

NEPHROLOGY UPDATE

Ross Named Alumni Endowed Professor of Medicine

Will Ross, MD, MPH, professor of medicine in the Division of Nephrology and associate dean for diversity for Washington University School of Medicine, is being honored with an Alumni Endowed Professorship in Medicine.

“An endowed professorship is one of the highest honors awarded to a faculty member,” said David H. Perlmutter, MD, executive vice chancellor for medical affairs. “Will is, and has been, an inspiration and role model to all of us for his pioneering and indelible impact on our School of Medicine and, more broadly, on the profession of academic medicine.”

Ross has been a faculty member in the division since 1996, after first serving as director of the hemodialysis unit and then vice president of medical affairs at the former St. Louis Regional Medical Center. He is a 1990 alumnus of our Nephrology Fellowship Training Program. An accomplished clinician and researcher, he says a serendipitous meeting with then Surgeon General Antonia Novella in 1991 was the impetus for his life’s work as a passionate advocate for health equity and diversity.

“I was presenting a research paper at the Surgeon General’s Task Force on Transplantation in Blacks,” recalled Ross. “Dr. Novella, who also is a nephrologist, said to me afterwards, ‘Will, I want to change your career. I know you love basic science, but if you really want to make a difference, you need to have a population health focus.’”

That conversation led to Ross creating innovative programs to enhance diversity

among medical students, residents and faculty within the medical school. It also prompted him to establish immersion opportunities in surrounding communities for medical students to see firsthand how environment impacts overall health. He leans on lessons he learned while growing up in the civil rights era, where he saw and understood the power of collaboration and multiculturalism.

“We have to have a diverse healthcare workforce to address the diverse needs and challenges within the communities we serve,” he said emphatically. “Then we have to reach out, roll up our sleeves, and create alliances within those communities and work together to eliminate barriers to care.”

He is the founder of the Saturday Free Health Clinic and a co-founder of Casa De Salud Latino Health Center in St. Louis and currently is board chair and a founding member of the Collegiate School of Medicine and Bioscience, a magnet high school focused on health professions careers. In 2001, he helped to create the St. Louis Regional Health Commission, which focused on actions to reduce major health challenges in the community through the formation of an integrated network of safety net primary care clinics and public health services. “Through these collaborative private-partnership efforts, the rates of diabetes, stroke,



Will Ross, MD, MPH, Washington University School of Medicine’s newest Alumni Endowed Professor in Medicine.

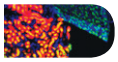
heart disease, infant mortality and births by teen mothers all dropped dramatically in the region,” said Ross.

Ross is past chairman of the St. Louis City Board of Health and a past member of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Health Disparities Committee. As he pushes the conversation about health equity locally and nationally, Ross also has gone global, co-developing an undergraduate program in public health in Haiti.

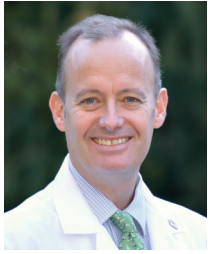
Even as he fills his schedule with community action and teaching activities, Ross maintains his clinical duties, which he says grounds him to the need for population health. Looking ahead, he wants Washington University to become a worldwide center of excellence in health equity.

To establish that, he’s working with medical school leaders to obtain an NIH FIRST grant to fund a multidisciplinary cohort of researchers and clinicians that will work together to identify and implement interventions that improve community health.

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Message from the Chief



I write with great optimism about the prospect of more normal times in our future. Today, 27% of the population has received at least one dose, with vaccination

rates increasing and the likelihood that all who want a vaccine will get one by May or June. This is great news!

Not everyone wants a COVID-19 vaccine, though. Such vaccine reluctance remains a challenge. I had long conversations with two of my patients with these reservations this morning in clinic. Please spread the word in your community that vaccines are both safe and necessary if we are to reopen fully.

As we envision better times in the months to come, it is gratifying that the

important work of the division has continued and our faculty has garnered many accolades. As you see on the front page and in our faculty news section, we are very proud that Will Ross and Jeff Miner are the recipients of endowed professorships. These professorships acknowledge the extensive contributions both have made to the field of nephrology as well as to the community at large. I express deep gratitude to Dr. Eduardo Slatopolsky for establishing the Eduardo and Judith Slatopolsky



Professorship of Medicine in Nephrology which will honor his remarkable legacy in perpetuity.

For a lifetime of advancements in our field, Aubrey Morrison also is honored by BJC, and the Veterans Administration has given Andreas Herrlich a 2021 Merit Award. Several faculty were promoted last year – congratulations to Drs. Tarek Alhamad, Maggie Chen, Steven Cheng, Moe Mahjoub and Tim Yau.

I look forward to the day when national conferences and other events again bring us together in person. In the meantime, please keep in touch. Let us know of your career moves and your thoughts on your time in our Division. We'd love to hear from you.

Ben

Benjamin D. Humphreys, MD, PhD
Joseph P. Friedman Professor and Chief
Division of Nephrology
Washington University School of Medicine

Thank You!

The Division of Nephrology thanks the following individuals who have generously donated to our division from September 2020 through February, 2021:

- Anonymous in honor of Dr. Ben Humphreys
- Mr. and Mrs. Joel and Susan Allen
- Dr. John E. Buerkert
- Dr. and Ms. Arvind and Dipika Garg
- Dr. Seth Goldberg
- Dr. Benjamin Duane Humphreys

- Ms. Debra A. Lane
- Ms. Patricia M. McKeveitt
- Dr. John Mellas
- Dr. Thomas Ralph Pohlman
- Dr. Didier Portilla
- Dr. and Mrs. Marcos and Cathy Rothstein
- Dr. Jose Rueda
- Mr. and Ms. Terrance Dwaine and Karen Lee Sell
- Dr. Eduardo Slatopolsky
- Ms. Betty Jean Smith

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“I am a product of the civil rights movement and that makes me optimistic to my core that by fostering collaboration, we can address a myriad of health issues. Why? Because it’s the right thing to do.”

For a more in-depth profile of Dr. Ross, visit <https://outlook.wustl.edu/leading-with-empathy/>

Support the Division of Nephrology

If you would like to support our research and teaching mission or contribute to the Division of Nephrology’s programs and services, please send your contribution to:

Washington University in St. Louis
Office of Medical Alumni and Development
Attn: Rachel A. Hartmann
7425 Forsyth Blvd.
Campus Box 1247
St. Louis, MO 63105

You may also contact Rachel A. Hartmann directly at 314-935-9715 or by email at rachel_hartmann@wustl.edu if you are considering supporting the Division through appreciated stocks, deferred giving, beneficiary plans or other assets.

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Fellowship Notes



By Seth Goldberg, MD,
Associate Program
Director for Service
& Assessment

The health of an institution can often be gauged by the number of construction cranes seen on its campus. Physical growth and renewal are excellent markers of a forward-thinking and forward-moving operation. With such expansion comes new challenges and opportunities.

Washington University School of Medicine has maintained a strong presence in the Central West End neighborhood of St. Louis for over 100 years, with a footprint now covering 164 acres across an area of 17 city blocks. New and upcoming inpatient towers on each end of the

campus allow for increased intensive care capabilities, expansion of dialysis facilities, and dedicated oncology wings, not to mention breathtaking vistas of neighboring Forest Park. Walking between opposite ends of the hospital, however, can cover one-third of a mile in each direction, and we recognize that such an endeavor (while providing for great physical exercise through our fully enclosed skyway system) can consume important minutes while rounding on consult services.

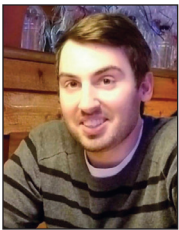
Thus, as the campus grows, similar expansion has made its way into our Nephrology Fellowship. For the first time in over a decade, the size of the fellowship cohort has grown. In July, we will welcome six new fellows plus two new transplant fellows, allowing for even more flexibility in the curricular design. From a practical perspective, this will ease the way for the creation of a dedicated consult service

to cover the north end of the campus; this geographic distribution will not only save countless hours of walking over the year, but also give that service an oncology emphasis for a unique training experience.

The expanded fellowship also will allow for more opportunities to shape one's career path, with increased elective time for scholarly and educational pursuits. While the main campus is home to our teaching services, including all inpatient, continuity clinic, and dialysis rotations, the Washington University impact extends into the community in all directions. Fellows will have increased flexibility to supplement their training with our offsite Interventional Nephrology faculty, community-based hemodialysis experience, and the satellite Home Modalities clinics as we strive to bring nephrology care out of the hospital and closer to the patients we serve.

2021 Fellows

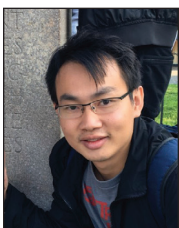
The Division of Nephrology welcomes the following new fellows to our program this summer:



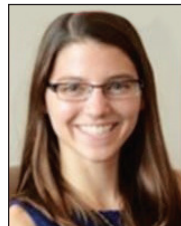
Jonathan Jakubowski, MD
Chicago Medical School
McHenry, IL



Zoey Levine, MD
The Brooklyn Hospital
and Medical Center
Brooklyn, NY



Nyien Chann Wai Lynn, MBBS
Maimonides Medical
Center
Brooklyn, NY



Morgan Schoer, MD
Washington University
School of Medicine
St. Louis, MO



Scott Stockholm, DO
Cape Fear Valley
Medical Center
Fayetteville, NC



Ojaswi Tomar, MD
SSM Health St. Mary's
Hospital
St. Louis, MO

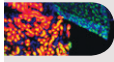
Transplant Fellows:



Karen Flores
Ohio State University/
Wexner Medical Center
Columbus, OH



Mohamed "Mo" Ibrahim
University at Buffalo
State University of
New York



Alumni Connections

Kamalanathan Sambandam, MD

*Associate Professor,
Division of Nephrology
Director, Nephrology
Fellowship Program
University of Texas
Southwestern Medical Center
Medical Director, Renal Clinics
at Parkland Hospital
WU Nephrology Fellow, 2006-2008*

After earning his medical degree from the University of Texas in 2003, Kamalanathan Sambandam, MD, kept an important sign of his career path visible on his car while he was in St. Louis for both his residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in nephrology.

“I kept my Texas license plate on my vehicle during my entire five years in St. Louis, always knowing that I would come back to Texas,” he said with a laugh. “It’s my home state.”

His drive for excellence appeared early, when he attained the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts of America in 1993. He graduated summa cum laude from Rice University with his undergraduate degree in biochemistry and subsequently graduated with honors at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston.

When he returned to Texas after fellowship, Sambandam joined the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School. Over the past several years, he has earned multiple awards for outstanding patient care in nephrology. That visible commitment to patient care ultimately led to him being appointed medical director of the Renal Clinics at Parkland Hospital, the safety net health system in Dallas County.

“I get great satisfaction from providing excellent care to the disadvantaged,” Sambandam said. “That’s why I wanted to serve in this manner when I came to Dallas.”

He recalls the clinical rigor while in the Nephrology Fellowship Training Program at Washington University School of Medicine. He would start the day in the Dialysis Unit on the Barnes Hospital side and then walk later in the day to see patients at Jewish Hospital. “The day required a vigorous pace,” he said. “But the long walk between the two locations was a welcome pause to allow my thoughts to roam for a few minutes.”

He added, “The clinical experiences while at Washington University gave me the confidence to conquer the challenges that I would face in the future. I remember all the great teachers, the camaraderie amongst all the fellows, and lively debates between the faculty during conferences. Anitha Vijayan was my faculty mentor and she provided several writing opportunities to me and supported me in grant applications.”

His clinical and research focus is on nondiabetic glomerular disease, but Sambandam loves the depth and breadth in the field of nephrology. “That’s one of the main reasons that nephrology brings me such joy and fulfillment,” he said.

Serving as director of the Nephrology Fellowship Training Program at UT Southwestern provides him that same sustenance. “If I were not a physician, I would have been a teacher. In my current role, I have the opportunity to do both,” he said. “The fact that I’m a teacher challenges me to be knowledgeable in all aspects of nephrology. That, in turn, makes me a better clinician. I tell my fellows today that although I worked very hard and came out of fellowship a strong nephrologist, my role as a teacher has made me ten times the nephrologist I was then. That excellence brings me even more passion

for nephrology and the care I deliver to patients.”

Sambandam takes lessons from his time in WU’s fellowship program when he served as the chief fellow. “I was just starting to understand how different learners are motivated and how to effectively transmit information,” he said. “I have evolved to understand that the role of an effective teacher is not to just put on a good ‘performance.’ It is our job, instead, to inspire curiosity and serve as a tool for the student as they pursue that curiosity.”

When he’s not at work, Sambandam enjoys spending time with his family. In particular, he loves playing soccer with his children. “I never had YouTube when I was playing soccer to learn how to strike the ball properly,” he said. “Now we learn from videos and practice curving the soccer ball together!”

“Truly, it’s my family who inspires me to continue growing and to be a bit better human every day.”

Family photos from Dr. Kamalanathan Sambandam.



Program Spotlight

Renal Biopsy Service



Gonzalo Matzumura, MD

With kidney biopsies considered a cornerstone for decision-making in nephrology, the Division of Nephrology is re-launching an in-house renal biopsy service to train

fellows in the procedure. The service will be led by Gonzalo Matzumura, MD, a current second-year fellow in our program. Matzumura joins the faculty this summer.

“Traditionally, nephrologists have performed their own biopsies, but recently

academic medical centers have relied more and more on interventional radiologists to perform the procedure, leaving little room and opportunity for nephrology trainees to practice this procedure,” said Matzumura.

Only some nephrology training programs in the United States teach ultrasound-guided kidney biopsies to their fellows. Learning to do the procedure in a native kidney requires more complex skills to manipulate both the needle and the ultrasound correctly.

“Our fellows currently participate in nearly every step of the diagnostic process, including interpreting the renal pathology,” explained Matzumura. “Training in performing the actual kidney biopsy will not only make fellows proficient with this

procedure, but also will make them skilled at ultrasound imaging, which is instrumental in other procedural nephrology skills, such as point-of-care ultrasound and ultrasound-guided line placement.”

As part of the training service, the division will continue to collaborate with the Department of Radiology to teach and then certify nephrologists in this procedure.

Matzumura earned his medical degree in 2014 from the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia Facultad de Medicina Alberto Hurtado in Lima, Peru. He completed his residency in medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston before joining our nephrology fellowship training program.

Managing Training and Stress Amidst a Pandemic

It’s been just over a year since the COVID-19 pandemic forced multiple adaptations within patient care, medical education and research. In reflecting on a time of flexibility and adaptability, fellows say training in our program has remained robust, even with changes.

“Education during this pandemic has been challenging, but also serendipitous,” said fellow Reena Gurung, MD. “I was able to continue all my daily noon conferences via Zoom, and also attend other national and international conferences virtually, which was something I never would have thought possible the prior year.”

“When there is a will, there is a way,” said fellow Gaurav Rajashekar, MBBS. “Teaching took on a whole new dimension, with more conversation during bedside teaching and an increased focus on fellows’ well-being. We never felt disconnected, as our faculty members would always drop into the fellows’ room to discuss, teach and explain.”

Fellow Hassaan Iftikhar, MBBS, noted, “Six months into my fellowship, I feel confident of what I have learned so far, and I hope I continue to build the

foundation of knowledge with the guidance of the excellent nephrologists that work with me.”

Still, the stress of working and training during a pandemic has been noticeable. Earlier this year, the American Society of Nephrology sponsored a national webinar focusing on the mental and emotional burden of the pandemic. It included a panel of renal fellows from the United States and Canada, including WU fellows Gonzalo Matzumura, MD, Blessing Osondu, MD, and Sana Shaikh, MD.

“It was humbling to hear testimonials from trainees in different parts of the continent and know that, while we have all experienced the pandemic differently, our emotional and mental responses are identical,” said Shaikh.

“I was thrilled to hear how other participants handled the surge of COVID both personally and institution-wise,” added Osondu. “The pandemic emerged right when I was about to transition into my second year of fellowship. The coping mechanisms that I heard about during the roundtable gave me insights into what I could do to ensure a healthy mental state. I can say for sure that I have continued to learn and grow both in



Fellowship Associate Program Director Frank O’Brien, MD, checks on the well-being of fellows during the pandemic.

terms of education and in my role as a senior fellow.”

Said Matzumura. “Thankfully, the overwhelming majority of fellows have remained healthy, engaged, and well supported while training in the pandemic.”

“This unprecedented pandemic led to huge challenges for medical education,” acknowledged Frank O’Brien, MD, FASN, associate program director of curriculum development for the Nephrology Fellowship Training Program. “As has been said often, necessity is the mother of invention. We are thankful to work in a division where members can adapt rapidly to changing circumstances, without compromising fellow education and while also helping each other remain healthy in both body and mind.”

Inaugural Seed Grants Awarded



Jeannine Basta, PhD



Brian Wong, PhD

Through an innovative partnership between the Division of Nephrology and the Center of Regenerative Medicine at Washington University, seed grants have been awarded to two researchers to fund investigations focused on kidney disease and regenerative medicine.

Jeannine Basta, PhD, assistant professor of research in the Division of Nephrology, along with Brian Wong, PhD, assistant professor from the Department of Surgery, have received

the first two grants awarded through the partnership. Basta's project is titled, The role of SWI/SNF component Brg1 in chromatin regulation of proximal tubule cells after acute kidney injury. Wong will focus on Enhancing lymphangiogenesis to improve kidney allograft survival.

"The Division of Nephrology was happy to partner with the Center for Regenerative Medicine in funding these seed grants that seek to leverage regenerative biology to develop therapies for kidney disease," said Benjamin Humphreys, MD, PhD, chief of the Division of Nephrology. "These two awards highlight the depth of interdisciplinary kidney related research taking place at Washington University School of Medicine."

The \$20,000, one-year seed grants were awarded after an internal and external selection committee reviewed all applications. At Washington University, the Center for



Regenerative Medicine is a large research collaborative, with more than 80 faculty members from basic science, clinical areas and engineering are working together to advance the science of regenerative medicine and its therapeutic applications.

Vijayan Presents Lecture at UAB on Benefits of Nocturnal PIRRT

After successfully implementing the use of nocturnal prolonged intermittent renal replacement therapy (PIRRT) at Barnes-Jewish Hospital, Anitha Vijayan, MD, is spreading the word. Vijayan recently was the guest Jerry Jackson Lecturer at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, where she discussed "Hybrid Renal Replacement Therapy Modalities in the treatment of Acute Kidney Injury (AKI)."

"PIRRT has been in use at other institutions, but at Wash U/Barnes-Jewish Hospital, I pioneered its use at night," says Vijayan. "Nocturnal PIRRT alleviates patients' anxiety and allows them to get physical therapy and other procedures done during the day."

Vijayan, the medical director of acute dialysis services, oversees the renal

replacement therapy program in the intensive care units at the hospital. On average nationwide, an estimated 20 percent of ICU patients can develop an acute kidney injury, with a large percentage of them subsequently requiring some form of renal replacement therapy. Unlike most hospitals, several RRT modalities are available here, including continuous renal replacement therapy (CRRT), intermittent hemodialysis (IHD), prolonged intermittent renal replacement therapy (PIRRT) and peritoneal dialysis (PD). Critically ill patients with AKI are initially started on CRRT, and they can be successfully transitioned to nocturnal PIRRT. Vijayan, along with colleagues Fahad Edrees, MD, and Tingting Li, MD, published their review in 2016 in *Advances in Chronic Kidney Disease*.



Anitha Vijayan, MD, with first-year fellow Bharat Neelam Raju, MD

Faculty News and Awards

Miner Honored with Eduardo and Judith Slatopolsky Endowed Professorship

Jeffrey Miner, PhD, FASN, director of basic research for the Division of Nephrology, has been honored with the inaugural Eduardo and Judith Slatopolsky Endowed Professor of Medicine in Nephrology.

“Jeff Miner has devoted his career to understanding how basement membranes contribute to kidney function and disease,” said Division Chief Benjamin Humphreys, MD, PhD. “I am deeply grateful to Dr. Slatopolsky for his generosity in establishing this professorship, which is a fitting tribute to his sustained contributions to nephrology for over five decades.”

Miner, an internationally renowned researcher, studies genetic diseases of the kidney glomerular basement, such as Alport Syndrome. Specifically, his research is focused on understanding why the kidney fails in Alport syndrome and how

to slow or stop kidney disease progression by using mouse models of the disease, novel genetic and imaging approaches, and direct testing of drugs as potential therapeutics. He also is the author of a prominent textbook titled “Basement Membranes.”

Miner, who calls himself an “accidental” nephrologist after working in a neuroscience research lab in the 1990s, notes, “I found myself studying two different kidney diseases rather than neuroscience and I made the choice to ‘follow the science’ and devote my career to nephrology research. It is, therefore, a particularly special honor for me to be named the inaugural Eduardo and Judith Slatopolsky Professor of Medicine in Nephrology because Dr. Slatopolsky is such a legend in renal pathology. Eduardo’s many career accomplishments set an extremely high bar that I, and I assume future



Jeffrey Miner, PhD, FASN

holders of this Professorship, will try our best to attain.”

Slatopolsky, a professor emeritus in the Division, is a pioneer in the understanding of the pathophysiology of secondary hyperparathyroidism, hyperphosphatemia and vitamin D biology.

He joined the Division in 1965 after completing his nephrology fellowship here and served as Director of the Chromalloy American Kidney Center at Barnes-Jewish Hospital for 30 of his 57 years. “I am grateful to be able to give something back to Washington University after all it has given me throughout my entire career,” said Slatopolsky. “Jeff Miner is an outstanding investigator who has greatly contributed to the understanding of the role of the glomerular basement membrane in health and disease. I am honored to have my name linked to his.”

Morrison Honored with BJH Lifetime Achievement Award

Aubrey Morrison, MBBS, MACP, FASN, has been honored with the BJH Lifetime Achievement Award from the Barnes-Jewish Hospital Medical Staff Association. Morrison, who was on the faculty at the hospital for more than 45 years before retiring last fall, is a pioneer in the study of chronic kidney diseases and inflammatory processes in the body. His research



Aubrey Morrison, MBBS, MACP, FASN

resulted in major advancements in the understanding of the role that COX-2 plays in the body’s response to inflammation, as well as the role of prostaglandin in obstructive

kidney disease. In addition to clinical and research activities, Morrison served as director of the Division’s Nephrology Fellowship Training Program from 2008 to 2011. His reflections about racism during his early years in medicine, titled, “Reflections of a Naïve Trainee,” were published in the January 2021 edition of the *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology*.

Herrlich Receives VA Merit Award

Congratulations to Andreas Herrlich, MD, PhD, who has received a four-year, \$660,000 VA Merit Award from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and a 5/8th position at the VA in St. Louis to carry out novel research aimed at developing therapeutic strategies for secondary organ complications after acute kidney injury (AKI), in particular acute lung injury.

Specifically, the VA Merit Award, which is similar in prestige to an R01 grant from the National Institutes of Health, will

fund his research, titled, “Remote Injury Responses after AKI.”

Acute kidney injury alone has a mortality of 15 to 30 percent. This mortality increases to 60-80% when other organs, such as the lung, are affected (multiorgan failure).

Herrlich, the director of translational research in our Division, joined the faculty in 2016. He is the recipient of several grants from the National Institutes of Health to study repair mechanisms after kidney injury. In 2019, he was awarded a five-year, \$1.125



Andreas Herrlich, MD, PhD

million NIH grant to identify kidney-specific therapeutics to slow the progression of CKD.

As a result of this latest award from the VA, Herrlich will keep

his research laboratory at Washington University School of Medicine. Going forward, his clinical practice and activities will be based at the St. Louis VA Medical Center-John Cochran Division.

Division of Nephrology

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Pass it On - Positivity Board!

Write one, take one, pass it on.
That's the sentiment behind a great Positivity Board set up by an inpatient ward at BJH to keep spirits up during the pandemic. From affirmations such as “Focus on the Good!” and “Breathe” to statements such as “Eat, Sleep, Save Lives, Repeat,” the board was a focal point to stop and take in the positivity while working long hours.

As one note put it, we hope all of you
“Stay Clean, Stay Safe, Stay Sane!”

