



# UCLA UROLOGY

UPDATE



Among the many ways UCLA Urology is making a difference both within and beyond the research, training, and patient care it provides: A partnership with Bridge Builders (left) exposes middle- and high school students to medicine and other STEM careers; and at the State-of-the-Art Urology Conference (right), which recently held its 50th annual meeting as the nation's longest-running specialty program, faculty and other experts explore the most challenging management problems facing practicing urologists.

## Impact of the Department's Faculty Transcends the Field of Urology

**U**CLA Urology has a long tradition of excellence in the care of patients with urological conditions, research that identifies new and improved approaches to urological diseases, and training that prepares the next generation of urology leaders. But in many cases, the work of UCLA Urology faculty makes an impact that is felt not only well outside the confines of UCLA, but also beyond urology to other areas of medicine and healthcare. Following are just a few examples:

As medicine moved away from a paternalistic system in which physicians alone determined the best course of treatment for patients, the last three decades have seen a growing trend toward shared decision-making — with the patient expressing their goals and preferences, and the physician sharing evidence and recommendations on a treatment path reflecting the patient's priorities. **Christopher Saigal, MD, MPH**, UCLA Urology professor and executive vice chair, became interested in the burgeoning field as a UCLA

Urology resident in the 1990s and has spent much of his research career developing ways to improve the shared decision-making process.

"I saw that patient preferences were measurable and could be quantified," Dr. Saigal says. "Patients face ever more choices, and tradeoffs involved with those choices that they are typically not prepared to understand. This has led to an increasing need to support patients to be part of their care."

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## Faculty Impact Transcends Urology

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# WiserCare

Welcome to WiserCare

In this experience you will learn about several different treatment options for prostate cancer, and how your values fit with these treatment options. There are four steps.

- 1. About You**  
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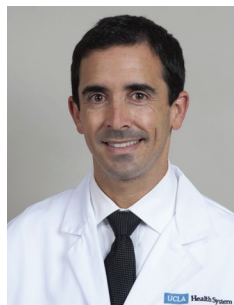
WiserCare, co-founded by Dr. Christopher Saigal, helps to improve the quality of shared decision-making, allowing patients to collaborate with their physicians to choose treatment paths that reflect their goals and preferences.

For information on making a gift to UCLA Urology, please log on to <http://giving.ucla.edu/urology> or call (310) 968-1560.



Based on his research on patient goals and priorities, Dr. Saigal developed interactive software tools that educate patients about various treatments and how they feel about various tradeoffs, resulting in a report the physician views before seeing the patient. The technology became the basis for WiserCare, a startup company Dr. Saigal co-founded. UCLA Health has licensed the software tool for use in some of the most common urologic conditions, including prostate cancer, kidney stones, and benign prostatic hyperplasia; as well as in other areas of medicine: colon cancer screening, diabetes care, advanced care planning, dialysis modality decision-making, and birth control decision-making. Several other institutions outside of UCLA have also begun licensing the WiserCare software.

In a study of approximately 2,000 patients, Dr. Saigal found that the WiserCare prostate cancer module improves the quality of decisions as well as improving access to care by reducing the length of visits. Similar studies are underway for other modules. “As medicine moves toward more virtual care, we will see increased focus on giving patients the power of the data that’s out there and personalizing it to their situation so that they’re better prepared for discussions with their doctors and can take more control of their decisions,” Dr. Saigal says.



The UCLA Urology faculty’s impact also extends to improving access to quality care among patients in the county health system. Given that the urology workforce is insufficient to meet population needs, the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (LAC-DHS) has created an interdisciplinary care model that builds clinical guidelines after considering input from multiple stakeholders, including patients, families, health system leaders, and the wide array of providers who collaborate to care for individuals with that clinical condition.

“Our mission at LAC-DHS is to take ownership over the entire population under our care, including those who in the past had difficulty accessing our services, and to provide them UCLA-level — or

better — care,” explains **Jonathan Bergman, MD, MPH**, UCLA Urology associate professor and holder of the Mark S. Litwin, MD, Endowed Chair in Mentorship, who is a urologist at Olive View-UCLA Medical Center, a 377-bed academic county hospital serving much of the San Fernando Valley.

Under the interdisciplinary care model, Dr. Bergman explains, primary care providers can deliver aspects of care, including diagnosis, workup, and medical management, that in other systems would require an up-front urology visit. As a result, over 90% of LAC-DHS urologic patients are seen within the time frame recommended by the attending urologist reviewer. Several LAC-DHS programs support patient needs and ensure providers are working at the top of their license, including an innovative cancer navigation program that was launched across LAC-DHS urology sites late last year and supports over 40 new patients each month.



It’s no coincidence that many of the organ transplant surgeons in the U.S. got their training at UCLA. **H. Albin Gritsch, MD**, UCLA Urology professor and the John Jergens Chair in Kidney Transplantation, was first exposed to

kidney transplantation as a UCLA Urology resident from 1986 to 1991, under the mentorship of Dr. Thomas Rosenthal, then the UCLA Kidney Transplant Program’s surgical director. When Dr. Gritsch was appointed to that position in 1997, he saw the need to train more urologists in kidney transplantation to address a shortage in the growing field. So he successfully applied to the American Society of Transplant Surgeons to make UCLA a fellowship training site for kidney transplant surgeons, beginning in 2002.

Since then, Dr. Gritsch has trained 10 urologists in kidney transplant surgery, many of whom have become directors of programs around the country and have prepared fellows of their own. Some have stayed on the UCLA faculty, strengthening one of the world’s leading kidney transplant programs — including Dr. Jeffrey Veale, director of the UCLA Kidney Transplantation Exchange Program; Dr. Jeremy Blumberg, chief of UCLA at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center; and Dr. Nima Nassiri, the newest member of the UCLA team. Dr. Gritsch and his UCLA transplant colleagues have also trained 67 multi-organ transplant fellows. Many transplant surgeons have come from other countries to



observe the UCLA team, bringing back what they learn to their colleagues. Dr. Gritsch has also gone overseas to provide assistance — including earlier this year to Zambia, where he helped a surgical team perform the country's first pediatric kidney transplant and laparoscopic donor nephrectomy.

“UCLA is the largest transplant center in the U.S., and as a high-volume program, we have a reputation for technical excellence,” Dr. Gritsch says. “Beyond providing excellent patient care, I feel it's my duty to pass on the incredible training I received from leaders in this field.”



Early in her career, **Jennifer Singer, MD**, UCLA Urology clinical professor, became interested in the field of medical education and training. Today, in addition to seeing patients at the Clark-Morrison Children's Urological Center at UCLA, Dr. Singer is playing a pivotal role in the department's education and training efforts as the Peter Starrett Chair in Medical Education in Urology. But Dr. Singer, who also serves

as associate chief medical informatics officer for UCLA Health, has devoted time to improving medical education well beyond the boundaries of the urology department.

As a junior UCLA Urology faculty member, Dr. Singer completed a medical education fellowship offered by the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine (DGSOM). The program trains fellows in fundamental approaches to medical education, preparing them to take on educational leadership roles. In 2018, Dr. Singer and colleagues from other DGSOM departments went to Stanford for a month-long program for medical faculty in which they learned approaches to deconstructing medical education into fundamental components in the overall educational experience. Since then, Dr. Singer and her colleagues have taught the program to DGSOM medical education fellows as well as residents each year.

Amid growing interest in the field of medical education, Dr. Singer has taken on an active role with the American Urological Association, moderating education sessions at the AUA's annual meeting and participating each year in selecting abstracts, posters and presentations for the subsection on urologic academic education. “In the past, the field of medical education has been disjointed and unstructured,” Dr. Singer says. “I became interested in this discipline because I saw the potential for improving the way we educate medical students, residents and fellows through proven, evidence-based approaches.”



Beyond their impact in training and teaching physicians and medical students, UCLA Urology faculty are making a difference in the lives of young people who have not yet decided on their careers. The department has a partnership with Bridge Builders Foundation, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit organization that supports youth through mentoring, scholarships, educational programs, and the teaching of

life skills. The initiative builds on the foundation's efforts to raise

health awareness and promote career opportunities for African American and other minority youth.

One of the UCLA Urology faculty members leading the effort is **Kymora Scotland, MD, PhD**, assistant professor, director of endourology research, and a physician with the UCLA Stone Treatment Center. Dr. Scotland has partnered with Bridge Builders, UCLA medical students, and faculty from UCLA Urology and other departments to expose middle- and high school students to medicine and other STEM careers based on the theme, “What They See, They Can Be.” Events have included panel discussions featuring UCLA Health professionals from various specialties, demonstrations at the UCLA Simulation Center, and tours of the undergraduate campus for high school students. Dr. Scotland also runs an anatomy course for grade and middle schoolers.



UCLA Urology research professor **Arie Belldgrun, MD** (top), the Roy and Carol Doumani Chair in Urologic Oncology and founding director of the UCLA Institute of Urologic Oncology, and **Allan Pantuck, MD, MS**, UCLA Urology professor and vice chair of academic affairs, have been national leaders in the development of cancer immunotherapy. While both initially focused on kidney cancer, in recent years their work has helped to move immune therapies well beyond urology.

“Over the years it became clear that these immunotherapy approaches that we were working on have broad applicability, both in and outside of urology,” Dr. Pantuck says.



Dr. Belldgrun began his career at the National Cancer Institute under the mentorship of Dr. Steven Rosenberg,

considered one of immunotherapy's pioneers, before coming to UCLA, where he led a multidisciplinary kidney cancer program that combined urologic oncology, medical oncology, basic science, and clinical trials. Drawn by the unique training opportunity, Dr. Pantuck came to UCLA in 1999 to start a three-year fellowship under Dr. Belldgrun's mentorship, and joined the faculty in 2002. Together with their colleagues, they developed, over a 15-year period, a kidney cancer vaccine in the laboratory and were able to bring it to patients through a clinical trial, showing that it could stimulate an immune response against patients' tumors.

The expertise gained by that experience led to UCLA, under the leadership of Dr. Pantuck, offering Provenge — a therapeutic vaccine for advanced prostate cancer, approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2010. Around that time, Drs. Belldgrun, Pantuck, and three other UCLA faculty with a longstanding interest in immunotherapy founded Kite Pharma, a biopharmaceutical company that became a leader in developing engineered cancer cell therapies. Kite Pharma, where Dr. Belldgrun served as founder, chairman, and chief executive officer, became among the first to receive FDA approval for a CAR T-cell therapy in 2017, and has now treated more patients than any other company with the cutting-edge approach — one of the most exciting new directions in cancer

## Craig Canfield, MD



This year marked the 50th meeting of the UCLA State-of-the-Art Urology Conference. The nation's longest-running specialty program, this conference annually draws more than 300 urology providers from all over the country for a two-and-a-half-day course during which experts explore the most challenging management problems facing practicing urologists. The course is chaired by Dr. William Aronson, UCLA Urology professor, with co-chairs Dr. Karim Chamie, UCLA Urology associate professor; and Dr. Craig Canfield, who has spent more than three decades in private practice in San Luis Obispo, California, after completing his UCLA Urology training in 1993.

“My participation is with an eye toward making sure the talks continue to address the needs of those of us who are treating patients every day in the community,” explains Dr. Canfield, who sees general urology cases in the San Luis Obispo office of Urology Associates of the Central Coast, which has five offices in northern Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. “We try to keep the conference focused on clinically relevant, practical points urologists can take away and use in their practice the next week.”

Dr. Canfield has been attending State-of-the-Art since he was a UCLA Urology resident. “It’s fun to go back, because it’s like a homecoming,” he says. “I get to see many of the people who trained at UCLA, and it’s a great opportunity to reconnect. But beyond the personal, the conference brings in both thought leaders who can help us stay current with best practices and policy guidelines, and technicians who can share valuable tips on surgical procedures that have evolved, or new techniques that have become available. It offers a condensed, comprehensive survey of what’s current in urology, which allows people like me to practice at the top of our game.”

Dr. Canfield says the broad training he received as a UCLA Urology resident laid the groundwork for his successful practice. “The breadth of the educational experience was such that by the time I left, I felt comfortable with every aspect of general urology — whether it was oncology, endourology, female pelvic medicine, or pediatrics,” he says. “As a practitioner, getting to see such a variety of cases has been very rewarding. And over time, what has become even more gratifying are the relationships with patients. It’s a privilege to get to know patients and their families, because as a urologist I’m following people over a long arc as opposed to providing episode-based care.”

## Improving Urologic Health for Hispanic Men

Everyone knows that eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, not smoking, and minimizing alcohol consumption are important to our overall health. But many are unaware of the critical role these and other lifestyle practices also play in male urologic health — in particular, sexual function and male fertility.

These issues are especially important in the Hispanic population, which has higher rates of obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, and hypertension than other racial and ethnic groups. Beyond genetic factors, cultural norms are believed to contribute. For example, many of the foods that are traditional staples in Hispanic homes and at shared meals include simple carbohydrates, simple sugars, and salt. Diets high in white-flour tortillas, white rice, sugar, and processed foods increase the risk of diabetes; high salt intake can lead to hypertension; and ultimately, these chronic conditions can lead to cardiovascular disease, the number-one killer of men in the United States. This also raises the risk for erectile dysfunction (ED). The vast majority of ED cases, particularly later in life, stem from cardiovascular changes. And for younger men, a growing body of evidence points to the strong correlation between overall health and sperm health, with implications for the ability to conceive. While there are many treatments for ED and male infertility, from medications to surgery, early lifestyle changes may help to prevent or delay these critical quality of life issues.

Healthy changes to the diet can be made without forgoing cultural traditions. Modifications can include switching to brown rice and whole wheat tortillas, substituting sweet potatoes for French fries, and not adding extra salt at meals. While remaining hydrated is an important health strategy, it should come from water consumption or natural juices rather than high-calorie, high-sugar sodas or sugary juices. Physical activity, a key component of a healthy lifestyle, should include cardiovascular exercise for heart health. Limiting alcohol intake and steering clear of tobacco help to avoid risks to erectile function and male fertility, among other health concerns. Although it can be especially challenging to follow optimal lifestyle practices for people with busy lives and limited incomes, even small changes can make a difference.

Seeing a primary care doctor is important for evaluating risk factors and beginning the process of making necessary modifications to improve overall health. For men with erectile dysfunction or having issues starting a family, urologists at The Men’s Clinic (TMC) at UCLA are available for consultations in English or Spanish. TMC includes Dr. Juan José Andino, a native Spanish speaker.

*For more information, visit [www.uclaurology.com](http://www.uclaurology.com). To make an appointment, call (310) 794-7700.*





# Letter from the Chair



**M**ore than ever, the challenges in healthcare demand that we think both outside the box and across disciplinary lines. Whether our goal is to cure patients of disease, identify ways of living healthier, provide more patient-centered and accessible care, or prepare the leaders of tomorrow, solutions transcend the traditional silos in which many of us were trained. While it remains essential that urologists have expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of conditions affecting the genitourinary tract, there is also a growing need in today's healthcare landscape for visionary leaders who join with experts outside of their domain to address major issues of the day.

*UCLA Urology draws individuals who look to make an impact well beyond their lab or the patients in front of them.*

This imperative became clear to me early in my career. In addition to a clinical practice seeing patients with urologic cancers, I pursued research to improve the quality of care and quality of life for patients. Leveraging the vast expertise across the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, I was able to participate in influential population science and health services research that proved transformative in defining and bringing these issues to the forefront not just in urology, but throughout medicine. To make urologic oncology care more accessible, I collaborated with leaders both within our department and in wide-ranging healthcare and public health positions throughout the state in establishing IMPACT (Improving Access, Counseling & Treatment for Californians with Prostate Cancer). Funded since 2001 with more than \$130 million, this California-funded program has brought free, high-quality prostate cancer treatment and other benefits to thousands of men with little or no health insurance.

Our cover story this issue highlights some of the many UCLA Urology faculty whose impact crosses traditional disciplinary and institutional lines — whether it's advancing research with implications for wide-ranging diseases, improving patient decision-making, expanding access to care, training transplant surgeons throughout the world, transforming the way medical students and residents are educated, or providing mentorship that exposes K-12 students to STEM careers. Like any strong academic urology department, UCLA Urology excels in the foundational elements of our mission: patient care, research, training, and community engagement. But what I believe sets us apart from many other top programs is that so many of our faculty are making a difference in ways that are broader and wider. UCLA Urology draws big thinkers — individuals who look to make an impact well beyond their lab or the patients in front of them. In so doing, we are contributing to a healthier tomorrow.

❖ **Mark S. Litwin, MD, MPH**  
*Distinguished Professor and Chair, UCLA Urology*

# Kudos

**Juan José Andino, MD, MBA, UCLA** Urology assistant clinical professor, and his coauthors had two manuscripts accepted for publication: “Association between surgeon procedure volume and reoperation rates for penile prosthesis implantation” in the *Journal of Sexual Medicine*; and “Comparing vasectomy techniques, recovery and complications: Tips and tricks” in the *International Journal of Impotence Research*. Dr. Andino was also appointed Spanish-language program committee chair for the American Society of Andrology 2026 Program Planning Committee, and vice chair of the Technology and Communication Committee and 2026 Program Planning Committee for the Sexual Medicine Society of North America.

**Wayne Brisbane, MD, UCLA** Urology assistant professor, and coauthors **Alan Priester, Anissa Nguyen, Mark Topoozian, Sakina Mota, Merdie Delfin, Samantha Gonzalez, Kyla Grunden, Shannon Richardson, Shyam Natarajan, and Leonard Marks**, had their manuscript, “Focal therapy of prostate cancer: Use of artificial intelligence to define tumour volume and predict treatment outcomes,” published in the *BJUI Compass*.

**Arnold Chin, MD, PhD, UCLA** Urology professor, and coauthors **Yiquian Gu, Ann Ly, Sara Rodriguez, Hanwei Zhang, Jiyeon Kim, Zhiyan Mao, Ankush Sachdeva, Nazy Zomorodian, Matteo Pellegrini, Gang Li, Sandy Liu, Alexandra Drakaki, and Matthew Rettig** had a manuscript, “PD-1 blockade plus cisplatin-based chemotherapy in patients with small cell/neuroendocrine bladder and prostate cancers,” published in *Cell Reports Medicine*.

**Nicholas Donin, MD, UCLA** Urology assistant clinical professor, and co-authors **Nicholas Kamkari, Vadim Osadchiy, Erika L. Wood, Kristen C. Williams, and Eduardo Piqueiras** had their manuscript, “Penile cancer awareness and knowledge among adult patients in an ambulatory urology clinic,” accepted for publication in *Translational Andrology and Urology*.

**Aboubacar Kaba, MD, UCLA** Urology resident, and coauthors **Asha Ayub,**

**Rashed Kosber, Steven Lerman, Kathy Huen, Stacey Carter, Thomas Gaither, Victor Nitti, and Jonathan Bergman** had their manuscript, “Teaching in the operating room: A qualitative mixed-methods review of effective methods,” accepted for publication in the *Annals of Medicine and Surgery*.

**Austin Lee, MD, UCLA** Urology resident, and coauthors **Saam Kazemi, Kevin Li, Matthew Dunn, Kymora Scotland, Alan Yaghoobian, Fuad Elkhoury, Lorna Kwan, and Christopher Saigal** had their abstract, “Optimizing Implementation of an Online Shared Decision-Making Intervention in Management of Nephrolithiasis,” accepted for presentation at the American Urological Association annual meeting in Las Vegas.

**Jacob Rajfer, MD, UCLA** Urology professor emeritus, and **Sriram Eleswarapu, MD, PhD, UCLA** Urology assistant clinical professor, had their manuscript, “Nutraceutical COMP-4 confers protection against endothelial dysfunction through the eNOS/iNOS-NO-cGMP pathway,” published in *PLOS One*.

**Victoria Rodriguez, PhD, MSW, MPH,** a fellow in the UCLA Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Training in Urologic & Gynecologic Cancers (PCORT) T32 mentored training program, had a manuscript, “Trends in endometrial cancer incidence in the United States by race/ethnicity and age of onset from 2000 to 2019,” published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*. Dr. Rodriguez was selected for participation in the Society of Behavioral Medicine’s Monica Baskin Diversity Institute for Emerging Scholars yearlong program for developing early-career professionals as equitable and thoughtful leaders.

**Eliya Shachar, MD,** a PCORT T32 mentored training program fellow, had three abstracts accepted for poster presentations: “Cytoreductive approach of advanced epithelial ovarian cancer: A retrospective real-world analysis guided by clinical variables, homologous recombination, and BRCA status,” at the Society of Gynecologic Oncology annual meeting; and two at the Tel Aviv University Research Fair of the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences:

“Optimizing cancer therapy administration: Alleviating bottlenecks with the ‘SwiftCare Fast Track’ Model” and “Real-world nationwide retrospective cohort study: Weight-based pembrolizumab dosing comparable to the standard fixed dose in the treatment of NSCL?”

**Jordyn Silverstein, MD,** a PCORT T32 mentored training program fellow, and coauthors **Beth Karlan and Gottfried Konecny** had their manuscript, “Antibody drug conjugates as targeted therapy for treating gynecologic cancers: Update 2025,” published in *Current Opinions in Obstetrics and Gynecology*. Dr. Silverstein was accepted for a poster presentation at the Society for Gynecologic Oncology annual meeting, and was accepted for oral presentation at the Western Collaborative Conference, AAMC. Dr. Silverstein was the recipient of a UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center Trainee Travel Award.

**David Yao, MD, UCLA** Urology assistant clinical professor, and coauthors **Tyler Wong, Stephanie Pannell, Nicholas Donin, Rajiv Jayadevan, Gloria Wong, Lorna Kwan, and Isla Garraway** had their abstract, “A 23-year comprehensive survey of restaging TURBT in the VA Healthcare System,” accepted for presentation at the American Urological Association annual meeting in Las Vegas. The research project is funded by the 2024 Winston Faculty Research Grant.

**The Men’s Clinic at UCLA** team had four abstracts accepted for the American Urological Association annual meeting in Las Vegas: “Trends in Surgical Management of Erectile Dysfunction: Data from the AUA Quality (AQUA) Registry” (poster presentation); “Racial and Ethnic Differences in Erectile Dysfunction Treatment: A Cohort Analysis of AQUA Registry Patients” (podium session); “25th Anniversary of Microdissection Testicular Sperm Extraction: Advancements in Sperm Retrieval for Non-Obstructive Azoospermia” (podium session); and “Prevalence of Hypogonadism and Testosterone Screening Practices in Men with Osteopenia and Osteoporosis: A Retrospective Cohort Study” (moderated poster).

## UCLA UROLOGY RECEIVES FUNDING TO SUPPORT JEDI INITIATIVES

For the second consecutive year, UCLA Urology has received funding from the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine's (DGSOM) Office of Inclusive Excellence (OIE) in support of its Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) projects. OIE's mission is to promote and sustain an inclusive environment within the DGSOM community, ensuring that all members can thrive.

As part of its efforts to weave JEDI into the fabric of the department, UCLA Urology has pursued wide-ranging initiatives, including programs supporting underrepresented urology residents; mentorship for underrepresented medical students without home urology programs as well as those at UCLA; a program to enhance the retention and wellness of new staff; strong community engagement efforts through partnerships in underserved areas of Los Angeles; and a focus on leveraging partnerships to improve patient care in underrepresented communities.

## Faculty Impact Transcends Urology

*continued from page 3*

treatment in recent years, now approved for several hematologic cancers. The CAR T product is being manufactured by Kite in El Segundo, the first manufacturing CAR T factory in the country, in addition to new facilities in California, Maryland, and Amsterdam. Kite Pharma was acquired by Gilead in 2017, and operates as an independent subsidiary headquartered in Santa Monica, with more than 4,000 employees and a global sales force. Another company founded by Dr. Belldegrun in San Francisco, Cell Design Labs, was also acquired by Gilead in 2017, and was eventually merged into Kite/Gilead.

Dr. Belldegrun has launched several other companies that have generated significant progress in the immunotherapy field. One of the companies, Santa Monica-based Neogene Therapeutics, is developing next-generation immunotherapy for solid tumors using engineering of the T cell receptors. Dr. Belldegrun is also a founding donor of the new California Institute for Immunology & Immunotherapy at UCLA, a public-private partnership that aims to translate scientific discoveries into next-generation vaccines and immune-based therapies. Dr. Pantuck has most recently served as chairman, co-founder, and chief medical officer of Athos Therapeutics, which is developing therapies for disorders of immune function — including inflammatory bowel disease and other autoimmune diseases.

Dr. Belldegrun is also a founder of several other biotechnology companies that are developing innovative therapies for urological cancers. Agensys, based in Santa Monica, developed a blockbuster drug, Enfortumab (Padcev), for the treatment of advanced bladder cancer; it was acquired by Gilead and is now part of Pfizer. Cougar Biotechnology in Westwood developed the prostate cancer drug Abiraterone (Zytiga) that was acquired by Janssen, JNJ. Allogene in San Francisco is currently developing allogeneic cell therapy. Its Allo CAR T for the treatment of kidney cancer is now in phase 2 of development with the hope of becoming the first approved allogeneic cell therapy in the U.S.

“Immunotherapy is now a \$100 billion industry in cancer, and we have moved to autoimmune disease, neurology, and other areas,” Dr. Belldegrun says. “Between our immunotherapy treatments and the innovative direction we have been able to take in urologic oncology, this is a very exciting time.”

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

### The Menon Family Foundation



After going through urology residency training together in Baltimore in the 1970s, Dr. Mani Menon (r.) and Dr. Jacob Rajfer (l.) pursued disparate career paths.

Dr. Menon ultimately became founding director and the Raj and Padma Vattikuti Distinguished Chair of the Vattikuti Urology Institute at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, where he established the world's first cancer-oriented robotics program and was influential in developing robotic surgery techniques for prostate, kidney, and bladder cancer patients — as well as training many of the leading robotic surgeons in the U.S. and around the world.

Dr. Rajfer ended up at UCLA, where he established one of the leading basic-science research programs in a field of importance: impotence. Collaborating with Louis Ignarro, PhD, distinguished emeritus professor of pharmacology, who won the 1998 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for this work — and with then-resident William Aronson, MD, now UCLA professor of urology — Dr. Rajfer helped describe the molecular events surrounding the production of nitric oxide, the chemical responsible for the erectile process, which explain in detail how drugs like Viagra work in helping men with erectile dysfunction. Dr. Rajfer at that time was chief of urology at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, a position he held from 1980 to 2014, as well as chief of andrology at UCLA. He became emeritus in 2017, but continues to serve in the UCLA Men's Health Program as a distinguished emeritus professor of urology.

The two remained in touch over the years, getting together at national meetings where, in addition to catching up as friends, they engaged in fruitful discussions as Dr. Menon sought to develop robotic surgery techniques that would preserve potency. “The issue with the radical prostatectomy procedure was the side effect of erectile dysfunction,” Dr. Rajfer says. “So we were interested in melding together our erectile dysfunction knowledge and his surgical techniques.”

Now, the Menon Family Foundation has selected UCLA Urology as one of a handful of leading academic urology departments across the country to be inaugural recipients of a Menon Academic Program grant to support inter-institutional collaborative research. The foundation designated a new \$1 million endowment to establish the Jacob Rajfer Award for Collaborative Research at UCLA, with the annual payout supporting a UCLA Urology trainee in their fourth year of residency, which is devoted to research. The program positions UCLA Urology to include peer research collaboration in its trainee scholarship, with fourth-year residents encouraged to team with research residents at one of the other nine funded institutions. The program will also foster cross-institutional mentorship among faculty and trainees.

“Mani recognizes that collaboration — not only within an institution, but also across institutions — can be instrumental in jump-starting important research,” Dr. Rajfer says. “I am thrilled that his foundation chose UCLA to further these efforts, and humbled that this program at UCLA will bear my name.”





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School of Medicine

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U.S. News & World Report's annual Best Hospitals survey ranks UCLA Health on the 2024-2025 Best Hospitals Honor Roll, which represents the top hospitals nationally for excellence in multiple areas of care. In California, UCLA Health ranked as the #1 state and regional hospital. UCLA Urology was ranked as the nation's #4 urology department.



# The Men's Clinic at UCLA

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Men's Clinic at UCLA (TMC) offers an FDA-approved long-acting testosterone therapy. For men with low testosterone, Testopel, a five-minute in-office procedure, gives up to four months of time-released testosterone therapy. TMC's expert providers perform hundreds of pellet insertion procedures every year, with unparalleled results.

*The Men's Clinic at UCLA is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary health and wellness center located in Santa Monica, with a satellite clinic in Burbank. For more information or to make an appointment, call (310) 794-7700.*



**Give Now.  
Here's How.**

Contributions to UCLA Urology support our research programs and help our faculty make the cutting-edge discoveries that can save lives. You can make a gift to UCLA Urology by logging on to <http://giving.ucla.edu/urology>. Please call (310) 968-1560 if you have any questions about making a gift to UCLA Urology.

### UPDATE

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