



UCLA UROLOGY

UPDATE



Above left: UCLA Urology's Dr. Lynn Stothers is a leader in bringing evidence-based integrative medicine to patients. Right: Dr. Stothers and UCLA Urology resident Dr. Kyle Zuniga with a noninvasive light-based technology used to address brain-mediated urinary tract and pelvic floor disorders.

UCLA Urologist Brings Integrative Medicine Treatments to Patients

Lynn Stothers, MD, MHSc, was well into her third decade as an accomplished surgeon-scientist and professor of urology at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver when she decided to go back to school.

Dr. Stothers joined the UCLA Urology faculty earlier this year as a professor-in-residence, returning to the department where, in 1995, she completed fellowship training in female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery. After learning under the tutelage of Dr. Shlomo Raz, a world leader in the field and currently a UCLA Urology distinguished professor emeritus, Dr. Stothers went back to UBC, where she had completed residency training, and became a leader in her own right. In 2020, she won the American Urological Association's prestigious Politano Award for her career-long excellence in clinical

care and research in urinary incontinence and global health.

But increasingly during her career, Dr. Stothers found herself frustrated by the limitations of conventional therapies. "Despite our best efforts, many of the areas I am focused on in urology have drugs with significant side effects," she explains. "There are surgeries that fail to help patients, even in the best of hands. And we have disorders for which we don't have effective treatments at all. I became very interested in finding alternatives for patients — and, looking into some of the aspects

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Top photo: UCLA Urology resident Dr. Kyle Zuniga (l.), UCLA Urology resident Dr. John Cabri (center), and UCLA Urology professor Dr. Lynn Stothers demonstrate the use of a noninvasive light-based technology for treating brain-mediated urinary tract and pelvic floor disorders. Bottom photo: Dr. Stothers with Dr. Christine Burke, a UCLA Urology fellow in Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery, displaying a wearable tracker used to better understand nocturia, a condition characterized by the frequent need to urinate during the night.

of integrative medicine involving evidence-based lifestyle behaviors that are modifiable, I saw potential applications. The scientific foundations of integrative medicine were growing rapidly.”

Dr. Stothers was first drawn to integrative medicine not long after completing her UCLA Urology fellowship. At UBC, she began delving into the science of cranberries, a major crop in British Columbia, for the prevention of urinary tract infection. She received funding for her work from the National Institutes of Health in the U.S., which had just launched a National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine — since renamed the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH).

The NCCIH continued to grow, promoting rigorous research into integrative health strategies — and so did Dr. Stothers’ interest in the discipline. In 2021, she decided to pursue a fellowship in integrative medicine at the University of Arizona, which she completed this summer. “I wanted to get to the heart of the matter and really learn the curriculum, rather than just studying it casually,” she explains.

Within the field, Dr. Stothers notes, integrative medicine is defined as whole-person medicine focusing on therapies and lifestyle approaches that make use of all health care disciplines to optimize health and healing. When she speaks with her patients about it, “I describe it to them as ‘lifestyle medicine-plus,’” she says. “It’s taking our existing, evidence-based therapies and interlacing evidence-based applications from lifestyle medicine.”

“There is a great deal of support for integrative medicine, within UCLA Health and our department.”

Those applications are wide-ranging — including diet and exercise, botanicals and supplements, mind-body practices, and aspects of Traditional Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine. “These have largely been excluded from most of our guidelines and therapeutic pathways in the past,” Dr. Stothers says. “But what’s really exciting is that integrative medicine approaches tend to be accessible, cost-effective, and within the control of the individual patient.”

Dr. Stothers’ interest and expertise in integrative medicine will be a boon for patients in the Division of Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery, which is jointly based in UCLA’s Department of Urology and Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology. “The establishment of an integrative medicine program within our division will allow us to offer new treatment options for many of our patients,” says Victor Nitti, MD, the division’s chief and the Shlomo Raz, MD, Chair in Urology. “Dr. Stothers’ evidenced-based approach will not only provide optimal care, but will also allow us to develop new and innovative treatments for our urology and urogynecology patients. This further supports our commitment to providing individualized, multidisciplinary care.”

As part of her new position on the UCLA Urology faculty, Dr. Stothers will collaborate with other integrative medicine faculty at UCLA, continuing her interest in developing novel strategies for the diagnosis and treatment of patients with urinary incontinence. In addition to her research on cranberries for preventing urinary tract infections, she has engaged in studies using standing MRI technology to investigate how various postures affect the urethra and bladder — research

designed to advance the use of yoga as therapy for urinary incontinence through a better understanding of the underlying biomechanics. A third area of Dr. Stothers’ research involves developing noninvasive light-based technologies, including near-infrared spectroscopy,

to address brain-mediated urinary tract and pelvic floor dysfunction. The research has been supported by the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation and NIH collaborative funding.

But Dr. Stothers points out that integrative medicine applications are not confined to her urologic subspecialty. For example, the DASH

Integrative Medicine

Integrative Medicine (IM) has been defined as “a practice of medicine that reaffirms the relationship between practitioner and patient; focuses on the whole person; is informed by evidence; and makes use of all appropriate therapeutic approaches and disciplines to achieve optimal health and healing.”

The fact that it is evidence-based distinguishes IM from alternative medicine. It is also important to stress that IM makes use of *all* appropriate therapeutic approaches. It is not meant to be a sole substitute for surgical or pharmaceutical therapies where there is an evidence base for their use; rather, IM practices are complementary to, and may be applied in conjunction with, surgical and pharmaceutical treatments — and, in the setting of sufficient scientific evidence, they are applied just as a surgical or pharmacologic therapy would be.

Within urology, it is now recognized that female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery (FPMRS) is an area in which the focus is frequently on improving quality of life. This makes FPMRS ripe for transformation with a coordinated approach to dramatically improve patient care, satisfaction, and outreach. But IM applications relevant to urology go well beyond FPMRS — crossing all of the subspecialties, including oncologic care, endourology, and men’s health. Moreover, since many of the applications within IM can be self-directed, they have the advantage of being low-cost and within the scope of self-care, which increases their accessibility.

UCLA Urology is increasingly offering IM within the scope of the care provided in its clinical programs. In addition, UCLA is home to a group of dedicated and interested health care providers who have come together to form the UCLA Health Integrative Medicine Collaborative. For anyone interested in learning more about IM, the UCLA Health Integrative Medicine Collaborative will hold its annual 2023 conference November 3 on the UCLA campus, open to health care professionals and the public at large.

For more information about IM offered through UCLA Urology, visit www.uclaurology.com. To make an appointment, call (310) 794-7700.



diet, often prescribed for individuals with hypertension, has also been found to be effective in preventing kidney stones. Dr. Stothers is interested in developing “teaching kitchens” to help patients implement dietary change that could apply to a number of other areas of urology, from bowel disorders to perioperative care. She notes that a substantial body of evidence supports the use of nonpharmaceutical approaches to the management of chronic pain, as well as biofeedback for pelvic floor training in patients with urinary incontinence and other mindfulness-based approaches to pain management and perioperative care.

Men’s health concerns such as erectile dysfunction represent another area ripe for these treatments. “Male sexual dysfunction is a perfect model for integrative medicine,” says Jesse N. Mills, MD, UCLA Urology clinical professor and director of the Men’s Clinic at UCLA. “When a man loses erectile function, it is potentially a sign of heart disease or another systemic illness. Couple that with the psychological devastation wrought by erectile dysfunction and you quickly see how this man’s problem reaches far beyond his urologic issue. Applying principles of integrative medicine to holistically approach this man’s sexual dysfunction will result in more patient-centered care and involve men in taking a more active role in restoring their function.”

Overall, Dr. Stothers says, the evidence base is strong for many integrative medicine treatments, whereas other areas remain in preclinical development. “That’s why it’s so important that NCCIH and various foundations are supporting this kind of research,” she says. “In the past, research was lacking, but with this growth in funding we are seeing a tremendous increase in both the number of high-level scientific journals dedicated to integrative medicine and in the quality of research published in those journals.”

Having completed her own fellowship, Dr. Stothers has begun working with UCLA Urology colleagues to develop an integrative medicine curriculum for the department’s residents and fellows, as well as expanding the research opportunities and ensuring that patients have access to the treatments. “UCLA has a large number of health professionals who are interested in these techniques, and many who have been trained and certified,” Dr. Stothers says. “There is a great deal of support for integrative medicine, both within UCLA Health and within our department. And critically, the community here really values these kinds of therapies, and many people are eager to participate in studies to help us develop the science. What I have come to appreciate as I’ve taken a deep dive into this curriculum is that in many other specialties, integrative medicine occurs routinely. In urology we have the evidence, but there has been little implementation. I’m excited to work with colleagues, trainees, and patients to help change that.”

ALUMNI PROFILE

Aqsa A. Khan, MD



It's been a decade since Dr. Aqsa A. Khan completed her UCLA Urology residency, but Dr. Khan continues to draw on the lessons from that experience — and pass them on to trainees as vice chair of education for the urology department at Mayo Clinic in Phoenix, Arizona, and associate program director of the department's residency training program.

As a Mayo Clinic urologist, Dr. Khan's focus is on benign, lower urinary tract diseases — treating predominantly women for conditions that include urinary incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, fistulas, and bladders in need of reconstructive surgery. “I love having the opportunity to improve the quality of life of patients experiencing these extremely sensitive, debilitating conditions,” she says.

It's an interest Dr. Khan traces to her residency training at UCLA, where she was inspired to go into female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery (FPMRS) by Dr. Shlomo Raz, a pioneer of the field, along with the FPMRS fellows. Dr. Khan then drew further inspiration from her fellowship training at NYU under Dr. Victor Nitti, who is now chief of UCLA Urology's FPMRS division.

“I am extremely honored to have had the opportunity to train at UCLA,” Dr. Khan says. “We were with worldwide leaders who were forward-thinking and had already contributed so much to the field. We got to work on such a wide variety of cases, in incredibly diverse settings. It's an experience that will always stay with me, and one I expect will benefit many patients going forward.”

In addition to working with residents, Dr. Khan serves as director of student wellness for the Alix School of Medicine at Mayo Clinic Arizona. In that role, she works with students and administrators to identify, discuss, and manage issues related to wellness, one of which is the all-too-common phenomenon of burnout. “There will always be a need for rigorous training, given how much there is to learn,” Dr. Khan says. “But I emphasize the importance of prioritizing your own wellness by making time for the things that give you joy, because if you're a provider who's not well, it could filter down to suboptimal care, and we may end up losing providers who leave health care.”

The compassion Dr. Khan shows for the medical students she oversees reflects her conviction that for any physician, knowledge and technical skills aren't enough. “When you're talking to a patient or family member who has a scary diagnosis or is going into a surgery, morality, kindness, and empathy are so important,” she says. “That human connection will always be part of medicine. And for me, that learning started at UCLA.”

NEW FACES

Juan José Andino, MD, MBA



Dr. Andino joins UCLA Urology as a health sciences assistant clinical professor and an inaugural recipient of the DGSOM Bruin Scholars award, which supports his efforts in justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Dr. Andino's clinical work includes all aspects of andrology and men's health, including erectile dysfunction, infertility, and Peyronie's Disease. In addition to seeing patients in Santa Monica, he will serve the community on the Martin Luther King, Jr., campus, where UCLA Urology provides and oversees urology care. Dr. Andino earned his MD and MBA from the University of Michigan, where he also completed his urology residency training. He completed his fellowship in male reproductive medicine and surgery at UCLA.

Nima Nassiri, MD



Dr. Nassiri joins the department as a health sciences assistant clinical professor. Dr. Nassiri, who sees patients in UCLA Urology's Westwood location, focuses clinically on all aspects of kidney transplantation and related urological conditions. His research interests are in immunological tolerance among kidney transplant recipients, as well as novel approaches to bladder substitution. After earning his MD at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine, Dr. Nassiri completed his urology residency training at USC and his fellowship in kidney transplantation at UCLA.

Alan Yaghoubian, MD



As a health sciences assistant clinical professor, Dr. Yaghoubian primarily sees patients at UCLA Urology's North Campus location in Santa Clarita, treating all aspects of endourology and stones, as well as BPH and general urology. His academic interests are in pedagogy and clinical trials in patients with stones and benign prostatic hyperplasia. Dr. Yaghoubian earned his MD from the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine, then completed his urology training at the Harvard Urologic Surgery Residency Program at Massachusetts General Hospital, and a fellowship in endourology and stones at Mount Sinai in New York City.

Letter from the Chair



As a leading urology program based in a preeminent academic health system, UCLA Urology takes pride in its ability to provide state-of-the-art diagnosis and treatment. We offer our patients the best evidence-based care that Western medicine has to offer, and through our research we advance the science, leading to new and improved therapies..

But with that pride must come humility — including the recognition that we don't have all the answers. Within urology, and throughout medicine, there are conditions for which our treatments are not always effective — and even when they are effective, patients may be left with bothersome symptoms.

*[Integrative medicine]
can enhance patient
care in many
symptom-driven
areas of urology.*

In recent years, the field of urology has increasingly recognized the value of incorporating traditional therapies, from acupuncture and acupressure to herbs and supplements to yoga. Approaches that fall outside the scope of Western medicine were once viewed as alternatives, but the fast-growing field of integrative health employs these non-medical treatments as an enhancement of our Western therapies. And in urology, many of these integrative therapies are proving to be successful in managing symptoms, even where we don't fully understand the way they work.

The recruitment to the UCLA Urology faculty of Dr. Lynn Stothers, who is featured in this issue's cover story, represents a milestone for our department as we expand our integrative urology offerings. Dr. Stothers brings a wealth of experience as a clinician who was trained in the classic medical model — her fellowship in female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery was here at UCLA, under the tutelage of the world-renowned Dr. Shlomo Raz. But in her practice over the last two-plus decades at the University of British Columbia, Dr. Stothers has also become a leader in integrative urology — equally comfortable discussing how patients can improve their symptoms through dietary changes, relaxation therapies and other non-medical strategies as she is conducting functional MRI and other tests to determine and address what is occurring at the cellular and tissue level.

This holistic approach to treatment can enhance patient care in many symptom-driven areas of urology, from men's health to chronic prostate and pelvic pain. Integrative urology is welcomed by many patients — particularly here in Southern California, long at the vanguard of new clinical approaches. As a department, we are leaning into integrative urology in the treatments we offer, the research we conduct, and our training of medical students, residents and fellows. Even for conditions we don't completely understand, there is much we can do to make the lives of our patients better.

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

Kudos

Mamdouh N. Aker, MD, UCLA Urology resident; **Wayne G. Brisbane, MD**, UCLA Urology assistant professor; **Lorna Kwan, MPH**, principal statistician; **Samantha Gonzalez, MA**, database manager; **Alan M. Priester, PhD**, assistant project scientist; **Adam Kinnaird, MD, PhD**, former UCLA Urology fellow; **Merdie K. Delfin, MSN, NP**, research coordinator; **Ely Felker, MD**, UCLA radiology resident; **Anthony E. Sisk, DO**, UCLA assistant clinical professor of pathology and laboratory medicine; **David Kuppermann, MD**, UCLA urology fellow in urologic oncology; and **Leonard S. Marks, MD**, UCLA Urology professor and deKernion Endowed Chair in Urology, had their manuscript, “Cryotherapy for partial gland ablation of prostate cancer: Oncologic and safety outcomes,” published in *Cancer Medicine*.

Andre Belarmino, MD, UCLA Urology resident, has been awarded a grant from the Panacea Foundation, which seeks to strengthen the underrepresented ethnic and racial minority pipeline of physicians by providing support to physician trainees with a shared mission of improving the diversity of the medical field.

Richard J. Boxer, MD, UCLA Urology clinical professor, and co-authors **Dr. Juan José Andino, MD, MBA**, UCLA Urology assistant clinical professor, and Nicholas W. Eyrich, MD, had their manuscript, “Overview of telehealth in the United States since the COVID-19 public health emergency: A narrative review,” published in the journal *mHealth*. The article shows that the growth of telehealth during COVID-19 was well received and did not have a negative impact on patient care.

Arnold Chin, MD, PhD, was promoted to professor of urology in recognition of his excellence in research, teaching, patient care, and service.

Richard Ehrlich, MD, UCLA Urology professor emeritus, has a new photography book, “Sequoia Reimagined: It Remains to Be Seen,” capturing the majesty of the sequoia giants in a series of images while utilizing creativity and imagination in

color. The book is published by Edition One and available as of September 2023.

Isla Garraway, MD, PhD, UCLA Urology professor and director of urologic research, and **Matthew Rettig, MD**, UCLA Urology professor, received a \$1.65 million grant from the VA Office of Research and Development for their project, “Military Exposure Contributors to Prostate Cancer Incidence, Aggressiveness, and Molecular Features in the United States Veterans Population.” Dr. Garraway was also awarded a \$1 million Prostate Cancer Foundation challenge grant for her study, “The Rate Elements Skewing Outcomes Linked to Veteran Equity in PCa (RESOLVE PCa) Consortium: Multilevel Modeling to Predict Prostate Cancer Incidence and Aggressiveness.” Dr. Garraway will act as lead site investigator for a \$3.9 million grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs for her project, “Mutational Processes Underlying Tumor Development in United States Veterans.” She also received a \$1.2 million VA CSRD Merit Award for her study, “Multilevel Factors Impacting Clinical Outcomes in Veterans With Intermediate-risk Prostate Cancer,” and a \$6.4 million VA CSRD Merit Award for her study, “AI-based Prediction of Metastatic Progression in High-Risk Localized Prostate Cancer.”

Andrew Goldstein, PhD, associate professor of molecular, cell & developmental biology and urology, received a \$900,000 Idea Development Award from the U.S. Department of Defense to study how metabolism changes in prostate cancer as a result of hormone therapy, the most commonly used treatment for men with advanced disease.

Kathy H. Huen, MD, MPH, UCLA Urology assistant clinical professor, and co-authors Carol A. Davis-Dao, Lois Sayrs, Louis Ehwerhemuepha, Chloe Martin-King, and Zeev Kain had their abstract, “Adults with spina bifida fare worse than young adults: A novel systemic vulnerability in urinary tract infection-related hospital care,” accepted for a podium presentation at the Society

of Pediatric Urology Fall Congress in Houston in September 2023. Dr. Huen and co-authors Amanda Macaraeg, Carol A. Davis-Dao, Sarah Williamson, Tim Boswell, Zain Suhale, Joshua Chamberlin, Elias Wehbi, Kai-wen Chuang, Heidi Stephany, and Antoine “Tony” Khoury, had their manuscript, “The double-face onlay-tube-onlay transverse preputial flap: An advantageous alternative to the two-stage hypospadias repair?,” accepted by the journal *Pediatric Urology*.

Kymora Scotland, MD, PhD, UCLA Urology assistant professor, director of endourology research, and associate director of the Endourology Fellowship Program at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, was awarded a 2023 Urology Care Foundation Humanitarian Grant to provide urologic screening events in South Los Angeles. “Early screening is key to prostate cancer treatment, and discussion of diseases such as kidney stones, incontinence, and erectile dysfunction can have a striking effect on quality of life for those suffering with these conditions,” Dr. Scotland says. “I hope to use these screening events as a way to educate the population and provide them with the tools they need to obtain the appropriate care.”

Jennifer Singer, MD, UCLA Urology clinical professor and Peter Starrett Chair in Medical Education, has been named vice chair for education in the Department of Urology. Dr. Singer has, for the past 12 years, provided dedicated service as UCLA Urology’s director of education. She will continue these duties in her new title as she expands her experience and leadership in medical education.

Andrew Zilavy, MD, UCLA Urology fellow in genital gender-affirmation surgery, and co-authors Maxx Gallegos, Brenna Briles, Min Jun, Curtis Crane, and Richard Santucci, had their abstract, “Enhanced recovery after phalloplasty surgery clinical pathway,” accepted to Plastic Surgery The Meeting, to be held in Austin, Texas, in October.

UCLA Urology Research Assistant Starts Med School



Amana Liddell won't forget the year she spent working as a research assistant to UCLA Urology professor William Aronson, MD, at the Veterans Administration in West Los Angeles, where Dr. Aronson is chief of urologic oncology. The experience served as a springboard for Liddell, who received a partial scholarship to attend the USC Keck School of Medicine, where she recently started her first year.

"It was eye-opening to see all the steps that go into making research happen."

"I had an amazing experience working with Dr. Aronson," Liddell says. "It was eye-opening to see all the steps that go into making research happen, from

study initiation to subject visits to data analysis and more. Additionally, it was really interesting to explore the world of urology. I had no idea about all the different conditions, procedures, and surgeries that make up the specialty. I especially loved having the opportunity to work at the VA with our veteran community."

Liddell says her time with Dr. Aronson inspired her to explore urology, and especially clinical research, in medical school and beyond. "I am excited to incorporate the lessons I've learned from Dr. Aronson and his research into my future as a physician," she says.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Warren Spitz



At age 63, Warren Spitz took pride in nearly always being "the healthiest guy in the room."

The Toronto, Canada-based businessman and philanthropist has run 14 marathons and enjoys slalom waterskiing at speeds exceeding 35 miles per hour. "Never a surgery, never a day in

the hospital," says Spitz, founder and CEO of UCS Forest Group, one of North America's leading distributors and importers of high-quality hardwood lumber, specialty softwoods, and decorative panels. "And then, 'bam.' It was really jarring."

In early 2021, Spitz's primary care physician recommended he have a full-body MRI exam, though there was no reason to suspect anything was wrong. "It was purely preventative," Spitz says. The test indicated the possibility of cancer in the pelvic area. Spitz followed up with a urologist, and a biopsy confirmed that he had early-stage prostate cancer.

Spitz consulted with five urologists — two in Canada and three in Southern California — before opting to undergo a robotic prostatectomy performed by Robert E. Reiter, MD, UCLA Urology professor, chief of urologic oncology, and director of the Prostate Cancer Program. "I really liked his presentation and his background," Spitz says. "He looked at the MRI himself and said that although the biopsy indicated a potentially low-risk cancer, he was concerned that the imaging could reflect something more aggressive."

Two years later, Spitz is back to being the healthiest guy in the room. And, with an eye toward ensuring that many other men can benefit from state-of-the-art diagnosis and treatment the way he did, Spitz recently donated \$100,000 to support the research of Dr. Reiter and the UCLA Prostate Cancer Program.

"If there is an epidemic in cancer for men, it's prostate," Spitz says. "More research will lead to a better understanding of the illness, and both the diagnosis and the treatment options will only continue to improve."

Spitz and his family, including his wife Maureen and three children, are active supporters of cultural and biomedical causes. Among other things, they created the Spitz Fellows Program for Indigenous women at the University of British Columbia Sauder School of Business, where Spitz chairs the faculty advisory board. The program provides Indigenous women the opportunity to receive a world-class business education.

"Our general philosophy is that no one achieves financial success alone, so if you're in the position to do so, you have to give back," Spitz says. "We all want a better society."



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UCLA Health hospitals in
Westwood and Santa Monica placed
5 in the nation in the 2022-23
U.S. News and World Report rankings.



The Men's Clinic at UCLA

DID YOU KNOW?

Men over 55 who engage in sex regularly live an average of 5-7 years longer than less sexually active men. Good sexual health depends on optimal hormone, cardiovascular, mental, and penile function. The fellowship-trained experts at The Men's Clinic at UCLA perform comprehensive evaluations of men to identify ways to maximize their sexual and overall health.

*The Men's Clinic at UCLA is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary health and wellness center located in Santa Monica, now with locations in Burbank and Santa Clarita.
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) 206-4565 if you have any questions about making a gift to UCLA Urology.

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