



UCSF PATHOLOGY ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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Department Leadership Appointment Updates

New Teaching and Mentoring appointments

Professor Ronald Balassanian, MD was appointed by an internal department search as **Residency Program Director (PD)** for the Department of Pathology as of May 15, 2023. Dr Debnath, Chair of Pathology, noted on his announcement of this appointment the following: "Ron has extensively devoted much of his academic career on education and mentoring and he brings incredible experience and enthusiasm in many areas such as curriculum development, global pathology, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Since 2016, he has served as Confidential Career Advisor for medical students, helping them prepare for a career in pathology. In 2021, he initiated participation by Cytopathology in the Specialty Practice Ambulatory sub-iNternship (SPAN), a required longitudinal outpatient preceptorship for fourth year medical students that enables them to develop advanced ambulatory patient care skills while working in the FNA clinic. In addition to his UME achievements, his contributions to GME were recognized by the 2021 Faculty Teaching Award, voted on by AP residents and fellows. Ron is an alumnus of UCSF Pathology, having completed AP and CP residency training and fellowships in Surgical Pathology and Cytopathology here and served as Chief Resident during this time. He also brings multi-institutional experience to the role, including as a post-sophomore fellow at the University of Vermont and as an attending physician and faculty member at Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School prior to returning to UCSF when he joined our faculty in 2011." Among the goals he cited when he applied for the position, are expanding the number of residents, creating sub-specialty rotations for residents, renewing the teaching curriculum, and to make Pathology fun- fun for residents, fun for faculty and fun for staff.

Professor Marta Margeta, MD, PhD was appointed as of July 2023 as our Department's inaugural **Vice Chair of Education** for the Department of Pathology. Dr. Margeta is currently Professor of Pathology, Associate Director of the Neuropathology Division and Neuropathology Fellowship, and Medical Director of the Neuromuscular Lab at UCSF. In addition, Dr. Margeta is a member of the UCSF Academy of Medical Educators and a long-standing pillar in the medical education community at UCSF, not only because of her tireless dedication to teaching but also because of her extensive expertise and leadership in medical school curriculum development in the Department and the School of Medicine over the last 15 years. She serves as Co-Director of Pathology Longitudinal Science Thread in the Bridges Curriculum and has served as the Co-Director of the "Brain, Mind, and Behavior" Course since 2009. From 2018 to 2024, she also directed a 2-week clinical immersion experience elective, "Demystifying Pathology," which has proven immensely popular among UCSF medical students. In 2023, Dr. Margeta became a member of the Bridges Curriculum Executive Committee. In addition, she has taken on diverse academic leadership and service roles at UCSF and the University of California: she served as Chair of the School of Medicine Faculty Council and has been a critical advocate for open-access publishing as Chair of both the UCSF and Systemwide Committees on Library and Scholarly Communication. The Vice Chair of Education is a new role dedicated to broadly elevating the educational mission in the Department. Dr. Margeta will serve on the Executive Committee and direct her expertise toward achieving greater integration and forging closer ties amongst the undergraduate (UME), graduate (GME) and continuing medical education (CME) programs in the Department. An important near-term priority for the Department is the restoration and expansion of our residency and clinical fellowship programs as part of emerging new opportunities for GME expansion at UCSF; as a result, Dr. Margeta has been working with our fellowship directors and with our Residency Program Directors, Drs. Ron Balassanian and Kristie White, to identify and advocate for additional positions from UCSF Health.

Under Dr Margeta's leadership, the department is transitioning didactic residency curriculum from traditional lectures to pre-recorded lectures, as well as establishing on-demand self-study resources and interactive slide sessions. In this process, there will be a growing reliance on the use of digital slides for educational purposes. As per Dr Margeta: "To enhance our ability to deliver this digital content easily and seamlessly at all our educational sites and across all types of learners (from UME to CME), we decided to use **PathPresenter (PP) as the departmental digital educational platform and have established a departmental PP account for this purpose.**"

Professor Joseph (Joe) Rabban, MD, MPH, will be helping Dr Margeta manage these digital pathology educational initiatives in his new position as the Digital Pathology Education Liaison (DPEL). He was selected for this role by Dr Margeta, who notes: "Dr Rabban has a long-standing interest in the digital pathology education and has developed extensive online gynecologic pathology self-study resources, which have been well received by the residents. To support these pioneering efforts, Dr Rabban has obtained Innovation Funding from the UCSF Academy of Medical Educators through a competitive application process. As the DPEL, Joe will work closely with me and other education leaders in the department to develop policies, procedures, and user training pertaining to digital pathology in education. Additionally, Joe will manage our departmental PP account, serve as the faculty liaison for the departmental Self-Study Educational Resources (SSER) website, and participate in the development of pilot proposals for digital pathology-based CME courses."

Professor Rageshree (Raga) Ramachandran, MD, PhD, has been selected through a SOM-wide search process to become the **Associate Director of the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP)** as of July 1, 2024. The UCSF MSTP program ranks among the top and most selective MD/PhD programs in the country. In her new role, Raga will guide MD/PhD students through their key transitions between pre-clinical coursework, graduate research, and clinical rotations. As noted by Chair Jay Debnath: "This is a "homecoming" for Raga because she began her career in medicine as an MSTP at the University of Pennsylvania, where she received a PhD in Cell and Molecular Biology. After her MD/PhD, she moved to the UCSF Dept of Pathology, first as a resident and fellow, ultimately joining our faculty in 2010. I am confident that Raga's long-standing expertise in the medical school curriculum and as a valued mentor for medical students, residents, and fellows makes her a perfect fit for her new role in the UCSF MSTP."

Professor Rageshree Ramachandran, MD, PhD was also selected through an internal search as the new **Faculty Mentoring Facilitator for the Department** as of July 1, 2024. In this new role, Raga will design and implement a more structured and proactive mentoring program for our faculty, especially those at the junior and mid-career levels. Dr Margeta led the search and notes the following: "Raga brings a wealth of experience to this position both as a mentor and educator. In our Department, she has served as the Director of Medical Education and as DEI champion. She has a long-standing familiarity with UCSF and the search committee was impressed by her thoughtful and comprehensive plans for structuring mentorship within our department and by her understanding of the different mentorship layers, including aspects of sponsorship and advising."

Assistant Professor Dana Balitzer, MD was also appointed by Dr. Margeta and Dr. Debnath to take the place of Dr. Ramachandran as the **Director of Medical Student Pathology Electives** as of July 1, 2024. In this new role, Dana will oversee the core Anatomic Pathology electives - Demystifying Pathology Clinical Immersion Experience (IDS 130.08) for MS3s, previously directed by Dr. Margeta, and Surgical & Autopsy Pathology Elective (PATH 150.03) for MS4s, previously directed by Dr. Ramachandran - working closely with the rotation site directors and supervising faculty/trainees. Dr Margeta notes the following: "Dana brings a passion for medical education and a broad teaching experience to this role. She currently directs the Competency-Based Immersion Experiences (COBIEs) Curriculum for Pathology and Lab Medicine, which launched in the spring of 2020 to prepare graduating MS4s for their AP/CP residency using a series of case-based and practical skills teaching sessions. Dana also serves as the Confidential Specialty Residency Advisor for Pathology, a role she took over from Dr. Ron Balassanian last year when he became the AP/CP Residency Program Director. Dana teaches multiple small groups in the required preclinical (MS1 and MS2) curriculum and has recently completed a two-day-long Teach for UCSF Certificate Program (Educator Essentials Certificate) as well as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Champion Training and several Core Teaching Skills Workshops. Finally, she founded the departmental Wellness Committee and chaired it until 2023 and is currently serving as the Education Liaison for the GI/Liver subspecialty group."

New Vice Chair Positions and Appointments

The former Vice Chair of Clinical Affairs, held in the past by Dr Linda Ferrell (2000-2015) and Dr Grace Kim (2015-2023) was split into two positions, one focused on the faculty practice and the second to lead medical direction and the clinical operations. In addition, the Surgical Pathology Director position was eliminated with subspecialty division directors reporting directly to the Vice Chair of Anatomic Pathology. These changes were made following extensive discussion and vote by all faculty members. The goals for this change were to complete the transition from a general pathology pattern of practice to a subspecialty division type of practice, and to also allow for the separation of the Medical Directorships (now funded by UCSF Health) from the Academic Leadership (funded by the Department and School of Medicine funds). The faculty members elected to serve in these two new Vice Chair began their roles in July 1 2023:

Professor Elham Khanafshar, MD, MS:
Vice Chair of Clinical Operations (VCCO) and Lead Medical Director

Professor Bradley Stohr, MD:
Vice Chair of Anatomic Pathology (VCAP)

New Medical Director Leadership effective July 1, 2023

Professor Elham Khanafshar, MD, MS: Mission Bay CLIA Laboratory Director

Professor Yunn-Yi Chen, MD, PhD: Mount Zion CLIA Laboratory Director

Professor Ron Balassanian: Cytology Laboratory and FNA Clinic Medical Director

Associate Professor Sarah Umetsu, MD, PhD: Immunohistochemistry Laboratory Medical Director

Associate Professor Anatoly Urisman, MD, PhD: Associate Medical Director of Digital Pathology (to assist Professor Zoltan Laszik, MD)

(Professor Ryan Gill, MD, PhD is continuing in his role as Parnassus CLIA Director.)

USCAP Leadership Appointment

Professor Joseph Rabban, MD, MPH was selected for a 4-year term on the USCAP Educational Committee (Nov 2023) as part of the Gynecological subspecialty membership. The Educational Committee is the most important (and hard-working) leadership group for USCAP for determining the Educational Programs.

Awards

DEI Department Awards

The DEI Leadership Awards are given annually in the Department of Pathology. The awards are intended to provide everyone working in our Department with the opportunity to recognize a staff, faculty member, and as of 2024, also a trainee (colleague, team member, mentor, etc.) for excellence in DEI leadership and supporting inclusion. In 2023, the award winners were:

Mark Weinstein, Department Manager, Anatomic Pathology, ZSFG
Dr. Poonam Vohra, Professor of Pathology

In 2024, when the award also began to include a trainee, and the award winners were:

Dominic Lung, Cytology Supervisor, ZSFG Pathology
Dr. Nesli Kayraklioglu, Fellow, General Surgical Pathology
Dr. Raga Ramachandran, Professor, Pathology

Teaching Awards UCSF Medical School

Two members of our department received prestigious teaching awards from the UCSF School of Medicine in recognition of their outstanding small group teaching in the past 2 years. In 2022-23 cycle, two of our faculty were recognized for the excellence in small group teaching.

Awards

As per Dr Marta Margeta, our newly appointed Director of Medical Education: “Only two awards for small group teaching are available each year, and both of them were awarded to pathology small group facilitators this past year (ending 2023), so it was an amazing sweep and highlights how much UCSF students enjoy pathology small groups!”

1. **Dr. Raga Ramachandran** has received the **2022-2023 Bridges Curriculum – Foundations 1 and 2 Teaching Award for Excellence in Small Group Instruction by Faculty Member**. This is a student-nominated award that reflects the high esteem and deep appreciation that MS1s and MS2s feel for exemplary preclinical teaching done by a faculty member.
2. **Dr. Alexander Weickhardt (PGY1)** has received **2022-2023 Bridges Curriculum – Foundations 1 and 2 Teaching Award for Excellence in Small Group Instruction by Student Instructor**. This is also a student-nominated award that reflects the high esteem and deep appreciation that MS1s and MS2s feel for exemplary preclinical teaching done by a senior medical student at UCSF (Alex then became a PGY1 trainee in our department).

Special Research Awards

American Society of Cytology, DEI award (second year in a row for UCSF to win this prize)

Dr. Timothy Gilpatrick was awarded the Excellence in Diversity Equity and Inclusion Research Award at the American Society of Cytopathology Annual Scientific Meeting in Austin Texas, Nov 2023. Along with his coauthors, **Drs. Poonam Vohra, Steve Long, and Peyman Samghabadi and Cytologist Reza Mousavi**, Dr. Gilpatrick analyzed anal cancer disparities at ZSFG and demonstrated age and race-based differences in anal cytology. The ASC award for DEI stated in 2022 and has only been awarded twice. This is the second year in a row a UCSF team has received the DEI award at the ASC meeting, both of which came from work at ZSFG (aka San Francisco General Hospital) showing the importance of the diverse populations we serve and the rich material available at ZSFG for DEI focused research.

In addition to a beautiful plaque, the ASC foundation awarded Tim a \$500 American Express Gift Card printed with squamous cells from an anal pap smear.

Appointment to the Academia Sinica of Taiwan, the equivalent of the National Academy of Science in the USA: **Dr Eric Huang, MD, PhD** (July 4, 2024). Academia Sinica (Taiwan) held its biennial Convocation of Academicians from July 1 to July 4. Newly elected Academicians and Honorary Academicians were announced by President James C. Liao and Conveners for the Convocation of Academicians in the press conference after the closing of the Convocation on July 4. This year, a total of 28 new Academicians and 2 Honorary Academicians were elected. Eric Huang was 1 of 6 of the elected academicians from the Division of Life Sciences. Eric is Professor & Vice Chair for Research in our department and his research is in the neurosciences. **Dr Huang** is also the Director of Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program and Director of the Physician Scientist Scholars Program at UCSF.

Two Anatomic Pathology Professors join 30 UCSF Scientists Honored for Highest Impact in Their Fields

Thirty-two UC San Francisco scientists are among the most influential individuals in their respective fields, according to the most recent analysis of research citations by the science and intellectual property company, Clarivate. Researchers were chosen according to authorship of highly-cited journal articles – those that ranked in the top 1% by citations for their field(s) and publication year over the past decade. This citation-based list was then refined by expert judgment at Clarivate to produce a final slate representing the top 0.1% of all scientists. “We celebrate the Highly Cited Researchers whose contributions transform our world by helping to make it healthier, more sustainable and more secure,” said Bar Veinstein, president of Academia and Government at Clarivate. “Recognition of Highly Cited Researchers not only validates research excellence but also enhances reputation, fosters collaboration and informs resource allocation, acting as a beacon for academic institutions and commercial organizations.” Highly-cited researchers have made breakthroughs pushing their fields to new heights and inspiring new science around the globe. UCSF scholars are among the most highly cited researchers in biology and biochemistry, clinical medicine, immunology, molecular biology, biochemistry, neuroscience and behavior, and pharmacology and toxicology. The 2023 rankings include 52 organizations — universities, government agencies and other entities — that are home to 27 or more Highly Cited Researchers. UCSF ranked 11th among all organizations. The Highly Cited list includes 6,849 individuals from 67 countries/regions. About 84% come from just 10 countries/regions, including 38% from the U.S. and 18% from mainland China.

We are therefore pleased to announce that two of our own Pathology Department members were named on this list: **Professor Eric Huang, MD, PhD, for his work in the Neurobiological Sciences, and Professor Maxwell Krummel, PhD, for his work in Pathology.**

The Prevent Cancer Foundation awards the Shure Family Charitable Foundation Award to Dr Matthew Stachler, MD, PhD (Mar 2024). Dr. Stachler, a physician scientist within the Department of Pathology, was recently awarded The Shure Family Charitable Foundation in memory of Max Shure Award from the Prevent Cancer Foundation for his project entitled "Immune Determinants of Barrett's Esophagus Progression". Dr. Stachler's laboratory studies the molecular mechanisms behind pre-cancerous cell progression into invasive cancer with a particular focus on the upper gastrointestinal system. The goal of these studies is to utilize this information to develop novel approaches for early detection, risk stratification, and therapy. Cancers of the upper gastrointestinal system, mainly cancers of the esophagus and stomach, are a deadly group of cancers that generally respond poorly to traditional treatments. Additionally, some of these cancers have recently seen a dramatic rise in incidence. Therefore, a better understanding of how these cancers form and better means to identify at risk patients early is significantly important. In this project, Dr. Stachler's team is working to understand how inflammation may influence progression to cancer in the pre-cancerous cells of esophageal adenocarcinoma (termed Barrett's esophagus). While it is widely known that Barrett's esophagus develops in an inflammatory rich environment; the exact cell makeup of this inflammation, how the inflammation may change during the progression process, and how the inflammation interacts with the pre-cancerous epithelial cells is unknown. Additionally, it is unknown if there may be a difference in inflammation between patients who go on to progress to cancer versus those who despite having Barrett's esophagus never get cancer. In this study, Dr. Stachler's team will utilize new technologies that allow the quantification and spatial location of a wide range of inflammatory cells to be determined in a unique cohort of patients with Barrett's esophagus in which some of the patients progressed to cancer while others did not. Additionally, they will determine any immune regulatory pathways that may be upregulated or downregulated within the Barrett's esophagus cells. This information will be invaluable to develop more refined hypothesis on which immune cells and pathways are important in the progression process and to develop better systems to functionally test these hypotheses.

Announcements



USCAP 2025 Abstract Submission [Now Open](#)

August 7th to September 26th @ 11am PST

It will be taking place in Boston, Massachusetts

March 22, 2025 to March 27, 2025

[Hotel Reservations are Open too](#)