After seven years of training, six graduates are moving on to begin their surgical careers

Faculty, family, and friends celebrated the graduation of six Department of Surgery residents on June 9, 2015 at TCF Bank Stadium. Read more about our graduates and their plans for the future.

**Elizabeth A. Berdan, MD, MS,** received her undergraduate degree from Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; a Doctor of Medicine degree, from the Medical College of Wisconsin; and a Master of Science degree in Clinical Research from the University of Minnesota. As a resident she received grants from the Chest Wall and Spinal Deformity Group to fund her research while working in the laboratory with her research mentor, Daniel Saltzman, MD, PhD. She was the recipient of the 2014 Henry Buchwald Award for Academic Achievement. Dr. Berdan received a number of awards for her scientific contributions. After graduation, she will begin a fellowship in pediatric surgery at the Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin/Medical College of Wisconsin Affiliated Hospitals, Inc.

**Christopher J. Chow, MD, MS,** received his undergraduate degree from Northwestern University, Chicago, and a Doctor of Medicine degree from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. His research in surgical outcomes as an NIH T32 Research Fellow led to numerous abstracts, posters, oral presentations, and published papers. He earned a Master of Science degree in Clinical Research during his time in the research laboratory. Dr. Chow received the 2014 David Gavisser Award, 2014 Earl G. Young Award, and 2011 Arnold P. Gold Resident Humanism and Excellence in Teaching Award. He served as an administrative chief resident this past year. After graduation, Dr. Chow will begin a fellowship in Colon and Rectal Surgery at the University of Minnesota.

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**THE DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY WELCOMES 2015 SURGICAL ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR – RODERICK BARKE, MD**

Lessons learned, lost, and rediscovered. Roderick Barke, MD, the 2015 Surgical Alumnus of the Year, spoke about these lessons and his distinguished career as a surgical leader at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) during a Grand Rounds lecture held on June 9, 2015. His talk, titled In Retrospect, was heard by a full house of soon to graduate surgical residents, new residents, faculty, and friends of the Department of Surgery.

Dr. Barke was nominated for this award by Department of Surgery faculty members. Criteria for nomination and selection include having been a surgical resident at UMN, who during their career,

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**Derrick Green, MD, Teresa Gonzaga, MD, Christopher Chow, MD, Janet Lee, MD, Kristin Ritter, MD, and Elizabeth Berdan, MD**
demonstrated innovative surgical skills, clinical excellence, research, compassionate patient care, role modeling, and leadership throughout their career.

Dr. Barke’s first surgical service assignment as an intern in 1979 was with Dr. John Delaney and Dr. Henry Buchwald. His interest in research was cultivated by Dr. Ed Humphrey. A Critical Care Fellowship under the mentorship of Dr. Frank Cerra helped lay the foundation for a career in Critical Care at the VAMC.

During a surgical career that spanned five presidential administrations, Dr. Barke navigated ever-changing political policy and budget decisions that impacted access, efficiency, and quality of health care for US veterans. Throughout his career he worked for change and reform when needed.

“Rod was one of those people that could get things done in a big bureaucracy,” said David A. Rothenberger, MD, in his introductory remarks. “He helped many of our surgical residents and trainees have an opportunity for exposure to world-class research and mustered the funds from the VAMC to help promote research for our trainees. He fostered the careers of many of the people in this room and others scattered around the US and the rest of the world.”

In the late 1990s, when a National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP) report showed O/E (observed/expected) mortality at the VAMC was not favorable, Dr. Barke took on the task of restructuring specialty care patient services to find where the problem lay.

“It took 6-7 years of systematically going through every division to figure out why the data was what it was and to see how it needed to be changed,” said Barke. “The person pushing this through was not going to be loved. And I was not loved.”

His work paid off. After the restructuring and needed reforms were implemented, subsequent O/E mortality rates showed significant improvements and in fact became better than the national average.

Additional reforms within the VA system markedly improved quality, boosted access, and increased efficiency.

However, Dr. Barke explained that 20 years after those sweeping reforms, things began to unravel in 2008.

“The VA lost sight of its primary mission of providing timely access to consistently high-quality care,” he explained. “In 2014, veterans experienced unprecedented wait times, compounded by a systematic cover-up by administrators, making it clear that reforms are needed again.”

Dr. Barke recently retired from his career at the VAMC, which included leadership roles as the Chief of Surgical Services, Director of the Specialty Patient Care Service Line, and UMN Resident Site Director.
Terese A. Gonzaga, MD, received her undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Doctor of Medicine degree from Loyola Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. Dr. Gonzaga was awarded the Lonza Award, a Minnesota Surgical Society Clinical Research Award, and the Department of Surgery Excellence in Clinical Science Research Award. Her research under the mentorship of Drs. Ahrenholz, Mohr, and Endorf at the Burn Center at Regions Hospital focused on burn wound cellulitis, hidradenitis suppurativa, and trauma/critical care. Dr. Gonzaga is first author for several publications, and has had several poster and oral presentations at national and international meetings. She traveled to Alaminos City in the Philippines with the plastic surgery staff for a mission trip in 2013. After graduation, Dr. Gonzaga will begin a fellowship at the University of Minnesota in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

Derrick L. Green, MD, MBA, received his undergraduate degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he held several leadership roles. He was elected and served as Student Government President, as well as the student representative to the University of Alabama Board of Trustees. Dr. Green received his Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Alabama School of Medicine and also a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Minnesota Carlson School of Management. He was involved with numerous research projects with his research mentor, Steven Santilli, MD. Two poster presentations at the Vascular Annual Meeting resulted in publications in high-impact journals. Dr. Green will begin a Vascular Fellowship at the University of Minnesota after graduation.

Janet T. Lee, MD, MS, received her undergraduate degree from Harvard University, where she graduated magna cum laude and received a foreign language citation in Mandarin Chinese. She received her Doctor of Medicine degree and Master of Science degree in Clinical Research from the University of Minnesota. Dr. Lee has had multiple poster and oral presentations at national and international meetings. She traveled to Honduras for surgical mission trips in both 2012 and 2013. Dr. Lee was awarded the Justin W. Goodhue, MD, Humanitarian Scholarship; the David Gaviser Award; the 2012 Department of Surgery Excellence in Clinical Research Award for best oral presentation; and the 2013 Department of Surgery Best Clinical Research Poster. She has numerous first-author publications, most notably an article on a multicenter, randomized controlled trial comparing skin closures after ostomy reversals in Diseases of the Colon & Rectum. She has served as an administrative chief resident this past year. After graduation, Dr. Lee will begin a fellowship in Colon and Rectal Surgery at the University of Minnesota, where she has been selected to serve as administrative fellow.

Kristin N. Ritter, MD, received her undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse. Returning to Minnesota, she attended the University of Minnesota where she received her Doctor of Medicine degree. Instead of working in the lab, Dr. Ritter completed a Critical Care Fellowship at the University of Minnesota. She is the recipient of the 2014 Earl G. Young award for “Exemplary Performance as a Surgical Resident while at Methodist Hospital” as well as the Department of Surgery Employee Recognition Award. After graduation, Dr. Ritter will practice general surgery at Methodist Hospital in St. Louis Park, MN.
2015 DOS GRADUATION SURGICAL AWARDS

**Henry Buchwald Award**
Pamela Portschy, MD

**Hays-Gaviser 4th Year Medical Student Award**
Matthew Fuglestad, MD

**David Gaviser Surgical Research Award**
Pamela Portschy, MD

**Justin W. Goodhue, MD, Humanitarian Scholarships**
Elliot Arsoniadis, MD
Erin Burke, MD
Christopher LaRocca, MD
Sydne Muratore, MD

**Earl Young Award**
Osama Alsaaied, MD

**Owen H. Wangensteen Award**
Thomas H. Blee, MD

**Cassius Ellis Resident Teaching Award**
Kristin N. Ritter, MD

2015 DOS RESIDENT RESEARCH PRESENTATION Awardees

**Basic Science**
1st Place: Rohini Khatri Olson, MD (Sabita Roy, PhD)
Impact of Hydromorphone on Dextran Sodium Sulfate Colitis

**Clinical Science**
1st Place: Erin Burke, MD (Mentor: Todd Tuttle, MD)
Completion Lymph Node Dissection or Observation for Melanoma Sentinel Lymph Node Metastases: A Decision Analysis