

# OHSU DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

Winter 2024

*Diversity Equity & Inclusion*



On  
The  
Cutting  
Edge





## Message from the Chair

Mackenzie Professor and Chair Ken Azarow, M.D., F.A.C.S., F.A.A.P.

As we approach the start of a new calendar year, I'm able to report an undeniable sense of accomplishment in what our department's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council has achieved over the the past 3 years. While you read through this edition of *On the Cutting Edge* devoted to DEI, please keep in mind that we have simply begun the process of addressing these complex issues as a department. There is so much learning that we still need to attain so that we can support our faculty, residents, and staff surrounding numerous issues that affect us in our daily lives. In addition, we have partnered with the OHSU health care system to develop programs and metrics to address access issues and our health care inequities. Each surgery division was tasked with submitting an initiative to address these issues, and the department submitted 2 from amongst the below to be supported at a health care system level. Here is the list of what our divisions are doing:

- Translating patient information packet to Spanish and creating a website for Spanish speakers - **Bariatric Surgery**
- Working with interpreter services to provide translation for patients being moved from pre-op to the OR and until the patient is asleep - **Surgical Oncology**
- Working with interpreter services to improve patient access to interpreters after hours - **Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery**
- Translating consents for endoscopic procedures into Spanish - **Gastrointestinal and General Surgery**
- Development of Healing Hurt People program with a goal to see patients within 4 hours - Working with ED, AOD, Public Safety, and TRN/CRN group to initiate the HHP consult upon patient arrival in ED - **Trauma Surgery**
- Interviewing families of patients with solid tumors to assess social and financial barriers-to-care and how they feel this may affect their child's outcomes - **Pediatric Surgery**
- Working to identify opportunity for translating surgical consent forms for non-English speakers to languages other than English and Spanish - **Vascular Surgery**
- Translating pre-transplant patient materials and developing a website for Spanish speakers - **Abdominal Organ Transplantation**
- Better utilizing Epic to improve patient race, ethnicity and gender identification data to address health disparities and improve patient satisfaction - **Cardiothoracic Surgery**
- Addressing disparities in pancreatic cancer care in Native American Communities in Oregon - a Kuni Foundation funded project (Brody/Kills First) - **Core Research**

The 2 projects chosen for submission to the health care system were 1) General Surgery's translation of surgical consents for endoscopy, and 2) our research program in partnership with the Brenden-Colson Center for Pancreatic Care addressing disparities in care for pancreatic cancer in our Native American Community.

Since the appointment of our Vice Chair of DEI, Dr. V. Liana Tsikitis, we have formed several task forces to deal with racism, gender equity, and health care issues surrounding the LGBTQ+ community, and community engagement to address health care inequity in our underserved communities. We have been actively engaged with Portland Public Schools and state colleges and universities to recruit and support the best and brightest so that we can even-up the disparity in our physician population to better match the population we take care of. As you read through this edition of *On the Cutting Edge*, you will see examples of specific initiatives that the department has undertaken in each of these areas and I encourage everyone associated with the department to become involved in one or several of these efforts.

# Read on for a closer look at the ongoing efforts from our DEI Council:

## **Anti-Racism**

Led by Tatiana Hoyos Gomez, M.D., and  
Tim Siegel, M.D.

**Page 6**

## **Community Engagement**

Led by Frederick Tibayan, M.D., and  
Truc Westerlund, B.S.

**Page 7**

## **DEI Sub-Internships**

Led by James Lim, M.D., Jonathan Brody, Ph.D.  
and teams

**Page 8**

## **Gender Equity**

Led by Ruchi Thanawala, M.D., M.S., and  
*former faculty* Katrine Lofberg, M.D.

**Page 11**

## **LGBTQIA+**

Led by Patrick Worth, M.D., and  
*newly appointed* Monica Llado-Farrulla, M.D.

**Page 12**





# DOS DEI COUNCIL LEADERSHIP



V. Liana Tsikitis, M.D., M.C.R., M.B.A.  
Vice Chair  
Division of Gastrointestinal and  
General Surgery



Tatiana Hoyos Gomez, M.D.  
Assistant Director  
Division of Trauma, Critical Care and  
Acute Care Surgery



Ruchi Thanawala, M.D., M.S.  
Assistant Director  
Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery



Truc Westerlund, B.S.  
Administrative Support  
Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery



Claire Lawrence, B.S., M.P.A.  
Administrator  
Division of Surgical Oncology



Fred Tibayan, M.D.  
Professor  
Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery



Patrick Worth, M.D., M.C.R.  
Assistant Professor  
Division of Gastrointestinal and  
General Surgery

## DEI COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DIVERSITY EQUITY & INCLUSION COUNCIL MEMBERS FY23 - 24				
Vice Chair	Liana Tsikitis			
Administrative Director	Truc Westerlund			
Administration	Claire Lawrence	Raina Villanueva		
Assistant Director	Tatiana Hoyos Gomez	Ruchi Thanawala		
Professor	Cherrie Abraham	Jonathan Brody	Fred Tibayan	
Associate Professor	Bob Goldman	Kim Lu	Tim Siegel	
Assistant Professor	Leo Daab	Constance Lee	Monica Llado-Farrulla	Khanh Nguyen
	Sergio Toledo Valdovinos	Patrick Worth		
APP	Mindy Hamilton			
Fellow				
Resident				
Student				
Research	Samantha Underwood			
Staff	Younhee Park			
Ex Officio	Karen Brasel	Belinda McCully	Susan Orloff	
Community Liaison	Nathalie Johnson			
MISSIONS PANEL				
LGBTQIA+	COMMUNITY OUTREACH	GENDER EQUITY	ANTI-RACISM	RESEARCH COMMITTEE
Monica Llado-Farrulla	Fred Tibayan	Ruchi Thanawala	Tatiana Hoyos Gomez	Liana Tsikitis
Patrick Worth	Truc Westerlund	Mindy Hamilton	Tim Siegel	Jonathan Brody
Joie Eckert	Cherrie Abraham	Khanh Nguyen	Leo Daab	Tatiana Hoyos Gomez
Heather Hoops	Ann Amonoo	Truc Westerlund	Truc Westerlund	Ruchi Thanawala
Samantha Underwood	Mindy Hamilton		Connie Lee	
	James Lim			
	Belinda McCully			

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION COUNCIL

In the summer of 2020, the Department of Surgery moved to expand the previous work of our Diversity Committee and formed the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council. The council is led by Vice Chair V. Liana Tsikitis, M.D., M.C.R., M.B.A., and is comprised of physicians, fellows, advanced practice practitioners, residents, students, and administrative staff.

The council's mission is to assist OHSU and the Department of Surgery to achieve health equity for all by becoming an inclusive, antiracist department and institution.

## DEI Defined

**Diversity:** The inclusion of individuals representing more than one national origin, color, religion, socioeconomic stratum, sexual orientation. Honoring diversity means acknowledging people's differences as an asset that enforces collective intelligence. When we strive for diverse representation and engagement we come closer to achieving equity.

**Equity:** "To be fair & impartial." Equity refers to fairness and justice and focuses on outcomes that are most appropriate for a given group, recognizing different challenges, needs, and histories. It is also not EQUALITY, which doesn't take differing needs or disparate outcomes into account. Systemic equity involves a robust system and a dynamic process consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice.

**Inclusion:** Inclusion refers to the achievement of the environment (work, school, community etc.) in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully and have equal access to opportunities and resources. Inclusion refers to empowerment of all individuals to contribute fully to the organization's success. An inclusive environment promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it values and practices respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of its members.

## Work Effort and Progress

- Implementation of focused training and education that addresses inequity in all departmental ranks.
  - Quarterly diversity training with **Blue Ocean Brain**, education within residency and faculty didactics, monthly **Cultural Humility Modules**, and faculty-wide **DEI-related Grand Rounds**.
- Addressing all patterns of hiring, retention, promotion and leadership opportunities for all faculty and creating a deliberate plan to address racial and gender disparities.
  - DEI Council participation in all **department leadership search committees** as well as annual **Promotion & Tenure Committee** meetings.
- Community Outreach in conjunction with the School of Medicine Institution efforts.
  - Approved funding for multiple **educational and community outreach projects**, including aiding **under-represented minority residents with memberships and attendance at professional society annual meetings**.



# THE ANTI-RACISM MISSION

Led by Tatiana Hoyos Gomez, M.D., and Tim Siegel, M.D.

*"To assist OHSU and the Department of Surgery achieve racial equity for all by becoming a diverse and inclusive department in all fronts aligning with OHSU anti-racist action plan: to become a truly anti-racist and multicultural institution"*

Responding to this call for introspection and change, the Department of Surgery took a step forward in 2020 by establishing a dynamic Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council.

One of those first Council members was **Tatiana Hoyos Gomez, M.D.**, a new faculty recruit at the time and Assistant Professor of Trauma and Critical Care Surgery. In the nascent stages of the Council, Dr. Hoyos Gomez drew inspiration from the innovative initiatives undertaken by a surgery resident at the University of Maryland, supported by leadership at University of Michigan. That group envisaged a curriculum akin to the medical tradition of M&M but centered on cultural nuances, crafting a framework that dissected not medical errors, but cultural errors.

Armed with this groundbreaking curriculum, Dr. Hoyos Gomez initiated a series of **Cultural Humility modules**, seamlessly integrated into our department's Monday morning M&M tradition. The inaugural year proved arduous, requiring participants to confront potentially defensive reactions while cultivating open-mindedness and a commitment to shared dialogue.

Drawing from the insights of the cultural complications curriculum, Dr. Hoyos Gomez and her working team established an anonymous case scenario repository. Within this platform, members of the department were able to anonymously recount instances of cultural error, implicit bias and microaggressions experienced in patient care, operating rooms, or within the broader hospital environment. Dr. Hoyos Gomez adeptly utilized these submissions to shape the next 2 years of Cultural Humility modules, addressing authentic challenges and dispelling ingrained preconceptions.

**Fast forward to 2023**, and the Department of Surgery's Cultural Humility modules have evolved into a well-established and ACCME-accredited series. The focus now pivots toward leveraging data gleaned from attendee surveys to gauge long-term relevance and impact. Moreover, Dr. Hoyos Gomez, along with the committed DEI Council, has embarked on a collaborative venture with other OHSU departments. Their goal is to disseminate the invaluable insights and methodologies embedded in the Cultural Humility modules, fostering widespread awareness and engender transformative change across OHSU.

## CULTURAL HUMILITY SESSION TOPICS

- Sexual Harassment
- Evaluation
- Diversity in Surgery
- Stereotype Threat
- Sizeism
- Representation
- Intersectionality
- Gender Schema
- Ableism
- Symbolism
- Implicit Bias
- Mentorship and Sponsorship
- Leadership and National Representation

## RESEARCH

Current research in progress:

"Prevalence and Match Rate of URiM Candidates and implicit biases in letter of references"



**DIVERSITY  
EQUITY  
INCLUSION**

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ANTI-RACISM



# THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MISSION

Led by Fred Tibayan, M.D., and Truc Westerlund, B.S.

*"To assist OHSU and the Department of Surgery in achieving access and health equity for all communities of our city and state. To establish rigorous pathways for students who are underrepresented in medicine to pursue the field of surgery."*

One of the main goals of the community engagement mission is to establish rigorous pathways for URiM to pursue the field of surgery. **Fred Tibayan, M.D.**, Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery and **Truc Westerlund, B.S.**, Administrative Coordinator of Cardiothoracic Surgery along with the DEI Council have worked hard in fostering meaningful connections with the community through outreach activities and events.

- OHSU participates in facilitating observership experiences for URiM students who are interested in a career in surgery. These experiences include partnering with a local nonprofit **MedStaircase**, participation in the Distance Learning Program - **STEMPrep**, and establishment of the Department of Surgery **Visiting Student Surgery Scholarship**. *Learn more about these sponsorships in the following pages.*
- Portland State University invites surgeons to discuss their career pathways at panels through the **TRIO** and **LSAMP programs**. These are groups that encourage and support STEM careers and academic scholarship for students who are first generation college attendees, demonstrate financial need, have learning disabilities, or are racially underrepresented groups in STEM. OHSU attends similar virtual panels with high schools throughout Portland. This is an avenue for students to learn about careers in surgery and meet mentors.
- Other recent community outreach events include participating in a fundraiser for **North by Northeast (NxNE) Community Health Center** which is devoted to health outcomes and advancing health equity for African American/Black people living in Portland. Money was raised through logging miles walked or run, with each mile matched by surgeons per dollar. The DoS also fundraised and helped build furniture for **KairosPDX**, a multifaceted organization committed to dismantling racism through education; it comprises a K-5 charter school, cultural-competency consulting services, government policy advocacy, and community relationship building. From the \$3,000 that was raised by OHSU, 140 learning kits were provided to students.
- A developing program is the formalized high school internship program. In the past year, a group of students interested in STEM careers spent part of their summer with the DoS. They participated in educational activities such as pig heart dissection and self-directed projects like video interview projects with surgical faculty. In the coming years, it will become a medical student directed program which will focus more on improving patient-centered care, QI initiatives, and DEI topics.



**DIVERSITY  
EQUITY  
INCLUSION**

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COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT



# DEI SUB-INTERNSHIPS



## DIVERSITY VISITING STUDENT SURGERY SCHOLARSHIP

Led by James Lim, M.D.

Now in its second year, the Diversity Visiting Student Surgery Scholarship is a funded program established by the Department of Surgery. The program selects one highly qualified medical student that identifies as any person who has experienced significant disadvantage or adversity (i.e., first-generation college graduate; recipient of social service resources while in elementary or secondary school, enhanced education or other programs for diverse populations; or by experience of economic, cultural, educational or family adversity) to participate in a fourth year sub-internship at OHSU.

Students must meet the basic requirements to rotate at OHSU and also submit an additional application for the award. It is a competitive application process and applications are solicited via advertising in national medical student interest groups as well as on the AAMC website. The applications are reviewed by the DEI council, and a single student is awarded.

Program includes:

- A 4-week rotation at Oregon Health & Science University Hospital
- Reimbursement of up to \$3,000 for travel, housing, and application expenses
- Clinical experience alongside renowned surgeons in many of the surgical specialties that OHSU has to offer within General Surgery which includes:
  - Hepatobiliary Surgery (Blue)
  - Surgical Oncology (Gold)
  - Colorectal and AB Wall Surgery (Green)
  - Foregut and Bariatric Surgery (Red)
- An assigned faculty mentor
- A resident or fellow mentor
- A meeting with the Vice Chair & Council of Diversity Equity and Inclusion committee

### 2023 Awardee



This year's awardee was Ruby Lopez-Flores from the University of Nevada-Reno. She rotated on the Red surgery service from July - August 2023, which was her first experience working together with surgical residents. By all accounts, she performed well and was well-received.

Ruby has a compelling story of persevering through family hardships and succeeding to become a first generation graduate student. She has continued to excel in medical school as evidenced by her nomination to AOA and the Gold Humanism Society. Her own lived experiences with family members being denied medical care due to socioeconomic and language barriers has fueled her passion in pushing DEI initiatives in her medical school. These initiatives include curriculum changes, leading outreach programs to underrepresented groups in local high schools/colleges and mentoring students interested in health care.

### 2022 Awardee



Our first inaugural awardee was Bailey Gutierrez from Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. She rotated on the Red surgery service from September - October 2022. She aspired to go into Trauma Surgery but wasn't receiving the resources and access she needed in her home town - so sought them here at OHSU.

Bailey has a passion for the underserved. Being a Hispanic woman in medicine, she feels able to provide a comforting voice and familiar face to the Spanish-speaking community and be a person they can trust. She uses her bilingual talents to assist with Manos de Cristo and helps with the Refugee Health Screening Project in Amarillo. She also serves as a mentor to middle school girls in the Women in Science Endeavors promoting the various fields of science for young females.

Bailey returned to Texas Tech University HSC for residency.

*As we approach our 3rd year of the Diversity Visiting Student Surgery Scholarship, we are enthused by its growing number of applicants and look forward to its continued support of a more diverse, inclusive and equitable department.*



## MEDSTAIRCASE

**MedStaircase** is a nonprofit organization (started in 2021) committed to increasing diversity in healthcare through mentorship, scholarship and education by elevating underrepresented groups along each step of their career path. At the conclusion of the sponsorship students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the general clinical practice environment they are assigned to work in
- Gain first-hand knowledge of the educational pathway required to become a physician practicing in that specialty
- Appreciate the elements of patient care in the specialty including performing a history and physical examination, performing diagnostic evaluations, and determining appropriate treatments including medications and procedures

The Department of Surgery has sponsored 2 students each year for the past 2 years for a week-long clinical experience at OHSU. The sponsorship includes:

- \$1,000 stipend for expenses
- Clinical shadowing experiences
- Mentorship from faculty within the various surgical specialties

### 2022 Awardees



Madison  
Dartmouth College



Diego  
Portland State University

### 2023 Awardees



Connie  
Portland State University



Sophia  
Oregon State University



## DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM CENTER

Led by Jonathan Brody, Ph.D., and team

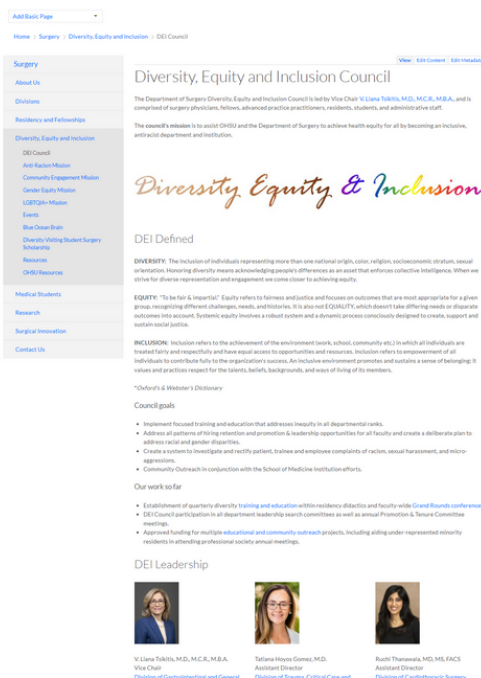
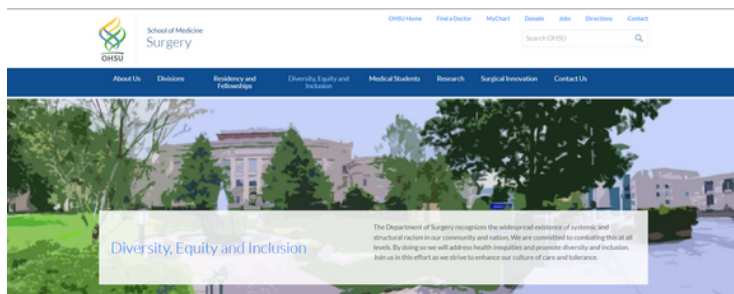
**Distance Learning Program Center - STEMPrep** | A summer internship providing longitudinal mentoring of under-represented budding scientists. The non-profit was first established in 1990 by Dr. Moses Williams, then Director of Admissions for Temple University School of Medicine in Philadelphia. OHSU began its collaboration with Dr. Williams in 2022, hosting a class of 11th/12th grade high school students who had been mentored within the DLPC-STEMPrep program since 7th grade. The summer experience is organized by the Department of Surgery, the Department of Cell, Developmental and Cancer Biology, and the Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology, with the opportunity for broad participation from basic science mentors.

It has been a pleasure to sponsor and participate as mentors for this program the past two years and we are excited to continue the support.

# COMMUNICATIONS

As a Council, we have established multiple forms of communication with the DoS community. Efforts include a website that is frequently updated and lives under the DoS School of Medicine banner, as well as sending out weekly DEI digests showcasing events and projects that are active within our DEI Council and Portland community.

WEBSITE



[OHSU.EDU/SCHOOL-OF-MEDICINE/SURGERY/DIVERISTY-EQUITY-AND-INCLUSION](https://ohsu.edu/school-of-medicine/surgery/diveristy-equity-and-inclusion)

WEEKLY DIGEST

**Department of Surgery**  
**DEI WEEKLY DIGEST**

Friday, December 15th 2023

**December Holidays Around The World**

**December 05-06: St. Nicholas Eve | Sinterklaas Day**

St. Nicholas Day is December 6th, but celebrations start the day before, St. Nicholas Eve. Celebrated throughout Europe, these days honor St. Nicholas, patron saint of Christmas, gift giving, and children.

Sinterklaas is an elderly, serious man with white hair and a long, full beard. He wears a long red cape or chasuble over a traditional white bishop's alb (a garment coming down to the ankles) and sometimes red stola (like a toga). He dons a red mitre (bishop-like head dress) and ruby ring, and holds a gold-colored crozier—a long ceremonial shepherd's staff with a fancy curled top. He traditionally rides a white horse. In the Netherlands, the horse is called Amerigo, in Belgium, it's named Slecht Weer Vandaag, meaning "Bad Weather Today." Sinterklaas carries a big book that tells whether a child has been good or naughty in the past year. He's one of the sources for the popular Christmas icon of Santa Claus.

In Belgium, children put their shoes near the hearth on St. Nicholas Eve in hopes that Sinterklaas will leave toys and trinkets in them as he rides by. The shoes are filled with carrots and sugar cubes for Slecht Weer Vandaag, and a cup of coffee is placed next to the shoes for Sinterklaas. When Sinterklaas comes, he replaces the shoes with gifts. For children, this is the big gift-giving day. When they are older or grown up, gifts are given on Christmas.

In the Netherlands, Sinterklaas Day is celebrated with children putting their shoes by the bed the night before St. Nicholas Day (called Sinterklaasavond or Pakjesavond) hoping that Sinterklaas, a jolly old elf, will fill them with presents and candy. Traditional Sinterklaas treats include hot chocolate, mandarin oranges, pepernoten, speculaas, Dutch letters (letter-shaped pastries filled with almond paste or a chocolate), chocolate coins, and marzipan figures. Newer treats include gingerbread biscuits and a figurine of Sinterklaas made of chocolate and wrapped in colored aluminum foil.

Saint Nicholas' Day is observed on December 6th in Western Christian countries, December 5th in the Netherlands, and December 19th in Eastern Christian countries.

**Reminders**

No Council Meeting this month for a Holiday break

If you have a case scenario you'd like to add to the Cultural Humility repository, scan this IRB approved QR code to submit anonymously:

**WEEK**

WHAT DO ELVES POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

ELF-IES

**November, December Chanukah | Hanukkah**

Although Chanukah is a minor Jewish holiday, it's the best known to non-Jewish people. This is due in part to its proximity to Christmas. Chanukah (Hanukkah or Hanukkah) begins on the 25th day of the Hebrew month Kislev, November or December. Chanukah means "dedication," and it celebrates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem. It lasts for eight days, and like other Jewish holidays, it begins at sundown.

In 168 BCE, a Greek king named Antiochus ruled Jerusalem. He forced his religion and deities upon the people. He took over the great temple of Jerusalem, burned the holy books, and condemned scholars to death. When a group of soldiers entered the small village of Modiin, they met with a disgruntled and rebellious group of men. These men would not do as the soldiers bid and a fight ensued resulting in the death of the soldiers. The men fled to the mountains where they remained, attacking and raiding the king's army for years. These men became known as the Maccabees.

When the Maccabees were finally able to return home, the leaders vowed to cleanse the temple and rededicate it to Jehovah. To accomplish this, they needed to reestablish the eternal light. Unfortunately, they found only a small vessel of consecrated oil. It would take eight days to make new oil. There was no way that small amount of oil would last, not even for a day. But a miracle happened. It did last—for eight days.

Chanukah celebrates this miracle as well as good over bad. One candle is lit each day. A menorah, a type of candelabrum, traditionally holds the candles. Other traditions include giving (or receiving) a gift each night of Chanukah, receiving Chanukah gelt (foil-covered chocolate coins), singing songs, spinning dreidels, and feasting on wonderful food that is typically cooked in and with oil. Popular foods include latkes (potato pancakes), brisket, matzo ball soup, rugelach (cookies filled with nuts, poppy seed paste, chocolate, or jam), loksomaden (fried dough dipped in honey), kugel (a sweet noodle dish), and sufganiyah (jelly doughnuts).

**The Menorah**

A menorah or hanukiyah is an elaborate candle holder. It holds nine candles. The eight outer candles (four on each side) are the same height. The ninth candle is the shamash, or helper. It's in the center and higher or lower than the other candles. The menorah is placed where it's easily view by everyone, in a window or a central place in the home. The menorah is lit just after twilight and with all the family members present (if possible). The shamash is lit first and it's used to light the other candles. The candles are lit from left to right and burn at least 30 minutes into the evening. Blessings are said during this process.

**The Dreidel**

Spinning the dreidel is a favorite pastime during Chanukah. The writings of Kabbalistic tell that during the Greek rule, reading the Torah (the Jewish holy book) was illegal and to study it was punishable by death. However, this did not stop Jewish people. They studied the Torah, and when soldiers would come close, they would quickly replace the Torah with a dreidel, a harmless game.

The game is based on an old German gambling game. The word dreidel is a derivative from a similar German top game, trenzlel. The traditional Chanukah game is played for Chanukah gelt. A dreidel is a special four-sided top. Each side has a symbol that dictates what happens next.

- Nun (נ): no one wins
- Gimmel (ג): the spinner takes the pot
- Het (ה): the spinner gets half the pot
- Shin (ש): the spinner must match the pot

These letters also stand for "A great miracle happened here." In Israel, Pey (פ) is used in place of shin meaning "A great miracle happened here." Other popular dreidel games include contests to see who can spin their top the longest or who can spin the most dreidels at the same time.



# THE GENDER EQUITY MISSION

Led by Ruchi Thanawala, M.D., M.S., and Katrine Lofberg, M.D.

*"To assist OHSU and the department of surgery in eliminating gender inequality in the workplace and within our academic community through education, advocacy and mentorship. Working to ensure pay parity, equitable representation in leadership and opportunities for advancement. Provide opportunities and resources for women to empower themselves"*

As a thoracic surgeon, entrepreneur and informatician, **Ruchi Thanawala, M.D., M.S.**, has considerable experience navigating industries that have been historically male-driven. The act of walking into rooms and arenas and commanding the attention of people who don't look like you requires considerably more energy than interacting with those from similar backgrounds. Dr. Thanawala and Dr. Lofberg have led the Gender Equity Task Force for the past 3 years with a robust education portfolio of multiple workshops and Grand Round discussions. In particular, Dr. Thanawala acknowledges that often the hardest part for gender minorities is consistently manifesting the extra confidence it requires to hold their own. With that in mind, her work on the DEI Council has focused on normalizing the conversation that gender disparities are a shared responsibility and encouraging minority faculty and trainees to seek out and formalize a mentor relationship.

The concept of shared responsibility is that while minorities must utilize available tools (such as mentorship) and face situations head-on, majorities must also put out energy to extend esteem and consideration. The basic premise underlying all of that is of course gender equality.

The Department of Surgery and DEI Council now intentionally facilitate junior/senior faculty dyads that specifically support promotion and tenure applications. Mentoring women and gender minorities into leadership and senior positions is paramount for gender equity to exist.

In sync with those efforts, Dr. Thanawala has worked to bring in diverse voices and experiences through internal webinars, mentoring medical students through the MedStaircase and STEM programs and continuing the equity discussion in national forums.

While gender equity challenges at the top are undisputed, Dr. Thanawala is encouraged by the work being done to address inequity within the Department, as well as by the increasingly diverse class of interns that are accepted each year. Women trainees are no longer in the vast minority and while racial diversity still remains low, there is significant progress there too. As more women and minorities enter the field of surgery, the tide of inequity will undoubtedly turn.

## WORKSHOPS/WEBINARS

- Strengths-Based Approach to Women's Professional Development
- Planning for Family: Fertility for Physicians
- Negotiation, Promotion, and Tenure
- Imposter Phenomenon
- Negotiation Skills
- Bias in Feedback
- Struggles and Successes in Supporting Pregnancy and Lactation
- I Know a "Guy" - The Power of Networking



DIVERSITY  
EQUITY  
INCLUSION

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GENDER EQUITY





# THE LGBTQIA+ MISSION

Led by Patrick Worth, M.D., and newly appointed lead Monica Llado-Farrulla, M.D.

*"To assist OHSU and the Department of Surgery in achieving equity for sexual and gender minorities through advocacy, allyship, and resource development. "*

One of the silver linings of the recent pandemic was a reexamination by the FDA of outdated restrictions surrounding blood donor eligibility from men who have sex with men (MSM) and women who have sex with MSM. From 2020 to 2023, the FDA and the USDA thoroughly examined the best available scientific evidence against previously established time-based deferrals and screening questions originally designed to reduce the risk of transfusion-transmitted HIV. Their aim was to determine more exact eligibility windows for all donors and reduce unnecessary discrimination. Expected results included a potential increase in the number of eligible individuals and an overall increase in the accuracy of risk assessment as it applies to all donors.



As advocates for science-based recommendations and decision-making, hepatobiliary surgeon **Patrick Worth, M.D.**, and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council of the Department of Surgery drafted and issued a letter to the Association of Academic Surgeons, highlighting the need for change and the scientific rationale behind it. Worth and the Council also advocated for change on a more public platform via Twitter and contributed their medical perspective to the conversation. On May 11, 2023, Dr. Worth and the DEI Council joined the countless contributors within the scientific, humanitarian and LGBTQIA+ communities in celebrating the FDA's newly issued recommendations regarding blood donor eligibility. The FDA now recommends applying individual risk assessment to all donors, including time-based deferrals and screening questions that were previously specific only to certain LGBTQIA+ groups. The new recommendations counteract decades of fear and misinformed caution in regards to HIV that have affected blood donor screening up until this point. It was a victory for humanity and serves as another stepping stone towards greater equity.



## RAISING AWARENESS FOR CANCER DETECTION AND RISK IN THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

An important topic of discussion and one that was presented recently to the Department of Surgery is improving patient care for transgender and nonconforming people. Yee Won Chong, a trans cancer survivor and TEDx Talk speaker among other attributes, addressed the Department this past May at Grand Rounds and presented an eye-opening account of his experience as a transmasculine patient diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer. He articulated the need for increased awareness of cancer risk and better communication for both providers and their transgender patients.

The takeaway for our providers was to acquire a good language toolkit to effectively communicate with their transgender or nonconforming people in order to appropriately screen for gender-specific cancers. Understanding the traumatic burden for some patients to disclose or speak about gendered organs is key and the importance of discussing cancer risk in a sensitive manner can be life-saving.

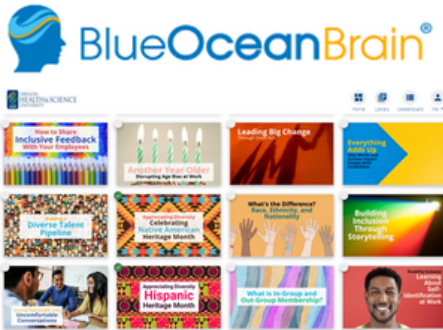


DIVERSITY  
EQUITY  
INCLUSION  
LGBTQIA+



## DEI RESOURCES FOR FACULTY AND TRAINEES:

### Blue Ocean Brain



### Memberships in Surgical Societies



### CDI Inclusive Language Guide

#### OHSU Inclusive Language Guide



<https://www.ohsu.edu/inclusive-language-guide>



# On The Cutting Edge



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