

# NEUROSURGERY



## Cleveland Clinic Neurosurgery Alumni Connection

FALL 2016



From the Desk of Edward Benzel, MD  
Chairman, Department of Neurosurgery

Well, the change of seasons is upon us. Most of us have had a wonderful summer and are looking forward to a glorious fall. As we transition from summer to fall, we in the Department of Neurosurgery at the Cleveland Clinic are transitioning from one chairman to another. I will be stepping down as chairman and will be handing the reigns over to Michael Steinmetz.

As I write this, my last Chairman's letter, I can't help but be somewhat 'misty eyed.' It is difficult, to one degree or another, to step down from a position that I loved so much. I, however, am ready for 'bigger and better things' as I begin the next chapter in my career. I am not dying. I am not leaving. I am not cutting back clinically. Instead, I will have more time for mentoring, coaching, teaching, researching, writing, and many other things that I have coveted in years gone by. I will be able to devote even more time as the Editor-in-Chief of World Neurosurgery. Perhaps most importantly, I will help Mike Steinmetz take the chairmanship to the next level and beyond. I so look forward to this collaboration.

Mike Steinmetz – what can I say? I knew him as a neurosurgery intern at the University of New Mexico. He was a star then, with his trajectory remaining perpetually upward since then. Mike and I came to the Cleveland Clinic together in 1999. He finished his residency, completed a spine fellowship at the University of Wisconsin and then returned as faculty at the Clinic. He then left for a several year stint at MetroHealth Medical Center as their NI Chair – only to finally return to the Clinic as Co-director of the Center for Spine Health. Now, as the Chair of Neurosurgery, Mike and I have gone full circle. I cannot think of a greater honor and privilege than to be succeeded by Mike Steinmetz. To top this off, I will be able to watch him take our program to new levels from a bird's eye perspective and view.

It is indeed both humbling and an honor to have been able to see all the growth and change in the Department of Neurosurgery over the last decade and a half. We all should look forward to even more growth and change in the years to come. The Department is in GREAT HANDS. Congratulations Mike Steinmetz!!!

### upcoming events

*The Department of Neurosurgery  
proudly presents:*

**Resident Graduation Ceremony**  
Ritz-Carlton, Cleveland, OH  
Saturday June 10, 2017



### Donald F. Dohn, MD

CCF Neurosurgery Alumni 1958  
Chairman, Department of Neurosurgery,  
Cleveland Clinic, 1967-1981

I am honored to serve as a contributor to the Neurological Surgery Alumni Connection. The remarkable status and achievements of today's neurosurgical department under Dr. Benzel's leadership are very impressive. It is also gratifying to see how he is reaching out to the former residents. Having retired in 1991, my comments will be mostly historical, as I share my Cleveland Clinic memories garnered from 28 years of fellowship and staff - not counting my Cleveland Clinic Florida time. Arriving for my training in 1953, I found three structural buildings: the hospital, the clinic, as well as the original clinic building. By contrast, to find my way around today's campus, I must rely on a detailed map. My first Cleveland Clinic encounter was with Dr. Wally Hamby, my Neurosurgical Professor at the University of Buffalo Medical School. He was Dr. W. James Gardner's first resident in the early 1930s, and then established his own practice in Buffalo, New York. He influenced my decision to seek training with Dr. Gardner.

The Neurological Surgery Fellowship at that time was a "training program" rather than a "teaching program." We learned from our close daily contact with the only two members of the neurosurgical staff: Dr. W. James Gardner and Dr. Alexander T. Bunts. Didactic study was a personal matter without any formal program.

Dr. Gardner, fully trained in neurosurgery at the University of Pennsylvania under Dr. Charles Fraser, was a member of their staff prior to joining the Cleveland Clinic. He was recruited to replace Dr. Charles Locke, the Clinic's first neurosurgeon, who died in the infamous 1929 Clinic disaster. Dr. Alexander Bunts, son of Frank E. Bunts, a Cleveland Clinic founder, had previously been a member of the Clinic's general surgical staff. After the 1929 fire, he was sent to the Mayo Clinic for "some training in neurosurgery."

In the 1950's, subspecialties such as neuroradiology, neuroanesthesia, and neuropathology, did not exist. The neurosurgical chief resident did all the neuroradiology procedures, except for myelograms, which the fellows did. The diagnostic measures were angiogram, pneumo-encephalogram, ventriculogram, and diskogram -- as well as a good measure of diagnostic acumen practiced in the daily outpatient clinic! Neurology was part of the combined specialty of neuro-psychiatry and made only limited referral contributions. The American Board of Neurological Surgery's (ABNS) training requirements were one year of surgical internship, one year of surgical residency, and three years of neurological surgery -- the

last year as chief resident. In those days, there were no fellowships in neurosurgical subspecialties.

During my training days, three fortuitous events proved to be very positive factors in my career. The first occurred upon my arrival at the Clinic where I was to begin my year of general surgery. I learned that instead I would be assigned to neurosurgery for my first six months - a change prompted by Dr. Gardner's decision to "remove" a couple fellows from the program. This provided me with valuable knowledge and skills, as well as a "legup" for my subsequent three years of neurosurgical training. Secondly, I was fortunate to have Dr. Edward Bishop as my chief resident during those first six months. Having recently completed his military service in a Korean War mash unit, his clinical experience and surgical skills added a long-lasting positive dimension to our training program. The third "positive factor" was my year abroad as a Fulbright Scholar at the Institute of Neurology, Queen Square, London. This created a difficult rotation problem for the training program in Cleveland, but Dr. Gardner reluctantly agreed. Included in my year abroad was a clinical tour of the British and Scandinavian neurosurgical centers; as well as, attendance at the first International Neurosurgical Conference held in Brussels, Belgium. This "year away" opened my eyes to the much wider world of neuroscience and life in general, as I began my Chief Residency year - and beyond.

Following my residency at the Clinic, I became a member of the staff, now with responsibilities much more intense. Notable stress certainly occurred when Dr. Gardner departed on a six-week tour of European neurosurgical centers, thus handing over a considerable challenge to this neophyte. In anticipation of Dr. Gardner's mandatory retirement at the age of 65 years, Dr. Hamby was lured back to Cleveland Clinic in 1960, and subsequently served as Chairman. What an honor it was for me to work with two such noted neurosurgeons, both "heroes" from my training days. In 1967, a year before Dr. Hamby's retirement to Florida, my 15-year stint as Chairman began.

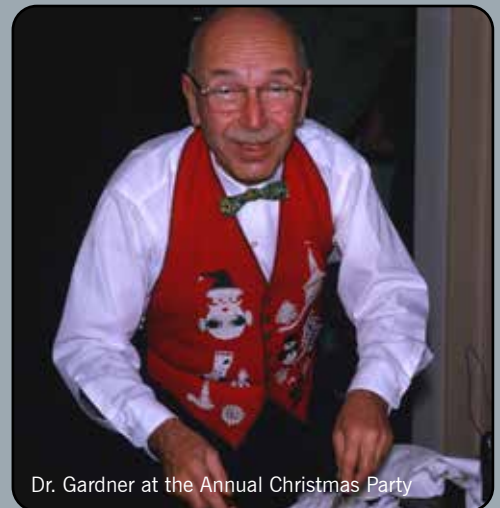
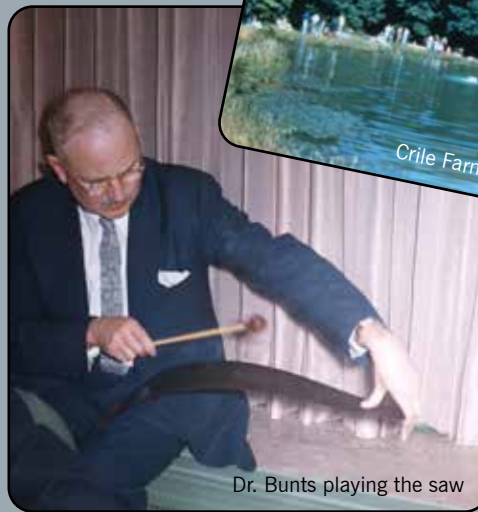
These were years of considerable change; not only for the department, but for neurosurgery itself. Sub-specialization in various areas of neurosurgery became more prominent and certainly influenced the expansion of the department, now under my leadership. Spinal surgery was our first change with my associate, Dr. John Collis, focusing his interest in this area. Other fields followed with the recruitment of new staff, each having specialty interest and training. Establishment of supportive services such as neuroradiology, neuroanesthesia, and neuropathology occurred. Another

positive event was to have neurology become its own specialty separate from psychiatry, and with its outpatient clinic adjacent to neurosurgery's clinic. Neurosurgery and neurology were granted their own combined hospital floor, and a neurointensive care unit was established. Two adjacent operating rooms were dedicated to neurosurgery, as well as a pre-op preparation area.

A teaching program was created that included the following sessions: pathology, radiology, morbidity/mortality, clinical pathological discussion, and a weekly journal club. Preparation for ABNS exams included "mock boards" and lectures by various surgical and related specialists. Saturday morning was dedicated to teaching conferences. A six-month St. Vincent Charity Hospital rotation was initiated to provide experience in trauma and emergency care. Opportunities for experiences at other facilities were also developed, such as rotations to the University of Vermont for hands-on microsurgical training. When ABNS expanded the Board requirements to four years, this allowed more time for research and subspecialty interests - often at other institutes. Visiting professors were often invited to give the house staff more widespread knowledge.

These years were also filled with dramatic changes in the entire field of neurological surgery. To describe all these diagnostic and technical innovations - and the everchanging status of neurosurgery itself - would require too long a litany of words. Instead, I would rather emphasize how fortunate I was to have my training and subsequent career at the Cleveland Clinic. In this milieu, I was afforded constant opportunities for personal involvement in those innovative times, which also made it possible for me to be active in national neurosurgical organizations, including the American Board of Neurological Surgery. The most memorable experience for me however, was the opportunity to help train more than forty residents in neurosurgery, and then to be able to follow their subsequent careers. This constitutes my most rewarding professional satisfaction.

I have been equally lucky from a personal aspect. My wife, Carolyn, and I have had a busy and adventurous life outside of careers - including travel, sailing, aviation, biking, hiking, mountain climbing, multiple hobbies, community activities, etc. Incidentally, she retired last year after a long career, first as a nurse and then as a lawyer. Interaction with family (three children, nine grandchildren, and six great-grand kids, all living in Colorado) has been a leading element in my life. I was very honored last year when my children arranged for a 90th birthday celebration for me in Vail, Colorado - with many more years to come, I hope!





Nina Moore, MD, PGY-6

This has been an exciting summer for the Cleveland Clinic residency program and Cleveland in general with the Cleveland Cavaliers bringing home a national championship victory! The hospital was buzzing with excitement during the finals and after the final game. The celebration drew over a million people downtown for the Cavalier's Celebratory parade. Cleveland also hosted the Republican National Convention, which also transpired smoothly.

In June, we celebrated another year of chief residents graduating. Although they will be missed, we are excited to see and hear of the exciting work that they are doing. Dr. Ryan Brennan has moved out to the state of Washington to continue his work in the Army as well as work in private practice. Dr. Andrew Healy has joined a practice in Charlotte, North Carolina focusing on his interest in spine surgery and research. Dr. Saksith Smithason has joined one of our former graduates, Dr. Virgilio Matheus (CCF Neurosurgery Alumni 2013), in Lumberton, North Carolina.

We also welcomed our new intern class in late June: Drs. Nehaw Sarmey, Jason Hsieh, and Swetha Sundar. Dr. Bryan Lee (PGY-5), hosted this year's residency barbeque at his home. A great time was had by the residents and their families.



Drs. Rich Schlenk, Mike Steinmetz, Ajit Krishnaney, Alex Witek, Lee Hwang, Saks Smithason, Moses Taghioff, Ryan Brennan, Andrew Healy, Ghaith Habboub, Balint Otvos, Gene Barnett, and Ed Benzel.



2016 Graduating residents (Drs. Ryan Brennan, Saks Smithason, and Andrew Healy) with Moses Taghioff, MD (CCF Neurosurgery Alumni 1973) at the gravesite of Dr. Harvey Cushing.



Some resident fun with Dr. Benzel



Andrew, Ryan, and Saks with Neurosurgery Residency Coordinator, Karen Walsh



2016 Cleveland Clinic  
Neurosurgery Residency Picnic

New intern class



Dr. Nehaw Sarmey



Dr. Jason Hsieh



Dr. Swetha Sundar

**Neurosurgery 2016 Awards presented at Graduation:**

Academic Award | Program Director's Award **Jeffrey Mullin**



Presented by Dr. Rich Schlenk

Chairman Award **Emily Bennett**



Presented by Dr. Ed Benzel

Humanitarian Award **Alex Witek**



Teacher of the Year, Faculty **Mark Bain**



Teacher of the Year, Resident **Louis Ross**



Presented by Chief Residents: Drs. Andrew Healy, Saks Smithason, and Ryan Brennan



Lee Hwang, MD, PGY-4

### Practical Lab Sessions at Lutheran Hospital

Residents have practical lab sessions at the Lutheran Hospital and neurosurgery staff are invited to speak then lead the lab. During the month of April 2016, there were a series of spine topics, with the first session being cervical spine approaches. Dr Michael Kelly (CCF Neurosurgery Alumni 2014), staff at The MetroHealth System, led the PGY- 2 and PGY- 3 group during this session.



Back Row: Drs. Bill Kemp, Mike Kelly, Emily Bennett, Balint Otvos  
 Front Row: Drs. Nina Moore, Lee Hwang, Amr Morsi



Drs. Bill Kemp and Amr Morsi



Drs. Mike Kelly and Balint Otvos

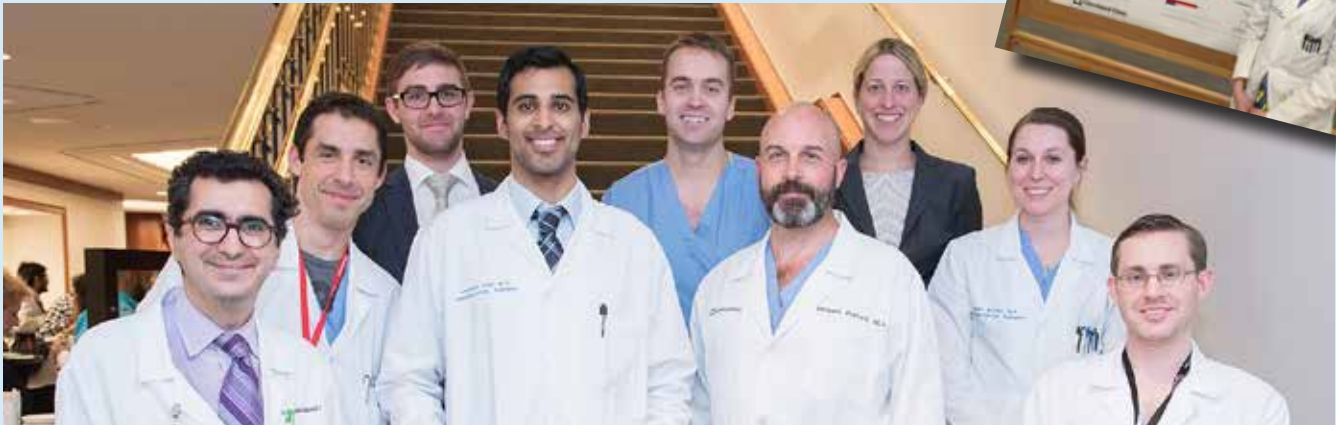


Drs. Emily Bennett and Nina Moore

## 2016 Neurological Institute Research Day

The Neurological Institute hosted 98 presentations on Thursday, May 20, 2016. Thank you to all participants for making this a very successful event. Award recipients each received a \$500 monetary award. Congratulations to two Neurosurgery Resident Award recipients:

- Nina Moore, MD, MSE (PGY-4): Rehemorrhage and Recurrence Rates of Small ACOM Aneurysms Post Embolization (Mark Bain, MD – Staff Supervisor)
- Kevin Walsh, MD (PGY-5): Biomechanics of L5/S1 in Long Thoracolumbosacral Constructs: A Cadaveric Study (Thomas Mroz, MD – Staff Supervisor)



Back row: Jaes Jones, Drs. Jeff Mullin and Emily Bennett  
 Middle row: Drs. Balint Otvos, Pranay Soni, Richard Schlenk and Nina Moore  
 Front row: Drs. Alireza Mohammad and Alex Witek

## Cleveland Clinic 2016-2017 Neurosurgery Residents

### Chief Residents



Rupa Juthani      Kevin Walsh      Jeff Mullin



Elizabeth Bennett      Nina Moore      Louis Ross      Andres Maldonado      Alex Witek      Bryan Lee  
 Ghailth Habboub      Lee Hwang      William Kemp      Matthew Grubowski      Balint Otvos      Amir Morsi



Eric Schmidt      Pranay Soni      Jason Hsieh      Nehaw Sarmey      Swetha Sundar

## Announcements

### Congratulations to our residents:

- Ghaith Habboub (PGY-4) married Shahed Tish on July 29, 2016
- Alex Witek (PGY-5 ) and Camille Cray were engaged this summer.
- Sean Robert Healy was born on May 8, 2016, to Andrew Healy (CCF Neurosurgery Alumni 2016) and his wife Jane. Sean joins big sister Ella!



## Stay Connected!

We encourage our alumni to stay connected with former colleagues, mentors, associates and friends. You can receive news updates about your training specialty and view events on the digital calendar including CME course information.

### CME Online

For CME information on all medical specialties, visit the Center for Continuing Education's website, [ccfme.org](http://ccfme.org), a leader in online CME with a worldwide outreach and record-setting CME numbers. On the site you can:

- Claim credit for CME activities
- View your transcript
- Reprint certificates
- Create an account in minutes!  
New profile: [ccfme.org/newprofile](http://ccfme.org/newprofile)
- Login: [ccfme.org/cmelogin](http://ccfme.org/cmelogin)

You can earn CME credit by reading articles from *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine*, either online or in print. Visit <http://ccjm.org/> for a current issue of *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine* and more information.

### Alumni Profile

Please click on <http://my.clevelandclinic.org/alumni/my-alumni-profile.aspx> to update your alumni profile.

## Have you claimed your Doximity profile?

Doximity is a physician social networking site. In addition to facilitating connections to healthcare professionals across specialties, U.S. News & World Report administers surveys for the Best Hospitals Ranking (<http://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals>) through Doximity.

If you already have an account, you can simply log on to the site and find the survey. You may also receive an email with an invitation to vote. If you do not have a Doximity account, you can register by following these steps:

1. Go to [Doximity.com](http://Doximity.com)
2. Claim or update your profile, verify certification, licensure, email and mailing address.
3. After having verified your profile by email, repeat the log in at [Doximity.com](http://Doximity.com) and look for the opportunity to vote.

## Feedback

Feedback for our newsletter is always welcome, as are your suggestions for future content. We would like the Alumni Update column to feature updates about marriages, births, promotions, retirements, vacations, hobbies, etc that you would like to share. Photos are especially welcomed! Please send your announcements or photos to Christine Moore at [moorec2@ccf.org](mailto:moorec2@ccf.org).

Cleveland Clinic is an independent, nonprofit, multispecialty academic medical center consistently ranked among the top hospitals in the country by U.S. News & WorldReport. Founded in 1921, it is dedicated to providing high-quality specialized care and includes eight community hospitals, 16 family health centers, an education institute and a research institute.