



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON

Neurosurgery

SYNAPSE

Issue 2 • Summer 2025

ANNUAL UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF NEUROSURGERY



As we reflect on another remarkable year for the Department of Neurosurgery, I am incredibly proud of the growth and accomplishments we have seen. Thanks to the dedication and teamwork of all our faculty, staff, residents, and APPs, we have made significant strides in expanding our program and elevating the quality of care we provide to our patients.

First and foremost, I am thrilled to announce the increase in our residency complement, ensuring that we continue to cultivate the next generation of outstanding neurosurgeons.

This year, we successfully matched two exceptional residents,

thanks to the tireless efforts of Jules Schippers and Giselle De La Rosa in supporting the recruitment process. Our residency program continues to attract top-tier talent, and this growth is a testament to our commitment to education and patient care. This year we welcome Jerry Brown, II, MD, from the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine at Florida Atlantic University and Hasaan Hayat, MD, from Michigan State University College of Human Medicine – Grand Rapids. This year also marked the graduation of our first pre-residency fellow, Dr. Jeffrey Feng. His work during his time with us has been exemplary, and we are proud to see him move on to the next stage of his career. We are also excited to announce that funding has been secured for a pre-residency fellow this year, with Henry Skelton, MD, Morehouse School of Medicine, joining the program in July.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to our residents and APPs Sara Perotti, Randall Blute and Stephanie Gillespie, who work tirelessly day in and day out. Their dedication to providing excellent care to our patients cannot be overstated, and we are grateful for their unwavering support. Further, Sara graduated from Georgetown this Spring with her DNP. I also want to extend my deepest appreciation to Dr. Neil Joshi for his exemplary leadership as Chief Resident this year. His leadership and contributions have helped guide the residency program to new heights. In addition, we celebrated the graduation of Dr. Pedro Aguilar from our residency program.



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UAZNeurosurgery

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His growth and achievements throughout his training have been truly remarkable, and we look forward to seeing the impact he will make in the field. I would like to offer a special thank you to Dr. John Hurlbert for agreeing to serve as Residency Program Director. His leadership, mentorship, and dedication to our residents has been and will continue to be indispensable in shaping the future of the program.

In the spirit of growth, we are proud to welcome four new faculty members to our department: Drs. Kim Terry, Mansour Mathkour, Wuyang Yang, and Colin Gold.

Their expertise and energy will undoubtedly make a profound impact on our clinical and academic endeavors. Additionally, we are excited to have Kristine Gradisher and Cynthia Rekemeyer join us as our newest Advanced Practice Providers. Their contributions will further strengthen our ability to care for our patients. A special thank you goes to Marisela Ramos, whose meticulous work in organizing candidate visits has been invaluable in bringing these new additions to our team. Thank you to Angela Castillo and team (Maria Payne, Mike Czigler, Angela Villanueva, Bobby Gonzalez, and the entirety of the clinic and OR staff) for their tireless work keeping the ship afloat and for our new Neuro OR lead Patrick Fitzsimmons for inspiring a sense of team.

This year, we achieved Joint Commission Spine Program Accreditation with the efforts of Dr. Rick Chua and Alanna Gonzalez, and we are pleased to see Banner's system wide Neuro ChARG Group employ the expertise of Stephanie Dorman in creating its initiatives for the future. We are grateful for the outreach efforts of Drs. Mike Avery and Nehaw Sarmey, who continue to help develop and grow our practice across the region.

In the realm of research, we are proud to report the receipt of significant grants, including the TRIF and SPARK grants awarded to Dr. Ilknur Telkes, a U of A Career Development Award for Dr. Kristin Huntoon, and an R18 grant for Dr. Julie Pilitsis. A huge congratulations are in order for the continued world-leading Parkinson's research conducted by Dr. Paul Larson. We are also pleased to welcome a larger research support team to assist with the excellent work done by Marisa Valletta, Iliana Perez, Debbie Morris, and Mitch Bartlett. Their collective efforts will support ongoing research initiatives and drive innovation within the department.

Please join me in welcoming Ugur Kilic MD, PhD the department's first post-doctoral research fellow and Kylie Lew, Research Coordinator.

Lastly, I want to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Marty Weinand, who remains the North Star of our department. His guidance and leadership have been instrumental. Notably over the last year he kept the pediatric practice running smoothly until Dr. Kim Terry joined us in January. She has been an amazing addition!

As we continue to build on these accomplishments, I am excited for the future of our department. We are moving forward with an incredible team, and I look forward to seeing what we will achieve together in the year to come.

With gratitude and excitement for the year ahead!

Julie G. Pilitsis, MD, PhD, MBA,
Department of Neurosurgery Chair and
Physician Executive for Functional
Neurosurgery for Banner Health

FEATURED FACULTY

Nehaw Sarmey, MD



Nehaw Sarmey, MD, is an Assistant Professor and board-eligible neurosurgeon in the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Arizona. Dr. Sarmey provides neurosurgical care at Banner University Medical Center - Tucson and is also part of the teaching faculty in the Neurological Surgery Residency Program at the University of Arizona College of Medicine - Tucson Campus.

She completed neurosurgery residency followed by fellowship training in epilepsy surgery at the renowned Cleveland Clinic, where she developed expertise in the surgical care of both adult and pediatric patients with difficult-to-treat, medically refractory epilepsy. This includes advanced diagnostic techniques such as stereo-electroencephalography (SEEG) for invasive EEG monitoring, as well as surgical treatments including tailored cortical resections (e.g. temporal lobectomy), laser ablation, corpus callosotomy, and neuromodulation treatments.

She currently works with the multi-disciplinary Arizona Comprehensive Epilepsy Program to provide a full breadth of epilepsy surgical care. As part of this mission, she is working to build the SEEG program and bring in new technologies such as responsive neuro-stimulation and laser ablation, the latter of that would further help treat patients with epilepsy as well as brain tumors.

Outside of epilepsy, Dr. Sarmey has interests in degenerative spine and functional neurosurgery, including chronic pain and normal pressure hydrocephalus. She is also interested in neurosurgical oncology and collaborates with the Banner-Tucson neuro-oncology tumor board on a regular basis. Dr. Sarmey's research interests include clinical and translational research in epilepsy surgery and treatment outcomes, and neuromodulation for epilepsy, including DBS, RNS, and VNS therapies. She enjoys teaching and working with residents and students at all levels. Ultimately she hopes to bring epilepsy surgery awareness and treatments to as many patients as possible in the community.

Kristin Huntoon, PhD, DO



Kristin Huntoon, PhD, DO, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Arizona and a staff Neurosurgeon at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System. A fellowship-trained brain and spine tumor neurosurgeon, Dr. Huntoon received her advanced training at renowned institutions, including Emory University and MD Anderson Cancer Center.

In her research laboratory, Dr. Huntoon is dedicated to advancing the understanding of brain and spine tumors. Her research aims to identify new diagnostic tools and innovative treatment strategies to improve outcomes for patients facing these aggressive and life-altering conditions.

As a grant-funded neurosurgeon-scientist, Dr. Huntoon has authored over 80 peer-reviewed journal articles and contributed to numerous book chapters, establishing herself as a leading figure in the field. She is also deeply involved in academic and clinical leadership, serving as Co-Chair of several key committees

within the Tumor Section of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons/Congress of Neurological Surgeons (AANS/CNS).

Dr. Huntoon's expertise is also sought after in her editorial roles, where she contributes to the advancement of neurological science as a reviewer for prominent journals such as the Journal of Neurosurgery and Section Editor for World Neurosurgery, among others. Through her dedication to clinical excellence and scientific innovation, she continues to make significant strides in the fight against brain and spine tumors.

ALUMNI UPDATE

Nikolay Martirosyan, MD, PhD



Nikolay was born and raised in Armenia. Difficult circumstances following the collapse of the Soviet Union led his family to relocate to Moscow, Russia. With the steadfast support of his parents, he was able to pursue a rigorous education and excel academically.

His passion for neurosurgery began

at age 12 after witnessing a craniotomy on television, sparking a deep interest in natural sciences. Nikolay graduated with honors from Sechenov University, one of Europe's oldest and largest medical schools. In his senior year, he served as president of the Student Surgical Society, actively studying neuroanatomy and shadowing neurosurgical procedures.

After medical school, Nikolay entered a neurosurgical residency at the renowned N.N. Burdenko Neurosurgical Institute. Working as a first assistant in complex surgeries and performing numerous minor operations independently deepened his commitment to neurosurgery. Recognizing that his training was insufficient to fully realize his professional aspirations, he sought further education in the United States.

In pursuit of broader expertise, Nikolay joined Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, Arizona, in 2008. This transition required adapting to a new language and culture while undertaking advanced research projects in spinal cord injury and neuro-oncology.

His perseverance and the guidance of his mentors resulted in significant achievements, including receiving the Mayfield Award from the Congress of Neurological Surgeons.

This work also served as the foundation for a clinical grant from the Department of Defense focused on spinal cord injuries.

Continuing his training, Nikolay joined the neurosurgery residency program at the University of Arizona Medical Center, a high-volume trauma center in Tucson. There, he balanced demanding clinical responsibilities with research in spinal cord injury, concurrently earning a doctoral degree in Neuroscience from Arizona State University during his research year. This combination of clinical care and research solidified his passion for treating spine and spinal cord conditions.

During residency, Nikolay served as Chief Resident for two consecutive years, cultivating critical leadership skills and expertise in managing complex neurosurgical cases. In his final year, he became the inaugural fellow of the Complex Spine Fellowship program established by John Hurlbert, MD. Nikolay trained under Dr. Hurlbert before completing the fellowship year in Phoenix under Dr. Juan Uribe, further honing his skills in complex and minimally invasive spine surgery.

After completing his training, Nikolay dedicated three-and-a-half years to practicing neurosurgery in Waterloo, Iowa, where he provided care to underserved populations and shared his knowledge with colleagues.

In 2023, Nikolay accepted a position at Barrow Neurological Institute, returning to Phoenix to continue his career in academic neurosurgery. Effective August, 2025, Nikolay will be joining Banner University Medical Center - Phoenix Campus, as Associate Professor, Neurosurgery and Orthopaedic Spine Surgery, where he will serve as Director, Spine Service at BUMC-P. Outside of his professional life, Nikolay enjoys raising his son Levon, nature photography, classical literature, and exploring the arts.

RESIDENT PROFILE

Neil D. Joshi, MD



I was born in Detroit, Michigan but spent most of my formative years living in Las Vegas, Nevada. My pathway to a medical career began unconventionally as an adolescent actor on Fox's "The Bernie Mac Show" and Disney's "Suite Life of Zack and Cody." By high school, I was fascinated with the frontal lobe and how it directed thoughts, emotions and impulses, and the structure behind my years of constructing and developing characters as an actor.

I went on to attend Michigan State University as an undergraduate, where I obtained my B.S. in Psychology with Honors, and I was subsequently accepted to Michigan State University College of Medicine in East Lansing.

Currently I am completing my Chief Resident year. I have a passion for leadership and interpersonal dynamics, and dedicated time this year to develop professional relationships both with and between my co-residents to facilitate trust, improve communication, and model efficiency. My unique recruitment contribution as Chief resident this year involved highlighting the unique bond between residents, as it is part of what makes our program so special.

As I look toward the future, I will be spending my final residency training year as an enfolded Complex Spine Neurosurgery fellow in University of Arizona CAST- accredited fellowship. When not in the hospital, I enjoy rap music, weight training on my Volcano, luxury watches and fashion, and videos analyzing leadership styles. Most importantly I enjoy spending time with my son Sarkis.

INAUGURAL NEUROSURGERY SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT

Udall Park, 01/18/2025



Front Row

(Left to Right): Cassie Palsma • Breanna Sheldon, MD • Julie Pilitsis, MD, PhD, MBA • Randall Blute, FNP-C • Maddox West • Michael Czeigler

Middle Row

(Left to Right): Anna Wang, MD • Daniel Lee, MD • Hasan Sumdani, MD • Kristin Huntoon, DO, PhD • Devin Collins • John Hurlbert, MD, PhD • Tim Thompson, RN

Back Row

(Left to Right): Luis Robles, MD • Alanna Gonzales, MBA • Richard Chua, MD • Ryan Palsma, MD • Kareem El Naamani, MD • Colin Huntoon • Chad Bruskotter

ENDOVASCULAR TRAINING WITH DR. AVERY

04/09/2025



(Left to Right):

Dara Farhadi, MD • Kareem El Naamani, MD • Hasan Sumdani, MD • Breanna Sheldon, MD • Michael Avery, MD • Neil Joshi, MD • Ryan Palsma, MD • Jeffrey Feng, MD

RESEARCH ON THE CUTTING EDGE

The research team is excited to report that research endeavors have continued to grow with both clinical and preclinical labs expanding exponentially. Due to this, we welcomed a new CRC (Kylie Lew) to the research team!

On the clinical side, the department has seven active clinical trials/NIH funded clinical studies with eight more in the start-up phase and over 25 investigator-initiated studies. Of note, Dr. Larson's ASPEN stem cell trial has successfully completed five procedures, and he has begun screening/enrolling for a second stem cell trial with Kenai Therapeutics. Further, Dr. Pilitsis' VISION study assessing the Surgical Information Sciences (SIS) software for visualizing DBS targets has reached enrollment totals with seven participants enrolled at U of A. Dr. Telkes has received two grants and has begun recruiting for her study investigating EEG signals as a biomarker for chronic pain.



KYLIE LEW, BS

Kylie Lew earned her BS in Neuroscience in 2023 from Arizona State University. Before joining the Department of Neurosurgery, she worked as a clinical research coordinator

with the Asthma and Airway Disease Research Center on the Tucson Children's Respiratory Study and as a clinical research assistant for the Department of Family and Community Medicine on various observational studies.

The Neuroscience biorepository (PI: Dr. Weinand) houses over 30 samples and continues to grow thanks to the collaborative efforts by the whole department. We would like to thank the Neurosurgery interest group (NSIG) who worked diligently to connect students to PIs, allowing projects to progress quickly aiding in our growth.

On the preclinical side, the department continues to focus on advancing therapies from bench to bedside as Dr. Huntoon begins her work on targeted immuno- and telomerase-mediated therapies. Further, Dr. Pilitsis in collaboration with MGH, received an R18 to develop and test a non-invasive, high-frequency trans-spinal magnetic stimulator (HF-TSMS), offering a novel approach for treatment of chronic neuropathic pain.

We are excited to continue to grow research efforts and look forward to the year ahead!



DR. UGUR KILIC, MD, PHD

Ugur Kilic earned her MD from Koc University (Istanbul, Turkey) in 2020 and her PhD in Neuroscience from KU Leuven (Belgium), where she worked in the pioneering neuromodulation

group led by Dr. Bart Nuttin, known for being the first to apply DBS in obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

Her dissertation focused on motor cortex stimulation and electrophysiological changes in post-stroke recovery. She is a neuroscientist with experience in systems neuroscience, DBS modeling, electrophysiology, and magnetically steerable neuromodulation technologies. She started as a postdoctoral researcher in Dr. Julie Pilitsis's team.





DR. TELKES' LAB UPDATES AND ACCOLADES

Chronic pain remains a major healthcare challenge. Even though SCS has been shown to be a highly effective treatment, we still lack an objective method to measure pain. To date, chronic pain and its markers have been studied using various methods; however, EEG presents a particularly promising opportunity for simultaneously capturing the complex nature of chronic pain and assessing the functional effects of SCS therapy. Through this U of A Eighteenth Mile TRIF-funded study, we are collecting multimodal data at the U of A CATS and in home settings in patients recruited from the U of A Neurosurgery Clinic. By analyzing EEG signatures in chronic pain patients with SCS, we aim to identify neural markers of pain relief and develop predictive machine learning models to forecast treatment outcomes.

Beyond pain research, our team is also exploring how neuromodulation can enhance motor function in individuals with spinal cord injury. More recently, my colleague, Dr. Christopher Arellano from Orthopedic Surgery, and I received a U of A COM-T SPARK Grant. Emerging evidence suggests that arm swing plays a crucial role in influencing leg muscle function, yet its integration into rehabilitation remains unclear. In this feasibility study, we aim to combine our expertise in biomechanics and neuromodulation to investigate the effects of transcutaneous spinal stimulation on brain and leg muscle activity in the context of gait rehabilitation. Dr. Telkes has received the Arizona Biomedical Research Centre (ABRC) New Investigator Award - a \$225K, 3-year grant to advance groundbreaking work in chronic pain assessment for older adults with Alzheimer's Disease!

Additional congratulations are due to Dr. Telkes, who was the recipient of the Early Career Award for the North American Neuromodulation Society, which is a 2,000 member society with more than 60% of members are early career, making this a huge honor.



OUR TEAM

TOP ROW (Left to Right) Giselle De La Rosa • Angela Castillo • Alanna Gonzales, MBA • Neil Joshi, MD • Sara Perotti, ACNP-BC, MSN, NREMT-P, NRCME, DNP • Hasan Sumdani, MD • Ilknur Telkes, PhD, MS Kristin Huntoon, PhD, DO • R. John Hurlbert, MD, PhD • Nehaw Sarmey, MD • Richard Chua, MD • Breanna Sheldon, MD • Luis Robles Lopez, MD • Marisela Ramos • Iliana Perez, MPH, MBA •

BOTTOM ROW (Left to Right) Julie Schippers • Randall Blute, FNP-C • Kareem El Naamani, MD • Dara Farhadi, MD • Ibrahim Alhalal, MBBS • Paul Larson, MD • Michael Avery, MD • Kimberly Terry, MD • Martin Weinand, MD • Julie Pilitsis, MD, PhD, MBA • Stephanie M. Gillespie, RN, BSN, MS, FNP-BC, CCRN, CNRN • Jeffrey Feng, MD • Stephanie Dorman, BSN, RN • Maria Payne

Not Included In Photo: Lauren Simpson, MD, MPH • Pedro Aguilar, MD • Ryan Palsma, MD • Marisa Valletta, PhD • Debbie Morris, PhD • Ugur Kilic, MD, PhD • Kylie Lew, BS • Nathan Martinez

NEUROSURGERY IN THE NEWS

SAMUEL AND WINIFRED WITT ENDOWED CHAIR

Join us in celebrating Department Chair and Professor, Julie G. Pilitsis, MD, PhD, MBA, who on December 12, 2024, was awarded investiture of the Samuel and Winifred Witt Endowed Chair, as conferred by College of Medicine Dean, Michael M.I. Abecassis, MD, MBA. This endowment will play a vital role in advancing neurosurgery medical education, research, and patient care and is a representation of Dr. Pilitsis' lasting commitment to academic excellence and innovation.

DR. PILITSIS ELECTED PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR STEREOTACTIC AND FUNCTIONAL NEUROSURGERY (ASSFN)

Julie G. Pilitsis, MD, PhD, MBA, was elected to serve as president of the American Society for Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery. Having first joined the society in 2008, Dr. Pilitsis became an executive board member in 2012. One of the passion projects for Dr. Pilitsis was establishing a mentorship committee for fellows and residents interested in this neurosurgical subspecialty. Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery fellowship training differs greatly from institution to institution and Dr. Pilitsis' mentorship program helps to direct trainees to programs that emphasize the various aspects of functional neurosurgery, such as pain, epilepsy, radiosurgery, and deep brain stimulation.

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE SPECIALTY ADVISOR WIN NEUROSURGERY AWARD RECIPIENT

Additional congratulations to Julie G. Pilitsis, MD, PhD, MBA, who on February 27, 2025, received the Specialty Advisor Award in Neurosurgery.

(Left to Right)
Dedrick Jordan, MD, PhD • Julie G. Pilitsis, MD, PhD, MBA • Michael M.I. Abecassis, MD, MBA •
Mingyu Liang, MB, PhD • Lisa M. Rimsza, MD • Frank Porreca, PhD



DR. JUSTIN S. CETAS MEMORIAL ENDOWMENT FUND

The Department of Neurosurgery is committed to ensuring that Dr. Justin S. Cetas' lifelong commitment to all aspects of patient care, education and training, and strong departmental leadership will continue long into the future. Dr. Cetas was a highly talented and skilled skull base neurosurgeon; it was his passion to share this vast fund of knowledge as a highly respected and innovative instructor. As a University of Arizona College of Medicine alumnus and the first appointed Chair of the Department of Neurosurgery, Dr. Cetas became very special to all of us. Because of a brilliant life lost early, Dr. Julie G. Pilitsis, along with Dr. Alivia Cetas, spouse of Dr. Cetas, are honored to announce the creation of the Dr. Justin S. Cetas Memorial Endowment.

This endowment will ensure the memory of Dr. Cetas lives on in perpetuity, promoting educational and training opportunities for faculty, residents, and students of the Department of Neurosurgery.

Nurturing this endowment will be a top priority for the Department of Neurosurgery maintaining robust levels of funds even during times of financial need. With your support, we are ensuring his legacy will continue. Donations may be made directly through the following link; <https://give.uafoundation.org/justincetas>.

Additionally, please mark your calendars and plan to join us, along with the Cetas Family, for the Inaugural Justin S. Cetas Memorial Lecture, presented by Distinguished Visiting Professor, Nate Selden, MD, PhD, FACS, FAAP and Current Dean OHSU School of Medicine, to be held during the Neuroscience Grands Rounds, Friday, November 7, 2025, 8:00 – 9:00 am, Room 5403.



CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. PEROTTI

Congratulations to Sara Perotti, ACNP-BC, MSN, NREMT-P, NRCME, DNP, who on March 21, 2025, successfully defended her doctoral thesis at Georgetown University, entitled Impact of a Neurosurgical Consensus Model For Risk-Based Timing of Venous Thromboembolism Prophylaxis in Adults with Acute Traumatic Brain Injury with Intracranial Hemorrhage: A Quality Improvement Project."



DR. HUNTOON, AWARD RECIPIENT OF THE 2025 CONGRESS OF NEUROLOGICAL SURGEONS FUTURE WOMEN LEADERS SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Congratulations to Kristin Huntoon, PhD, DO, who was named the winner of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons Foundation's 2025 Future Women Leaders Scholarship Award.

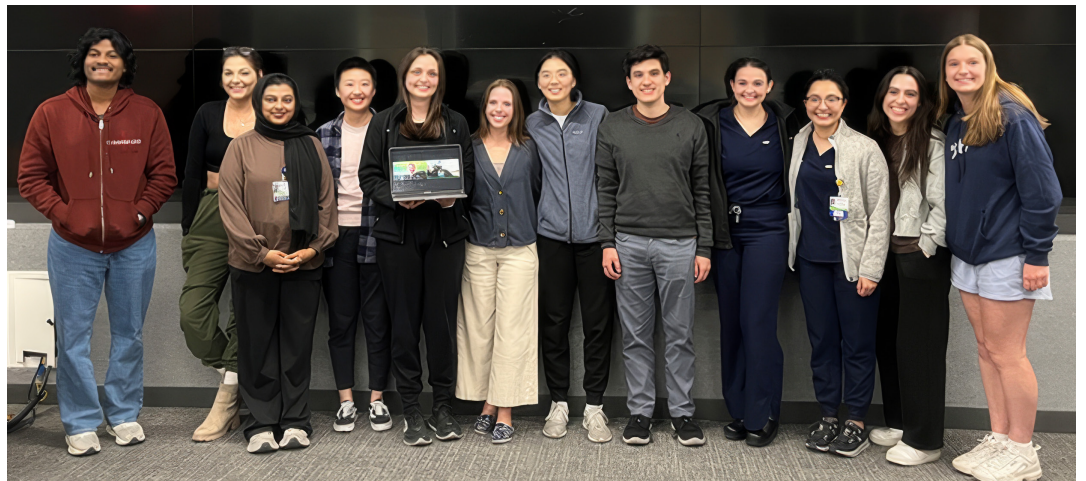


JOINT COMMISSION SPINE SURVEY CERTIFICATION

The Joint Commission completed an on-site Spine Survey on November 15, 2024. Following the survey, the Department of Neurosurgery received Joint Commission accreditation for spine. We are the only center in Arizona with this distinction. The Commission findings determined there were only two identified issues including: developing an annual education program for nursing teams regarding spine-specific patients and identifying and implementing a method for assessing the effectiveness of patient education in spine classes. Heartiest Congratulations to Drs. Hurlbert, Chua, and the entire spine service, with a special thank you to Alanna Gonzales and Stephanie Dorman for their herculean preparatory efforts to ensure our program had a positive review experience.

NEUROSURGERY INTEREST GROUP

Established in October 2024 by Dr. Dara Farhadi (PGY-2) and Manlin Shao (MD/PhD student), the Neurosurgery Interest Group (NSIG) connects the Department of Neurosurgery with medical and undergraduate students. The group offers lectures led by faculty and residents, hands-on procedural training, and student-led sessions on neuroanatomy, research methodology, and statistical analysis. NSIG also facilitates research projects driven by residents and medical students with monthly progress meetings. Additionally, group members collaborate with other student organizations and engage with the local community to promote neurosurgical education and research.



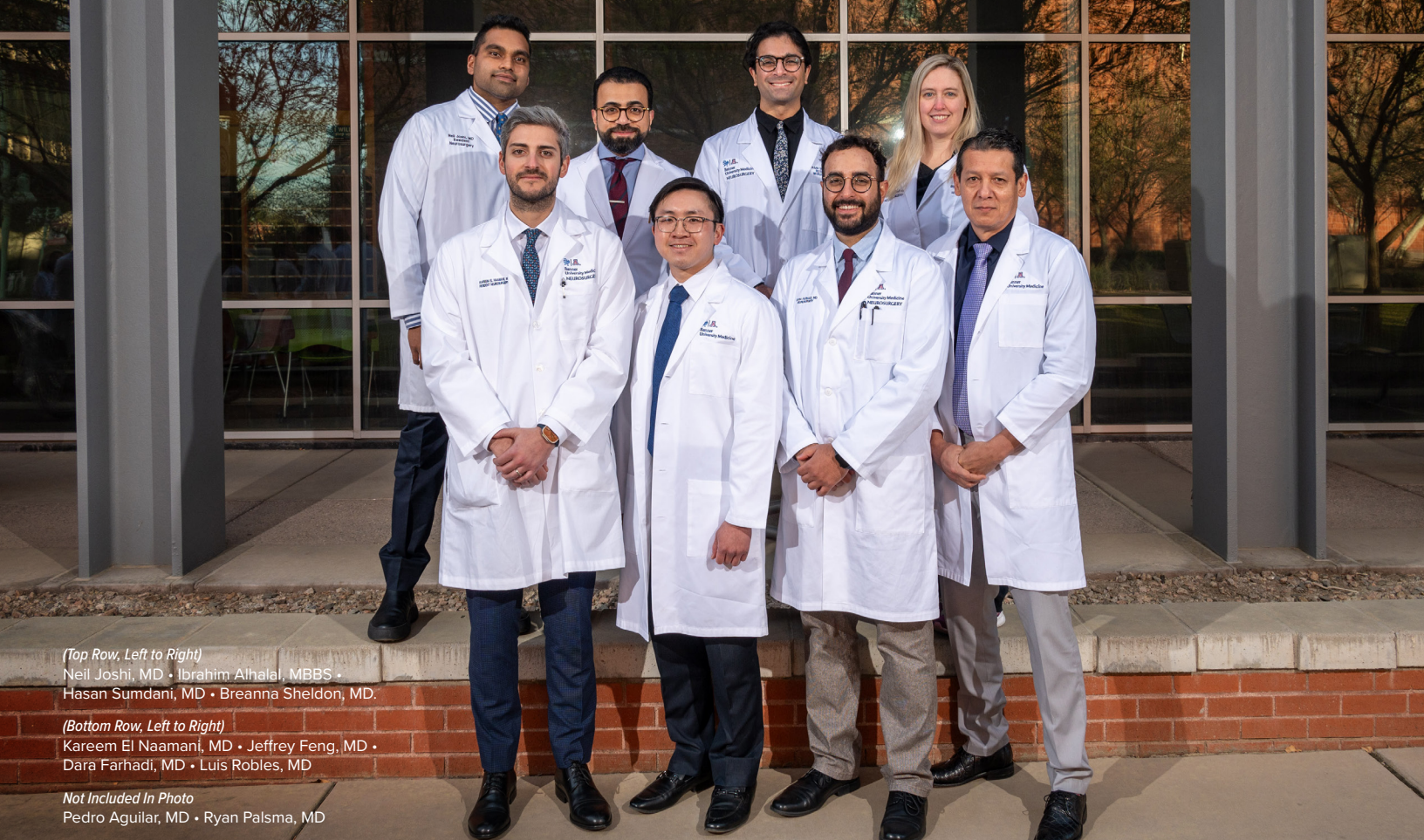
(Left to Right)

Pravarakhya Puppalla • Haley Eversman • Sameena Rahman • Manlin Shao • Katie Riordan • Alexandra Miller • Sun Woo Kim • Derek Smetanick • Hanna Johnson • Lizette Castaño • Daniella Bone (undergrad) • Megan Dwyer (undergrad).

(Featured on the laptop, Left – Right)

Izzi Bauer (UACOM-P) • Dara Farhadi (PGY-2).

Kudos to Manlin Shao, for arranging another phenomenal NSIG event, held on 04/02/25, which featured College of Medicine (Tucson and Phoenix Campus) MS-4 students, Katherine Riordan and Izzi Bauer. Both Katie and Izzi had successful neurosurgery residency program matches (Rush University Medical Center and University of Arizona COM-Phoenix, respectively) this past March. Katie and Izzi were on-hand to share with the group their experiences and different perspectives while interviewing and insight in planning their program rank lists. The audience asked many great questions and were treated to additional pearls of wisdom from now PGY2 neurosurgery resident, Dara Farhadi, MD.



(Top Row, Left to Right)
Neil Joshi, MD • Ibrahim Alhalal, MBBS •
Hasan Sumdani, MD • Breanna Sheldon, MD.

(Bottom Row, Left to Right)
Kareem El Naamani, MD • Jeffrey Feng, MD •
Dara Farhadi, MD • Luis Robles, MD

Not Included In Photo
Pedro Aguilar, MD • Ryan Palmsa, MD

EDUCATIONAL ENDEAVORS:

The Department of Neurosurgery at Banner University Medical Center – Tucson Campus submitted a request and was granted approval by the ACGME/Residency Review Committee for Neurological Surgery, to elevate the resident complement from seven to eleven trainees. The Executive Committee, upon review of the program during their annual meeting held in January 2025, noted that the program is in substantial compliance with Program Requirements, with zero citations or areas for concern, and granted the program Continued Accreditation, No Citations.

Additionally, Dr. R. John Hurlbert, MD, PhD, was reviewed and approved as incoming Residency Program Director, by the Graduate Medical Education Committee, with his appointment beginning April 1, 2025. The Residency Program is very grateful to Department Chair, Dr. Julie Pilitsis, for serving as Interim Residency Program Director while the Clinical Competency Committee identified a permanent director. Dr. Hurlbert will remain Co-Chair, Clinical Spine Service at Banner University Medical Center, Tucson Campus and continues in his role as Complex Spine Neurosurgery Fellowship Program Director.

This past year Dr. Hurlbert applied for a complement increase through CAST for an additional Complex Spine Fellow and received continued CAST-accreditation

status with approval to train two CAST spine fellows, along with the one Non-Standard (NST) Complex Spine Neurosurgery Fellow position.

Dr. Julie Pilitsis, Department Chair and Physician Executive for Functional Neurosciences - Banner Health, also had great success in submission of a request to the Graduate Medical Education Committee for approval to train a Non-Standard (NST) Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery Fellow. Dr. Pilitsis also applied for and received approval to train a CAST-Accredited Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery Fellow.

Dr. Julie Pilitsis was able to successfully actualize with the Banner Health Care Administration for approval of a Pre-Residency General Neurosurgery Fellowship Program. The Pre-Residency General Neurosurgery Fellowship is a twelve-month clinical fellowship created to train medical school graduates from USMLE-accredited training programs. The program introduces the fellow to the full diverse spectrum of neurosurgical patient care and includes experience in inpatient hospital wards, in performing bedside procedures, attending outpatient clinics, providing neurosurgery consultation in the ER setting, in-house call coverage during the second six months of training, along with operating room exposure.

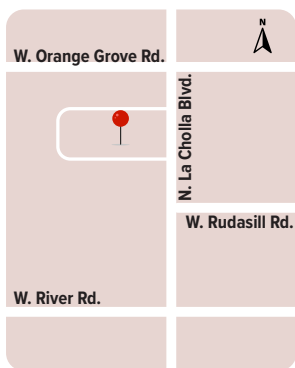


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Neurosurgery

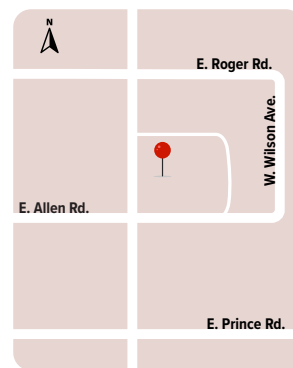
PO Box 245070
1501 N Campbell Avenue, Room 4303
Tucson, Arizona, 85724-5070

OUTPATIENT NEUROSURGERY CLINIC SITES



**Banner University Medical Center
PEDIATRIC SPECIALTY CLINIC**

6261 N. La Cholla Blvd., Suite 131
Tucson, Arizona, 85741
520-694-5437



**Banner University Medical Center
NORTH CAMPUS**

3838 N. Campbell Avenue, Building
2, Neurosurgery Clinic "F," 2nd Floor,
Tucson, Arizona, 85719
520-694-8888



**Diamond Children's Multispecialty Services Clinic
BANNER UNIVERSITY MEDICINE WHOLE HEALTH CLINIC**

535 N. Wilmot Road, Suite 101
Tucson, Arizona, 85711
520-694-5437



**Banner University Medicine
MULTISPECIALTY SERVICES CLINIC**

265 W. Ina Road,
Tucson, Arizona, 85704
520-694-8888

Please note maps are not to scale