, the gut-brain axis, and evidence-based integrative approaches to digestive health. Passionate about delivering compassionate, patient-centered care and improving quality of life through individualized treatment strategies.

Additionally, assisted in piloting the ECC clinics, supporting innovative initiatives to enhance care delivery and patient access.



Mitchell Castro, PA-C

Is a board-certified Physician Assistant specializing in gastroenterology, dedicated to providing compassionate, evidence-based care for complex digestive health challenges.

A 2000 graduate of the Western University of Health Sciences Physician Assistant program, Mitchell has focused his clinical practice entirely on gastroenterology, combining advanced medical management with a patient-centered approach.

While experienced in treating a wide array of GI conditions, Mitchell has a deep clinical interest in managing Disorders of Brain-Gut Interaction (DBGIs), such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), and the diagnosis and targeted management of Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO).



Summer Collier, DNP, RN, FNP-BC

Summer Collier, DNP, FNP-BC, is a Nurse Practitioner in the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology and is celebrating her 10th year with UC San Diego Health.

Her clinical practice focuses on ambulatory hepatology, with particular interests in pharmacotherapy for alcohol use disorder, transitions of care for patients with decompensated liver disease, and quality improvement initiatives that enhance care delivery.

In addition to her clinical work, she is committed to advancing APP education and leadership through her roles as APP Lead for the AASLD Associates Special Interest Group, mentor in the AASLD Women's Leadership Initiative, and faculty speaker for GHAPP.

APP Corner

The Advanced Practice Providers (APPs) of UC San Diego Health's Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology are integral members of our care team, providing expert, compassionate care to patients with digestive and liver diseases. Working alongside our physicians and multidisciplinary teams, they help ensure the highest quality care and support throughout each patient's journey.



Angelina Collins, MSN, ANP-BC

Her areas of expertise include Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), and she is passionate about providing comprehensive, patient-centered care for individuals at all stages of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

She is also dedicated to Advanced Practice Provider (APP) education, serving on faculty for local and national IBD conferences, including the AIBD APP Institute, GHAPP, and IBD Cutting Edge.

She currently serves as co-director of the AGA Principles in GI for the NP/PA course, co-director of the Crohn's & Colitis Congress APP Track, a member of the Milestone APP Steering Committee, and co-director of ChatAPP, a monthly IBD case series for APPs.



Pamela Conner, MSN, FNP-BC

Pamela Conner, MSN, FNP-BC, is a board-certified family nurse practitioner who provides evidence-based, patient-centered care for patients with complex liver diseases, including viral hepatitis, alcohol-associated liver disease, MASLD, autoimmune and genetic liver conditions, and hepatocellular carcinoma. In addition to her outpatient role, she supports inpatient Hepatology services and helped implement the Expedited Consult Clinic, improving patient access to specialty liver care.

Before joining UC San Diego Health, Pamela worked in transplant hepatology at Scripps Center for Organ Transplant and previously served patients at Family Health Centers of San Diego. With more than 20 years of experience as a nurse practitioner, she remains actively involved in advancing liver health initiatives and supporting APP engagement across UC San Diego Health.



Mara Custodio, PA-C

Mara Custodio, MPA, PA-C is a board-certified physician assistant with experience in academic, hospital-based, and private practice settings. Her clinical interests include functional gastrointestinal disorders, esophageal diseases, and colorectal cancer prevention. She specializes in the evaluation and management of GERD, IBS, eosinophilic esophagitis, celiac disease, dysphagia, chronic digestive symptoms, and colon polyp surveillance.

Ms. Custodio earned her Master of Physician Assistant Studies from Eastern Virginia Medical School and her undergraduate degree from University of California, Los Angeles, where she participated in clinical research and co-authored peer-reviewed publications.



Jeremy Flowers, DNP, FNP-BC, WHNP-BC, GNP-BC

Jeremy Flowers, DNP, has been a valued member of UC San Diego Health since 1999 and has served in the Division of Gastroenterology since 2013. A doctorally prepared nurse practitioner, Jeremy maintains board certification in three specialties—Family Practice, Women's Health, and Geriatrics—reflecting his broad clinical expertise and commitment to lifelong learning.

In Gastroenterology, Jeremy provides specialized care for patients with inflammatory bowel disease, combining clinical excellence with a compassionate, patient-centered approach. He also has a strong interest in medical imaging, particularly point-of-care ultrasound, and holds credentials in multiple imaging modalities.

Throughout his career, Jeremy has made significant contributions to patient care, education, and innovation, leaving a lasting impact on colleagues, patients, and the UC San Diego community.

APP Corner

The Advanced Practice Providers (APPs) of UC San Diego Health's Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology are integral members of our care team, providing expert, compassionate care to patients with digestive and liver diseases. Working alongside our physicians and multidisciplinary teams, they help ensure the highest quality care and support throughout each patient's journey.



Lisa Richards, MSN, FNP-BC, AF-AASLD

She has been honored to serve the hepatology community for over two decades. Her clinical hepatology journey at UC San Diego Health began in September 2003, providing 23 years of dedicated patient care, and in October 2016 she joined Dr. Loomba as Associate Director of Clinical Research Operations at the MASLD Research Center while continuing her clinical practice.

She is a Fellow of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) and served as an Ex-Officio member of the Governing Board from 2020 to 2022 as well as Chair of the Hepatology Associate Special Interest Group, and she presented at numerous national and international conferences before retiring in July 2026, remaining deeply grateful to her colleagues, mentors, and patients at UC San Diego Health.



Robin Soto, MSN, RN, FNP-BC

Robin Soto, NP has been a member of the UC San Diego Health ambulatory hepatology team since 2016. Her clinical interests include steatotic liver disease, including MASLD/MASH and MetALD, alcohol-associated liver disease, and hepatitis C.

She is a liver faculty member for GHAPP (GI and Hepatology Advanced Practice Providers) and a contributor to the MASLD Learning Network.

She was part of the team that developed the Eliminate Hepatitis C San Diego County initiative and regularly speaks at national conferences, including AASLD - The Liver Meeting (TLM), Digestive Disease Week (DDW), and GHAPP national and regional meetings.



Call for 2026-27 Pilot & Feasibility Grants

The next round of Pilot & Feasibility grants for the academic year 2026-27 will be announced in the summer/fall of 2026.

SDDRC Seminars

1/26/26 Seminar



Presenter: **Dr. Carolina Tropini, Ph.D., P.L. Eng.**

Institution: University of British Columbia

Title: *Environmental perturbations in the gut: from pathogen susceptibility to engineered biosensors*

3/25/26 Seminar



Presenter: **Dr. Nayaantara Coelho-Prabhu, MD**

Institution: Mayo Clinic

Title: *Detection and Management of Colitis associated Neoplasia*

**SDDRC
Seminar**

Date/Time:
Monday 6/29/26, 12:00 – 1:00 pm, PT,
Leichtag-107 (Conference Room)

Speaker:
M. Maya Kaelberer, PhD
A gut sense for microbes



Science at Lunchtime

Date/Time:
Monday 7/27/26, 12:15 – 1:15 pm, Pacific Time,
BRF2- 5A03 (Conference Room)

Presenter:
Phillipp Hartmann, M.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine,
Division of Pediatrics, UC San Diego

**SDDRC WORKSHOP
*Spatial Transcriptomics***

Fall 2026



**2027 SDDRC
Symposium**

The 8th Annual SDDRC Symposium is scheduled for Friday, February 5, 2027 from 1:30 – 5:00 pm at MET Lower Auditorium.

In addition to two keynote speakers, the 2025–2026 SDDRC Pilot and Feasibility awardees will present updates on their projects. Presentations from the SDDRC Cores will also provide updates on new resources and services available to investigators.



If you have used the Center services, please remember to cite the SDDRC in your publications, “This work was supported by the San Diego Digestive Diseases Research Center (P30 DK120515).”

Please visit our website <http://sddrc.ucsd.edu> for up-to-date information about the Center and its upcoming events.

Follow us on X (Formerly known as Twitter):

<https://twitter.com/SDDRC>

Direct all questions to sddrc@health.ucsd.edu, or the SDDRC Coordinator, Victoria Shokrollah vshokrollah@health.ucsd.edu

Upcoming Events



AWE Week
June 27-30, 2026

Endoscopy Around the World
9th Annual Interventional Endoscopy Course
CME/MOC/CEU

Course Directors:



Mary Lee Krinsky, DO



Phoenix Nguyen, MD



Sonya Reicher, MD



Laurel L. Branch, MD

Guest Faculty:

- Kenneth Chang, MD
- Muhammad Hasan, MD
- Thomas Savides, MD
- Janak Shah, MD
- Uzma Siddiqui, MD
- Rena Yadlapati, MD

Join in-person

June 27

UCSD
Center for the Future of Surgery
19515 Gilman Dr, La Jolla, CA 92093

Join virtually

June 28, 29, 30

Register for Free
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Upcoming Events

UC San Diego
DIVISION OF GASTROENTEROLOGY & HEPATOLOGY

SAVE THE DATE
**22ND ANNUAL
ISENBERG LECTURE**

HARVEY J. ALTER, MD
2020 NOBEL LAUREATE IN PHYSIOLOGY OR MEDICINE
DISTINGUISHED NIH INVESTIGATOR
FORMER CHIEF OF INFECTIONS DISEASES
FORMER ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH
SENIOR SCHOLAR (EMERITUS)
NIH CLINICAL CENTER

WEDNESDAY
SEPT 16, 2026
RECEPTION: 4:30 PM
LECTURE: 5:30 PM
LOCATION: TBD

E-MAIL INVITATION
WITH REGISTRATION
TO FOLLOW

Other Events

- Advances in GI Conference
January 30, 2027
- SDDRC Symposium
February 5, 2027

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Donations to the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology GI Fellowship Training Program

Consistently recognized by US News & World Report as the one of the top research programs in the world, the Division of Gastroenterology's Fellowship Program aims for every fellow to obtain exemplary clinical training and unrivaled research opportunities. Your donations would ensure the Division can continue to provide a high level of specialty training for its fellows and support essential professional development costs that it may not otherwise cover. UC San Diego Gastroenterology trainees have gone on to become Deans and Department Chairs at Universities around the country. We ask for your support to help us train the future leaders in GI who will help solve the most complicated diseases in this field.

To Our Alumni

Alumni donations are an impactful way of showing gratitude for the training received at UC San Diego while supporting current fellows who are taking part in some of the most formative year of their education. You can support the education of current fellows following in your footsteps by allowing them to participate in specific training (i.e., CREST, travel to scientific conferences and interact with medical professionals in the specialties of gastroenterology, hepatology, endoscopy, and gastrointestinal surgery). As an alumnus, you know our past and current efforts in gastroenterology clinical and scientific training. It is our goal to bring the best resources to educational training, and we invite you to consider making a philanthropic investment so our program can continue to thrive.

Thank You

On behalf of the faculty and fellows, we want to thank you for your interest and support of our program. For more information about supporting the Fellowship Program, contact Melanie Cruz mbcruz@ucsd.edu.

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