



**DR. CHRISTIAAN  
SCHRAG**

*FROM ZIMBABWE  
TO CALGARY AND BACK*

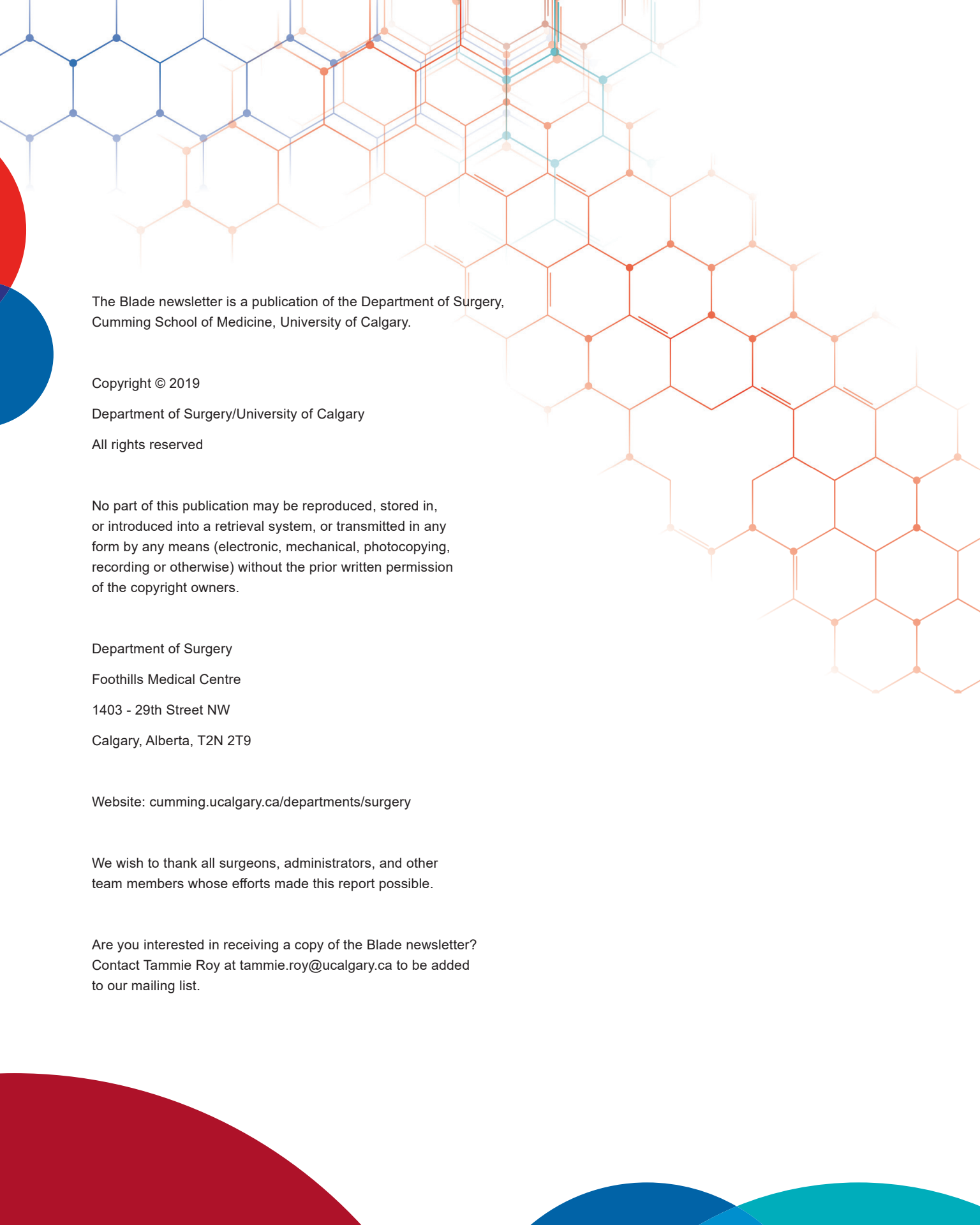
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# The Blade

The Department of Surgery Newsletter

CUMMING SCHOOL  
OF MEDICINE





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Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary.

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We wish to thank all surgeons, administrators, and other  
team members whose efforts made this report possible.

Are you interested in receiving a copy of the Blade newsletter?  
Contact Tammie Roy at [tammie.roy@ucalgary.ca](mailto:tammie.roy@ucalgary.ca) to be added  
to our mailing list.



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## MESSAGE FROM **DR. SEAN GRONDIN,** DEPARTMENT HEAD



I am pleased to share the latest issue of the Blade newsletter, where we highlight a few of the department's activities and profile some of our colleagues.

I begin by offering a warm welcome to our new faculty members. I look forward to working with you and continuing to grow our department while in an ever-dynamic environment. I also extend a special welcome to our new residents and fellows and offer a hearty congratulations to our graduated trainees.

This next year promises to be an exciting time for our department and our members, and though the transition to the new provincial government has brought inevitable uncertainty, we will continue to direct our efforts towards excellence in patient care, research, and education.

I look forward to the upcoming year and working in collaboration with my colleagues, the Cumming School of Medicine, and Alberta Health Services as we strive for the betterment of our department.

I hope you enjoy this edition of The Blade.

## OFFICE OF SURGICAL FELLOWSHIP UPDATE WITH **DR. AMIN KHERANI**

**F**ellowship programs are often the most career-defining moments of a surgeon's training. After completing their surgical residency, surgical fellows embark on a focused area of study and competency under the tutelage of an experienced surgical team and mentor(s).

Since its inception in 2015, the Office of Surgical Fellowship (OSF) has embarked upon and achieved numerous milestones. We actively foster and support 24 surgical fellowship training programs, and we provide solid training to our surgical fellows through clinical and academic rigor in a supportive and friendly atmosphere.

Currently, we have 30 surgical fellows from diverse geographic backgrounds, including Canada, USA, Middle East, United Kingdom, Australia, Europe, Bahamas, Brazil, Japan, and India. They are enrolled in various programs and work together to enhance their surgical skills, share knowledge, and contribute to the clinical and academic setting at the University of Calgary.

The office is committed to excellence in surgical education that fosters our fellows to grow in their surgical skills, patient care, teaching, and leadership abilities. Our fellows are encouraged to actively participate in the Principles of Research Course. They are also encouraged to engage in scientific research projects with their mentors, which may be presented during the annual Fellows Research Symposium as a stepping stone towards peer-reviewed publications. We are fortunate to be supported in our efforts by two committed program coordinators, Tracy Burke and Bernice Mina-Buna, who are very dedicated to our training program's success.



We want and encourage our surgical fellows to dive deep and immerse themselves into the clinical academic environment in collaboration with their mentors. This engaged approach and dedicated attitude ensure our surgical fellows enjoy the fruits of their fellowship experience in Calgary as they become future leaders, outstanding surgeons, and strong citizens of the community.



# CENTRE FOR GLOBAL SURGERY UPDATE WITH DR. GWEN HOLLAAR

**G**lobal Citizenship is an evolving buzzword, but what does it mean to a group of surgeons working in Calgary?

Using the definition by Oxfam, global citizens take an active role in promoting a more equal, fair, and sustainable world by, being aware of their role within a wider world context, respecting and valuing diversity, being motivated by social injustice, participating in the community at a range of levels from local to global, and being willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place.

It's within the spirit of global citizenship that the Department of Surgery seeks to promote community engagement and ask ourselves, "how can we encourage faculty members to participate in community engagement activities at some level?"

The Center for Global Surgery (CGS) was created in 2009, largely to help organize, support, and host the Bethune Round Table, an annual conference aimed at addressing the challenges of providing accessible, high-quality surgical care to marginalized patients in low-resource settings.

Since then, the purpose has evolved, and the current mission of the CGS is to promote global citizenship by providing a means for faculty, residents, and staff to participate in activities that strengthen surgical care, education, and research amongst vulnerable populations on the local, national, and global stage.

The CGS steering committee seeks to develop priorities and strategies that encourage department members to be active global citizens. Opportunities for global citizenship exist at all levels, and the committee is exploring a variety of ideas and initiatives.

Locally, department members could deepen their understanding of indigenous culture and become part of a surgical health care team working on indigenous reserves. They could also be part of a team running specialty clinics that provide healthcare to low-income families and refugees.

Nationally, department members could collaborate with a rural/remote hospital in Alberta or the Territories



to support the development of their surgical capacity, enable participation in education rounds, and work together to build stronger partnerships.

Internationally, we could work with existing Cumming School of Medicine (CSM) partnerships to promote deeper collaboration, build upon others' work, and encourage better sustainability. Our faculty could travel to a partner institution to teach local residents, and their faculty could visit Calgary for an observership, resident exchange, or joint research project with bilateral resident and faculty involvement.

We are excited about the future of the CGS, and we are always looking for input and participation. We encourage everyone to consider how we can take a more active role as global citizens. Please contact us at [cgs@ucalgary.ca](mailto:cgs@ucalgary.ca) or visit our website [ucalgary.ca/cgs](http://ucalgary.ca/cgs)

# INTRODUCING THE **OMBUDSPERSON AND DEPARTMENTAL ADVISOR ON DIVERSITY**

**T**he Department of Surgery would like to introduce our Ombudsperson and Departmental Advisor on Diversity, Dr. Elaine Joughin. Dr. Joughin has been practicing in Calgary for close to 30 years, is a pediatric orthopaedic surgeon at Alberta Children's Hospital, and clinical assistant professor at the University of Calgary.

An ombudsperson is an individual appointed by the department who is entrusted to represent the interests of department members by investigating and addressing complaints of maladministration or rights violations.

As a representative for fairness and equity, Dr. Joughin sits on all search and selection committees to ensure fairness throughout the entire process, including the establishment of criteria and the selection of candidates. She ensures that all qualified candidates are interviewed, within the guidelines of funding two or three interviews per position.

"When we have candidates from diverse backgrounds, it increases the likelihood of a more diverse department which better represents the population we treat," says Dr. Joughin. "It's important to remember that the selection of residents and fellows directly influences the diversity of candidates qualified to apply for department positions." Dr. Joughin would like to see a more diverse department with equal representation of genders and visible minorities.

Dr. Joughin also ensures department members are supported when they have concerns about fairness and seek to have their concerns addressed. As the ombudsperson, she is available to confidentially meet with individuals to provide support inside and outside the venues convened to address their concerns.

The Department of Surgery recognizes the importance of an ombudsperson and fully supports this confidential role at all levels. For more information, please contact Dr. Joughin at 403-875-8684 or [Joughin@ucalgary.ca](mailto:Joughin@ucalgary.ca).





# 2019 SURGEONS' DAY

**T**he 37th Annual Surgeon's Day Research Symposium was held on June 14th, 2019, at the Foothills Medical Centre, Health Sciences Centre, Libin Theatre. It was followed by a sports-themed Awards Gala, which was held at Winsport, Canada Olympic Park.

This year's symposium was well attended with 16 podium presentations and 20 poster presentations given within the four pillars of Clinical Research, Health Systems, Basic Science, and Education. The Sharpest Knife (Live Grant) Competition was held for the second time and was once again a huge success.

Thank you to our special guests Dr. Randy Moore, University of Calgary (McMurtry Lecturer), and Dr. Stephen Feinberg, Michigan Medicine Oral Surgery Clinic (McPhedran Lecturer). We also thank everyone involved who helped make the event a success.



Dr. Vick Chahal and  
Dr. Sean Grondin





Award Winners Dr. Murray Wong and Dr. Spencer Montgomery (Best Posters in Clinical and Education Research), Dr. Daniel You (John Smith & Laura May Gardner Award), and Dr. Prism Schneider (Outstanding Contribution of a New Faculty Member)

Dr. Bryan Donnelly,  
Distinguished Service Award for  
Rockyview General Hospital



Dr. Derek Drummond,  
Distinguished Service Award  
for Alberta Children's Hospital



Dr. Alan Lin,  
Distinguished Service Award  
for Peter Lougheed Centre



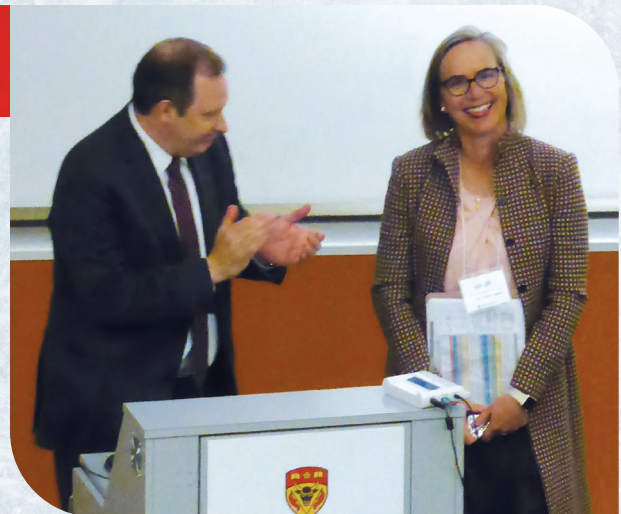




The Sharpest Knife  
Competition Winners,  
Dr. Rebecca Hartley and  
research team in action!

# Calgary Kids' Hand Rule – A Prediction Model for Pediatric Hand Fracture Triage

Dr. Sean Grondin and  
Dr. Claire Temple-Oberle



Dr. Randy Moore,  
McMurtry Lecturer



Dr. Stephen Feinberg,  
McPhedran Lecturer,  
and Dr. Sean Grondin



# DR. CHRISTIAAN SCHRAG FROM ZIMBABWE TO CALGARY AND BACK

In 2019, Dr. Christiaan Schrag received the Department of Surgery's award for Excellence in Surgical Care for Underserved Populations. Over the last 10 years, he has worked in 3 countries, with 6 different charities, and performed over 200 life-changing surgeries. "When a mother sees her child after surgery ... they are just so happy. I know I've made a difference."

Dr. Schrag is a plastic surgeon who specializes in microsurgical reconstruction of the head and neck. The procedures include the restoration of palates, tongues, and jaws after cancer treatment. He is also an active researcher focused on improving patient care and decreasing complications after surgery. He has a special interest in brachial plexus injuries and facial reanimation.

Each year Dr. Schrag travels with an international team to Zimbabwe where they perform up to 100 surgeries over two weeks. The trips are organized by Operation of Hope, a not-for-profit that sends volunteer surgical teams of nurses, surgeons, and anaesthetists to under-served countries. They provide free surgeries to children born with facial deformities as well as children with burns, and the team raises money to buy the equipment and supplies needed for each mission.

*"When a mother sees  
her child after surgery  
... they are just so  
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made a difference."*





***"Being from Zimbabwe is a big component of volunteering there. I want to help a place that I feel a connection to ..."***

***"...The people are lovely. The local teams we work with are great, and the patients and their families make you feel so welcome."***

**T**he majority of the children treated have cleft lips or palates, which cause difficulties with speech and swallowing. "This type of congenital defect comes with a lot of stigma in Africa, for the child, mother, and sometimes the entire family," says Dr. Schrag. The team performs a fairly short surgery with minimal risk, but the benefits to the children and families are huge. "That's really what plastic surgery is all about. It's about the quality of life you give people."

Burns are very prevalent in Zimbabwe, so the team also does reconstructive surgery for burn victims. "Families cook on open fires and the country has different standards for electrical safety, so we treat a lot of children with burns," said Dr. Schrag.

Every day is a 10-12 hour day. The team is typically at the hospital and is operating by 7 am and returns to their hotel around 6 pm or 7 pm. Then it's up the next morning to start again. Each trip is different and presents different





To learn more about Operation of Hope and their life-changing missions to Zimbabwe, please visit [operationofhope.org](http://operationofhope.org) or view *Scars of Hope-Bulawayo* at [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

The Calgary team is holding its annual fundraiser on March 7, 2020, with hopes to raise \$40,000 to support the next mission.

***DID YOU KNOW?  
Dr. Schrag spent  
a year in Taiwan  
after high school  
where he learned  
Mandarin Chinese.***

challenges. “We’ve had customs not clear a bag that had important medical equipment,” says Dr. Schrag. “We’ve had lights go out in the OR, and with no replacement bulbs, we had to figure out what to do. We’re always troubleshooting.” Though there are challenges, the good far outweighs the bad. “There’s always an unforeseen problem, and that’s the difficult part, but the people are lovely. The local teams we work with are great, and the patients and their families make you feel so welcome.”

In the past, Dr. Schrag has also volunteered his time and travelled to Pakistan and Haiti performing similar surgeries. “I’ve volunteered in other countries and with other organizations, but Operation of Hope is such a fantastic organization and Zimbabwe is a country that holds a lot of connection for me,” shares Dr. Schrag.

Something that Dr. Schrag’s colleagues may be surprised to learn is that he was born and raised in Zimbabwe. “Being from Zimbabwe is a big component of volunteering there.

I want to help a place that I feel a connection to... I still have cousins, aunts, and uncles that live there,” says Dr. Schrag.

After the Zimbabwe civil war, his family moved to Oman and then the UK before immigrating to Canada when he was 16. They settled on Vancouver Island. Dr. Schrag later moved to Ontario where he completed an undergraduate degree and a medical degree.

He originally came to Calgary as a medical student to do an elective in plastic surgery. “I had plans to learn how to ski while here, but that didn’t happen,” says Dr. Schrag. “I discovered that I loved plastic surgery and spent every free moment working. I loved the specialty, so I came back to Calgary for my residency and never left.”

“I love what I do. My colleagues are all so supportive, and it’s because of their support that I can make a difference in people’s lives. For this, I’m very grateful,” shares Dr. Schrag. His next trip to Zimbabwe is planned for the spring of 2020.





## MEET SHELLY BOHN, DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY MANAGER

**A**s the new Manager for the Department of Surgery, Shelly spends her days focused on department operations, staff, and finances, but it's her passion for helping others that motivates her to come to work each day.

Born and raised in Banff, Shelly spent her childhood playing in the mountains. "There was always something to do, and we were never inside. Not many people can say they had a school activity day and were taken by helicopter to Mt. Assiniboine! We camped overnight and spent the day hiking and biking," shared Shelly. As a teen, she worked at Sunshine Ski Hill, where she spent her breaks skiing and sighting celebrities like Alyssa Milano and Tom Berenger. "Growing up in Banff was amazing. I feel so lucky for all the experiences and interesting people I met."


After high school, competitive volleyball took Shelly to Saskatchewan, where she completed a degree in kinesiology

from the University of Regina. Her first job brought her to Calgary, and she started her career with Alberta Health Services in cardiac rehab doing exercise prescription for individuals pre- and post-cardiac surgery and stroke.

The next 20 years saw Shelly holding a variety of interesting and career-advancing roles, which led to management and the completion of her Masters in Leadership with a Specialization in Health. "I think I stayed with Alberta Health Services for so many years because I love to learn, I love the variety, and I love to challenge myself," said Shelly. "Health care provides all of that, but more importantly, I know my work is making a difference in people's lives."

Some career highlights for Shelly include setting up and managing the Pediatric Sleep Service at the Alberta Children's Hospital, a role which involved traveling throughout North America to present to other health professionals about pediatric sleep.





More recently, she completed a secondment to the Dental Clinic at Foothills Medical Centre to conduct an operational review, which was pivotal in improving the clinic environment for staff and patients.

The Department of Surgery position was a logical next step in her career and an opportunity to learn more about health care from the academic side. “I miss not seeing the patients as much, but I know I can still make a difference, just in a different way,” says Shelly. Though she prefers to lead quietly from behind, Shelly takes a lot of pride in seeing her team succeed. “This department already has so much to be proud of, and I’m excited to be a part of taking it in new directions.”

When not at work, Shelly and her husband are busy supporting their daughter, who was a performer with the Young Canadians until this fall. Shelly also loves spending time with her little rescue dog Beau, doing logic puzzles, reading, and drawing.

#### ***DID YOU KNOW?***

- *Shelly’s high school graduation was forced to change venues because of the Wayne Gretzky wedding!*
- *Riley Park is named after Shelly’s grandfather who homesteaded and donated the land to the City of Calgary.*
- *Shelly’s father created the contraption that allowed lines to be automatically painted on roads.*



# INTRODUCING ONE OF OUR NEWEST FACULTY MEMBERS DR. BIMAL BHINDI

**D**r. Bimal Bhindi is one of our newest faculty members who joined the Department of Surgery in the summer of 2018 as a urologic oncologist. He works at the Southern Alberta Institute of Urology at the Rockyview General Hospital and cares for patients in all areas of urologic oncology with a focus on prostate and kidney cancer.

Born and raised in Montreal, Dr. Bhindi completed his medical degree at McGill University. He knew he wanted to go into

"It's exciting to be part of a group working to learn and bring about positive change."

surgery but didn't decide on urology until he shadowed one of his mentors. "We really hit it off, and I saw myself running a similar practice," says Dr. Bhindi. "I felt this specialty could

be a great way to make a difference in people's lives." In 2012, he moved to Toronto and completed his residency training in urologic surgery at the University of Toronto.

Following his residency, Dr. Bhindi moved to Rochester, Minnesota, and completed a urologic oncology fellowship at the Mayo Clinic before moving to Calgary in 2018.

"Calgary seemed like a great city for a young family, and it was a terrific job opportunity," shared Dr. Bhindi.



"I felt this specialty could be a great way to make a difference in people's lives."

Dr. Bhindi is very active in research and is especially interested in active surveillance, optimization of patient selection for local therapies, personalized medicine, and multimodal therapy for advanced and metastatic prostate and kidney cancer. "I think it's important to learn more about the diseases we treat today so we can better treat them in the future," said Dr. Bhindi. "It's exciting to be part of a group working to learn and bring about positive change."

In addition to a busy surgical practice, Dr. Bhindi has a young daughter and son, ages two-and-a-half years and eight months, who keep him busy outside the hospital. Being new to Alberta, the family enjoys trips to the mountains and hiking to experience the province's natural beauty. Dr. Bhindi also enjoys chess, travelling, running, and weight-training. He has previously completed half marathons and the Tough Mudder challenge.



# CONGRATULATIONS TO MEMBERS IN NEW POSITIONS

**Please join us in welcoming these members to their  
new leadership positions in the department:**

**Dr. Frankie Fraulin**, Deputy Head of Department: Governance and Physician Services, *effective October 1, 2019*

**Dr. Robert Hart**, Physician Lead, Evidence Decision Support Program, *effective August 1, 2019*

**Dr. Marcia Clark**, Site Lead-Surgery, South Health Campus, *effective July 1, 2019*

**Dr. Andrew Crichton**, Section Chief, Ophthalmology, *effective July 1, 2019*

**Dr. Neel Datta**, Director, Calgary Zone Surgery Workforce Strategy, *effective July 1, 2019*

**Dr. Ryan Rochon**, Quality Improvement Lead – General Surgery, *effective July 1, 2019*

**Dr. Christopher Armstrong**, Director, Surgical Foundations, *effective June 1, 2019*

**Dr. Antoine Bouchard-Fortier**, Quality Improvement Lead – Surgical Oncology, *effective May 1, 2019*

**Dr. Fabio Ferri-de-Barros**, Quality Improvement Lead – Pediatric Surgery, *effective May 1, 2019*

**Dr. Graham Cobb**, Section Chief, Dentistry and Oral Health, *effective May 1, 2019*

**Dr. Grant Moffat**, Quality Improvement Lead – General Surgery, *effective February 1, 2019*

**Dr. Kate Elzinga**, Quality Improvement Lead – Plastic Surgery, *effective February 1, 2019*

**Dr. Richard Ng**, Quality Improvement Lead – Orthopedics, *effective February 1, 2019*

**Dr. Paul McBeth**, Facilities Allocation Chairperson, *effective February 1, 2019*

**Dr. Jen Matthews**, Patient Concerns Coordinator, *effective February 1, 2019*

**Dr. Colin Schieman**, Co-Block Booking Chairperson, *effective February 1, 2019*

**Dr. Randy Moore**, Co-Block Booking Chairperson, *effective February 1, 2019*

**Dr. James Brookes**, Co-Physician Lead, Competency by Design, *effective January 1, 2019*

**Dr. Amin Kherani**, Director, Office of Surgical Fellowship, *effective January 1, 2019*





*Jo-El Buerlen  
is an adventurer  
at heart who loves  
her job.*

## MEET JO-EL BUERLEN, CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Jo-El has worked for Alberta Health Services for almost four years, starting in the Office of Surgical Education and the Surgical Foundations Residency Program, and most recently as the coordinator for Continuing Medical Education. “I love health and education,” says Jo-El, who organizes training, seminars, and lectures for the Department of Surgery. Events such as Research Day, the Canadian Orthopedic Residency Forum, and the Operating Room Personnel Nurses Training Seminar have the capable Jo-El managing all the logistics and details in the background.

“Every seminar, every lecture, every event, I learn something new. I’m in awe of the talented faculty and residents in the department. I’ve learned so much and met some pretty amazing people,” says Jo-El. “I love that I can create an event and help give people a good experience.”

Before her role with Alberta Health Services, Jo-El spent over 30 years in the education and health sector, holding a variety of administrative positions ranging from program assistant to event coordinator. Her experience has perfectly aligned with her current role.

Though Jo-El isn’t new to the world of health and education, she is fairly new to Calgary. She was born south of the border in Aurora, Colorado, but grew up in the Yukon. Her parents purchased a general store in the small



village of Carmacks when she was four years old. When they first moved to Carmacks, they lived in a one-room home with no running water and a wood stove for heat. They also grew and hunted most of their own food.

Jo-EI loved growing up in this tightknit community with nature at her doorstep. "We had so much freedom. In the summer, we'd be outside playing in the forest all day. In the winter, we were skidooring, snowshoeing, and dog sledding," shares Jo-EI. She also learned how to train her dogs from an early age. "My sister and I had wood duty, so we'd load up the toboggan with wood and trained the dogs to pull it to the house for us."

After living in BC for many years, Jo-EI recently moved to Calgary to be closer to her partner, Mark. They spend their time camping and kayaking with Tina Maria, their Manchester Terrier, gardening, or on Jo-EI's latest passion, her motorcycle. "I got tired of being Mark's passenger, so this year I got my own bike and have put over 2000 km on it this summer," said Jo-EI.

When not in the mountains or on the road, Jo-EI looks forward to coming to work every day and organizing high-quality educational events for the department. "You have a choice in how you want to live your life, and I choose to focus on the positive," shares Jo-EI. "I love my job. It's fun! I get to come to work every day and do something I enjoy."

*"You have a choice in how you want to live your life, and I choose to focus on the positive,"*





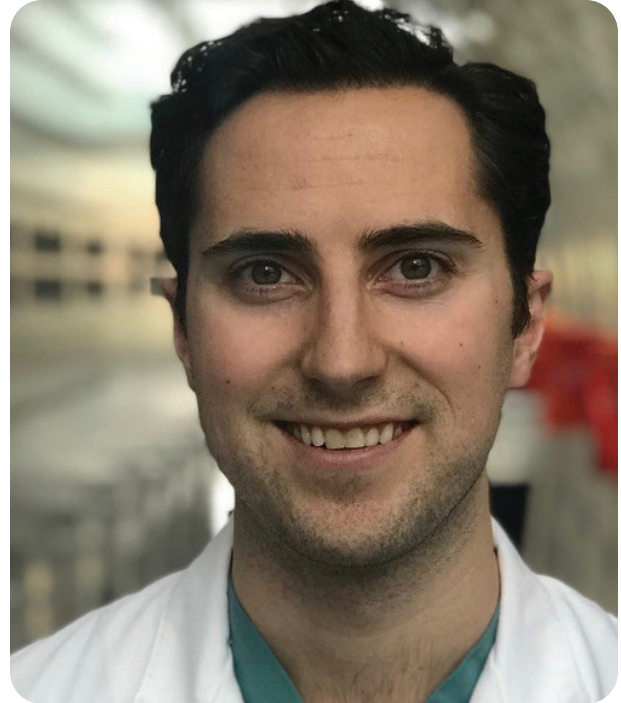
# WELCOME TO **NEW FACULTY**



## **Dr. Carrie Liu**

Clinical Lecturer, Otolaryngology

Dr. Carrie Liu completed a nursing degree, medical degree, and otolaryngology-head and neck surgery residency at the University of Calgary. She also completed a Master of Public Health degree, with a focus on health policy and management, from the Harvard School of Public Health. More recently, Dr. Liu completed a pediatric otolaryngology fellowship at the Seattle Children's Hospital, University of Washington. Dr. Liu will see patients through the sensory clinic at the Alberta Children's Hospital as her practice will cover all aspects of pediatric otolaryngology. Her special interests include patients with chronic ear disease, sleep apnea, and dysphagia.



## **Dr. Devon Livingstone**

Clinical Lecturer, Otolaryngology

Dr. Devon Livingstone is an academic otolaryngologist-head and neck surgeon starting practice at the South Health Campus. He completed medical school and a residency at the University of Calgary, as well as the Master of Translation Medicine program through the University of California, San Francisco and Berkeley. Surgically, he has a comprehensive scope of practice including, endoscopic sinus surgery, functional rhinoplasty, thyroid disease, middle ear surgery, and salivary gland disorders. His research interests include artificial intelligence as applied to medicine and the discipline of translational medicine.

## **Dr. Ryan Rochon** Clinical Lecturer, General Surgery

## **Dr. Kevin Robertson** Clinical Lecturer, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery



# THANK YOU TO RETIRED MEMBERS

We would like to recognize and thank our recently retired members for their dedication and years of hard work. We thank you for your academic and clinical contributions to the department and wish you a happy and fulfilling retirement.

**Dr. Bryan Donnelly**, Urology

**Dr. Robert Gordon**, Ophthalmology

**Dr. Gerry Kiefer**, Pediatric Surgery

**Dr. Beth Lange**, Otolaryngology

**Dr. Donald Metcalfe**, Urology

**Dr. James Nixon**, General Surgery

**Dr. Patrick Wyse**, Ophthalmology

## 2020 DATES TO REMEMBER

**Surgical Foundations Teacher Training Retreat**

February 19-21, 2020

**Department of Surgery Retreat**

February 27-29, 2020

**Canadian Orthopaedic Resident Forum**

April 3-6, 2020

**Glen Edwards Day**

May 29, 2020

**Surgeons' Day and Awards Gala**

June 12, 2020





**CUMMING SCHOOL  
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Services**