



Division of Liver and Pancreas Transplantation

Quarterly Newsletter | October 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

CHIEF'S UPDATE

As 2020 has drawn to a close and a new year has begun, I cannot help but reflect on what a tumultuous year we all experienced. There is certainly one positive notion that came out of 2020 — the year exposed a multitude of major challenges ranging from healthcare, social justice, economic, political, and environmental. The past year has been revealing, and now that our eyes have been opened to many underlying issues, 2021 should be a year to act. For that, I am thankful to have lived through 2020.

Our division weathered the storms of 2020 quite well. While we faced our own internal challenges related to the pandemic, we were able to successfully maneuver through and around them. I am proud to say that our professional teams rose to the challenges and delivered top-tier medical and surgical care to our patients suffering from organ failure. Our programs achieved high transplant volumes and associated excellent outcomes. We developed novel operating procedures for all aspects of the program and learned to work together in new formats. Even though we are hopeful that 2021 brings about change, we continue to function in our new normal, albeit with safeguards in place.

In this newsletter, you will find updates on many of our programs and personnel. As our last newsletter paid tribute to our outgoing Chief of the Division, this one highlights the current Chief.

On behalf of our teams, I would like to wish you all a healthy and safe new year.

Douglas G. Farmer, MD
Professor of Surgery
Interim Chief, Division of Liver and Pancreas Transplantation

Personnel Profile

Douglas G. Farmer, MD



In March 2020, with the pending retirement of Dr. Ronald Busuttil, Dr. Douglas G. Farmer was appointed as the interim Chief of the Division of Liver and Pancreas Transplantation. Dr. Farmer has had a long-standing interest in transplantation dating back to high school and college. He attended Duke University, where he graduated with honors in 1985; from there, he obtained his MD degree from Duke University School of Medicine. He was then recruited to UCLA by Dr. Busuttil to train in General Surgery and Multiorgan Transplantation. He joined the faculty at UCLA Health in 1998 and has been promoted through the years to Professor of Surgery.

Dr. Farmer has had a broad clinical interest that includes liver transplantation, intestinal transplantation, hepatobiliary surgery, complex gastrointestinal reconstruction, and portal hypertension. Through these interests he has performed over 1300 transplant procedures on adults and children. He has served as the Surgical Director of the Pediatric Liver Transplant Program, and the Adult and Pediatric Intestinal Transplant Programs. He has both clinical and basic science research experience, published nearly 200 manuscripts in peer reviewed journals, received numerous research grants, and served on many editorial boards. He is active in multiple surgical societies where he has held leadership positions. He is currently the Chair of the Transplantation Accreditation and Certification Council, a subsidiary of the American Society of Transplant Surgeons, which oversees further development of transplant surgical training in the United States and Canada. Dr. Farmer brings a wealth of experience to our division and we welcome him into his new role.

Milestones and Accolades

- **Vatche G. Agopian, MD** assumed role of Deputy Editor for the journal *Liver Transplantation*. He also received two NIH/NCI R01 awards for the following studies:
 - Integrated analysis of HCC CTCs for Liver Transplant Candidate Selection (5yr, \$2.9 million)
 - Covalent Chemistry on Nanosubstrates Enables Molecular Analysis of Purified Extracellular Vesicles in HCC (5yr, \$2.97 million)
- **Gerald Lipshutz, MD** received a \$10,000 pilot award from the Association for Creatine Deficiencies for Gene Therapy for Guanidinoacetate Methyltransferase Deficiency.
- **Jerzy W. Kupiec-Weglinski MD, PhD** received new funding. NIH-NIAID. 1R01AI155856-01. The Relaxin Receptor Gr/Rxrp1 Signaling in Liver Transplant Ischemia-Reperfusion Injury and the Inflammation Resolution. 9/22/2020-8/31/2025.
- **Intestinal Transplant Program** celebrated its 29th anniversary on November 12th, 2020. Over the course of nearly three decades, the program has grown from what used to be a procedure aimed at rescuing desperately ill patients, to one that provides state-of-the-art care for patients with intestinal diseases and parenteral nutritional needs.

- Pancreas Transplant Program celebrated its 27th anniversary on November 14th, 2020. This program offers pancreas transplantation as either *simultaneous kidney pancreas* or *pancreas alone* procedures. In addition, autologous islet cell isolation and transplantation has been developed and expanded for select patients.

Divisional Events

Divisional Grand Rounds

Our Divisional Grand Rounds feature subjects of interest relevant to hepatology, transplantation, and hepatobiliary cancer. The format consists of formal 45-minute lectures led by renowned speakers followed by a Q&A on the selected topic.

The events will be held via Zoom and meeting details are provided upon registration. To sign up, please email vyavila@mednet.ucla.edu or ssaab@mednet.ucla.edu

Past Grand Rounds

October 13, 2020

- In October, we heard an interesting lecture entitled “**Update on Interventional Endoscopy Applications for Patients with Liver Disease**” presented by **Adarsh Thaker, MD**, Assistant Professor of Medicine at David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. This talk shed light on the possible roles for endoscopy in treating various manifestations of liver disease.

November 10, 2020

- Last November, **Dr. Jeff Bronstein**, Professor of Neurology at David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, gave an excellent lecture on the neurologic issues in liver disease entitled “**A Neurologist’s Approach to Wilson’s Disease**”.

December 8, 2020

- The December Grand Rounds was cancelled due to the upcoming winter holidays.

Upcoming Grand Rounds

February 2, 2021

- “**To Tweet or Not to Tweet: The Viral Power of Twitter to Engage in Healthcare**” presented by **Ravina Kullar, PharmD, MPH**

March 2, 2021

- “**Liver Diseases and Transplants in Pregnancy: When our Paths Cross**” presented by **Christina Han, MD**

April 6, 2021

- “**Contemporary Locoregional Therapy for Hepatocellular Carcinoma**” presented by **Sid Padia, MD**

UCLA Liver Hour Series

Our Liver Hour Series are discussions focused on clinically relevant and controversial topics related to hepatology, hepatobiliary, and transplant surgery. The format includes a short, formal presentation followed by an interactive dialogue.

Past Liver Hours

October 1, 2020

- The October Liver Hour featured an in-depth and engaging discussion on the topic of “**Liver Disorders During Pregnancy**”. Twelve participants were able to learn from **Dr. Mohamed El Kabany’s** expertise.

November 5, 2020

- In November, **Dr. Vatche Agopian**, the Director of the Liver Cancer Center, led the discussion on the topic of “**Hepatocellular and Cholangiocellular Carcinoma**” for 20 participants.

The events will be held via Zoom and meeting details are provided upon registration. To sign up, please email vyavila@mednet.ucla.edu or ssaab@mednet.ucla.edu

December 3, 2020

- In December, the topic of “Alcoholic Hepatitis” was discussed by Dr. Beshoy Yanny for 16 participants.

Upcoming Liver Hour Topics

- January 7th, 2021: “Treatment of refractory Hepatic Encephalopathy”
- February 4th, 2021: “Primary Biliary Cholangitis”
- March 4th, 2021: “Liver Disease Care during COVID-19 and the new COVID-19 protocol”

14th Annual UCLA Liver Diseases Symposium

April 24, 2021 (8:30am - 12:30pm)

The UCLA Liver Diseases Symposium will provide a state-of-the-art update and scientific exchange on prevalent liver diseases and their complications using a multi-disciplinary approach with hepatologists and surgeons. We hope you will be able to join us virtually in April! Please reach out to the UCLA CME Office at UCLACME@mednet.ucla.edu for any questions.

Register Here



Farewells and Fresh Faces

- **Curtis D. Holt, PharmD** retired in December 2020 after 29 years of service with the division. He served as the Director of Clinical Research for the Dumont-UCLA Transplant Program and the Dumont-UCLA Pharmacokinetics Laboratory. He has been an integral part of the transplant programs, an exemplary pharmacology educator and a well-respected colleague. We wish Curtis the best in his new chapter.
- **Katerina Rybkina, NP** spent 15 years with our liver transplant program – six as an intensive care unit nurse in our liver unit followed by nine years as a nurse practitioner caring for our inpatients. Katerina was dedicated and committed to our patients and provided outstanding care. She has decided to take on the challenge of a new organ system and has taken a position with the UCLA Lung Transplant Program. We thank her for her service and wish her the best moving forward.
- **Marci Nomura, NP** joined the post adult liver transplant coordinator team. Marcie has worked with liver transplant patients for 28 years.
- **Melissa Stanczak, NP** joined the liver service. She previously worked with the division from 2005 to 2010.

Program Highlights

Learn More
Here

ADULT LIVER TRANSPLANT

Phone 310-825-8138

Email adultlivertransplant@mednet.ucla.edu

Web www.uclahealth.org/transplants/liver

PEDIATRIC LIVER TRANSPLANT

Call 310-825-8138

Email pedslivertransplant@mednet.ucla.edu

Web

www.uclahealth.org/transplants/liver/pediatric-transplant

INTESTINAL TRANSPLANT

Call 310-825-8138

Email intestinetransplant@mednet.ucla.edu

Web www.uclahealth.org/transplants/intestinal

PANCREAS/ISLET TRANSPLANT

Call 310-825-8138

Email pancreastransplant@mednet.ucla.edu

Web www.uclahealth.org/transplants/pancreas

LIVING DONOR LIVER TRANSPLANT PROGRAM

Call 310-825-8138

Email livingdonor@mednet.ucla.edu

Web

<https://www.uclahealth.org/transplants/liver/living-donor-transplant>

LIVER CANCER CENTER

Call 310-825-1412

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