



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

Department of Surgery

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Message from the Department Head



DR. GAIL DARLING, DEPARTMENT HEAD

This has been a growth year for the Department of Surgery. We had a successful business case application for additional surgeon resources and have recruited 21 new surgeons this year through a combination of new positions, TIP TOP, retirements, and replacements. Nine of these surgeons have already started and are featured in this report on pages 18 - 20. The other 12 will be starting in 2025 and we have 3 more positions yet to fill. These new recruits have brought new ideas and new energy to the Department allowing us to increase our surgical volumes and academic productivity.

Clinical Work

Our government embarked on the Action for Health several years ago. Our leadership team developed strategies to increase access and flow, increase surgical volumes, reduce wait lists, and ensuring Nova Scotians get timely access to care. Our role was to operationalize those strategies. We were given funding for 18 new ORs but opening those rooms was delayed until we were able to recruit nurses and other support staff, and anesthesiologists. We still have 2.5 rooms to open which we anticipate will happen by September 2025. We identified that we needed more surgeons to actually deliver more care. Government and leadership heard us and provided us with approximately 11 net new funded positions. The good news is that we are delivering on the goals of Action for Health. Even though there are still more ORs to open, and more surgeons to start work, our overall volumes are up 15% over the baseline year of 2020 and up 6% over last year's volumes. With these additional ORs we were tasked with doing an additional 2500 cases. We have not reached that target yet partly because we still have 2.5 ORs to open and 11 more surgeons to start work but already we are on our way. We have reduced our waitlist from 14089 (June 2019) to 8,736 (Feb 2025). This is a 38% reduction in patients waiting. Importantly the proportion of long waiters has also decreased and hot off the press our Lucas Gap is 9% as of Jan 31 2025 (target is 10%).

Research

Our research productivity continues to grow. Dr Mike Dunbar handed over the reins as director of research to Dr. Michael Bezuhly. His exciting vision for the Department is outlined in his message on page 8. I am grateful to Dr. Dunbar for his leadership of the research committee over the past 6 years culminating with a department wide project looking at ED bounce-backs. Data from this project is being used by Dr. Jenna Smith-Forrester, a Neurosurgeon Senior Resident, to support a business case for the development of a post-op surgical clinic at Bayer's Lake COC to reduce ED visits, reduce costs to the system and improve patient outcomes and satisfaction.



Dr. Carman Giacomantonio was selected to the Gibran and Jamile Ramia Chair in Surgical Oncology, taking over from Dr. Geoff Porter who was the inaugural chair. This endowed chair enabled amazing research productivity for Dr Porter, and we expect Dr Giacomantonio's research will also benefit from this endowment. In an academic Department of Surgery support for our researchers is so important, this work cannot be accomplished at night or on weekends. Having protected time and research infrastructure is essential to success.

Visiting Speakers

Our keynote speaker for Research Day on April 10th was Dr John Marshall (Dal Alumnus) speaking on "How Covid-19 is Changing Clinical Research". This inspiring talk illustrated what can be accomplished in a short time when like-minded people work together.

The Dr. A. S. MacDonald lecture was delivered by Dr Caitlyn Hicks from Johns Hopkins on June 5th. Her topic "Value Based Care in Vascular Surgery: We Can Do Better" clearly demonstrated the importance of monitoring patient outcomes of our interventions and critically analysing our results. In the afternoon Dr. Hicks joined us for golf at our annual golf day in Chester followed by a delicious Nova Scotia Lobster supper at the Shore Club.

Education

I am especially proud of our contributions in education: six of our surgeons are in the top 10% of Med I tutors and our cardiac surgery Program Director, Dr. David Horne was awarded Program Director of the Year. In our Dal Educational Deliverables, we met 100% of UGME requests! Our residents continue to have a stellar pass rate on the Royal College exams.

We are grateful to our nursing teams, our anesthesia colleagues, MDR staff, house-keeping, patient attendants, porters and our nursing leadership, Leanne Hickey, Adam Gillis, Karen Strickland and our superstar director of Periop Deb Garnier. Surgery is a team sport and we need and appreciate everyone bringing their best game to work everyday.

I am very proud of our Department of Surgery. Our future is brighter than ever!

Gail Darling



DR. CAITLYN HICKS



DR. DAVID HORNE,
PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR



Mission, Vision, Values

MISSION

To provide leadership and innovation in surgery, by setting and striving to exceed the highest standards for patient care, research, and education to improve the health and quality of life for the people of Atlantic Canada.

VISION

To be an internationally renowned academic department providing exemplary surgical care, specialty and sub-specialty education, research and innovation within an integrated Atlantic Regional Health Care Network.

VALUES

- Commitment to patient care, research, education and innovation
- Patient-family centric/evidence-based care
- Accountability and transparency
- Collaboration and engagement
- Professionalism and collegiality
- Advocacy and social responsibility



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2024 in Review

WE ARE

NINE DIVISIONS

Cardiac Surgery
 General Surgery
 Neurosurgery
 Orthopaedic Surgery
 Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery
 Thoracic Surgery
 Pediatric Surgery
 Plastic Surgery
 Vascular Surgery



OUR PATIENTS

ATLANTIC CANADIANS

NS Central Zone 65%
 The rest of NS 28%

PEI 3%
 NB 3%
 NL 1%

ANALYSIS

WHAT WE DO

4% ↑
148,537
PATIENT VISITS

New Patients	32,944
Follow-up Appointments	115,593
In Person	125,976
Virtual	22,561

19,670
OR CASES

47,743
OR HOURS

6% ↑

OTHER THINGS WE DO

EDUCATION

1,563 Undergraduate Teaching Hours
 Equivalent to 40 weeks of teaching

Postgraduate Teaching
 87 Surgical Residents, 127 Off-service Residents

RESEARCH

Total publications: 193
 Total Grants Held: 63
 (PI's, Co-PI's and Collaborators)
 37 held as PI and Co-PI

ADMINISTRATION

Faculty of Medicine, Royal College, National &
 International committees, and societies.



A Win For All

Although EDIA has met with some obstacles particularly south of the border, here in Nova Scotia we still believe it is important and vital to who we are as a community. I am delighted to share this story with you. This story is inspirational and attests to strength of determination and innovation by the student involved and by the team which supported them.

I met RJ last year and we were concerned he would have issues getting into the OR to do his clerkship. We strategized together, although he did most of the work. We were inspired by stories of several other surgeons who used wheel chairs. There was a podiatrist in Colorado, a pediatric surgeon and a neurosurgeon. Based on those successes we figured it is very feasible to get RJ in the OR, we just need to set ourselves up accordingly.

RJ organized acquiring a power chair. He was successful in obtaining grants to fund most of it and I believe the department of medicine helped cover some of the cost as well. We then went about the hospital to see what was and what wasn't accessible. I was personally shocked to find out how little of our hospital is accessible. Funny story: the bathrooms all have a little wheel chair on them but the doors don't open automatically.

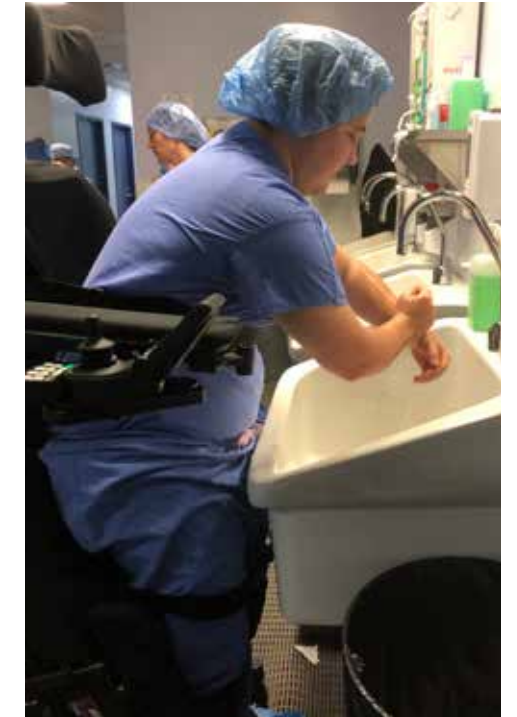
RJ and I then went to the skills lab together. We roughly practiced draping, but mostly wanted to ensure he could comfortably move around an OR table and reach over to operate. Once this was completed we moved on to organize a simulation with IPAC, OR and anesthesia staff. This was a huge success. We went through preop, how to get scrubs, developed a protocol for cleaning his power chair and scrubbed in for a simulated surgery. We even simulated an intraoperative emergency with the need to bring in a crash cart.

From here we developed a standard operating procedure (SOP) for entering and exiting the OR as well as donning and doffing / being sterile in the OR. We practiced one more time with the OR staff and felt we ironed out most of the kinks.

Last Friday, RJ came to assist on a case with a real patient. He got scrubs and his chair was cleaned with help from the patient attendants. He came into the OR and scrubbed in as any other medical student would. Once the OR started, I must admit both he and I kind of forgot he was in a power chair. He was scrubbed and at the patient side. We explained what we were doing, he assisted holding wires and endovascular devices and at case completion sutured the incision. Following this we had another case to do, this time an emergency. The room was tense, but RJ's presence was again the same as any other medical student. All and all it was a very regular day and it ran very smoothly.

We are sure more issues will pop up but I think RJ can now go into any OR at the HI.

Written by Dr. Sam Jessula, Vascular Surgeon



RJ SCRUBBING IN HIS POWER CHAIR



Research



RESEARCH CHAIR DR. BEZUHY

Since taking on the role of Departmental Research Director in June 2024, I have had the opportunity to meet with key research stakeholders, including Division Heads and Research Directors, and the outgoing Departmental Research Director Dr. Michael Dunbar. Thanks to Dr. Dunbar and Deputy Research Director Dr. Sean Christie, research within the Department has taken important leaps forward, most notably with the emergency department rebound initiative and closer collaboration with data analytics structures within Nova Scotia Health.

One of the highest research priorities identified within our Department is the need for stable common Departmental infrastructure, more specifically the identification and retention of high-quality research personnel who can assist with patient recruitment, and oversee ethics and grant proposals, particularly for clinical trials. To meet this need, the Research Committee is investing heavily in the recruitment and retention of a team of full-time research personnel who can be mobilized within or between Divisions. To improve access to biostatistical supports, we have established a formal relationship between our Department and the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology to provide cost-effective, timely biostatistical support. We have also developed a clear pathway to identify and support new surgeon-scientist before they arrive on staff so that they have the tools to hit the ground running. In the new year, we will be implementing a funding stream to identify and focus investment in research groups within the Department to improve readiness and success in Tri-Council funding competitions. The hope is that these research groups will form the impetus for the establishment of additional research chairs within the Department.

The future of research within the Department is bright owing to our ongoing investment in our people. The best is yet to come in 2025!

THE GIBRAN & JAMILE RAMIA ENDOWED CHAIR IN SURGICAL ONCOLOGY RESEARCH

Congratulations to Dr. Carman Giacomantonio, who was recently named The Gibran & Jamile Ramia Endowed Chair in Surgical Oncology. Dr. Giacomantonio is a professor of surgery and pathology at Dalhousie University and clinical scientist of the Beatrice Hunter Cancer Research Institute.

Dr. Giacomantonio began his research career in intra-tumoral immunotherapy, using a tuberculosis vaccine to stimulate immune responses against tumors, with findings published in 2004. He went on to establish a lab in the Department of Pathology in partnership with Dr. Paola Marcato. They are focusing their bench research on innovative cancer immunotherapies. In 2023, he began collaborating with Sona NanoTech Inc. to explore Gold NanoRod-based targeted hyperthermia for cancers like melanoma, breast cancer, and colorectal cancer. These findings have fostered a solidified plan for a first-in-human clinical trial of this hyperthermia therapy for metastatic melanoma in 2025.

As Ramia Chair in Surgical Oncology, Dr. Giacomantonio will establish a vibrant research program, driving innovative studies on the causes, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of malignant diseases. He will prove to be an ongoing strong mentor for young clinician scientists in the FOM.



DR. C GIACOMANTONIO

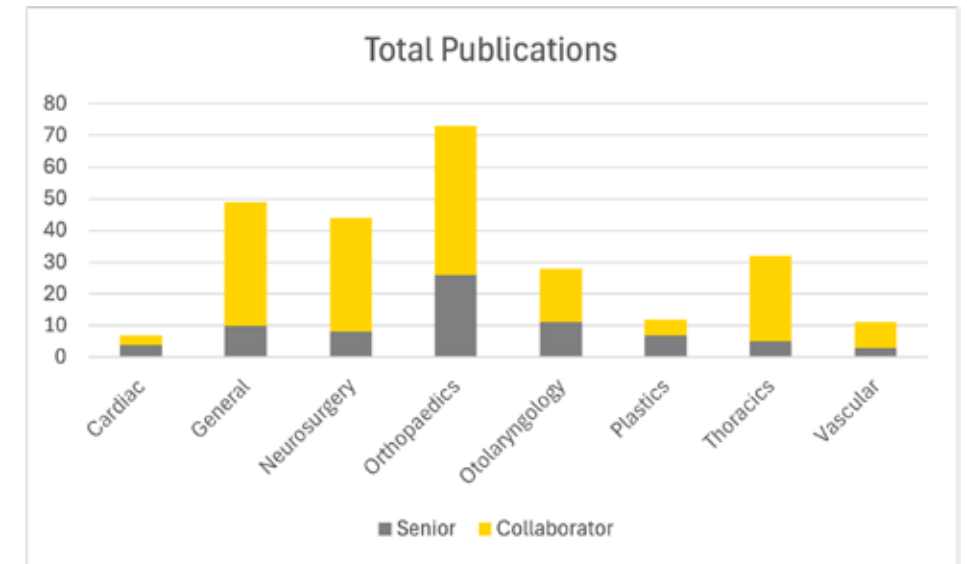


TOTAL PUBLICATIONS

In 2024 we published 193 journal articles, 74 as senior authors and 182 as contributors. To find a full list of the publications, please visit DalDOS.ca and find your way to the research section.

Publications Over Five Years (Senior / Collaborator)

2020	154	(96/137)
2021	192	(83/156)
2022	237	(93/108)
2023	205	(76/196)
2024	193	(74/182)



RESEARCH IN MEDICINE

Research in Medicine (RIM) is a Dalhousie Medical School program that provides a vehicle for medical students across both campuses in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. They will be exposed to research through their medical training in a self-directed learning format called experimental learning. Currently, members of the Department of Surgery are supervising 56 RIM students, Cardiac 7, General 7, Neurosurgery 7, Orthopaedics 20, Otolaryngology 1, Plastics 6, Thoracic 8, Vascular 3.

ED REBOUND PROJECT

The Emergency Department (ED) Rebound Project continued as a collaborative Quality Improvement initiative between the Department of Surgery Research Committee and Nova Scotia Health's Performance and Analytics team. By analyzing ED visits within 90 days of surgical discharge for 31 surgical procedures, the project delivered key insights into the rates, timing, and drivers of ED utilization, guiding strategies to improve surgical care and enhance patient outcomes.

Engaging 14 supervising staff surgeons, 5 surgical fellows, 13 residents, and 13 medical students, the project has been a platform for academic and professional achievements. To date, the work has been disseminated through one journal publication in print and four pending, as well as 18 presentations at national and international conferences earning recognition with five notable awards.

Eleven teams presented at the 2024 Department of Surgery Research Day, sparking valuable discussions within the department and gaining attention from key stakeholders, including the Nova Scotia Government's Minister of Health and Wellness.

The ED Rebound Project highlights the department's commitment to research excellence, trainee success, and the integration of research into policy and practice to drive meaningful improvements in surgical care.



Research Day



DR. G DARLING

The Annual Department of Surgery Research Day was held on April 10, 2024 at the Halifax convention Centre. The morning salutation was delivered by The Honourable Michelle Thompson, Minister of Health and Wellness. The program was demonstrative of the excellent research being done by our residents, medical students, graduate students and Fellows.

The day's morning session was led by Dr. Michael Dunbar showcasing the Departmental ED Rebound Project. Followed by presentations in Prospective Studies, Cost/Care Practices, Basic and Innovative Science, Pharmacology, Surgical Cancer Outcomes, New Surgical Techniques, Epidemiology and Quality Care, Medical Education, Decision Making and the Digital Age. There were in total 56 presentations for the day!

Dr. John Marshall from the University of Toronto delivered the noon-time Dr. Bethune Visiting Professor lecture, "How COVID-19 is Changing Clinical Research"

Congratulations to our residents winning presentations at this year's Faculty of Medicine Resident Research Day:

Dr. Ashley Robinson:
Best Clinical Research Presentation

Dr. Jenna Smith-Forrester:
Best work in Quality improvement, Medical Education, Leadership, or Administration.



DR. J MARSHALL



DR. G DARLING & DR. J BAILEY



DR. ROBERT STONE TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIP

Dr. Mark MacLean, Resident
Neurosurgery

"NMDA-Receptor Antagonism for The Prevention of Neurological Dysfunction in Traumatic Brain Injury: Results of a Randomized Pre-Clinical Trial"

BEST RESIDENT PRESENTATION

Dr. Ashley Robinson – Resident
General Surgery

"Relationship Between Hospital Surgical Volumes and Length of Stay for Hirschsprung's Disease: Preliminary Results of a Can Population-Based Study"

BEST BASIC SCIENCE PRESENTATION

Kavita Krueger - Grad Student
Department of Pharmacology

"Recessive Variants in the Intergenic NOS1AP-C10RF226 Locus Cause Kidney Disease"

BEST MEDICAL STUDENT PRESENTATION

John Gobran

HONORABLE MENTION

Neha Katote, Medical Student
General Surgery

"ED Rebound Presentation - Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography"

HONORABLE MENTION

Dr. Jenna Smith-Forrester, Surgical Resident
Neurosurgery

"ED Rebound Presentation - Posterior Spinal Decompression"
Plastic Surgery

"Investing in a Gender Affirming Surgery Program:
A Cost Analysis"



DR. G DARLING, DR. A ROBINSON & DR. M DUNBAR



DR. G DARLING, DR. J GORBAN & DR. M DUNBAR



DR. G DARLING, DR. J SMITH-FORRESTER & DR. M DUNBAR



Research Grants



	STATUS	GRANTING AGENCY	GRANT AMOUNT	TERMS	YEAR AWARDED		STATUS	GRANTING AGENCY	GRANT AMOUNT	TERMS	YEAR AWARDED
Bezuhly	Co-PI	New Frontiers Grant	\$300,000.00	3 years	2023	Giacomantonio	PI	Sidney Crosby Foundation	\$200,000.00	2 years	2022
	Co-PI	NSERC Alliance Grant (ALLRP)	\$99,406.00	1 year	2024		Co-APP	JD Irving Canadian Cancer -Challenge	\$400,000.00	3 years	2022
	PI	IWK Project Grant	\$24,970.00	2 year	2024		PI	RAMIA Chair in Surgical Oncology	\$750,000.00	5 years	2024
	PI	Invest NS Tier 1	\$15,000.00	1 year	2024	Glennie	PI	CORL Grant - Can Orth Research Legacy	\$19,580.00	2 years	2023
Christie	Co-APP	CIHR	\$520,788.00	5 years	2020	Hirsch	Co-PI	MITACS	\$100,000.00	2 years	2022
	Co-PI	NSHA	\$99,999.00	3 years	2022	Hong	Co-PI	NSHA	\$60,000.00	3 years	2023
	Co-APP	CIHR	\$99,970.00	3 years	2022	Knapp	Co-APP	NIH	\$1,314,551.00	5 years	2022
	Co-APP	Environment & Climate Change Canada	\$5,999,997.00	6 years	2020	Morris, DP	Co-APP	CIHR	\$313,652.00	4 years	2022
	Local PI	Rick Hansen SC Injury Registry	\$120,000.00	2 years	2022		Co-APP	INOVAIT	\$1,422,000.00	3 years	2022
	Co-APP	NSERC Alliance	\$470,500.00	3 years	2023	Neumann	Co-APP	RNS	\$100,000.00	2 years	2022
	Co-PI	NSHA	\$75,000.00	6 years	2019		Co-PI	GlaxoSmithKline	\$165,341.46	3 years	2022
	Co-APP	BRC Knowledge Translational Grant	\$35,000.00	3 years	2023	Spence	PI	NSHA	\$98,000.00	3 years	2022
	PI	NSHA	\$25,000.00	7 years	2018		PI	NSH Innovatio Hub	\$50,000.00	1 year	2023
					PI		NSHA	\$94,000.00	2 years	2022	
Clarke	Co-APP	Public Safety Canada	\$1,539,000.00	2 years	2023	Taylor	Co-PI	DMRF	\$40,000.00	3 years	2024
	Co-APP	Neurosciences, Metal Health/Addiction	\$887,400.00	5 years	2023		Weeks	Co-APP	Canadian Cancer Society RI - Atlantic	\$150,000.00	3 years
	Co-APP	CIHR	\$849,150.00	5 years	2022	Co-PI		Terry Fox Marathon of Hope	\$471,000.00	3 years	2023
	PI	NSHA	\$42,744.00	2 years	2022	Co-Inv		Terry Fox Marathon of Hope	\$1,200,000.00	2 years	2024
	Co-APP	NSHA	\$98,452.00	2 years	2024	Co-App		Terry Fox Marathon of Hope	\$12,000,000.00	4 years	2023
	PI	Mathematics of Information -MITACS	\$90,000.00	4 years	2024	Wallace	Co-APP	Canadian Cancer Society Breakthrough	\$5,197,880.00	5 years	2023
					PI		Lung Cancer Canada Ambition Award	\$50,000.00	1 year	2024	
					Co-PI		DRMF- Health Influencers Grant	\$250,000.00	5 years	2022	
					Co-APP		Terry Fox Research & Multiple Match	\$26,000,000.00	3 years	2023	
Drohan	Co-Inv	CIHR	\$546,976.00	4 years	2024	Co-PI	LUNGNSPEI	\$70,000.00	3 years	2024	
						Co-PI	CIHR	\$80,000.00	1 year	2024	
Dunbar	PI	QEII Chair in Arthroplasty	\$1,050,000.00	10 years	2015	Walsh	Co-APP	CIHR	\$745,872.00	5 years	2024
Dunbar / Richardson	Co-PI	MITACS accelerate Cluster	\$640,000.00	5 years	2021	Weise	PI	NSHRF	\$90,000.00	1 year	2024
	CO-APP	CIHR	\$4,482,900.00	5 years	2019		PI	Boston Scientific Corp	\$100,000.00	6 years	2019
	PI	STRYKER	\$300,000.00	3 years	2024	Wong	PI	CIHR	\$416,924.00	4 years	2022
	PI	QEII Foundation -ROBOTICS Research	\$10,000,000.00	2 years	2022		PI	CONMED Canada	\$504,574.07	5 years	2023
							PI	CONMED Canada	\$271,700.00	4 years	2022
El-Hawary	PI	Pediatric Spine Foundation	\$1,111,970.00	7 years	2019	PI	Episurf Medical	\$113,110.00	4 years	2022	
	PI	IWK	\$34,185.00	1 year	2024						
Gala-Lopez	Co-APP	NSHRF	\$50,000.00	2 years	2024						
	Co-APP	NSHRF	\$50,000.00	2 years	2024						
	Co-Inv	TFR1 Marathon of Hope	\$40,000.00	1 year	2024						
	Collaborator	CCS- Atlantic Canada Research Grant	\$300,000.00	4 year	2021						

TOTAL \$: \$82,836,591.53, PI: 23 , CO-PI: 14, COLLABORATORS/CO-APPS: 26, TOTAL #:63,RESEARCH CHAIRS: 2



DOS Internal Research Awards

Dr. Ivan Wong Operational Grant \$70,000.00

Division of Orthopaedic Surgery: “Navigating the Shoulder’s Frontier: A Comprehensive Approach to Anterior Instability”

Dr. Emily Krauss Operational Grant \$69,666.00

Division of Plastic Surgery “Department of Surgery Bio-mechanics Hub: Proof of Concept in Neurological Injury Repair”

Dr. Andrew Glennie Operational Grant \$64,976.00

Division of Orthopaedic Surgery: “Advancing the Surgical Treatment of Lumbar Degenerative Spondylolisthesis in Canada through the Development of a New Surgical Decision Aid”

Dr. Katerina Neumann Operational Grant \$ 47,786.92

Division of General Surgery: Nova Scotia-Based Total Neoadjuvant Treatment (TNT) for the Treatment of Locally Advanced Rectal Cancer: Assessing Success of Implementation and Outcomes Associated with a Provincially Standardized Algorithm (TNT Study)”

Dr. Katerina Neumann Operational Grant \$30,000.00

Division of General Surgery: “Patient-Centered Functional Outcomes in the Era of Evolving Surgical Approaches: An Academic Center’s Experience During the Roll-out of a Colorectal Robotics Program”

Dr. Alison Wallace Operational Grant \$49,629.00

Division of Thoracic Surgery: “Prehab for Lung and Esophageal Cancer: Optimizing Well-being for Better Outcomes”

Dr. Adrienne Weeks Operational Grant \$50,800.00

Division of Neurosurgery: The function of Met-CAT TRF in GBM and the micro-environment”

Dr. Lutz Weise Operational Grant \$54,733.00

Division of Neurosurgery: “SPARK: Spinal Cord Stimulation Pioneering Analgesia for Resilient Recovery in Post intra-Thoracic surgery Pain”

Dr. Sam Jessula Seed Grant \$65,846.00

Division of Vascular Surgery: “Virtual Prehabilitation for Patients undergoing Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Repair”

Dr. Gregory Knapp Seed Grant \$42,338.00

Division of General Surgery: “Safety and Efficacy of Intralesional IL-2 for Resectable Triple Negative Breast Cancer”

BASIC SCIENCE FUNDS

	Operational Funds	\$ 437,590.92
Dr. Sean Christie	\$15,000.00	
Dr. Jim Fawcett	\$ 8,000.00	
Dr. Boris Gala-Lopez	\$15,000.00	
Dr. Michael Bezuhly	\$15,000.00	
Dr. Alison Wallace	\$15,000.00	
Dr. Adrienne Weeks	\$ 7,000.00	
	Seed Funds	\$ 108,184.00
	Basic Science	\$ 75,000.00
		\$ 620,774.92



Education

The Dalhousie Department of Surgery continues in our strong tradition of excellence in education across the academic spectrum.

Undergraduate Education:

Our faculty provides over 900 direct teaching hours annually to Med I and Med II students in lectures, tutorials, and other small group learning, as well as over 275 hours dedicated to OSCE examinations for medical students. In addition to this, 31 Med I and II students participated in many hours of shadowing and elective experience during clinical time with our faculty.

In clerkship, there were over 200 clinical placements for clerks and other similar students (including OMFS residents, dental students, and other similar learners) lasting several weeks each. In 2025/26, we will be adding Master of Physician Assistant Studies Students to these rotations to further bolster our health care system. Our clerkship seminar series and skills lab hours provided over 100 additional hours of direct teaching time by faculty.

Postgraduate Education:

The six direct entry specialties in our Department (Cardiac Surgery, General Surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic Surgery, Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery, Plastic Surgery) graduated 17 residents, with 100% success on the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada examination. In addition, our RCPSC program in Pediatric General Surgery graduated one candidate from the 2-year program.

For the 2024/25 academic year, we have 86 residents ranging from R1 to R5 (or R6 for Cardiac Surgery and Neurosurgery), welcoming 16 residents to Dalhousie in the R1 year, either through the CARMS match or through our VISA trainee program.

Written by Dr. Gerard Corsten, IWK Otolaryngology Surgeon, DOS Education Director 2024

DIVISIONAL TEACHING AWARDS

CARDIAC

Dr. Greg Hirsch

GENERAL

Dr. Chris Kenyon

NEUROSURGERY

Dr. Stephen Lownie

ORTHOPAEDICS

Dr. Andrew Trenholm UGME
Drs. Chad Coles, David Wilson PGME

OTOLARYNGOLOGY

Dr. Devin Piccott

PLASTICS

Dr. Jason Williams

THORACIC

Dr. A Ednie

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR

MEDICAL EDUCATION
CERTIFICATE OF MERIT AWARD
RESIDENT EXCELLENCE

Dr. Jack Rasmussen

TOP 10% OF TUTORS

SKILLED CLINICIAN

Dr. Duncan Smith, Orthopaedics
Dr. Elaine Fung, Otolaryngology

MED 1 TUTORS

Dr. Christopher Blackmore, Pediatrics
Dr. Stephanie Hiebert, General
Dr. Min Lee, Vascular

MED 1 TUTORS

Dr. Emily Krauss, Plastics



2024 Dalhousie Surgery Graduates



Back row left to right: Shahriar Seddigh, Chad Purcell, Connor McGuire, Mark MacLean, Robert Raskin, Victoria Bentley, Middle row: Abdullah Aldaihani, Front row left to right: Erika Leck, Fares Al-Jahdali, Claudia Cote, Anna Duncan, Pooja Patel

CARDIAC SURGERY

6 residents in the 6 year program
David Horne
Program Director
Idris Ali
Clerkship Representative

ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY

19 residents in the 5 year program
Andrew Glennie
Program Director
David Wilson
Clerkship Representative

PLASTIC SURGERY

12 residents in the 5 year program
Margaret Wheelock
Program Director
Justin Paletz
Clerkship Representative

GENERAL SURGERY

28 residents in the 5 year program
Lucy Helyer
Program Director
Stephanie Hiebert
Clerkship Representative

OTOLARYNGOLOGY

HEAD AND NECK SURGERY
11 residents in the 5 year program
Gerard Corsten
Program Director
Ayham AIAfif
Clerkship Representative

SURGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Andrew Trenholm
Program Director
Alexander Ednie
Associate Director

NEUROSURGERY

10 residents in the 6 year program
Gwynedd Pickett
Program Director
Simon Walling
Clerkship Representative

PEDIATRIC GENERAL SURGERY

1 resident in the 2 year program,
after general surgery training
Chris Blackmore
Program Director
Jessica Mills
Clerkship Representative

DEPARTMENT CLERKSHIP

DIRECTOR
Jack Rasmussen



FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

The Dalhousie Surgery Fellowship Committee had a very successful year highlighted by the approval of three new fellowship programs. Dr. Emad Massoud and the otolaryngology team were instrumental in the creation of a rhinology and skull base surgical fellowship, Dr. Richard Spence established the acute care surgery and global health fellowship, and Dr. Bashar Bata founded the pediatric ophthalmology fellowship. Although ophthalmology is not part of the Dalhousie Department of Surgery, pediatric ophthalmology is under the umbrella of the IWK Department of Surgery. A fine example of Dalhousie Surgery bringing programs together for the greater good of post graduate education!

During our committees' regular meetings, fellowship directors presented new fellow candidates and approved 36 new fellows to join our programs. In an effort to ensure efficient fellow evaluations, Dr. Gerard Corsten and Dr. Chad Coles created updated evaluations for our fellowship programs to use and are now available on the One45 system. By having the ability to electronically submit evaluations, fellowship programs will be able to provide timely evaluations of our fellows so that our fellows can optimize their learning opportunities. Our committee is also pleased to announce that the base salary for fellows was increased by almost 10% starting July 2024 and that regular further increases will be tied to any potential increases in the MSI unit value.

The fellowship directors are currently reviewing their objectives which may also be added to the website, Fellows.DalDOS.ca. We are also working on a web page that displays where our former fellows are now. This will highlight the international nature of many of our programs. Dr. Gail Darling and Lesli Smith have been thoughtful enough to help our fellows feel welcome by putting together a listing of all our fellows with photos of them so we can recognize them when we see them around our health centers.

For the second year in a row, we have hosted our fellows at a department wide social event at Saint Mary's Boat Club. It was a wonderful opportunity for our department to meet and to get to know our fellows early during their time with us. Plan to attend in 2025!

The future of our committee and of our fellowship programs looks promising as Dr. Matt Rigby will become the new Chair of the Fellowship Committee starting on January 1, 2025. We look forward to Matt's leadership as the cardiac surgery fellowship program ramps up and as our fellowship programs continue to build stronger ties to Dalhousie University. He will no doubt continue to raise the bar and to ensure that Dalhousie Surgery is the place to be for fellows looking for a world-class education.

Written by Dr. Ron El-Hawary, IWK Orthopaedic Surgeon, DOS Fellowship Director 2024



New Faculty Appointments



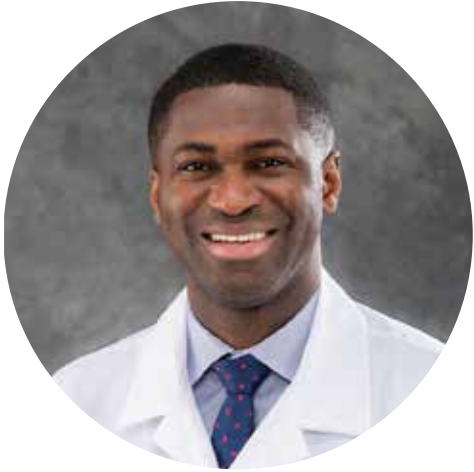
DR. AYHAM AL AFIF, Assistant Professor
September 2024

Dr. Al Afif completed medical school and residency in Otolaryngology at Dalhousie University. This was followed by a fellowship in Head and Neck Surgical Oncology and Microvascular Reconstruction at the University of Alabama in Birmingham. He was in practice for 3 years as a Head and Neck surgeon at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer in Buffalo, New York. He recently returned to Halifax with a clinical focus on advanced head and neck mucosal, skull base and thyroid malignancies, as well as Robotic Surgery for oropharyngeal tumors. His research interests are in virtual surgical planning for oromandibular reconstruction.



DR. CHRISTOPHER CHIN, Assistant Professor
September 2024

Dr Chin attended medical school and residency in London, Ontario at Western University. He subsequently completed his fellowship in Rhinology, Anterior Skull Base Surgery, and Head and Neck Oncology at the University of Toronto. After fellowship, he was hired in Saint John, NB, in 2016 and was named Division Head of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at the Saint John Regional Hospital in 2021. In 2024, he was recruited to his current position as rhinologist/skull base surgeon in Halifax, NS. He is an exam board member for the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada for rhinology.



DR. BERNARD BURGESSON, Assistant Professor
August 2024

Dr. Burgessson earned his undergraduate degree from Queen's University in Kingston, ON, before returning home for his medical education and orthopedic residency at Dalhousie University. He has recently completed a fellowship in Foot & Ankle Reconstruction and Trauma at Massachusetts General Hospital (Harvard University). His research focuses on enhancing access to orthopaedic surgery for marginalized populations, exploring novel treatment options for osteochondral lesions of the talus, and the use of weight-bearing CT imaging in Foot & Ankle Surgery.



DR. NADIM JOUKHADAR, Assistant Professor
September 2024

Dr. Joukhadar is a Plastic Surgeon originally from Nova Scotia. He completed his undergraduate training at McGill University and then his medical school and residency training at Dalhousie University. He also completed a Master of Education through the University of Ottawa during his residency. This was followed by his fellowship in microsurgery, breast reconstruction, aesthetic surgery, and top surgery through the University of Toronto. He then worked in Toronto in gender-affirming top surgery. He returns to Nova Scotia to join the Dalhousie Gender Surgery team focused on top surgery.



DR. EMILY BURKE, Assistant Professor
December 2024

Dr. Burke is a plastic surgeon, returning to her home province of Nova Scotia to set up her practice. She completed her medical school and plastic surgery residency training at Dalhousie University. She then moved to the United Kingdom for her fellowship training. She began at St. Andrew's Centre for Plastic Surgery and Burns in Chelmsford, Essex, training under world renowned surgeons in reconstructive breast microsurgery. She then moved to London, where she completed another microsurgery fellowship, including breast, lower limb and head & neck reconstruction at Guys and St. Thomas' Hospitals. Her third fellowship was completed at the London Clinic, focusing on aesthetic and reconstructive surgery.



DR. RHYS KAVANAGH, Assistant Professor
September 2024

Dr. Kavanagh is a general surgeon originally from Nova Scotia. He completed his medical school training and surgical residency at Dalhousie University. This was followed by a fellowship in Advanced Laparoscopic and Bariatric surgery at The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. He has practiced since 2019 as a MIS and bariatric surgeon at Mercy Hospital in Iowa City and South Shore Regional Hospital. He has now joined the surgical group at Dartmouth General Hospital with a clinical focus on providing advanced minimally invasive general surgery, endoscopy and metabolic bariatric surgery.



New Faculty Appointments



DR. KEVIN MORASH, Assistant Professor
October 2024

Dr. Morash is a Pediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon, originally from Cole Harbour, NS. He completed medical school at Queen's University, followed by Orthopaedic Surgery residency at Dalhousie University and a Pediatric Orthopaedic fellowship at Nemours/A.I. duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, Delaware, USA. He has also completed a Master of Education degree through Acadia University. He returns to Halifax after two years in practice at Western University in London, ON. His academic interests are in scoliosis, limb deformity and medical education.



DR. ALEXANDRA QUIMBY, Assistant Professor
July 2024

Dr. Quimby is an Otolaryngologist – Head & Neck Surgeon originally from Ontario. She completed medical school and residency training at the University of Ottawa followed by a fellowship in Otolaryngology & Neurotology at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, USA. She completed a Masters in Public Health / Epidemiology at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Subsequent to completing fellowship training and prior to moving to Halifax, she practiced at SUNY Upstate. She has a strong interest in clinical research, with a focus on hearing healthcare disparities."



DR. PHIL TREMBLAY, Assistant Professor
February 2024

Dr. Tremblay is originally from Bathurst, New Brunswick and completed his medical training, cardiac surgery residency as well as a Masters in Community Health and Epidemiology at Dalhousie University. He then pursued fellowship training in mechanical circulatory support and thoracic transplantation at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, California. Prior to moving back to Nova Scotia, Dr. Tremblay worked as a cardiac surgeon with specialization in heart and lung transplantation at Corewell Health with faculty appointment at Michigan State University.



Retirements and Departures

RETIREMENTS

Dr. Steven Lownie
Dr. Geoffrey Porter
Dr. David Kirkpatrick
Dr. Harry Henteleff

DEPARTURES

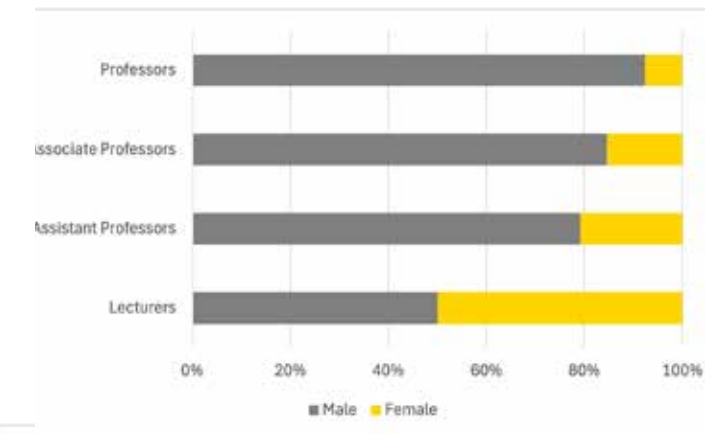
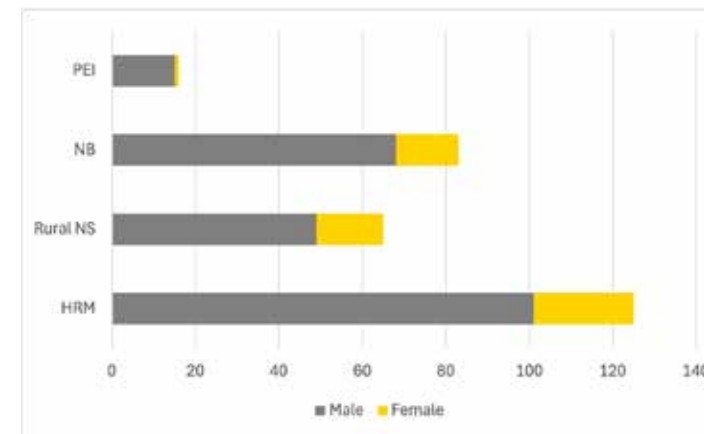
Dr. Nael Shoman Abu Dhabi, UAE
Dr. Jacob Alant Urbana, IL
Dr. John Stein London, ON
Dr. Ron El-Hawary Boston, MA

PROMOTIONS

Dr. Marius Hoogerboord, Associate Professor
Dr. Daniel French, Associate Professor

OUR ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

We strive for excellence with our workforce and we encourage everyone to apply for promotions. Our staff covers the Maritime provinces in urban and rural locations.





Global Surgery

The Global Surgery Office (GSO) at Dalhousie: 2024 Highlights

The GSO at Dalhousie remains dedicated to advancing equitable surgical care worldwide through research, education, and advocacy. This year, our focus has expanded within the Department of Surgery (DOS), inspiring academic engagement to address global surgical inequities. We continually assess new project proposals and encourage participation from the Dalhousie community in advocacy events and partnerships.

Research Impact

Dr. Knapp and collaborators from the African Research Group for Oncology (ARGO) published a pivotal study in JCO Global Oncology, "Population-level access to breast cancer early detection and diagnosis in Nigeria." in December 2023. The study aimed to highlight disparities in access to breast cancer detection in Nigeria.

Colonoscopy Proctor Course in Nigeria

In April 2024, the GSO played a pivotal role in facilitating, and funding the inaugural Dal-ARGO Colonoscopy Course at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) in Nigeria. This initiative aimed to address the increasing incidence of colorectal cancer in Nigeria by equipping surgeons with advanced endoscopy skills.



DR. GREG KNAPP AND STUDENTS

The course was led by OAU Professor, Olusegun Alatise, Dalhousie surgeons Dr. Greg Knapp and Dr. Richard Spence, Dr. Shilpa Murthy from Yale School of Medicine, and Dr. Sahle Griffith from Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Barbados. Together, they provided hands-on training to 18 junior surgeons, including a novel low- and high-fidelity cross-over model to enhance their practical skills.

This initiative was recently featured in the Doctors NS, September 2024 issue and will soon appear in Dal Med News.

New Partnerships and Exchanges

While in Nigeria, Drs. Spence and Knapp connected with Dr. Sahle Griffith, head of Surgery at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Barbados. This partnership spurred the idea of a research exchange and clinical elective between the two academic institutions, Dalhousie University, and the University of West Indies.



DR. RICHARD SPENCE AND STUDENTS



The research portion will consist of a Barbados surgical student travelling to Dalhousie University and working alongside surgical mentors for 4-6 months starting in 2025. The project will focus on microsatellite instability (MSI) testing in colon carcinomas within a Barbadian cohort, including viewing MSI and mismatch repair (MMR) testing data from 2015 to 2024. It will assess current practices against NCCN guidelines, offering insights into MSI prevalence and its implications for patient care.

The clinical elective, set to launch in September 2025, will provide Dalhousie 3rd/4th year surgical residents with the opportunity to engage in 1-3 months of hands-on training in acute care surgery and trauma management at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Barbados. This exchange partnership is still in the planning stages.

GSO Global Cancer Disparities Pilot Project

In partnership with the Global Cancer Disparities Initiative at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, the GSO supported Nigerian researcher D. Abidemi E. Omoinsi's research to expand access to cancer registries across Nigeria. This grant represents the 3rd year the GSO has supported junior Nigerian surgeon-scientists with pilot grants.



DR. GREG KNAPP

In September, Dr. Knapp traveled to the 2024 ARGO Symposium in Ife Nigeria. He delivered two lectures on the management of non-metastatic recurrent Colorectal Cancer and localization techniques for sentinel lymph node biopsy: pragmatic solutions in the Nigerian context.

Campus Events

In April, Dalhousie surgeons Dr. Hoogerboord, Dr. Spence, Dr. Horne, and Dr. Knapp participated in "Bridging Borders: Perspectives on Global Surgery," a panel discussion hosted by the Dalhousie chapter of the Canadian Global Surgery Trainees' Alliance (CGSTA). The event featured Nigerian and Canadian surgeons comparing surgical experiences and health outcomes between low/middle-income and high-income countries, followed by a Q&A session.

In May 2024, the GSO co-hosted a screening of UNNATURAL CAUSES alongside the Departments of Anesthesia and Obstetrics & Gynecology at the IWK Theatre, followed by a panel with health equity experts, fostering dialogue on global health disparities.

Additional Initiatives

GSO Travel Grant, was awarded to Dalhousie Pediatric surgeon, Dr. Olga Bednarek instructed the Latin American Vital Anesthesia Simulation Training (VAST) Course in Mexico City in April 2024, empowering anesthesia educators across Latin America.



DR. OLGA BEDNAREK AND TEAM IN MEXICO



Cardiac Surgery

QEII

- Dr. I Ali
- Dr. R Baskett
- Dr. A Caddell
- Dr. C DiQuinzio
- Dr. C Herman
- Dr. G Hirsch
- Dr. D Horne
- Dr. P Tremblay
- Dr. M Vician
- Dr. J Wood



CLINICAL ANALYSIS

3,156

PATIENT VISITS

1,114

OPERATIONS

4,628

OR HOURS

427

OR AFTERHOURS



2024 has been a recovery year for the Division of Cardiac Surgery – one that has helped us shape our future. Dr. Philippe Tremblay started work in February. After completing his residency, he did a one-year fellowship at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, focusing on cardiac and lung transplantation and the management of heart failure. He then worked as a staff cardiac surgeon in Michigan before coming to Halifax.

Dr. Catherine Deshaies will be starting at the IWK in February of 2025 after completing her first fellowship at the Texas Children’s Hospital in Houston and her second fellowship in Melbourne Australia. Dr. Claudia Côté has been hired as an adult cardiac surgeon to start in July of 2025. Her fellowship focus will be on aortic surgery and TAVI in Paris and Montreal. Dr. Roberto

Ribeiro has also been hired and is currently doing a minimally invasive mitral valve fellowship in the Netherlands. In addition to clinical work, they will all be involved in teaching and research.

They are all welcome additions. Dr. Horné has been the only pediatric cardiac surgeon at the IWK for about two years and at the QEII Health Sciences Centre Halifax Infirmery we have been down two to three surgeons depending on illness.

Our residency program continues to be our crown jewel as it always has been. Every resident that has completed our program, since its inception in the late 1970s, has achieved Royal College certification and are gainfully employed in the specialty. A significant number have achieved leadership positions both in Cardiac Surgery Programs and at the national society level. This year has been no different, Dr. Claudia Côté has passed, and Dr. Ribeiro just completed his oral exam. The program continues under the leadership of Dr. David Horné. This year David received the Program Director of the Year Award for all Dalhousie affiliated programs; this is a testament to his teaching and leadership skills. Every member of the division is engaged in teaching at both the undergraduate and post-graduate levels. Dr. Ali serves on the Dalhousie Undergraduate Medical Education Committee and is a Case-Based Learning Tutor in first year clinical skills, as am I. Dr. Baskett has done this in the past as is our Cardiac Surgery Fellowship Director.

Clinically, we perform all manner of cardiac surgery and surgery of the great vessels and aorta. We have



a symbiotic relationship with our Cardiology colleagues and enjoy a substantial amount of collaboration with them. This includes the management of coronary artery disease, valvular heart disease including TAVI and mitraclip programs, congenital heart disease, and the Connective Tissue Clinic (including collaborations with the New Brunswick Heart Centre in Saint John), the Transplant/VAD/Heart Failure Program, and Electrophysiology. Another example is the management of aortic disease including acute aorta syndromes and aneurysms – this is carried out in collaboration with interventional radiology and vascular surgery. We are working with Interventional Radiology and Vascular Surgery on developing a protocol to enable us to lower our paraplegia rate in major aorta work (both endovascular and open repairs). We also have connections across Canada for sharing aortic clinical decisions as well as research, The Canadian Thoracic Aortic Conglomerate (CTAC). All these invasive procedures would not be possible without a highly skilled team of cardiac anaesthetists under the leadership of Dr. Paula Kolysheer and perfusionists under the management of Claire Ward. Our team also includes the skilled nurses on our ward, in our Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU), in the operating rooms, and in our clinic, who take exemplary care of our patients.

Some new technology we are starting to employ include the Atriclip (to decrease stroke in patients with atrial fibrillation who are having cardiac surgery), the AMDS dissection Stent, and the Impella 5.5 temporary micro-axial left ventricular assist device. We continue to manage our own CVICU which is directed on the medical side by Dr. Michael Vician and on the nursing side by Karina Rankka. Currently, it is staffed by two physicians in addition to Dr. Vician – Dr. Claudio Di Quinzio and Dr. Andrew Caddell, and by three surgeons – Dr. Roger Baskett, Dr. Greg Hirsch, and Dr. Philippe Tremblay.

In addition to our surgical work, we continue to provide care to outpatients in our clinic and by phone. We also do outreach clinics in Sydney, Charlottetown, Yarmouth, and Amherst. The effect is better accessibility and overall decreased carbon footprint. Dr. Hirsch reviewed the outcome statistics from June 2022 to March 2023 and 199 patients were seen in our outreach clinics (147,000 KM of driving saved, 14 tons of CO2 did not get emitted, and \$26,000 of financial savings for our patients).

We are very aware of our outcomes with the intent of improving patient care. Dr. Greg Hirsch, who is the Senior Medical Director of Peri-operative and Surgical Services also serves as Quality Director for both Cardiac Surgery and the Department of Surgery. We have maintained a database since 1996 which has been funded by ourselves and is called the Maritime Heart Centre (MHC) Registry. It has been a rich source of data for a great number of research presentations and publications. We are now about to transition to the STS Database which connects us to all North America. One of our quality initiatives is our Cardiac ERAS Program which was rolled out in the summer and is in collaboration with our Cardiac Anaesthesia colleagues and peri-op care providers. The lead is one of our cardiac anaesthetists, Dr. Pieter de Jager. The goal is to standardize our approach to surgical prep, RBC optimization, smoking cessation, intra-op antibiotics delivery, early extubation, and mobilization. The desired outcome is to decrease surgical site infections and length of stay and readmission rates. The results will be tracked. This is just one example of many.

Academically, the Division of Cardiac Surgery punches above its weight. For the last number of years our Research Director has been Dr. Christine Herman who has guided our residents. Dr. Herman recently passed the torch to Dr. Phil Tremblay, and we are confident he will continue his excellent work. One of Dr. Herman’s initiatives was to start an Aortic Tissue Bank made possible by a grateful donor. Our research coordinator is Ryan Gainer. So far, in the calendar year 2024, the division has 15 publications and 33 presentations at research days, national and international meetings. That is all despite being significantly under-staffed at all levels – surgical staff, residents, and fellows. This has made the delivery of patient care a challenge at times and we have had to be mindful of “burnout” at all levels. Despite that, I do think the future looks bright and I am more than excited at the thought of working with the new surgeons hired. We are looking forward to exploring new innovative ways of delivering patient care with them and wish our colleagues in Cardiology and Vascular Surgery and Interventional Radiology made possible by our partners and leaders at Nova Scotia Health. Thank you to Dr. Darling and the leadership team at Nova Scotia Health for their support of our division.

RESIDENTS

- Dr. R Ribeiro
- Dr. C Cote
- Dr. M AlOtaibi
- Dr. D De Waard CIP
- Dr. J Bierer CIP
- Dr. T Amir



General Surgery

QEII

- Dr. A Drohan
- Dr. J Ellsmere
- Dr. B Gala-Lopez
- Dr. C Giacomantonio
- Dr. L Helyer
- Dr. S Hiebert
- Dr. M Hoogerboord
- Dr. P Johnson
- Dr. C Kenyon
- Dr. G Knapp
- Dr. S Livingstone
- Dr. S Minor
- Dr. K Neumann
- Dr. R Spence
- Dr. M Walsh

IWK

- Dr. C Blackmore
- Dr. D Davies
- Dr. K Milford
- Dr. J Mills

DGH

- Dr. J Enright
- Dr. R Kavanagh
- Dr. J Murdoch
- Dr. R Stewart
- Dr. W Shih
- Dr. L Wasilewski
- Dr. J Watson-Jessome



General Surgery Research Collaborative (GSRC)

The Dalhousie General Surgery Research Collaborative (GSRC) is comprised of surgeon researchers within the Division of General Surgery who share a common interest in improving surgical care delivery through collaborative, outcomes-based research. The Collaborative brings together a shared research support infrastructure. It was founded in 2021 with 4 staff members and now has expanded to include 5 staff surgeon researchers and 3 research coordinators. The GSRC fuels many projects spanning outcomes research, big data, and clinical trials, collaborating with researchers from other surgical and non-surgical specialties across provincial and international boundaries. There is a focus on innovation with exploratory methodology, as well as robust database creation to allow for international benchmarking, all while maintaining a patient centered approach. Highlights regarding current projects can be found at Research Collaborative - Division of General and Gastrointestinal Surgery - Dalhousie University.

In the photo above left to right : Dr. Richard Spence, Tongtong Li (research coordinator), Mobina Ali (research assistant), Aaryn Montgomery-Song (research coordinator), Dr. Ashley Drohan, Dr. Greg Knapp, Dr. Boris Gala-Lopez, Dr. Katerina Neumann

Doubling the Gift of Life: A Remarkable Year for Organ Donation and Transplantation

The Atlantic Multi-Organ Transplant Program (MOTP) at the QEII HSC has witnessed an extraordinary year marked by a significant increase in organ donation and transplant activity. Over the past year, our program has almost doubled the number of liver (41), kidney transplants (140) as well as 6 heart transplants, transforming countless lives and setting a new standard for transplant care in Atlantic Canada. This achievement reflects the tireless efforts of our multidisciplinary team, including physicians, transplant coordinators, nurses, social workers, and administrative staff, who work together to provide world-class care to patients and their families. Our success is also due to the remarkable generosity of donors and their families, whose selfless decisions have given new hope to those needing lifesaving transplants. We are deeply grateful for the support of our community, which has been instrumental in our success.

CLINICAL ANALYSIS

17,707

PATIENT VISITS

3,296

OPERATIONS

8,914

OR HOURS

1,733

OR AFTERHOURS

Several factors contributed to this unprecedented increase. Enhanced public awareness campaigns, improved collaboration with donor hospitals, and streamlined referral processes have all played a crucial role in expanding our donor pool.

Additionally, surgical techniques and postoperative care innovations have enabled us to perform more complex transplants with outstanding outcomes. The impact of this growth extends beyond the numbers.

For each transplant performed, a patient is given a second chance at life, and their families are granted the priceless gift of more time with their loved ones. This doubling of activity is not just a statistical success but a profound testament to our program's strength, resilience, and compassion. It has also been a booster to our educational endeavours with surgical residents and fellows.

As we look ahead, the MOTP remains committed to advancing organ donation and transplantation through innovation and the sustained growth of our transplant team. By continuing to push the boundaries of what is possible, we strive to ensure that every patient waiting for a transplant has the opportunity to receive the gift of life.

Lymphedema

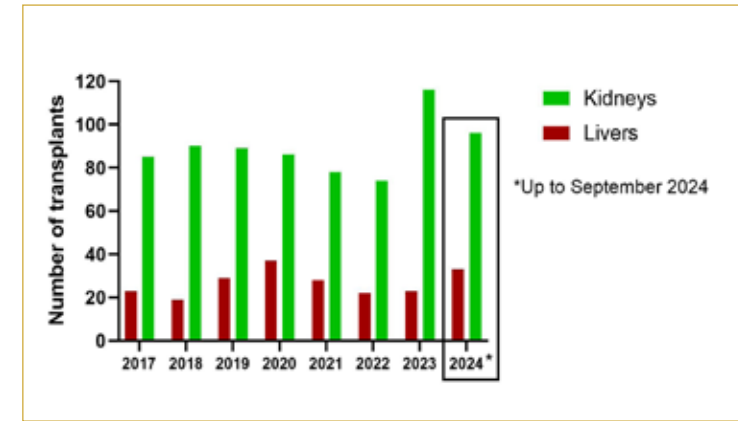
Lymphedema is a known complication after axillary lymph node dissection (ALND) for breast cancer, with as many as 30% of patients developing this condition after surgery and radiation. This incurable condition can have proud impacts on patients quality of life.



DR. DROHAN & DR. CORKUM

Over the past year, Drs. Ashley Drohan, Joseph Corkum, Greg Knapp and Margie Wheelock have incorporated a novel surgical technique to ALND to reduce the incidence of this troublesome complication. Lymphovenous anastomosis (LVA) includes creating an anastomosis between arm lymphatics and venous branches of the axillary vein.

This surgical technique has been associated with a decrease in lymphedema rates and does not increase the risk profile of ALND. To date, the group has conducted 5 LVA's, representing the first use of this technique in the Maritime Provinces. Long term follow up will establish the effectiveness of this technique in our patient population, but early results.



RESIDENTS

- Dr. V Bentley
- Dr. P Patel
- Dr. R Raskin
- Dr. A Southcott
- Dr. J Tweedy
- Dr. L Attar
- Dr. A Al-Abduljabbar
- Dr. A Keeping
- Dr. V Long
- Dr. A Robinson CIP
- Dr. E Savonitto
- Dr. D Bowker
- Dr. J Coles
- Dr. J Doucett
- Dr. P Lagace
- Dr. M McNeil
- Dr. R Brownstone

- Dr. I Georgescu
- Dr. L MacDonald
- Dr. A Mounshi
- Dr. A Orovec
- Dr. D Vidovic
- Dr. L Almazroui
- Dr. B Cruickshank
- Dr. A Dame
- Dr. F Leathead
- Dr. D Patel
- Dr. C Penny

FELLOWS

- Dr. J Beaumont
- Dr. K McRae
- Dr. Z Mir - MOTP
- Dr. Z Bhikhoo - IWK



Pediatric Surgery / IWK

- Dr. B Bata
- Dr. M Bezuhly
- Dr. C Blackmore
- Dr. G Corsten
- Dr. M Dahrab
- Dr. D Davies
- Dr. R El-Hawary
- Dr. L Gauthier
- Dr. P Hong
- Dr. D Horne
- Dr. L Johnson
- Dr. D Keefe
- Dr. R Laroche
- Dr. K Logan
- Dr. D MacLellan
- Dr. D McNeely
- Dr. K Milford
- Dr. J Mills
- Dr. K Morash
- Dr. B Orlik
- Dr V Promelle
- Dr. J Robitaille
- Dr. S Walling
- Dr. M Wheelock

- FELLOWS
- Dr. G Alahmadi
- Dr. F Alberghina
- Dr. A Alelaumi
- Dr. O Bednarek
- Dr. Z Bhikhoo
- Dr. R Habib



CLINICAL ANALYSIS

21,399
PATIENT VISITS

4,120
OPERATIONS

6,399
OR HOURS

638
OR AFTERHOURS

The IWK Department of Pediatric Surgery provides specialized, pediatric sub-specialty care to the children of the Maritime and Atlantic Provinces across eight specialties. These include:

- Congenital Cardiovascular Surgery
- Pediatric ENT Surgery
- Pediatric General & Thoracic Surgery
- Pediatric Orthopedic Surgery
- Pediatric Ophthalmology
- Pediatric Neurosurgery
- Pediatric Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery
- Pediatric Urology

The IWK is the only quaternary Pediatric Trauma Centre in the Maritimes and manages the majority of pediatric and adolescent cancer care. Strong research programs continue to be productive across all specialties.



This year the Department was approved for expansion of the Orthopedic Surgery Division and welcomes Dr. Kevin Morash to the group and Pediatric ENT Surgery who will welcome Dr. Elise Graham in January 2025.

Photos, Dr. Graham in London, Ontario, Dr. Morash helping out at Bring Your Child to Work Day, while he was a resident.



DR. E GRAHAM



DR. K MORASH

First robotic pediatric scoliosis surgery in Canada

Canada's first spinal robot for patient care has reached another major milestone. In an exciting leap forward, the QEII Health Sciences Centre and IWK Health have successfully performed Canada's first robotic-assisted surgery for pediatric scoliosis, marking a historic milestone in surgical robotics and pediatric care.

This groundbreaking procedure was performed by a world-class team — including surgeons, Dr. Ron El-Hawary, Dr. Ben Orlik and Dr. Andrew Glennie —using the MAZOR X spinal robot at the QEII Health Sciences



DRS. R EL-HAWARY, A GLENNIE, B ORLIK AND TEAM



Neurosurgery

- QEII
- Dr. S Barry
- Dr. S Christie
- Dr. D Clarke
- Dr. D McNeely
- Dr. G Pickett
- Dr. S Walling
- Dr. A Weeks
- Dr. L Weise



CLINICAL ANALYSIS

6,487

PATIENT VISITS

1,146

OPERATIONS

4,180

OR HOURS

773

OR AFTERHOURS

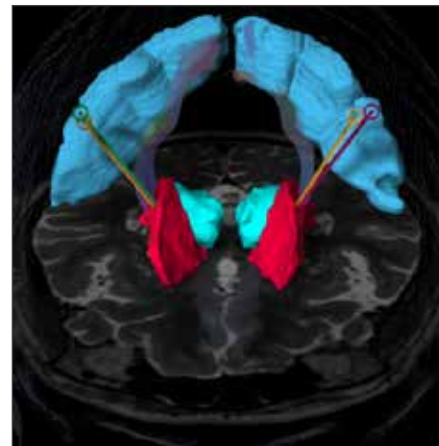
Neuromodulation Program

Our Neuromodulation Program serves the people of Atlantic Canada, focusing on enhancing the quality of life for individuals diagnosed with movement disorders, complex pain syndromes, epilepsy, and spasticity. We currently support 600 patients with implantable neurostimulators for deep brain (DBS), cortical, spinal cord (SCS), and peripheral stimulation.

Our team is committed to advancing patient care through several ongoing research projects. These include studies on the impact of electrophysiological and imaging guidance in Deep Brain Stimulation and exploring spinal cord stimulation for post-thoracic surgery pain. We are also investigating the role of brain activity recordings over DBS electrodes in patients with drug-resistant epilepsy. Further research aims to explore minimally invasive surgical techniques for electrode placement and participation in clinical registries.

We're excited to share some of our recent achievements and updates:

- Program Lead Dr. Lutz Weise was elected Secretary of the Canadian Neuromodulation Society at their latest annual meeting in Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- Program Coordinator Christine Potvin, RN, delivered an invited lecture that received the highest praise among all presentations at the same meeting.
- Allyster Klassen, Master of Biomedical Engineering joined our research team in February.
- Dr. Thomas Van Essen completed his fellowship in Functional Neurosurgery in June and has accepted a staff position at the University Neurosurgical Center in The Hague, Holland.

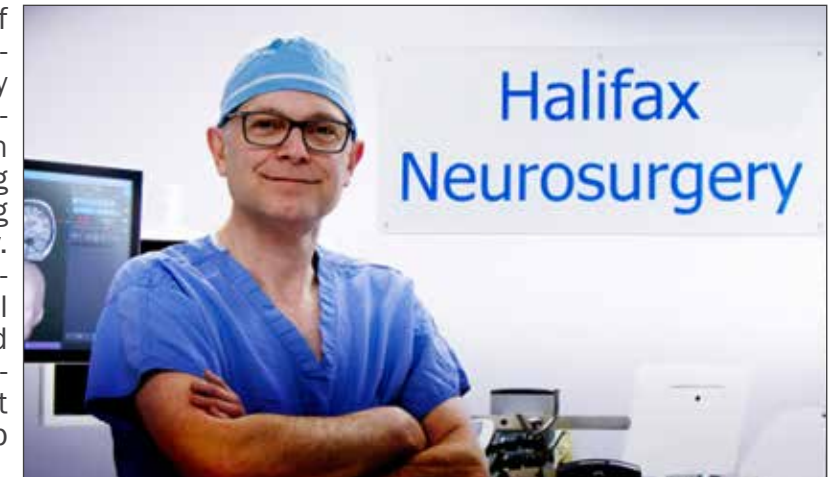


Our team members have represented us at international conferences in Vancouver, Chicago, and Dublin. We're also thrilled to announce that Halifax will host a Canadian Neuromodulation Society workshop in October, focusing on interventional pain and neuromodulation procedures for trainee physicians.

Our nursing team, including Christine Potvin and Peggy Flynn, is the first in Canada to implement a care directive for programming DBS devices. This year, we secured over \$150,000 in funding from the Department of Surgery Operational Grant and the Nova Scotia Health Research Fund to support our upcoming research projects.

Expansion of Neurosurgical Robotic Program

Thanks to the generosity of the late Clarence and Marjorie Anderson, whose legacy lives on through their charitable gift, the QEII will soon welcome groundbreaking technology for patients living with uncontrolled epilepsy. The ROSA One Brain System, an advanced surgical robot and the first of its kind in Atlantic Canada, will empower surgeons to pinpoint the source of seizures deep within the brain, potentially offering patients a cure.



DR. D CLARKE

The new neurosurgical robot will be a game-changer for QEII neurosurgical teams. The ROSA One Brain System will integrate with the QEII's current StealthStation robotic equipment, eliminating the margin of human error for sensitive surgical measurements. Time-saving features will allow surgeons to perform more efficiently, reducing operating time for certain procedures by 30 to 40 per cent.

Retirement



DR. S LOWNIE

Congratulations to Dr. Stephen Lownie on his retirement from clinical practice at Dalhousie University and Nova Scotia Health on March 22, 2024. Dr. Lownie's distinguished neurosurgical career began at Dalhousie's medical school and we have been enriched by his return to Halifax and his contributions to Halifax Neurosurgery over the past several years. Colleagues, friends, and his family came together to honor him, express appreciation for his mentorship and leadership, and to mark this significant transition. Thank you and happy retirement, Steve!

RESIDENTS

- Dr. M MacLean
- Dr. E Leck
- Dr. A Bokeris
- Dr. J Ho Han CIP
- Dr. J Smith-Forrester
- Dr. K Tourigny CIP
- Dr. A Alwadei
- Dr. R Vaughan
- Dr. S Jung
- Dr. B Ajlan
- Dr. E Parker

FELLOWS

- Dr. V Gaonkar



Orthopaedic Surgery

QEII

- Dr. M Biddulph
- Dr. B Burgessson
- Dr. C Coady
- Dr. C Coles
- Dr. M Dunbar
- Dr. D Ferguson
- Dr. M Glazebrook
- Dr. A Glennie
- Dr. M Gross
- Dr. D Johnston
- Dr. R Leighton
- Dr. J Morash
- Dr. W Oxner
- Dr. G Richardson
- Dr. A Trenholm
- Dr. D Wilson
- Dr. I Wong



CLINICAL ANALYSIS

42,755

PATIENT VISITS

5,396

OPERATIONS

11,020

OR HOURS

1,390

OR AFTERHOURS

Canadian Orthopaedic Association National Conference in Halifax 2024

The COA was held in Nova Scotia for in June 2024, Chaired by Dr. Glen Richardson. The 2024 Annual Meeting program featured comprehensive education across all of the orthopaedic sub-specialties and showcases the best in research, innovation and critical issues.

Sports Medicine Year In Review

The Dalhousie Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Research group highlights the accomplishments of our medical and research teams over the past year.



DR. I WONG

From June 2023 to June 2024, we published 19 papers and presented our work at over 75 international and national venues, including conferences, webinars, and live surgical educational broadcasts. We continue to have visiting surgeons learn our techniques both virtually and in person. Additionally, we have established global partnerships in education, research, and with orthopaedic companies.

We would like to thank all of our colleagues and collaborators; we value your interest and involvement and we thank you for helping to drive our team to success!



DR. G RICHARDSON

QEII Foundation Endowed Chair: Arthroplasty Outcomes



DR. M DUNBAR

Focused on improving delivery of care and outcomes for Orthopaedic patients, Chair research under Dr Michael Dunbar's direction has expanded to encompass hip , knee , upper extremity, and spine specialties.

Capitalizing on the advantage of sharing resources for 2 analysts to compile a robust administrative health dataset and develop shared analytic methodology, collaborations gained for fiscal year 2023/24 included 4 staff surgeons Drs. Glen Richardson, Andrew Glennie, Bernard Burgessson and Devin Ferguson, 1 clinical pharmacist, and training opportunities for 1 surgical fellow, 2 residents, and 2 medical students.

Work presented and/or published this year have included:

Medication prescribing patterns /surgical outcomes; [Opioids, Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), Anticoagulant venous thromboembolism (VTE) Prophylaxis, Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs).]

Health Care Utilization; [Postoperative primary care and emergency department utilization, Demographic impacts on orthopaedic surgery rates, Day surgery increases since COVID-19.]

Surgical OSCE

The orthopaedic surgical OSCE takes place every year. PGY 3-5 residents are presented with four different orthopedic conditions performing an observed history and physical exam for each and then subsequently performing the surgical plan on a cadaver.

Standardized patients are trained with history and simulated physical exam findings prior to and after surgery. These patients can have complex social issues along with their orthopaedic problems.

The OSCE takes place in the Skills Centre with a senior resident being evaluated and a junior resident assisting in the operation. An attending staff member observers and evaluates silently.

The OSCE is now in its 8th year with other orthopedic programs across the country starting to run similar versions. There are several publications for those who may be interested.



DR. A GLENNIE AND TEAM

RESIDENTS

- Dr. K Moran
- Dr. S Seddigh CIP
- Dr. F Al-Jahdali
- Dr. K Johnston
- Dr. M Ali
- Dr. A Ashour
- Dr. M Whitcomb
- Dr. H Al-Haboubi
- Dr. A Loewen
- Dr. J McNally
- Dr. S Al-Hajraf
- Dr. A Al-Zamel
- Dr. A Chughtai
- Dr. C Sonke
- Dr. N Al-Kaabi
- Dr. N Baniyas
- Dr. T Hillier
- Dr. T Jordan

FELLOWS

- Dr. A Ahmad
- Dr. O Al Hubaishi
- Dr. M Alissa
- Dr. A Almuslami
- Dr. O AlOdat
- Dr. B Alrashedan
- Dr. R Dissanayake
- Dr. S Maranya
- Dr. L Murguia Gonzalez
- Dr. L Roffe
- Dr. N Schneider
- Dr. A Silva
- Dr. E Torres Rangel
- Dr. S Zhu
- Dr. F Alberghina, IWK
- Dr. A Alelaumi, IWK
- Dr. R Habib, IWK

IWK

- Dr. R El-Hawary
- Dr. L Gauthier
- Dr. K Logan
- Dr. K Morash
- Dr. B Orlik

DGH

- Dr. R Hurley
- Dr. D LeGay
- Dr. J Leighton
- Dr. D O'Brien
- Dr. B O'Neill
- Dr. D Smith
- Dr. A Tucker
- Dr. N Urquhart



Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery



CLINICAL ANALYSIS

16,745

PATIENT VISITS

1,422

OPERATIONS

3,864

OR HOURS

168

OR AFTERHOURS

QEII

- Dr. A Al Afif
- Dr. T Brown
- Dr. C Chin
- Dr. M Corsten
- Dr. E Fung
- Dr. D Kirkpatrick
- Dr. E Massoud
- Dr. D Morris
- Dr. A Quimby
- Dr. M Rigby
- Dr. M Taylor
- Dr. J Trites

DGH

- Dr. R Balys
- Dr. R Leblanc
- Dr. D Piccott
- Dr. J Scott

IWK

- Dr. G Corsten
- Dr. L Johnson
- Dr. P Hong

A Dal OtoHNS presence in Ukraine

Have you ever worked in a war zone? The “Big War” began in February 2022 when Russian forces invaded the sovereign territory of Ukraine. Of course, military conflict had been ongoing since 2014 when large parts of Crimea were annexed. The front lines in eastern Ukraine have seen horrific trauma, with many suffering from explosive injuries to the face, head and neck.

Face the Future (www.facethefuturefoundation.ca) is a Canadian charitable organization which has led 53 humanitarian surgical missions to countries in need since 1996. Their first mission to Ukraine was in March 2023, and their second took place in late October. Of the 5 North American surgeons recruited for the October mission, two are connected to our Otolaryngology family at Dalhousie: Dr. Jonathan Trites and Dr. Matthew Brace. After completing his residency in 2015, Dr. Brace pursued a fellowship in facial plastic and reconstructive surgery at Ohio State University in Columbus. He is the Medical Director of Guelph Facial Plastic Surgery (www.facialplastics.ca) and serves as adjunct faculty for Western and McMaster Universities as well as the University of Toronto. Dr. Trites is one of our staff here at the VG.

The impact of the mission is not adequately captured in numbers, but altogether 30 patients (all soldiers except for 1) received well over 100 surgical procedures ranging from nasal reconstruction to scar revision and fistula repair, facial paralysis rehab to patient-specific implants for orbital and midfacial defects from Dr. Trites & the mission team. Surgical education was a huge part of the mission, and this included working alongside our Ukrainian colleagues and their learners, live streaming the procedures and a full day symposium on managing victims of head & neck war trauma. It was a joy to reconnect with Matt, to see first-hand some of the skillset he has acquired, and to shine a little light on another part of our Global Village.



Otology / Neurotology Update

This year has been productive for our Otology / Neurotology group.

Established collaboration with Biomedical Engineering saw the Optical Coherence Tomography device, Ossiview, developed at Dalhousie University by Audioptics, attract the attention of Zeiss who are currently looking to marketing opportunities.

The project has spawned collaborative projects, a couple of Masters of Applied Science and PhD projects and memorably this year Junzhe Wang, previous Dal Surgery Resident Research Day winner, received the Governor General’s Gold Medal Award in Sciences and Engineering for 2024. The Medal and certificate were awarded at the convocation ceremony for the Faculty of Medicine in May.

New collaborations with Diagnostic Imaging have been established applying a Halifax-based and developed 0.5 Tesla MRI scanner to the imaging of acoustic neuromas and Cholesteatoma. The recent recruitment of the internationally renowned Belgian radiologist Dr. Jan Casselman has lent a depth of experience to the interpretation of this work which is adding invaluable insight.

The Maritime Lateral Skullbase Clinic boasts one of the best kept continuous, multidisciplinary databases in Canada and is ripe for harvest. Similarly, our Cochlear implant programme has over 20 years of data in the vault.

Our Fellowship Programme has trained 23 Neurotologists since 2002 from Canada and beyond. Particular strongholds are to be found across the UK, The Netherlands, Belgium and Australia.

Dalhousie was honoured this year by the TWJ Foundation for being one of its chosen international Fellowship sites at the 50th Anniversary of this British-based charity which part-funds a UK Fellow every third year.

One of the most prolific cochlear implant surgeons in the world, Professor AbdulRahman Hagr from Riyadh, who is currently the President of the Saudi ORL Society, performed his first cochlear implant, under supervision at the VGH in Halifax during his Fellowship.

With the new recruitment of Dr Alexandra Quimby to match the departure of Dr Nael Shoman and with hopes of boosting our resources and numbers further, we are optimistic that Otology in the Maritimes has a bright future.

RESIDENTS

- Dr. A Aldaihani
- Dr. V Kuta
- Dr. C Purcell
- Dr. A Clark
- Dr. U Khan
- Dr. K Munroe
- Dr. N Alhajri
- Dr. S Secord
- Dr. H Brennan
- Dr. K Hathi

FELLOWS

- Dr. A Alghulikah
- Dr. S AlQaryan
- Dr. A Dror
- Dr. S Janik
- Dr. G Alahmadi- IWK



OTOLARYNGOLOGY RESIDENTS



Plastic Surgery

QEII

- Dr. J Corkum
- Dr. N Joukhadar
- Dr. E Krauss
- Dr. M Leblanc
- Dr. J Paletz
- Dr. J Rasmussen
- Dr. J Williams

DGH

- Dr. G Davis
- Dr. E Burke

IWK

- Dr. M Bezuhly
- Dr. M Wheelock



CLINICAL ANALYSIS

18,311

PATIENT VISITS

1,049

OPERATIONS

2,662

OR HOURS

179

OR AFTERHOURS

The Division provides tertiary and quaternary level care to the region, and a high volume of secondary level service to Central and other Zones in Nova Scotia. Clinical services include surgical management of skin cancer, hand surgery, peripheral nerve surgery, breast surgery including reconstruction of breast cancer patients, craniofacial surgery, gender affirming chest surgery, burn surgery, advanced wound care and reconstruction, and a full range of pediatric plastic surgery including cleft lip and palate repair, craniofacial reconstruction, and congenital hand reconstruction. Our surgeons are also collaborators, working with many other specialties in a reconstructive capacity, performing flap surgeries to meet various oncologic and traumatic needs.

We are proud to share that our gender affirming surgery team has recently expanded with the recruitment of Dr. Nadim Joukhadar. Dr. Joe Corkum, program lead, was recently profiled in the QE 2 Times discussing this important service that we can now provide to the community.

Our Division continues to deliver on its academic mission. From a medical education standpoint, the fully accredited Plastic Surgery residency program is led by program director Dr. Margie Wheelock, while Dr. Justin Paletz is our undergraduate education director and Dr. Joe Corkum is our fellowship director. Our research program is led by Dr. Emily Krauss, divisional research director, and is now supported by Dr. Julia Harrison, PhD who joined our team last year as a full-time research coordinator.

The Division is proud of our past, passionate about the high-quality clinical care, teaching and research we deliver at present, and excited about our future!



First N.S. gender-affirming top surgery program now in place with 2 dedicated surgeons



DR. N JOUKHADAR

For the first time, Nova Scotia Health has a program in place providing gender-affirming chest masculinization and feminization surgeries.

The health authority did not previously have a dedicated program for these kinds of procedures — commonly referred to as top surgery — with surgeons who have a mandate to provide the care, according to Nova Scotia Health.

Two surgeons specifically trained in top surgery have been recruited for the program, which began when the first surgeon came on board in July 2023. Dr. Nadim Joukhadar joined the program in September.

“I’d always ... wanted to give back to the LGBTQ+ community in some way,” said Joukhadar, who is part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community himself.

Joukhadar is from Halifax and returned home after receiving specialty training and working in Toronto. He said it’s gratifying to be able to provide care to people in the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

“I’ve never had something that’s been more rewarding in my life in any field,” he said. “I’ve never been happier at my work.” (article and photo courtesy of CBC)

“I’ve never had something that’s been more rewarding in my life in any field,” he said. “I’ve never been happier at my work.” (article and photo courtesy of CBC)

Notable Mentions

Dr. Jason Williams
Dr. Gerald L. Sparkes Faculty Teaching Award
for Excellence in Plastic Surgery Education 2024

Dr. Anna Duncan
Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine Samuel R. McLaughlin Scholarship 2024

Dr. Colton Boudreau & Dr. Erik Mandawe
Dr. Winston Parkhill Award
for Excellence in Teaching by a Plastic Surgery Resident 2024

Dr. Tammy Selman
Atlantic Society of Plastic Surgeons Best Presentation by a Resident 2024

Dr. Mike Bezuhly
Appointed Director of Research, Department of Surgery

RESIDENTS

- Dr. A Duncan
- Dr. R Gudimella CIP
- Dr. C McGuire
- Dr. A Al Shammari
- Dr. T Dow
- Dr. B Greene
- Dr. A Albrahim
- Dr. C Boudreau
- Dr. E Mandawe
- Dr. T Selman
- Dr. S Al Shawaf
- Dr. S Al Shammari
- Dr. K Ross



Thoracic Surgery

QEII

- Dr. G Darling
- Dr. A Ednie
- Dr. D French
- Dr. H Henteleff
- Dr. A Mujoomdar
- Dr. M Plourde
- Dr. A Wallace



CLINICAL ANALYSIS

9,998

PATIENT VISITS

1,250

OPERATIONS

3,139

OR HOURS

645

OR AFTERHOURS

Bringing Thoracic Surgery Care Closer to Home: Cape Breton Clinic

The Cape Breton Thoracic Surgery Clinic, led by Dr. Daniel French and Sarah Gillis, RN, is dedicated to providing specialized thoracic care to the local community. This clinic offers patients in Cape Breton easier access to expert consultations, diagnostic services, and follow-up care without the need to travel long distances. The significance of this clinic lies in its ability to deliver high-quality, patient-centered care closer to home, improving both the convenience and accessibility of thoracic surgery services for individuals in the region. By addressing the unique needs of the Cape Breton community, the clinic plays a crucial role in enhancing health outcomes and reducing the burden of travel for patients seeking thoracic surgery care.

Art for Lungs: A Creative Journey in Support of Lung Cancer Research and Patient Care

The Division of Thoracic Surgery, in collaboration with Lung NSPEI, hosted its second annual Art for Lungs event on May 9, 2024, raising \$30,000 to support critical lung cancer research and patient care programs, furthering efforts to address Nova Scotia's alarmingly high lung cancer rates and mortality—the highest in Canada.

This annual event unites philanthropists, medical professionals, researchers, students, and government officials who share a commitment to improving outcomes for lung cancer patients. Guests enjoyed live art by Holly Carr, music by Sam Wilson, and a hands-on experience with the da Vinci surgical robot, showcasing cutting-edge technology used in lung cancer treatment.

The funds raised are dedicated to advancing groundbreaking lung cancer research led by the QEII Division of Thoracic Surgery and to supporting vital patient programs offered by Lung NSPEI. This impactful evening of art and music emphasized the importance of community involvement in the fight against lung cancer, helping to push forward medical advancements and improve patient care.

ABCD Award

Thoracic Surgery has a new ABCD award (Above and Beyond the Call of Duty) for outstanding performance while on Thoracic Surgery. Dr. Rheann Brownstone received it for 2024



CLINICAL TRIALS: A GLOBAL FIRST FOR NOVA SCOTIA

Dr. Alison Wallace is the principal investigator for the AstraZeneca-funded Phase III Tropion-Lung12 clinical trial. Dr. Wallace and her team achieved a remarkable milestone, becoming the first site globally to activate the trial and the first in North America to enroll a patient. This groundbreaking trial, titled "A phase III, randomized, open-label, global study of adjuvant datopotamab deruxtecan (Dato-DXd) in combination with rilvegostomig or rilvegostomig monotherapy versus standard of care, following complete tumor resection in participants with stage I adenocarcinoma non-small cell lung cancer who are ctDNA-positive or have high-risk pathological features," marks a significant achievement for Nova Scotia and highlights the outstanding efforts of the entire team.



DR. A WALLACE

IASLC Academy Award Recognition: A Prestigious Milestone in Lung Cancer Research

Dr. Alison Wallace recently attended the World Conference on Lung Cancer, where she received notable recognition within the research community by being selected as one of only 30 candidates worldwide to participate in the esteemed International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC) Academy. This prestigious program, known for identifying and nurturing future leaders in lung cancer research and treatment, draws a highly competitive international pool of applicants. Graduates of the IASLC Academy frequently advance to hold influential positions in the field, underscoring the exceptional caliber of individuals chosen.

Dr. Wallace's participation not only reflects her standing in the global research community but also enhances her ability to bring cutting-edge knowledge and collaboration opportunities back to our institution, further supporting excellence in patient care and clinical research.

2024 Cross-Canada Survey of Radon Exposure: Mapping Residential Risk Across Canada

Dr. Alison Wallace is an author on the recently published 2024 Cross-Canada Survey of Radon Exposure in Residential Buildings of Urban and Rural Communities, a comprehensive study examining radon exposure as a critical environmental risk factor for lung cancer across Canada. This report, produced through a collaboration among prominent researchers from Canadian Universities, the Evict Radon National Study team, and Health Canada's National Radon Program, addresses a nationwide health concern. Radon is the leading environmental cause of lung cancer, and Canada has seen an increase in radon exposure levels, with approximately 1 in 5 Canadians living in homes above Health Canada's recommended radon limit of 200 Bq/m³.



Dr. Wallace's involvement underscores her commitment to researching environmental lung cancer risk factors. The findings reveal a concerning increase in high-radon zones across Canadian regions, especially in Atlantic Canada, the Prairies, and Northern communities. This report provides a foundation for targeted public health efforts, encouraging local, provincial, and national authorities to prioritize radon awareness, outreach, and mitigation initiatives.

The report also highlights areas with particularly high radon prevalence, including Halifax, which presents significant health implications for Nova Scotians. Dr. Wallace's contribution to this impactful report reflects her dedication to reducing environmental cancer risks and advancing public health strategies for improved lung cancer prevention in Canada.

Division of Thoracic Surgery Research Impact: Presenting Our Work Locally, Nationally, and Globally

In 2024, the Division of Thoracic Surgery showcased its ongoing research efforts with presentations at local, national, and international conferences. Our team presented 6 papers at local conferences, 5 nationally, and 6 internationally, highlighting the breadth and relevance of our work in thoracic surgery.

In addition to our conference presence, the Division published 7 papers in peer-reviewed journals this year, contributing to the growing body of knowledge in our field, which reflects our commitment to disseminating meaningful research that advances the care of patients with thoracic conditions.



Vascular Surgery

QEII

- Dr. P Casey
- Dr. S Jessula
- Dr. M Lee
- Dr. G MacKean
- Dr. J McDonald
- Dr. M Smith

FELLOWS

- Dr. M Al Sulaimani



CLINICAL ANALYSIS

11,979

PATIENT VISITS

877

OPERATIONS

2,937

OR HOURS

493

OR AFTERHOURS

The Division of Vascular Surgery is excited to announce the hiring of three new surgeons who will start in 2025.

Dr. Alexa Mordhorst- recently completed her residency at the University of British Columbia and is now in the UK pursuing a prestigious fellowship in the UK in complex venous disease including chronic venous occlusions and reconstructions, arteriovenous malformations, congenital venous malformations etc. She is passionate about surgical education and training and is keen to become involved in both undergraduate and postgraduate education.

Dr. Adam Power is an Associate Professor from the University of Western Ontario who also has a fellowship in complex venous disease from the Mayo clinic. He has been the past program director for vascular surgery at Western. He has a Master of Bio-Science Enterprise (MBE) degree from the University of Cambridge, UK and is one of the leading innovators in vascular surgery in Canada. He founded his own medical device company and is passionate about innovation, intellectual property and advancement in surgical devices. He has built vast connections in these areas and will be an excellent resource for the NSHA innovation hub.

Dr. Heather Gill is an Associate Professor at McGill University. She is a prolific researcher with numerous publications, and is the current president of our Canadian Vascular Society. Her research focus has been in prehabilitation and ERAS protocols. She has been awarded a prestigious CIHR grant to conduct a multinational randomized control trial for prehab in open aneurysm surgery patients.



YEAR IN REVIEW

In the past year, we have performed 25 advanced fenestrated/branched endovascular procedures for complex aneurysms and are considered a high volume center for these cases. . We have built a collaborative team with interventional radiology and cardiac surgery which has contributed to our success.

As part of the Vascular Quality Initiative- a quality database- our center contributed >50 Open AAAs and >100 EVARs between July 2023-Jun 2024- representing 32% of open AAA cases and 21% of EVARS respectively in Canada.

Through one of our quality improvement studies, we have improved our discharge medication compliance on antiplatelet and statins: our results have shown increase from 89 to 96% (in EVARs it went from 80 to 95%).

Our research output has increased exponentially with the addition of Dr. Samuel Jessula. With his energy and passion for research, the division has had 12 publications and/or international/national/regional presentations combined. His guidance has resulted in his medical student winning 2 prestigious research grants from the Canadian Society of Vascular Surgery.

Our surgical volume has increased by 25% over the past year highlighting the prevalence of vascular disease in Nova Scotia and our dedication to this patient population. The Division would like to thank everyone who plays a part in providing care for our patients.

VIRTUAL CARE

Our surgeons Drs. Joey McDonald and Matthew Smith have been leaders in the use of virtual health. Together they have conducted approximately 1600 virtual visits all over the province.

They have been able to do consults with patients at peripheral hospitals, with their families and other health care providers at the bedside. They accompany wound care nurses virtually to patient homes to assess wound progress. They provide virtual followup care and visits with nursing assistance.

Their work has increased patient satisfaction, allowing patients to stay close to home, and sparing them the expense and discomfort of travelling long distances. Physicians and nurses also feel supported and regard this as very useful tool for patient care.





Our People



In Memoriam



Dr. Alex Gillis – (1928-2024)

Dr. Gillis completed his medical degree from Dalhousie University and became the first certified pediatric surgeon in the Maritimes. Dr. Gillis joined the Dalhousie Department of Surgery in 1961 and was a founding member of the Canadian Association of Pediatric Surgeons. From 1970 to 1995, he was the Chief of Surgery at the IWK and established all major pediatric surgical specialties. He was awarded the Order of Canada in 1997 for the introduction and development of techniques of open-heart surgery in children. Dr. Gillis took part in creating the Pediatric Surgery Training Program accredited by the Royal College which has trained more than 20 pediatric surgeons working around the world. He moved to Saudi Arabia for a period of time but returned to the IWK serving as the VP of Medicine and other administrative roles. In 1996, Dr. Gillis was honored with the title of Professor Emeritus at Dalhousie University. To further recognize his contributions, the title of 'Dr. D. Alex Gillis Professor and Head' was established in 2011 for the Department Heads in Surgery.



Dr. Robert Stone – (1940-2024)

Dr. Stone completed his medical degree from Queen's University in 1964. He began his career at the Toronto General Hospital, then became surgeon-in-chief at Mount Sinai Hospital and Surgeon-in-chief at Toronto Western Hospital. In 1993, he moved to Halifax where he became the Head of the Department of Surgery until 2006. Dr. Stone was well known throughout his career for his excellence in teaching and received many awards. In 2006, the Department of Surgery announced the Dr. Stone Travelling Fellowship in his honour. The prize is awarded annually to the top resident at the annual research day and provides funds to aid in travel expenses to secure fellowship training after residency. On retirement, Dr. Stone was given the honorary title of Professor Emeritus.



We teach, conduct research, and serve our patients on Mi'kmaw territory, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. The people of the Mi'kmaw Nation have lived on this territory for millennia, and we acknowledge them as the past, present, and future care-takers of this land. We are all Treaty people.

We also recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies, and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

Department of Surgery
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