



UC San Diego

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology & Palliative Care Newsletter



Wishing everyone a wonderful holiday season and Happy New Year!



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Please consider donating to our mission! While we continue to make great strides, we are limited on what we can accomplish with existing funds. We encourage you to become involved with the UC San Diego Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology, and Palliative Care and join us in helping older adults live their best lives longer and improving care for individuals with serious illness. By supporting our efforts, you can ensure that our research, education programs, and clinical care keep pace with the needs of our community and remain strong.

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Spotlight: Lina Scandalis, PhD



What is your current profession/role?

I am a senior clinical research associate for the Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology, and Palliative care.

What initially inspired and motivated you to pursue a career in Geriatrics?

I became interested in Geriatrics later in my research career. I began as a Developmental Biologist looking at vertebrate limb development and regeneration, transitioned to development of hearing and hearing loss, and finally moved to age-related sensory deficits and aging. Currently my interests lie in aging and age-related diseases.

What parts of your work have been particularly inspiring or rewarding for you?

I've had the opportunity to work with some amazing students and trainees. Students who work with me in the lab and then leave inspired to discover and create is the most rewarding part of my job.

What is your go-to stress relief activity during a busy work week?

During these winter months, I like to challenge myself to regular ocean swims. Not only do cold water swims have profound health benefits, they also distract from any stress or anxiety that the work week might present.

If you had to choose a different profession, what would it be?

I would be an interior designer, or any profession that works to add visual elements and function to a space.

Announcing our 2025-56 Fellows

Geriatric Medicine Fellows 2025-26



Emily Venvertloh, DO was born and raised in San Diego. For her undergraduate career she moved to Pennsylvania where she attended Villanova University and received her bachelor's degree in Biology and concentration in Peace and Justice. She later moved back to Southern California for medical school where she attended Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, CA and trained at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center for her Internal Medicine residency. She developed an interest in geriatrics beginning in her undergraduate career and into residency where she cared for older adults in both the outpatient and inpatient setting. Her geriatric interests are varied including PACE programs and inpatient geriatric medicine. Outside of work, she enjoys hiking, cooking, and reading.



Will Fleming, MD grew up in a small suburb just outside New Orleans, Louisiana, where the city's rich and eclectic culture deeply shaped his perspectives. He earned a degree in Anthropology from Tulane University, where he later completed his medical degree. Dr. Fleming's interest in Geriatric Medicine stems from his desire to work with underserved populations while cherishing the vibrant stories and unique experiences of older adults. His career aspirations include integrating geriatric medicine into hospital-based care to improve care transitions and reduce inpatient risk factors. Outside of medicine, Dr. Fleming enjoys spending time with his wife and two-year-old as they eagerly await their next addition in early 2025. He also loves exploring San Diego's best coffee spots, running, hiking, and catching beach sunsets.



Julia Larson, MD was born and raised in Saint Louis, Missouri. She earned her bachelor's degree at Missouri State University and completed medical school at Saint Louis University. Looking for warmer weather, she moved to San Diego for her Internal Medicine residency at UC San Diego. Her journey to becoming a Geriatrician began with her grandfather, a World War II veteran, who inspired a special kind of admiration and respect for the older generations. Geriatrics has been sprinkled into her studies, from a college minor in Gerontology to research projects in medical school and residency. She is thrilled to continue her Geriatric education here at UC San Diego. Her free time is spent reading, running, and crafting. She is rarely found without multiple books and projects in progress.

UCSD/Scripps Health Hospice & Palliative Medicine Fellows 2025-26



April Butler, MD is a graduate of the University of Louisville School of Medicine and is currently a chief resident at UC San Diego, where she completed her residency in Internal Medicine/Pediatrics. Outside of work, she enjoys traveling, playing golf, and ice cream. "Keeping patient dignity and humanity at the center of care and forming

partnerships with patients and their families anchored me during my residency, and I want to continue to be a part of a field that provides personalized, patient-centered care. I am excited to become a part of a multidisciplinary team with the goal that embodies medicine to me: doing what is best for the patient.”



Errica Capossela, MD attended the Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine and completed a residency in Pediatrics at Cohen Children’s Medical Center at Northwell Health. She is currently a fellow in Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine at UC San Diego and Rady Children’s. Her hobbies include snowboarding, yoga, baking, and knitting. “I recognize now more than ever how we as a medical community need more physicians trained in palliative care, especially in pediatrics. To this day, functioning in a palliative care role is one of the few positions in which I have been struck with the sense that I am doing what I am supposed to be doing.”



Zachary Fica, MD earned an MD from the University of Utah and is currently a chief resident in Emergency Medicine at UC San Diego. He enjoys birding, triathlons, and games like Dungeons and Dragons. “As a physician, the most rewarding part of my job is when I can help people in their lowest and most vulnerable moments. Sometimes, that means using knowledge and technical skills to cure their disease or manage their symptoms. But most often, helping people means being a compassionate caretaker who is willing to listen, witness, and be present and honest. The opportunities I've had to help my patients in that way remind me why I chose healthcare and why I want to continue my training in Hospice and Palliative Medicine.”



Alban Holyoke, MD graduated from Wright State University School of Medicine and completed his residency in Emergency Medicine at Yale. He is currently an Emergency Physician in the Bay Area at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center and Kaiser Redwood City. His hobbies range from fly fishing to sailing to pinball. “I want to cultivate the skills to treat patients' symptoms, but also help them understand their own humanity and hopefully gain new understanding of my own human experience. It is an exciting time to be in medicine with advances in medications, devices and new technology, but medicine at its core is about people, suffering, and our humanity, and that is what I am seeking in palliative care.”



Sawyer Kieffer, MD completed his medical education at the University of Iowa and is currently an Internal Medicine resident at Thomas Jefferson University. Outside of work, he enjoys woodworking, rock climbing, and cycling. “Working with [patients with serious illness] made me realize that I am even more passionate about another side of medicine- the side that's not about curing and fixing and diagnosing and doing, the side that honors the true privilege of caring for another human by providing physical and psychological comfort during serious illness and the most vulnerable transition from life to death.”



Michael McEnany, MD attended Wake Forest University's School of Medicine and completed his residency training in Emergency Medicine at the University of New Mexico. He is currently an Emergency Medicine physician at Northern Inyo Hospital in Bishop, CA. His interests include connecting with the natural world and learning to play the fiddle. "The methods and goals of hospice and palliative care, to me, represent the core of medicine. Listening with patience, responding to vulnerability with compassion, addressing the origins and continuance of suffering, while openly and bravely discussing the existential nature and threat of illness are all aspects of medicine that I strive to embody."



Michelle Quan, MD graduated from UCLA's School of Medicine and completed her Internal Medicine residency at UC Davis, where she was a chief resident. She is currently the Medical Director of the Internal Medicine Pre-Operative Services at UC Davis. Outside of work, she enjoys pottery, graphic design, basketball, and baking. "I am pursuing a fellowship in palliative care because it offers the opportunity to provide comprehensive emotional and physical care. It allows me to continue advocating for patients, ensuring they receive the support and dignity they deserve as they navigate life's most challenging and uncertain moments."



Kim Winiker, MD earned his MD from the University of Massachusetts School of Medicine and is currently a chief resident at the University of Pittsburgh in Internal Medicine/Pediatrics. His hobbies include skiing, yoga and meditation, ultimate Frisbee, and travel. “In residency, I gravitated toward interactions with the sickest patients, learning about their hopes, passions, and fears, and using these connections to guide my clinical decision-making. I resolved to pursue a career in Palliative Medicine to continue providing care to this complex patient population. I have seen skillful and kind palliative physicians lead patients and families through harrowing circumstances to deeply meaningful outcomes.”

Welcome Drs. Emily Venvertloh, Will Fleming, Julia Larson, April Butler, Errica Capossela, Zachary Fica, Alban Holyoke, Sawyer Kieffer, Michael McEnany, Michelle Quan, and Kim Winiker!

What's Happening/Events

Aging Creatively in the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego

January 30th 2025
4pm
Museum of Contemporary Art

Please join us for this unique event presented in collaboration between the UC San Diego Stein Institute for Research on Aging and the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. This event will feature a thought-provoking panel discussion on the intersection of art, aging, and the museum experience, followed by a guided tour of the Museum and a reception.

The panelists include our own Dr. Khai Nguyen along with MCASD CEO Kathryn Kanjo. The panel will showcase the meaningful work being done by both organizations, supported by the Vitality Arts Program, to explore how art can engage, empower, and enrich the lives of older adults.

Aging Creatively in the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego



WHEN: JANUARY 30TH 2025
BEGINS AT 4:00PM

WHERE: MCASD
700 PROSPECT ST
LA JOLLA, CA 92037

Please join us for this unique event presented in collaboration between the UC San Diego Stein Institute for Research on Aging and the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. This event will feature a thought-provoking panel discussion on the intersection of art, aging, and the museum experience, followed by a tour of the Museum and a reception. The panel will showcase the meaningful work being done by both organizations, supported by the Vitality Arts Program, to explore how art can engage, empower, and enrich the lives of older adults.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

4 PM - 4:10 PM WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
4:10 PM - 5 PM PANEL CONVERSATION

PANELISTS:

KHAI NGYUEN MD, MHS CLINICAL SERVICES CHIEF, HEALTH SCIENCES – CLINICAL PROFESSOR, AND UCSD DIVISION OF GERIATRICS, GERONTOLOGY, & PALLIATIVE CARE

KATHRYN KANJO, THE DAVID C. COPLEY DIRECTOR AND CEO AT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART SAN DIEGO

MODERATOR:

DANIELLE GLORIOSO, LCSW

5 PM - 5:15 PM Q AND A
5:25 PM - 6 PM TOUR MCASD GALLERIES
6 PM REFRESHMENTS

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SAM AND ROSE STEIN INSTITUTE
FOR RESEARCH ON AGING

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Museum of
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San Diego

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Photos from our Division Holiday Party



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