



What a year it has been for UCSD Gastroenterology and Hepatology in 2022!

For the third straight year we were ranked **#1 in the US News and World Report Best Global Universities for Gastroenterology and Hepatology**. We also were ranked **#11 in the US News and World Report for Best Hospitals for Gastroenterology and GI Surgery**, which is our highest rank ever. All of our contributions have resulted in UC San Diego leading the way in gastroenterology and hepatology research and clinical care.

Our Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Research fellowship training programs continue to expand with the addition of our fourteenth fellow (10 clinical and 4 research). Many thanks to **Drs. Denise Kalmaz, Gobind Anand, Irine Vodkin, Lars Eckmann, Rohit Loomba** for their leadership of the GI, Hepatology, and T32 fellowships. Special thanks to our fellowship program coordinator **Roslyn Lara**, and our Chief Fellows **Dr. Donald Goens** and **Dr. Eric Low**. We were again fortunate to match with an outstanding group of residents who will start our GI fellowship in July 2023. We are proud of the impact our graduated fellows have on clinical care, research, and health leadership around the country.

Research continues to thrive at UCSD among our prolific investigators. This has led to numerous high impact publications, and significant federal, industry, and philanthropy research awards. Much gratitude to **Dr. Lars Eckmann** and **Dr. Bernd Schnabl** for their leadership of the San Diego Digestive Diseases Research Center (SDDRC), and **Dr. Rohit Loomba** for leadership of the Non-alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) Research Center.

Our clinical teams continue to grow in response to the increased requests for GI and hepatology clinical care. We welcome many new team members to UCSD and VA Gastroenterology and Hepatology, including physicians **Dr. Matthew Bender, Dr. Kyle Geary, Dr. Gaurav Syal, Dr. Monica Tincopa**, advanced practice providers **Mitch Castro PA, Erin Cerney NP, Pamela Conner NP**, and health leader **Shannon Brown RN, MSN**.

I am especially grateful to our GI and Hepatology physician leaders involved in our executive team and clinical operations team, including **Drs. Veeral Ajmera, Brigid Boland, Michael Chang, Lars Eckmann, Pradipta Ghosh, Samir Gupta, Denise Kalmaz, Rohit Loomba, Heather Patton, Josh Rubin, Bernd Schnabl, Sid Singh, Matt Tsai, Rena Yadlapati**, and **Wilson Kwong**.

Huge shout out to our GI and Hepatology Division staff including **Tia Levine, Leticia Egea, Kelly Santos, Roslyn Lara, Alyssa Lorenzo, Laura Ramirez**, and **Heather De Leon**.

Our division also recognizes the enormous leadership support provided by Chair of Medicine **Dr. Zea Borok**, CEO **Patty Maysent**, and Interim Dean/VHCS **Dr. Steve Garfin**. Our senior health system/science and department/division leaders appreciate the importance just culture plays in the well-being of our faculty, trainees, and staff, and are helping us focus on team member wellness/burnout and Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) initiatives. These areas will be among our highest priorities as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Finally, we are thrilled to welcome back **Dr. John Carethers** who will be the new UCSD Vice Chancellor of Health Sciences. John will succeed **Dr. David Brenner**, also of our GI and Hepatology Division, who was the VCHS from 2007 to 2022. John is currently Chair of Medicine at University of Michigan Health, and the 2022-2023 President of the American Gastroenterological Association.

Please have wonderful holidays with your families and thank you for your ongoing contributions and support of the UC San Diego Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology.

Thomas J Savides MD

*Interim Gastroenterology and Hepatology Division Chief*

*Distinguished Professor of Clinical Medicine*



## 2021 – 2022 DIVISION OF GASTROENTEROLOGY UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO



**Standing (L-R):** Josh Rubin, Sid Singh, Waseem Ahmad, Nghia Nguyen, Yuko Kono, Fady Youssef, Cynthia Hsu, Gobind Anand, Amir Zarrinpar, Abbas Fehmi, Amanda Krause, Joseph Meserve, Eric Low, Aws Hasan, Donald Goens, Jesus Dominguez, Pranab Barman, Nabil Nouredin, Lars Eckmann, Selena Kuo, Zach Gitto, Ed Yang, Laurel Branch, Bobby Klapheke, Michael Change, Michael Docherty

**Sitting (L-R):** Bernd Schnabl, Denise Kalmaz, Veeral Ajmera, Ravi Mittal, Samir Gupta, Heather Patton, Thomas Savides, Rohit Loomba, Mary Lee Krinsky, Nedret Copur-Dahi, Rena Yadlapati, Brigid Boland

# WELCOME BACK TO UCSD

JOHN CARETHERS, MD  
VICE CHANCELLOR – HEALTH SCIENCES



We are thrilled to welcome back Dr. John Carethers as the new UC San Diego Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences starting in January 2023! Dr. Carethers was a previous UCSD GI Division Chief, and is currently is the Chair of Medicine at University of Michigan and also the President of the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA).

# GET TO KNOW OUR NEW FACULTY

## GEN GI FACULTY – MATTHEW T. BENDER, MD

UC San Diego  
School of Medicine



Matthew Taranaki Bender, MD

Matthew Bender is a gastroenterology physician with a focus on general gastroenterology. Matthew grew up in a northern Kentucky suburb of Cincinnati, though much of his extended family is split between California and New Zealand. Matthew made his first foray to southern California when he received his undergraduate degree from Pepperdine University, and subsequently went on to receive his medical degree at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine. His training was continued in residency at University of Virginia for internal medicine, followed by Gastroenterology fellowship at The Ohio State University. Having finished training, Matthew has returned to southern California and looks forward to joining the UCSD team as a clinician-educator.

While not working hard on the job, Matthew can often be found in the outdoors either hiking, camping, skiing, or climbing the occasional mountain. His favorite location remains Mt. Kilimanjaro, and he hopes to return there in the next 1-2 years to climb again. If stuck indoors on a rainy day, Matthew has a deep appreciation for the wide variety of specialty board games which have come out in the last decade, and is always looking for a partner or group to join.

## VA STAFF PHYSICIAN - KYLE GEARY, MD

UC San Diego  
School of Medicine



Kyle Geary, MD

Kyle Geary is a general gastroenterology physician with a strong clinical interest in education and quality improvement. Kyle received his undergraduate degree from Loyola University Chicago and received his medical degree at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois. He subsequently attended University of Illinois at Chicago for internal medicine residency followed by the University of Chicago/[NorthShore University HealthSystem](#) for Gastroenterology fellowship. After a medical training career in Chicago, Kyle and his wife Ashley and son Roman (2 years old) decided it was time to seek out an exciting opportunity in San Diego and join the faculty at the San Diego VA Medical Center and UCSD. Kyle is excited to continue his medical career at the VA providing exceptional care to our veteran population and education for our trainees.

# GET TO KNOW OUR NEW FACULTY

## NEW IBD FACULTY – GAURAV SYAL, MD, MHDS

UC San Diego  
School of Medicine



Gaurav Syal, MD, MHDS

Gaurav Syal is a gastroenterologist with a focus on inflammatory bowel diseases. After receiving his medical degree from JIPMER, India, he completed internal medicine residency and gastroenterology fellowship at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and an advanced fellowship in inflammatory bowel diseases at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. He subsequently practiced as an academic gastroenterologist at the Cedars-Sinai IBD Center from 2017-2022 and during this time, he obtained a master's degree in health delivery science. His clinical and research interests are treatment and outcomes of inflammatory pouch disorders, and positioning of advanced therapies in IBD.

He recently moved to San Diego with his wife, Supreet, who is joining as a transplant nephrologist at UCSD, and 2-year-old daughter, Meher, and is excited to start the next phase of his career at UCSD.

## NEW HEPATOLOGY FACULTY – MONICA TINCOPA, MD, MSc

UC San Diego  
School of Medicine



Monica Tincopa, MD, MSc

Monica Tincopa MD MSc is a transplant hepatologist and clinical researcher with an interest in obesity, metabolic syndrome and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease and nonalcoholic steatohepatitis. Dr. Tincopa received her medical degree from Johns Hopkins University where she also completed her internal medicine residency. She completed her gastroenterology (GI) and transplant hepatology fellowships at the University of Michigan (UM). As a GI fellow, Dr. Tincopa was supported by an NIH T32 training grant and obtained a masters in Health and Healthcare Research from UM. Monica was the recipient of the 2015 AASLD Advanced/Transplant Hepatology Award and the 2018 AASLD Clinical and Translational Outcomes Research Award. Dr. Tincopa is board certified in obesity medicine in addition to internal medicine, gastroenterology and transplant hepatology.

Outside of work, Monica enjoys spending time with her children and loves to be at the beach running, surfing and hiking. She is excited to join the Hepatology group at UCSD!

Incoming Fellows

# 2023 GI Fellows



Juliana da Silva  
Univ of Chicago

**CLINICAL**



Kurren Mehta  
Duke

**CLINICAL**



Kelly Torosian  
UCSD

**CLINICAL**



Harrison Penrose  
UCSD

**RESEARCH**



Srishti Saha  
UTSW

**RESEARCH**

## 2022 GI Fellow Graduates

On June 11, 2022, the GI Division faculty, fellows and staff celebrated (with Joseph Meserve, Fady Youssef, Aws Hasan, and Waseem Ahmad) their anticipated completion of their gastroenterology training.



So, where did our fellows go?

Waseem Ahmad joined the GI faculty at UCSF

Joseph Meserve stayed at UCSD to do an Advanced IBD preceptorship

Fady Youssef and Aws Hasan stayed at UCSD to do an Advanced Endoscopy preceptorship.

# Awards & Recognition



Dr. Sid Singh was named the Senior Associate Editor for *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology* and was appointed Chair of the AGA Clinical Guidelines Committee



## **ASGE Endoscopy Unit Recognition:**

In November 2022, The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy honored the UC San Diego La Jolla and Hillcrest Endoscopy Units as part of the ASGE Endoscopy Unit Recognition Program. This is a competitive award and much gratitude to Josh Rubin, Jeremy Flowers, Stephanie Reed and others in helping us reach recognition for the highest quality and safety standards in our endoscopy units

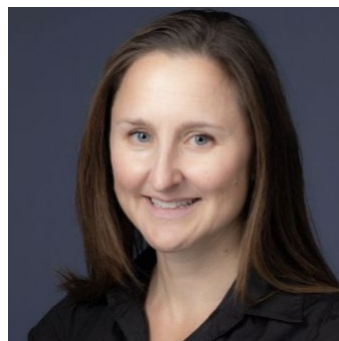
Dr. Yadlapati was named as an Associate Editor for *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology* and co-authored four major society guidelines/best practices this year (ACG-GERD, AGA-GER, ACG-Barrett's, and ACG-Gastroparesis)



The American Society for Clinical Investigation has selected Dr. Amir Zarrinpar for their 2023 Council.

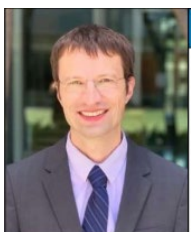
Dr. Zarrinpar was also named Director of the UCSD Department of Medicine Physician Scientist Training Program.

Dr. Brigid Boland received a 2022 American Medical Women's Association INSPIRE Award which honors woman physicians who are inspirational and who demonstrate vision, integrity, collaboration, and service.



## **UCSD Women in GI GLOGE event:**

There was a wonder holiday celebration including many current GI and Hepatology faculty and fellows, as well as former fellows.



Dr. Schnabl renewed his NIH R01 grant "The Role of the Intestinal Mycobiome in Alcoholic Liver Disease", and is academic investigator for a NIH R43 Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant "A novel therapy for acute alcoholic hepatitis".

# Awards & Recognition

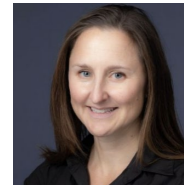
## UCSD GI Leadership in San Diego GI Society 2023



President: Denise Kalmaz, MD



Vice President: Shailja Shah, MD



Secretary/Treasurer: Brigid Boland, MD

Dr. Pradipta Ghosh received a Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust award for \$1,972,275.00 for the term of 36 months, in support of IBD research to be conducted as a collaboration between UC San Diego and the Columbia University, as well as The Torrey Coast Foundation award of \$1,605,000 in support of the Institute for Network Medicine's Esophageal Adenocarcinoma Program.



Congratulations to Dr. Gupta for being 2022 Chair of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Colorectal High Risk/Hereditary Guideline Committee



Dr. Shailja Shah has been named as one of [Becker's GI & Endoscopy 10 Gastroenterologist to Know](#).

Dr. Cynthia Hsu (T32 fellow) received the 2022 Samuel French Memorial Award for her paper accepted in *Hepatology* "Any alcohol use in NAFLD patients is associated with significant changes to the intestinal virome" from the NIH-funded Southern California Research Center for ALPD & Cirrhosis.

Dr. Hsu is also the 2023 Pilot & Feasibility Grant recipient from the Southern California Research Center for ALPD & Cirrhosis. The title of her project is "Effect of gut microbial ethanol production on alcohol use disorder and AALD".

Dr Hsu was also selected as a 2023 AGA-Amgen Fellowship-to-Faculty Transition Award recipient.

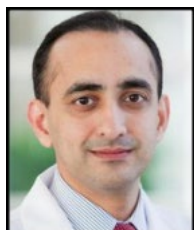




## Awards & Recognition



Congratulations to Matthew Tsai and Michael Chang for receiving **2022 UCSD Medical Staff Professionalism Awards**. This award recognizes physicians who honor the core values of quality, care, integrity, respectfulness, and teamwork, and promote a culture of safety.



### San Diego Magazine Top Doctors 2022

Congratulations to Abbas Fehmi and Thomas Savides for being voted by their peers at 2022 Top Doctors in Gastroenterology in San Diego.



### Updates from the San Diego Digestive Diseases Research Center (SDDRC)

The following new members have joined the SDDRC family for a current total of 54 members. The Center would like to welcome the following new members:

- Phillipp Hartmann, MD
- Marygorret Obonyo, PhD

#### **Core Service and Updates**

Congratulations to Dr. Tatiana Kisseleva who assumed the Director of the Preclinical Models Core position.

As a new service, the Human Translational Core is now offering access to archival clinical (GI/liver) tissue samples (stained or unstained slides) from the Pathology Department. This service can be obtained by submitting the sample request form located on the Center website, or via email to the Center. If you are not sure how to get started, we can provide consultation in pathology, biostatistics, protocol design, and training. Contact us with any questions:

[sddrc@ucsd.edu](mailto:sddrc@ucsd.edu)

#### **2022-23 Pilot & Feasibility Grants**

New awardees will be announced in December 2022.

#### **SDDRC Seminars**

Monday 12/12/22, 12:00 – 1:00 pm, PT, Leichtag - 107 (Lecture Room)

“Exploring pathways from NASH to HCC in mice and humans”

Nicholas O. Davidson, MD, DSc

John E. and Adaline Simon Endowed Professor of Medicine, Director, Digestive Disease Research Core Center, Chief, Division of Gastroenterology, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, MO

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> California DDRCC Network Symposium**

The California DDRCC Network Symposium is scheduled for Friday 12/9/22 from 1:00 – 4:00 pm, PT via Zoom. The purpose of the network is to connect basic/translational, clinical gastroenterology, and liver researchers at all levels of experience from UC San Diego, UC San Francisco, University of Southern California, and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. A major goal of the symposium is to support junior investigators by highlighting their latest research findings and providing them with access to experienced investigators with knowledge relevant to career development. Specifically, we will have a scientific program featuring brief presentations by basic/translational and clinical junior investigators from each of the 4 institutions, followed by a workshop focusing on networking and career development. The detailed agenda is listed on the SDDRC website.

#### **SDDRC 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium**

The next SDDRC Symposium is scheduled for Friday 2/10/23 from 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm, PT, at the UCSD, MET Lower Auditorium.

The SDDRC website contains detailed information regarding upcoming monthly seminars.

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

Direct all questions to [sddrc@health.ucsd.edu](mailto:sddrc@health.ucsd.edu). Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SDDRC>.

As a reminder, if you have used the Center services, please acknowledge the grant in your publications: “The study was supported by the NIDDK-funded San Diego Digestive Diseases Research Center (P30 DK120515).”

Our patient-centered, multidisciplinary approach towards diagnosis and treatment of NAFLD (Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease) has led to several important breakthroughs. This year, we would like to share two of our most recent publications regarding the heritability of NAFLD as well as the prevalence of disease progression in patients with type 2 diabetes. In addition, we would like to thank the patients, speakers and collaborators who participated in NASH Day!

**Heritability of Advanced Fibrosis:** NAFLD and NAFLD-related fibrosis are both heritable traits; however, we wanted to see the prevalence of NAFLD with advanced fibrosis in first-degree relatives. This would help us understand the heritability of advanced fibrosis as well as the need for familial screening during risk assessment. For this study, we enrolled 396 first-degree relatives of NAFLD patients with advanced fibrosis, NAFLD patients without advanced fibrosis, and non-NAFLD patients. Our primary goal was to determine the prevalence of advanced fibrosis in the first-degree relatives. We discovered a 15.6% prevalence of advanced fibrosis in the first-degree relatives of NAFLD patients with advanced fibrosis. In comparison, the prevalence of advanced fibrosis in the first-degree relatives of NAFLD patients without advanced fibrosis and non-NAFLD patients was 5.9% and 1.3% respectively. Based on our findings, we discovered that first-degree relatives of patients with NAFLD and advanced fibrosis have a greater likelihood of experiencing advanced fibrosis than those of non-NAFLD patients. Furthermore, we believe that relatives of NAFLD patients with advanced fibrosis are of interest when examining high-risk patients within the general population. These findings were published in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*.

**T2DM Prospective Study:** Common risk factors for progressive liver disease in NAFLD include obesity, insulin resistance, and type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM). However, due to uncertainty regarding the true prevalence of advanced fibrosis and cirrhosis in patients with T2DM, systemic screening is not recommended under the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) NAFLD Practice Guidelines. We therefore aimed to evaluate the prevalence of advanced fibrosis and cirrhosis in a prospectively recruited cohort of adults with T2DM (Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus). A total of 501 adults age  $\geq 50$  years with T2DM met eligibility and were recruited for this study. NAFLD was defined as MRI-PDFF  $\geq 5\%$  after exclusion of other liver diseases and advanced fibrosis and cirrhosis were defined by established liver stiffness cut points on MRE or VCTE if MRE was not available. We found that the prevalence of NAFLD, advanced fibrosis and cirrhosis was 65%, 14% and 6%, respectively. These findings present new data on the elevated risk of advanced fibrosis and cirrhosis in adults with T2DM, further supporting the need for systematic screening of older adults with T2DM. This study was accepted for publication in the *Journal of Hepatology*.

#### NASH Day 2022:



NASH Day is an annual event hosted by the NAFLD Research Center that raises public awareness for NASH (Nonalcoholic steatohepatitis), advancements in treatment, and ongoing research and clinical trials. Our presenters this year included Dr. Veeral Ajmera, Dr. Monica Tincopa, and Dr. Daniel Huang. Dr. Ajmera discussed the impact of type 2 diabetes and obesity on NAFLD. Next, Dr. Tincopa discussed the importance of diet and exercise in NAFLD prevention and resolution. Lastly, Dr. Huang discussed the importance of cohorts toward improving the management of NASH. Full length recordings of the presentations will be available on the

NAFLD Research Center YouTube Channel. NASH Day 2022 also featured a panel of patients who offered their first-hand experience of living with NASH and their experiences with receiving treatment at UCSD. We look forward to next year's NASH Day as we continue the fight against NASH!

# 2022 EVENTS

## DIGESTIVE DISEASE WEEK (DDW) – May 22, 2022



# 2022 EVENTS

## ISENBERG LECTURE – November 29, 2022



This year we were honored to have the esteemed Dr. Guadalupe Garcia-Tsao, Professor of Medicine, Yale University, giving the annual Endowed Jon I. Isenberg Endowed Lecture on “Paradigm Shifts in Portal Hypertension.”

## Holiday Party – December 3, 2022

After years of Covid restrictions, we were able to have an outdoor holiday gathering to honor our faculty, fellows, and staff for all that they have accomplished. Colleagues that have worked together via zoom, or in different clinical locations, were able to connect and celebrate!



## UPCOMING EVENTS

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 2023

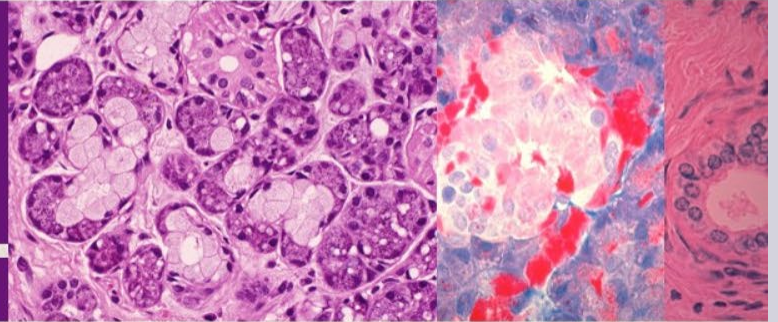
Presented by the UC San Diego Division of Gastroenterology

#ucsdgi UC San Diego  
School of Medicine

### Annual Advances in Gastroenterology and Hepatology Conference

What's New in Gastroenterology and Hepatology?

March 11, 2023 | Live Conference



[CLICK TO REGISTER](#)

Digestive Disease Week (DDW) 2023

May 6-9, 2023

Chicago, IL

UCSD Reception: Sunday, May 7, 2023

UC San Diego  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE





## Charitable Donations

You may contribute and support our GI Fellowship Program and allow our fellows to attend training-related activities by clicking and donating on this [GIVE LINK](https://giveto.ucsd.edu/giving/home/gift-referral/010194af-e449-42cb-a281-e0f064efeb7b/) or you can visit the website: <https://giveto.ucsd.edu/giving/home/gift-referral/010194af-e449-42cb-a281-e0f064efeb7b/>

Remember: if you itemize, you may be able to receive a charitable deduction for 2022 for your gifts received on or before December 31.

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