

Graduation 2021

Department of Surgery
Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry
Western University



Dear graduates:

Although the pandemic has prevented us from coming together as a Department to celebrate this year, I hope you do not feel that in any way this diminishes the momentous occasion of your graduation from our subspecialty programs or the Master of Science in Surgery program. These are significant milestones and we are very proud to welcome you to our alumni family. Graduation marks the end of your formal educational journey with us, but also serves as a bridge to the next stage of your surgical or academic career. I wish for each of you fulfilment and joy in this passage, knowing that you will continue to have an impact on human health and wellbeing around the globe.

Sincerely,

Emil H. Schemitsch, MD, FRCSC, FCAHS

Richard Ivey Professor & Chair/Chief, Department of Surgery

Graduation List for June 2021

Division of Cardiac Surgery

Mohammed Tarabzoni

Division of General Surgery

Nathalie Carey

Robin Ralph-Edwards

Luke Hartford

Jennifer Koichopolos

Tanya Kuper

Division of Orthopaedic Surgery

Michael Ching

Mehul Garach

John Matheson

Nicholas Pasic

Division of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery

Kathleen Nelligan

Kitty Wu

Division of Thoracic Surgery

Jessica Coffey

Alexander Ednie

Division of Urology

Jeff Law

Samir Sami

Division of Vascular Surgery

Oonagh Scallan

Shane Smith

Master of Science in Surgery

Sejla Abdic

Renan Rodrigues-Fernandes

Mehdi Qiabi

Eric Walser

Cardiac Surgery

The Division of Cardiac Surgery would like to congratulate Dr. Mohammed Tarabzoni on his success in completing the residency training program. He and our entire group of residents have shown great resilience and dedication to their profession in this year of the pandemic!

~ Dr. ML Myers, Program Director



Congratulations to **Dr Mohammed Tarabzoni** who is completing his residency in Cardiac Surgery. Mo has come to us from Saudi Arabia along with his wife Basma Alyamany, who has completed her Fellowship in Neuropathology, and with their two children. Despite the challenges of adapting to the Canadian winter, Dr. Tarabzoni has developed into an excellent surgeon. He has been an enthusiastic, hard-working and highly respected member of our team, as well as a strong teacher and mentor to his junior colleagues. During his residency he also completed his Master's in Public Health at Western. Dr. Tarabzoni will be staying with the Division to do a Fellowship in complex aortic surgery with the ultimate plan to return as a consultant cardiac surgeon to King Fahad Medical Centre in Riyadh.

General Surgery

Congratulations to this year's General Surgery graduates: Dr. Nathalie Carey, Dr. Luke Hartford, Dr. Jennifer Koichopolos, Dr. Tanya Kuper, and Dr. Robin Ralph-Edwards. The COVID-19 pandemic has made what is normally a stressful year into an exceptionally challenging year. Yet, the commitment and perseverance demonstrated by our residents in spite of the constantly changing circumstances is exemplary.

~ *Dr. Michael Ott, Program Director*



Dr. Nathalie Carey completed both an HBSc and a Master's Degree at the University of Toronto, specializing in Pharmacology. Following her studies in Toronto, she joined the class of Meds 2016 at Western University for Medical School and also chose to stay in London for her General Surgery Residency. Dr. Carey will be pursuing a Pediatric Surgery Fellowship at McMaster University next year and we wish her all the best.



Dr. Luke Hartford completed his undergraduate studies at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and chose to complete his General Surgery Residency here at Western University. Dr. Hartford plans to gain some additional experience in ERCP and endoscopic ultrasound in London and Montreal prior to starting a career with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine at the Health Sciences North Hospital in Sudbury. Good luck Dr. Hartford!

General Surgery (cont'd)



Dr. Jennifer Koichopolos completed her undergraduate degree in Life Sciences at Queen's University and completed her Medical Degree and General Surgery Residency at Western University. Dr. Koichopolos will be finishing her Critical Care Fellowship at Western University next year and we wish her all the best.



Dr. Tanya Kuper completed an HBSc in Pathobiology at the University of Toronto and her Doctor of Medicine at Western University. During her General Surgery Residency at Western University she also completed a Master's of Science in Surgery and a Master's of Public Health in Epidemiology at Harvard. Dr. Kuper will be pursuing a Colorectal Surgery Fellowship at the University of Minnesota. Good luck Dr. Kuper!



Dr. Robin Ralph-Edwards obtained a Bachelor's degree in the Human Biology Specialist program at the University of Toronto and her Medical degree at Queen's University. She then moved to London to complete her General Surgery Residency at Western University. Dr. Ralph-Edwards will be heading to the University of Toronto to complete a Thoracic Surgery Fellowship and we wish her all the best.

Orthopaedic Surgery

This year has been particularly challenging for our Division and especially our residents. That challenge was especially stressful and difficult on our graduating residents who, in addition to having to worry about their future career and passing their exams, also had to consider the difficulties that they would face with the ever changing policies around the management of the pandemic. We are proud of our residents as well as our consultants in the division of orthopaedics for working together in the most collaborative and cooperative manner that one could hope for, in order to successfully graduate our residents with sufficient training and also to ensure that they had good short and long-term career plans ahead of them.”

~ *Dr. James Howard, Program Director*



Dr. Michael Ching is graduating from his residency in Orthopaedic Surgery this year. He will be completing 2 fellowships in the upcoming years, first in Trauma surgery followed by Arthroplasty in Toronto. His life goal is to find a job locally and ideally keep it for the next 20 years. When asked about his defining feature, he suggested that his ability to make steak would be the most outstanding defining feature. However, as a Division, we feel that his surgical skills are his most outstanding feature and that he has “excellent hands”.

During his residency, Dr. Ching was awarded the prestigious Harvey Bailey Award for Best Basic Science during his residency training. He believes that during residency, he was best known for his approach to teaching which was “seldom correct and never unsure”. And that his strongest trait is determination.

He will be missed by all in the Division and we wish him a wonderful and long career. His skills and knowledge will serve his patients well and he will be a big asset to any community he works in.

Orthopaedic Surgery (cont'd)



Dr. John Matheson will be graduating from his orthopaedic training this year. He is a dad of 2 young children and the husband to a supportive wife that has helped him keep life in perspective over the last 5 years. During his residency, John was awarded the James F. Allen Memorial Award for the resident who best demonstrated enthusiasm, excellence, and interest in community orthopaedics.

In the upcoming years he will be completing his fellowship in Shoulder Surgery at the Hand and Upper Limb Clinic. He hopes to settle into a full-time position performing upper limb surgery while working on innovative projects. His 10 year career plan is to continue working as a hand and upper limb surgeon with opportunities to provide teaching to his mentees. However, if that does not work out, he plans to be found at the base of any ski hill with a make-shift hut with a “bonesetter” sign at the top.

His fondest memories of residency are being referred to as “Dad” by some of his colleagues who themselves have not yet had the opportunity to be parents. And his strongest trait is his ability to be open minded and patient. He will be missed as a resident but we will be happy to keep him as a Fellow.



Dr. Mehul Garach will be graduating from orthopaedic surgery this year with plans to attend a lower limb reconstruction fellowship and trauma at St. Michael’s Hospital in Toronto. He identifies himself as being a husband, a photographer, a gamer, a car enthusiast and of course, an excellent physician.

During his residency, he was elected to the PARO general council as a PGY4 and represented his fellow residents well. His 5-year career plan is to begin a community practice in Southwestern Ontario focusing primarily on revision lower extremity arthroplasty and management of orthopaedic trauma.

Orthopaedic Surgery (cont'd)

His long-term plan is to continue to grow his practice and develop teaching as part of his practice, teaching medical students at peripheral sites as well as finding a way to balance his work and life and raise a wonderful family. During residency he was known as being a supportive senior resident and a peer who was always available to chat about work-related and general life issues. He feels that his strongest trait is his dependability. He will be missed at Western and we wish him great luck in his career moving forward.



Dr. Nick Pasic is graduating from his residency in orthopaedics. His plan is to pursue a Sports Medicine & Shoulder Surgery fellowship at Colorado University. In the short and long-term, he intends to pursue a job at an academic institution and hopefully also provide coverage for the sport teams at any institution that he works at. His intentions are also to have a very active research lab and practice and perhaps even create a joint orthopaedic/physiotherapy clinic with his spouse.

When asked what he was best known for during residency, he answered “my penchant for gambling on sporting events”. The consultants however, vouch for him that he was very responsible while doing this.

He believes his strongest trait is his sense of humour and intraoperative story telling. We could not find any other individuals who would vouch for this claim.

Nick was an excellent resident and a very good colleague to his co-residents. He will be missed by all in the Division. We wish him great luck moving forward in his career which is likely to be very fruitful as a Sports Medicine Orthopaedic specialist.

Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery

On behalf of the Division of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery, I would like to congratulate our graduating residents Dr. Kitty Wu and Dr. Kathleen Nelligan. It has been a tremendous final year due to the many challenges resulting from the pandemic. Our residents handled this unforeseen situation exceptionally well, and we are proud of the surgeons they have become and all they have achieved.

~ *Dr. Aaron Grant, Program Director*



Dr. Kitty Wu has been an absolute pleasure to train over the last five years, her hard work, dedication, and happy demeanor have been most appreciated. Dr. Wu has been very productive during her time with us and she has successfully completed her Masters of Surgery program, published multiple papers and has won numerous local and national research awards. She is continuing on to complete a fellowship in hand surgery and we wish her luck in all her future endeavors.



We have come to appreciate **Dr. Kathleen Nelligan** as a dedicated and driven individual who has blossomed into an excellent surgeon. She has been productive during her training and some of her accolades include successfully completing her Masters of Surgery program, conducting research on underserved patient populations and accepting leadership roles on provincial organizations. Kathleen is pursuing a fellowship in breast reconstruction and we wish her every success in the future.

Urology

We have two graduating residents this year, they lost the third musketeer to another program early on. Samir and Jeff are very different personalities but worked wonderfully as a team and complimented each other. They weathered the Covid storm with resilience and patience, dealing with constant scheduling changes while making sure they prepared for their exams. We will miss them and are very proud to see them mature and blossom over the residency and look forward to celebrating their future achievements.

~ *Dr. Sumit Dave, Program Director*



Dr. Jeffrey Law, fondly and appropriately known as Judge Law is the silent thinker kind, affable and always ready to take things on with a smile. He has been impressive as a team player, and received our Most Valuable Resident award, selected by his peers for 2020-21. Jeff besides completing residency successfully had another greater achievement through residency- the birth of his baby daughter, Emily, who is the apple of his eye. He has also finally achieved a 5/5 on his diaper-change EPA. He starts as a Staff Urologist in Stratford come July- we plan to send him a ton of work and he will increase our community footprint while providing opportunities for our residents as a community elective site.



Dr. Samir Sami is the smart, brooding and intense guy from Alberta, with a wry sense of humour. Samir needed a few coffees and a mega alarm to get going, but once on, he was a super performer and a dedicated resident. He did this while keeping a good work-life balance, maintaining his passion of sports and exercising. This did not help him achieve success at our annual summer barbecue faculty versus resident games, though he blames his teammates. Samir moves on to a competitive and clinically robust Endourology fellowship at St. Mike's Hospital Toronto, where he will break more stones, perform more robotic and laparoscopic surgery and be our advocate and friend.

Thoracic Surgery

The Division of Thoracic Surgery would like to congratulate our graduating resident, Dr. Alexander Ednie. Alexander is heading back to the east coast where he will practice as a Thoracic Surgeon in Halifax. We wish Alexander the best of luck in the next step of his career.

~ *Dr. Mehdi Qiabi, Program Director*



Dr. Alexander Ednie is a graduate from UBC medical school. He then went across the country to train in General Surgery at Dalhousie University. He successfully completed his Thoracic Surgery subspecialty training at Western University from 2019 to 2021.

During his time here in London, Alexander distinguished himself by his excellent bedside manner, his enthusiasm, his ability to create a pleasant working environment and his sense of humor. He is a skilled surgeon and a caring physician. The global pandemic led to some challenges that were overcome successfully by Alexander. He was able to support his wife, who was also doing a fellowship, and their son. Alexander's ability to multitask certainly was an asset. He was able to complete a research project and he wrote a manuscript. Alexander made it a priority to keep a sense of balance and to exercise regularly. He was seen as a model from the medical students, a teacher from the junior residents, a colleague from his consultants, and an empathic surgeon from his patients and the nurses working with him.

Vascular Surgery

The Division of Vascular Surgery is proud to have two graduates from our training program this year. We have enjoyed seeing both of them grow in different ways over the past few years and are excited to see what their futures hold. On a personal note as program director, I cannot think of two better people to graduate as I end my role on a “high note”!

~ *Dr. Adam Power, Program Director*



Dr. Oonagh Scallan joined our direct entry program after obtaining her MD from Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry. Over the past 5 years, she has evolved into an excellent academic vascular surgeon and we are very proud of her many accomplishments. Her vascular surgery abilities are matched only by her mothering abilities as she became the first resident in our program to have a child. Oonagh will be pursuing a Masters in Health Professions Education at Western starting in July while simultaneously becoming our first Bill Blair Aortic Fellow. Following this, we are hoping that we can convince her to join our division for her successful academic career.



Dr. Shane Smith joined our 5+2 program after becoming a General Surgeon through training completed here at Western. Demonstrating his commitment to the lifelong learning process, he previously obtained a BSc in Mathematics and Physics, BA in Philosophy, MSc in Biophysics and Physiology, MD from Dalhousie University, and finally a Family Medicine Residency at Queen’s University. He will be the first dual-trained General and Vascular Surgeon in the Canadian Armed Forces and we are very proud of his many accomplishments. We are very fortunate that Dr. Smith will be joining both the General and Vascular Surgery Divisions this July and are looking forward to his successful academic career!

MSc in Surgery

I am honoured to be provided with the opportunity to showcase the most recent graduates from the MSc in Surgery program at Western University. This year marked the eighth year of our program and with the completion by these four students we now have eighty-six graduates of the program. The four completing students this spring persevered and completed their research and thesis writing during the unprecedented past year of the pandemic. I am very proud of the accomplishments of all our students and would like to also extend a special thank you to the faculty and staff whose hard work contributes to the success of the program.

~ Dr. Abdel Lawendy, Graduate Chair



Dr. Sejla Abdic comes to us from Austria, where she completed her medical degree. She has been exceptionally productive during her time at Western. Her thesis on bone loss and implant reconstruction of the shoulder has resulted in two published papers. Dr. Abdic has aspirations to become an orthopedic surgeon, and we wish her the best.



We are extremely impressed with the high quality research that was **Dr. Renan Rodrigues-Fernandes'** thesis. He demonstrated great initiative, independence, critical thought, and an affinity for research. Congratulations on your impactful contributions to the Orthopedic literature.



Dr. Mehdi Qiabi obtained his MD at the Université de Montréal (Dean’s Honor list). He subsequently trained in General Surgery at the Université de Sherbrooke and completed a subspeciality in Thoracic Surgery at Western University. His MSc thesis focused on intrapleural administration of hypertonic glucose to treat air leak following lung resection surgery which was successfully performed despite the COVID global pandemic and did show promising results.”



Dr. Eric Walser’s thesis represents the greatest accounting in the literature to date of the non-educational and educational experiences of surgical residents in workplace based learning. His findings of educational value and/or lack of value of clinical experiences exposes gaps in clinical training programs that must be addressed in the CBME era. Awareness and action characterize self-directed learning in professional environments. And Eric’s approach to conducting his MSc Surgery thesis was a rewarding confirmation of what self-directed learning really looks like.

*“Learning is the only thing
the mind never exhausts,
never fears, and never
regrets.”*

- Leonardo da Vinci

*Congratulations to all our graduates!
We wish you great success in this
next chapter of your lives.*

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