Weill Cornell Medicine
Brain & Spine Center

News and Updates From Weill Cornell Medicine Neurological Surgery Spring 2022

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Philip E. Stieg, PhD, MD

This time of year invariably brings thoughts of rebirth and renewal, and I can't think of a year when we all needed it more. I'm delighted to see spring flowers blooming and wake up to birdsong every morning. It really is a glorious time of year.

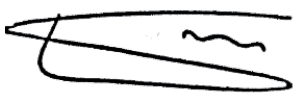
It's also the time for spring meetings and conferences, some of which are back in person for the first time since 2019. It's been gratifying indeed to meet in real life with colleagues I've seen mostly on computer screens the past two years and catch up on personal as well as professional news.

Our faculty and residents have been bringing some impressive awards home from these meetings. I could not be more proud of **Dr. Roger Härtl,** named Humanitarian of the Year by the AANS for his indefatigable work in Tanzania (see story this page). Two of Dr. Härtl's protégés also won honors recently: **Dr. Jacob Goldberg,** a fifth-year resident on our team, was named a Charlie Kuntz Scholar at the joint AANS/CNS Spine Summit and also took home our department's first J.A.N.E. Award, the top prize from that meeting (see page 2). **Pravesh Gadjradj,** a fellow studying under Dr. Härtl, was named winner of the Sanford Larson Award for best research at the AANS.

Our faculty continue to break new ground across many areas of neurosurgery and take leadership roles in moving our field forward. We are hosting CME courses in innovative techniques such as transorbital surgery (see page 3), and publishing academic papers and books at a record rate, including a new and completely updated edition of my own textbook on AVMs, due out in early 2023. Our faculty members are regulars on webinars (find them on our YouTube channel) and in the media (see page 3). And I am honored to host so many interesting and articulate guests on my podcast, This Is Your Brain.

All in all, it's a remarkable and refreshing time to be working in this amazing field of neurosurgery. I look forward to seeing many of you as we emerge from a difficult time and move back into the sunshine.

Yours in good health,



Dr. Roger Härtl Named AANS Humanitarian of the Year for Global Health Projects

When **Roger Härtl** first visited Africa as a medical student, he was profoundly affected by what he saw. Children with untreated hydrocephalus suffered needlessly; teens and adults lost decades of useful life as a result of uncorrected spinal deformity; and too many patients died while waiting for surgery after traumatic injury. He started thinking about what could be done to bring neurosurgical training to that under-served continent, and in 2008 he led the first team of Western practitioners to initiate a neurosurgical program in Tanzania.

In the nearly 15 years since then, Dr. Härtl has worked tirelessly to build on that early effort, and his dedication has paid off. What was originally called the Neurosurgical Mission in Tanzania has grown from a single trip delivering supplies into a robust year-round program with weekly Zoom meetings, an exchange of fellows, and an annual hands-on neurotrauma course. With a focus on training the trainers, Dr. Härtl is ensuring that the program will not become mired in dependency.

Visiting Africa as a medical student, Dr. Hartl was inspired to improve medical care there. Today, he trains local providers in lifesaving neurosurgical techniques and has become celebrated for his work.

The donor-funded fellowship program assigns Western-trained neurosurgeons to work in Tanzania for a year or more at a time, reinforcing the lessons taught in the annual trip. African-trained providers also come to New York to train alongside Dr. Härtl here at Weill Cornell, then bring those newfound skills back home to continue training their peers in country.

This year, Dr. Härtl was honored by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons as its Humanitarian of the Year for his lifesaving work in Tanzania and for his commitment to global neurosurgical education through CME courses and European training classes. The award is one of the highest honors bestowed by the AANS, which recognized Dr. Härtl for his years of dedication to these projects.

Despite the interruption in travel due to the pandemic, Dr. Härtl maintained the program using virtual meetings, hosting the annual neurotrauma course on Zoom, and even adding a second virtual course focused on scoliosis. Plans are underway for another course, this one on minimally invasive surgery using locally available instruments.

We congratulate Dr. Härtl on this great honor and look forward to supporting the Tanzania Neurosurgery Project for many years to come.

Residency and Fellowship News

Match Day 2022

Dr. Philip Stieg, Dr. Michael Kaplitt, and **Dr. Jeffrey Greenfield** are thrilled to welcome Kate Rosen and John Chae as the newest physician-scientists who will begin training with us in July.

Kate Rosen will receive her MD from the Oregon Health & Science University School of Medicine, where she was a member of Alpha Omega Alpha, the national medical student honor society, and of the Gold Humanism Honor Society. Kate's research projects have included studying delayed cerebral ischemia after pituitary macroadenoma resection and evaluating the association between the Covid-19 pandemic and postpartum maternal mental health; her study of fluid overload in pediatric ICU patients was named Best Abstract by a Trainee at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

John Chae will receive his MD from Weill Cornell Medical College, where he was a member of Alpha Omega Alpha. John was awarded the 2019 Siegel Family Student Prize for high academic achievement and leadership as well as the 2018 Marcus M. Reienberg, M.D. Award in Community Service. John has served as a mentor with HPREP, designed to boost medical school enrollment rates of underrepresented groups. He has conducted research under the mentorship of **Dr. Jeffrey Greenfield** on congenital brain malformations, including the creation of a novel pathophysiology-based classification system.

Resident Wins Top Awards

At the 2022 joint AANS/CNS Spine Summit, fifth-year neurosurgery resident **Jacob Goldberg** was named a 2022 Charlie Kuntz Scholar for work he's done with **Dr. Roger Härtl, Dr. Ibrahim Hussain, Dr. Carolin Melcher,** and members of our resident training team. Dr. Goldberg also achieved top honors by winning the J.A.N.E. Award (Journalistic and Academic Neurosurgical Excellence) for top resident manuscript of the year.

Dr. Goldberg (center) with his mentors and collaborators, Dr. Ibrahim Hussain and Dr. Roger Härtl

The winning research project focused on the use of a high-tech simulator to train residents in the advanced techniques of minimally invasive spine surgery. Dr. Goldberg presented findings that showed residents who used the simulator for a procedure three times achieved progressively decreased operative time, with fewer skipped surgical steps and fewer major mistakes. They also demonstrated increased confidence in the procedure.

Dr. Goldberg joins a long list of previous Charlie Kuntz Scholars from Weill Cornell Medicine Neurosurgery; this was the first J.A.N.E. Award for our department.

Now Recruiting Clinical Research Spine Fellow

We are now recruiting for a clinical research fellowship in spine surgery under the direction of Dr. Roger Härtl, with research involving biological treatment approaches and tissue-engineering for degenerative disc disease. The fellowship, which is a one- or two-year position, offers intensive, full-time minimally invasive spine surgery research training for candidates who have successfully completed an accredited neurological surgery or orthopedic surgery residency training program. Fellows participate in research projects with the Weill Cornell Medicine spine team. For more information about the fellowship, or to apply, contact Dr. Roger Härtl: (212) 746-2152.

Three 20th Anniversaries in Neurosurgery

When **Dr. Philip E. Stieg** was recruited to Weill Cornell and NewYork-Presbyterian in the year 2000, his assignment was to build a new department. Formerly a division of the Department of Surgery, the new Department of Neurosurgery grew quickly, from a handful of neurosurgeons and support staff in 2000 to more than 30 world-class neurosurgeons today, supported by more than 100 physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurses, medical assistants, and administrative staff who collaborate to ensure top-notch care for patients. There have been many changes over the past two decades, but the excellence of care and spirit of innovation remain the same.

Along with Dr. Stieg, Kristin Strybing, Kim Salvaggio, and Suzan Wollard celebrate 20 years in the department of neurosurgery.

Dr. Stieg had no way of knowing at the time that three of his first team members would be celebrating 20th anniversaries with him. **Kimberly Salvaggio, MSN, FNP-BC; Kristin Strybing, MS, FNP-BC;** and **Suzan Wollard, MMSc, PA-C,** all joined the team within a few months of one another between late 2001 and early 2002, during a period of extraordinary growth in the department. Two decades later they are three of our most valued team members, continuing to provide excellent care to their patients and now also offering mentorship and advice to more junior members of the team.

Kim Salvaggio joined the department in 2001, working with **Dr. Y. Pierre Gobin** in establishing an interventional neuroradiology (INR) practice within neurosurgery. Throughout the years Kim has presented cerebral aneurysm data at numerous meetings and has been a named co-author on peer-reviewed articles with the retinoblastoma team. Dr. Gobin's pioneering work developing intra-arterial chemotherapy for pediatric patients with retinoblastoma has saved the vision and eyes of hundreds of children, and Kim is particularly proud to be a part of that.

A few months after Kim started, **Kristin Strybing** was hired to support the practices of **Dr. Michael Kaplitt** and **Dr. Theodore Schwartz.** Kristin is now the chief nurse practitioner, supervising all of the outpatient advanced practice providers in the much-expanded department. She also continues to support Dr. Michael Kaplitt in his movement disorders practice and has been gratified by advances in that field, including the introduction of focused ultrasound for essential tremor.

In February of 2002, **Suzan Wollard** joined the team as a physician assistant. PAs work in many settings, including providing front-line care to our hospitalized patients before, after, and during surgery. Suzie is now chief physician assistant of neurosurgery and neurology, with five senior physician assistants helping her manage the busy inpatient practices. "In the beginning I focused all my energies on providing exceptional patient care even in the most difficult situations," she says. "Now I mentor others to provide this level of care."

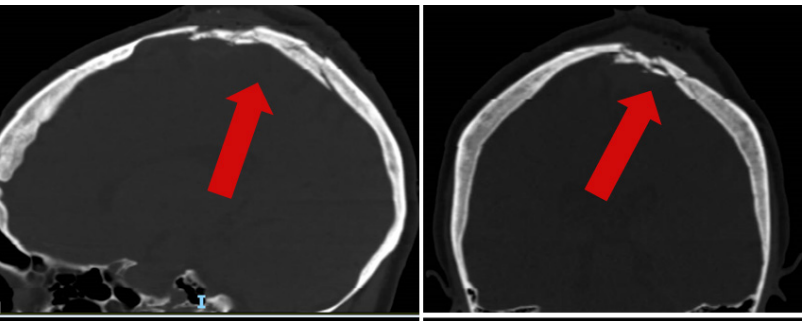
We all have tremendous appreciation for the skills, compassion, and dedication these three remarkable professionals have brought to our team over the past 20 years. Is it too much to hope for 20 more?

Dr. Schwarz Saves Subway Rider After Hammer Attack

Dr. Nina Rothschild, a scientist with New York City's Department of Health, recently made the news for one of the worst reasons imaginable when she became the victim of a senseless, violent attack at a subway station. Her assailant hit her on the head with a hammer no fewer than 14 times, fracturing her skull in multiple places and leaving deep, dirty lacerations all over her head.

The neurosurgeon on call that night was **Dr. Justin Schwarz,** who had already been summoned in to perform emergency surgery on a stroke patient. He was just finishing that surgery when he was told about the trauma patient who needed him. Dr. Schwarz spent the rest of his night in the OR performing a meticulous cleaning of the wounds and reconstructing Dr. Rothschild's skull and scalp.

In our neurosurgery blog on the Weill Cornell Medicine Brain and Spine web site, Dr. Schwarz reflects on what it's like to be the neuro-



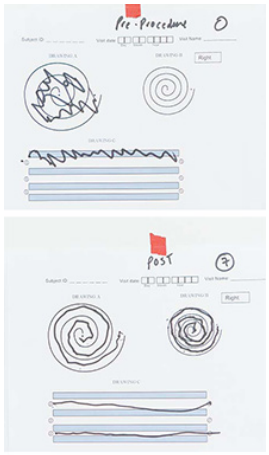
The arrows show the two areas of Dr. Rothschild's skull that were damaged beyond repair and needed to be replaced with titanium mesh.

surgeon on night call in a Level 1 Trauma Center in New York City, where nothing should ever surprise you—but every so often still does. Read his account of that harrowing night at **weillcornellbrainandspine.org/blog**

New Focused Ultrasound Installation Opens New Doors for Medicare Patients with Tremor

With the installation of high-intensity focused ultrasound technology at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medicine, we have expanded treatment options for patients covered by Medicare who have essential tremor or the tremors of Parkinson's disease. The availability of this advanced technology in the hospital represents an important opportunity for Medicare patients, who are now eligible for covered treatment for tremors.

Dr. Michael Kaplitt, director of the movement disorder service at Weill Cornell Medicine Brain and Spine Center and a pioneer in the development and testing of innovative treatments for movement disorders, has been conducting clinical trials at a Weill Cornell Medicine research location. He has successfully treated many patients there, but that research location is not eligible for Medicare reimbursement. Today, with the availability of focused ultrasound technology at the hospital, Medicare patients may receive covered treatment for their tremors.



Before the procedure, a patient is asked to draw spiral and horizontal lines, which show the effects of the tremor. Immediately after, the patient has much greater movement control (bottom).

Dr. Kaplitt has a long history of innovation in treating movement disorders. He was the first to conduct a clinical trial of gene therapy for Parkinson's disease, and he continues to be a world leader in the field of gene therapy for movement disorders. He has been an advocate for focused ultrasound technology for years and was instrumental in conducting the clinical trials that earned FDA approval for the device.

To make an appointment with Dr. Kaplitt for evaluation, please use the form at **weillcornellbrainandspine.org/request-appointment** or call 212-746-4966.

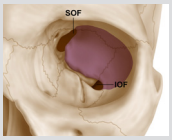
Summer/Fall 2022 CME Course Calendar

We are delighted to be hosting live CME courses again this year in addition to streaming events that will maintain our global reach. Visit **neurosurgery.weill.cornell.edu/education** for information.

JUNE 3-4, 2022

Transorbital Skull Base Surgery: International Hands-On Course

Directed by Dr. Theodore Schwartz and Dr. Kris Moe



Transorbital neuroendoscopic surgery (TONES) is a fast-emerging technique that allows minimally invasive access to the orbit and the intracranial compartment. Directed by two of the pioneers of the technique, this new course—the first of its kind in North America—is designed for neurosurgeons, otolaryngologists, ophthalmologists, and oculoplastic surgeons. Visit **transorbitalskullbase.org**

SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

Recognition and Management of Common Neurosurgical Conditions in the Pediatric Practice

Directed by Dr. Jeffrey Greenfield and Dr. Caroline Long

This half-day CME course is designed as a comprehensive educational seminar to teach pediatricians as well as pediatric nurses and advanced practice providers how to identify the signs of pediatric brain tumors, seizures, and inborn abnormalities of the spine, face, and head; how best to triage; when to image; and when to send a child to the emergency room.

OCT. 27, 2022

Spine Tumor Seminar 2022

Directed by Dr. Susan Pannullo, Dr. Kai-Ming Fu, and Dr. Michael Virk

Specialists share state-of-the-art treatment paradigms for patients with spinal tumors, including neurological surgery, neuro-oncology, medical and radiation oncology, neuroradiology, and pain anesthesia.

DEC. 15-17, 2022

NYC-MISS 2022: 16th New York City Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery Symposium

Directed by Dr. Roger Härtl and Dr. Luiz Pimenta

A comprehensive overview of less invasive techniques for the operative treatment of spinal disorders. Proponents and critics of MIS surgery will discuss the pros and cons of MIS approaches, establishing the skills for selecting appropriate patients for MIS surgery. Visit **nycmiss.com**

IT'S A NO-BRAINER: JANICA GOULBOURNE WINS QUARTERLY EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD

The Neurosurgery Outstanding Service Award spotlights members of the department who go above and beyond their assigned duties and who exemplify the core values of the department.

The most recent winner is **Janica Goulbourne,** a designated medical assistant who works with **Dr. Stieg, Dr. Dobri,** and **Dr. Pannullo.** Janica received multiple nominations, all of which referred to her as thorough, efficient, detail-oriented, and collegial. Most importantly, Janica's colleagues commented on how Janica cares for our patients with a calming presence that makes everyone feel comfortable.

Janica has been with the Weill Cornell Medicine Brain and Spine Center for six years and has become a valued team member. This month we not only recognize her for her outstanding service, but we also congratulate her for being accepted into the extremely competitive physician assistant program at Ithaca College. Janica has been preparing for this for several years, adding more classes and credits to her bachelor's degree in chemistry to prepare her for her application. Her acceptance into this rigorous program is a testament to her commitment to excellence and dedication to patient care. We will miss her, but we hope to welcome her back to our team in two years when she graduates as a PA.

NewYork-Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medicine

Brain Tumor Surgery
Benign and malignant tumors in adults and children
Dr. Philip E. Stieg 212-746-4684
Dr. Theodore H. Schwartz 212-746-5620
Dr. Babacar Cisse 646-962-3389
Dr. Mark Souweidane 212-746-2363 (pediatric)
Dr. Jeffrey Greenfield 212-746-2363 (pediatric)
Dr. Caitlin Hoffman 212-746-2363 (pediatric)

Cerebrovascular Surgery
Aneurysms, AVMs, carotid occlusive disease
Dr. Philip E. Stieg 212-746-4684
Dr. Jared Knopman 212-746-5149
Dr. Justin Schwarz 212-746-2821

Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery
Parkinson's disease, essential tremor, and pain
Dr. Michael Kaplitt 212-746-4966

Epilepsy Surgery
Curative and palliative surgical approaches to epilepsy
Dr. Theodore H. Schwartz 212-746-5620
Dr. Caitlin Hoffman 212-746-2363 (pediatric)

Interventional Neuroradiology
Minimally invasive image-guided diagnosis and treatment
Dr. Jared Knopman 212-746-5149
Dr. Y. Pierre Gobin 212-746-4998
Dr. Srikanth Boddu 212-746-2821
Dr. Justin Schwarz 212-746-2821

Neuro-oncology
Comprehensive treatment options for cancers of the brain and spine
Dr. Howard Fine 212-746-2596
Dr. Susan Pannullo 212-746-2438
Dr. Rajiv Magge 646-962-2185
Dr. Evan Noch 646-962-2185

Neuropsychology
Testing, psychotherapy, and cognitive remediation
Heidi Bender, PhD 212-746-2197
Amanda Sacks-Zimmerman, PhD 212-746-3356
Jessica Spat-Lemus, PhD 646-962-3336

Pediatric Neurosurgery
Treatment of the full spectrum of CNS conditions in children
Dr. Mark Souweidane 212-746-2363
Dr. Jeffrey Greenfield 212-746-2363
Dr. Caitlin Hoffman 212-746-2363
Dr. Neil Feldstein 212-305-1396 (Columbia campus)

Pituitary Tumors/Neuroendocrinology
Endoscopic approaches to anterior skull base surgery
Dr. Theodore H. Schwartz 212-746-5620
Dr. Babacar Cisse 646-962-3389
Dr. Jeffrey Greenfield 212-746-2363 (pediatric)
Dr. Georgiana Dobri 646-962-3556 (neuroendocrinology)

Spinal Surgery
Comprehensive care for spine conditions and injuries
Dr. Roger Härtl 212-746-2152
Dr. Eric Elowitz 212-746-2870
Dr. Kai-Ming Fu 212-746-2260
Dr. Daniel Riew 212-746-1164
Dr. Robert Snow 212-717-0256
Dr. Michael Virk 646-962-3388

Stereotactic Radiosurgery
Noninvasive treatments for brain tumors and other conditions
Dr. Susan Pannullo 212-746-2438
Dr. Babacar Cisse 646-962-3389

NewYork-Presbyterian Lower Manhattan
646-962-5115
Minimally invasive and complex spine
Dr. Kai-Ming Fu, Chief of Neurosurgery
Dr. Michael Virk

NewYork-Presbyterian Queens
718-670-1837
Dr. John Park, Chief of Neurosurgery
Brain tumors, neuro-oncology, spine surgery
Dr. Ning Lin, cerebrovascular surgery
Dr. Srikanth Boddu, interventional neuroradiology
Dr. Rupa Gopalan Juthani, brain and spine tumors
Dr. Lynn McGrath, spine surgery
Dr. Caitlin Hoffman (pediatric) 212-746-2363

NewYork-Presbyterian Brooklyn Methodist
718-780-3070
Dr. Rohan Ramakrishna, Chief of Neurosurgery
Brain tumors, neuro-oncology, stereotactic neurosurgery
Dr. Martin Zonenshayn, movement disorders and peripheral nerve conditions
Dr. Michael Ayad, cerebrovascular surgery
Dr. Louis Chang, minimally invasive and complex spine
Dr. Justin Schwarz, cerebrovascular surgery
Dr. Caitlin Hoffman (pediatric) 212-746-2363

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