NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

As we embark into this new year it has never been more apparent that change is in the air.

Our Department continues to be on the forefront of providing valuable tools to our physician partners in the community as we launch the Physician Resource Website. It is our goal to provide timely and valuable information to further grow our community relationships.

We continue to build relationships nationally by hosting speakers from around the country.

Recently we were privileged to hear talks from Glenn J.R. Whitman, MD of Johns Hopkins Cardiac Surgery; Kenneth H. Sartorelli, MD from the University of Vermont College of Medicine; Steven D. Schwatzberg, MD the Chairman of the Department of Surgery at the University at Buffalo School of Medicine; and Jason B. Fleming, MD of MD Anderson Cancer Center to name a few.

Growth is our biggest change agent as we are honored to add faculty from around the country. 2016 saw the addition of Elizabeth Kovacs, PhD as our Director of Burn Research; Mitchell J. Cohen, MD as our Director of Surgical Services at Denver Health Medical Center; Elizabeth Pomfret, MD, PhD as the Division Head of Transplant Surgery and James Pomposelli, MD, PhD also in Transplant Surgery along with many others.

Excellence in our work continues to be a priority as well. Our Lone Tree Breast Center was recognized as the UCHAlliance clinic with the highest patient satisfaction results. A number of our faculty were also recognized as top performers here on the Anschutz campus as well as at our satellite location in Colorado Springs.

Recognition was also given to Bradley Wallace, MD for being an Outstanding Researcher.

The University of Colorado provides a number of great opportunities for researchers to be on the leading edge. Dr. Frederic Deleyiannis’ laboratory is doing work in the area of vaping as it relates to surgery; while Dr. Elizabeth Kovacs' laboratory continues its work on the role of leukocytes and inflammatory mediators.

Change is inevitable and it’s what you do with it that matters. We use it as a catalyst for better things and look forward to what this year will bring as we strive for excellence.

It continues to be my privilege to share our successes and upcoming events with you. I hope you enjoy the newsletter that follows.

Richard D. Schulick, MD, MBA
The Aragón/Gonzalez-Giusti Chair Professor & Chair

Our clinical accomplishments continue to make headlines as well. Dr. Michael Gordon, a hand surgeon within the Department of Surgery, was able to provide a local climber the necessary surgery for an amazing comeback to eventually summit Everest.

In This Issue:

2 Physician Resource Website
3 Welcome New Faculty & Staff
4-5 Guest Lecturers
6 Guest Lecturers Continued
6 Lone Tree Breast Center
7 2016 Top Docs
8 Kovacs Laboratory
8 Vaping and Surgery
8 Honors, Awards, Accomplishments
9 Dr. Cohen Joins Denver Health
10 Drs. Pomfret & Pomposelli Join CU
10-11 Everest Summit after an Injury
12 Upcoming Events

www.cusurgery.com
NEW PHYSICIAN RESOURCE WEBSITE

The Department of Surgery and UC Health’s Physician Relations and Community Outreach program has partnered with BroadcastMed to develop Physician Resource (http://physicianresource.ucdenver.edu/), a physician education portal that is intended to serve as an educational resource to our referring physicians. The site will host a range of video and non-video content that may include surgical footage, grand rounds, CME, newsletters, and other resources that provide value to a physician audience.

An added value to our relationship with BroadcastMed is syndication of our content through the BroadcastMed Network (BroadcastMed.com) which offers a consortium of medically relevant content to physicians and positions us among some of the most prominent names in healthcare. BroadcastMed will continue to work with us to deepen the content on our site and to execute a marketing strategy in alignment with our goals that will drive a continuous flow of quality site traffic.

Our goal through the implementation of this platform is to deepen our relationships with potential referring physicians, grow our brand, and increase physician referrals. The site soft launched in August and to date hosts several Surgery Grand Rounds presentations and articles from select divisions within The Department of Surgery. We also just added our first online CME course for Pelvic Trauma that offers physicians the opportunity to obtain credit online: http://physicianresource.ucdenver.edu/specialties/cme-courses.

This publication is viewable online at: http://issuu.com/slangesurgery/docs/January_2017_dos_newsletter
Alan Hopeman’s career pattern differs from other cardiothoracic surgeons of equal professional prominence. For 23 years, he was a career Army Medical Officer but found the time, energy and discipline to combine his active duty assignments with the local academic surgical community.

Al was born and raised in Morehead, Minnesota. His father, a civil engineer, was of Dutch origin and his mother, an elementary school teacher, was of Northern European descent. His parents devoted their lives to the care of Al’s older disabled brother. In their unwritten book of behavior; parents took care of their children - no matter what.

In 1942, Al entered the University of Minnesota Medical School but was soon enlisted in the Army, he served as a Medical Service Officer training medical soldiers.

At each Army assignment, true to the academic tradition he had absorbed as a medical student from Drs. Owen Wangensteen and Clarence Dennis, Al sought close affiliation with local Medical School Departments of Surgery. Despite administrative duties as a Colonel, he maintained his clinical and operative responsibilities in Thoracic and later Cardiac Surgery. He accumulated clinical experience in this emerging specialty and was a founding member of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons. After military retirement he was Professor of Surgery at Missouri, Nebraska and Colorado. He took special interest in teaching students and residents and was awarded the Golden Apple Award by students at all three schools. Surgical Residents at Colorado named him the outstanding Clinical Faculty member in 1983 and 1991. In 2011 he was elected to the Colorado Pulmonary Hall of Fame.

Dr. Hopeman had three tours of duty at the Fitzsimons Army Hospital during his career and he and Dorothy decided to make Denver their home upon his retirement. In 1974 he was recruited as Chief of the Cardiothoracic Surgical Division at Denver General Hospital. In 1986 he retired as Emeritus Professor. He continued his role as a teacher and consultant to the Department of Surgery, serving in such capacities as a member of the Selection Committee for a Chairman. He attended Department Grand Rounds regularly. In late 2010 Al and Dorothy moved back to Minneapolis to be close to children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. In late June 2012, Dorothy passed away. Al continues to live in Minneapolis.

Dr. Hopeman continues to be an important influence on the cardiovascular teaching program, both as a role model and as a source of enormous clinical experience.

Dr. Glenn Whitman joined the Johns Hopkins Division of Cardiac Surgery in 2009 as Associate Professor of Surgery. His training began at the University of Pennsylvania where he was a resident in surgery from 1979-1984. At that time he followed Dr. Alden Harken to the University of Colorado where he finished his general surgery training and then completed his training as a cardiothoracic surgeon. Thereafter, Dr. Whitman became an Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado and Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the Denver Veteran’s Administration Hospital where he was a resident in surgery from 1979-1984. At that time he followed Dr. Alden Harken to the University of Pennsylvania where he was a resident in surgery from 1979-1984. In 1990 he returned to his home city of Philadelphia where he became the Chief of Cardiac Surgery at the Medical College of Pennsylvania formerly Women’s Medical College, the first medical school in the United States to accept women. Dr. Whitman remained at the Medical College of Pennsylvania for eight years before moving to the University of Maryland as the Chief of Cardiac Surgery. Unfortunately, in the year 2000, he had to withdraw from the active practice of Cardiothoracic Surgery due to arthritis. Since that time Dr. Whitman has had a variety of roles in health care.

He has served as the Director of Transplantation and UNOS Representative at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia, as well as its Director of Perioperative Services, managing preadmission testing, the operating room, and the post anesthesia care unit. In 2007 he left Temple for Thomas Jefferson Hospital to join Dr. Charles Yeo, taking over the responsibilities of running the Cardiac Surgery Intensive Care Unit. In the summer of 2009, he was recruited by Dr. Duke Cameron to return to Baltimore to run the Cardiac Surgery Intensive Care Unit and oversee the Performance Improvement/Quality Assurance program for Cardiac Surgery at Johns Hopkins.

Dr. Whitman’s initial research interests were in Cardiac Ischemia Reperfusion Injury and P31 Nuclear Magnetic Resonance of Cardiac Bioenergetics, for which he received both NIH and Veterans Administration funding. He has since become involved with quality outcomes and has presented both at the American College of Surgeons as well as the Society of Thoracic Surgery regarding the difficulties associated with Performance Improvement and Quality Assurance in the field of health care, and in particular, in the Intensive Care Unit.
2016 JOHN R. LILLY LECTURESHIP IN
PEDIATRIC SURGERY

Dr. Lilly’s focus of clinical and research work was in the liver diseases of infants and children. In 1972, he pioneered the operation to correct the formerly fatal disease of biliary atresia. Never having previously been performed in the United States, this operation has now become the treatment of choice for biliary atresia. An inspirational and charismatic teacher, Dr. Lilly was renowned for his “fireside” teaching rounds during which the residents were expected to know the names of all 7 dwarfs and the characters of Alice in Wonderland equally as well as they knew the anatomy and physiology of the human body. Dr. Lilly was a renowned educator, skilled and talented surgeon.

This lectureship was established and named as a memorial to Dr. John R. Lilly.

John R. Lilly, M.D. was born on May 23rd, 1929 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he grew up. Dr. Lilly obtained his doctor of medicine degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1954. He completed internship at Queen’s Hospital, Honolulu, Hawaii and surgical residency at the University of California Hospital, San Francisco, California. Following a postgraduate fellowship in pediatric surgery at the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children’s Hospital in London, he became the first pediatric surgery resident to train at Children’s Hospital of the District of Columbia under Jud Randolph, MD. He completed a fellowship in transplantation with Dr. Thomas Starzl, at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in 1970 and was recruited by Dr. Starzl in 1972, to become Chief of Pediatric Surgery at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, a position he held until his death in 1995.

GUEST SPEAKER - LILLY LECTURESHIP
KENNETH H. SARTORELLI, MD

Dr. Sartorelli was born and raised in Barre, Vermont. He earned a degree in Zoology from the University of Vermont (UVM) and subsequently obtained his medical degree from the University of Vermont College of Medicine. Dr. Sartorelli completed his surgical residency, including a year as a surgical research fellow, at the Medical Center Hospital of Vermont (now the University of Vermont Medical Center) in 1993. Next he came west to Colorado and completed his pediatric surgical residency at Denver Children’s Hospital in 1995. After completion of his pediatric surgical training Dr. Sartorelli returned to Vermont and joined the faculty at the UVM College of Medicine, where he is a Professor of Surgery and Pediatrics. He also serves as Division Chief of Pediatric Surgery and Surgeon-in-Chief of the Vermont Children’s Hospital.

Dr. Sartorelli’s professional and research interests have been in the areas of pediatric and adult trauma. He has served on a number of hospital and university committees and is involved in regional and national surgical organizations, especially related to trauma, specifically pediatric trauma.

Dr. Sartorelli has won 3 teaching awards, has 42 peer reviewed publications and has written 8 book chapters. He also serves as the Chair of the ACS Committee on Trauma (Pediatric Surgery Subspecialty Committee).

Dr. Sartorelli is forever grateful to Drs. Lilly and Karrer for affording him the opportunity to train in pediatric surgery and is extremely honored and humbled to deliver the John R. Lilly Memorial Lectureship at Children’s Hospital of Colorado.
VISITING PROFESSOR

JASON B. FLEMING, MD, FACS

The Department of Surgery was pleased to host Jason B. Fleming, MD, FACS. Dr. Fleming is a pancreatic surgeon at MD Anderson and serves as director of the tissue acquisition and biorepository core for the Pancreas Cancer Research Program at MD Anderson. Dr. Fleming initiated and developed the first direct xenograft program in GI cancer at MD Anderson. These are derived from human pancreatic adenocarcinomas that Dr. Fleming and his surgical colleagues surgically remove from patients at MD Anderson. Direct xenografts recapitulate the tumor microenvironment and provide a unique platform to examine pancreatic adenocarcinoma.

We greatly enjoyed his presentation on the Advances in Pancreatic Surgery and look forward to his future work in this area.

LONE TREE BREAST CENTER

GALLOPS TO GREATNESS

Lone Tree Breast Center was recently honored with the Galloping to Greatness Award from UCHealth. The award is given to the UCHealth clinic with the highest results for patient satisfaction over the past year on both the Anschutz and Lone Tree Campuses of UCHealth. “Since we opened our doors two and a half years ago, we have always had 100% commitment to exceptional patient care. We carefully built our Lone Tree team of people dedicated to that concept, and this award is proof that we have been successful. I am thrilled this team is getting institutional recognition for their dedication and I am proud to work with them every day,” said Colleen Murphy, MD, the medical director of Lone Tree Breast Center.

Receiving care at Lone Tree Breast Center offers you access to University of Colorado Cancer Center, the only Comprehensive Cancer Center in the state designated by the National Cancer Institute (NCI), and one of just 45 in the country.

As part of the comprehensive Breast Center, physicians participate in weekly multidisciplinary conferences and tumor boards to ensure patients receive the most comprehensive care possible.

JOHN H. AND CYNTHIA H. SCHULTZ LECTURESHIP GUEST - STEVEN D. SCHWAITZBERG, MD, FACS

Steven D. Schwatzberg, MD, FACS is Chairman of the Department of Surgery at the University at Buffalo School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences and Professor of Surgery and Bioinformatics. Dr. Schwatzberg also serves as the Medical Director, Surgical Program Development, at Great Lakes Health.

A graduate of Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Schwatzberg received his MD from Baylor College of Medicine and a MA (hon) from Harvard in 2014. He completed his surgical residency (1981-86) at Baylor Affiliated Hospitals and fellowships in infectious disease (1980-81) at the Methodist Hospital and in pediatric trauma (1986-87) at the Pediatric Trauma Institute, Floating Hospital for Children.

Dr. Schwatzberg is an internationally recognized physician-investigator whose research is focused in five areas: device development; prevention of intra-abdominal adhesions; skill acquisition in minimally invasive surgery; clinical evaluation of antibiotics; and clinical outcomes. His seminal research on the effects of microwaves in blood warming led to practical device application and federal approval. He translated his basic laboratory work with an anti-adhesion device to the pivotal clinical trial supporting its use in patients. He has made important contributions in both the preclinical and clinical areas in the development of surgical robots. His numerous research projects have been funded by the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and industry. He is currently the Principle Investigator on two grants looking at outcomes in biliary tract surgery and a national prospective clinical trial of “natural orifice” versus conventional laparoscopic cholecystectomy.

Dr. Schwatzberg has won numerous awards including the ACS 2010 Health Policy Scholar award, Computerworld/National Smithsonian Honors 21st Century Laureate Achievement award (2003), and many awards for teaching excellence. Gastrointestinal Endoscopic.

This publication is viewable online at: http://issuu.com/slangesurgery/docs/January_2017_dos_newsletter
Lone Tree Breast Center provides comprehensive services for breast health. Our Breast Center is one of the few places in Colorado to offer the new 3D mammography using Hologic Genius 3D Breast Tomosynthesis technology. This state-of-the-art technology uses multiple low-dose images at multiple angles to produce a series of one millimeter slices that create a 3D reconstruction of the breast, providing increased visualization for the detection of breast cancer and greatly reducing the need for additional imaging.

The Lone Tree Breast Center team is a fully integrated extension of the University of Colorado Cancer Center and the Diane O’Connor Thompson Breast Center.
SPOTLIGHT ON KOVACS LABORATORY

Trauma Acute Care Surgery is pleased to announce the arrival of Elizabeth Kovacs, PhD, the Director of Burn Research in the Department of Surgery at the University of Colorado Denver.

Dr. Kovacs attended Reed College before earning her PhD in Cell Biology at the University of Vermont. She completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Immunoregulation, Biological Response Modifiers Program at the National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health and an Executive Leadership Fellowship in Academic Medicine (ELAM) Program for Women at Drexel University.

For more than two decades, her laboratory has been studying models of tissue injury and repair with a focus on the role of leukocytes and inflammatory mediators. She has also worked with leukocyte subsets isolated from the blood and lung of burn patients with inhalation injury, smokers, drinkers and lung transplant recipients, as well as the blood, lungs, liver, intestine and skin obtained from mice subjected to injury. Much of her recent work revolves around immune and inflammatory responses in the context of healthy aging and the effects of injury or infection in the aged. Further, she has been studying the combined insult of binge alcohol intoxication and injury, exploring the role of leukocyte subsets, fibroblasts, and endothelial and epithelial cells in end-organ damage. The laboratory is actively examining both mechanisms of action and therapeutic interventions designed to manipulate the inflammatory milieu and restore normal tissue architecture.

Dr. Kovacs has mentored more than 100 trainees in her laboratory ranging from high school students to visiting professors. The majority of trainees have been graduate students in the PhD and MD/PhD tracks and PhD postdoctoral fellows, along with a handful of surgical residents.

We look forward to her continued work here in the Department of Surgery.

VAPING AND SURGERY: WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

The health hazards of smoking have been documented for decades, but research on “vaping,” the smoking of electronic cigarettes, is still in its infancy.

Proponents of vaping claim that e-cigarettes are much safer than conventional cigarettes since they deliver nicotine without burning tobacco. (In regular cigarettes, the burning process releases thousands of additional chemicals that are inhaled into the smoker’s lungs along with the nicotine.) Skeptics point out that the flavored liquids used in e-cigarettes contain their own chemical compounds which are largely unregulated and have unknown health effects—not to mention the known negative effects of nicotine. Currently, there is not enough research on vaping to answer this debate definitively.

For patients who need to undergo surgery, questions about the relative risks of smoking and vaping can be particularly important. Nicotine and carbon monoxide, both of which are inhaled in cigarette smoke, hamper the body’s ability to heal from wounds, including surgical incisions. The link between smoking and poor surgical outcomes is well established: smokers have more complications with anesthesia, more complications after surgery, and slower healing than nonsmokers. For surgical patients who have trouble quitting, even a few days’ abstinence from cigarettes before and after surgery can greatly increase their body’s resilience and ability to heal.

But what about vaping? Is smoking electronic cigarettes before and after surgery just as bad as smoking regular cigarettes? Half as bad? Or hardly harmful at all? Could vaping be a good substitute for surgical patients who are have trouble abstaining from regular cigarettes before and after their procedure?

Dr. Frederic Deleyiannis, a surgeon in our Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, wanted to answer these question with experimental evidence. The results he found were dramatic.
DENVER HEALTH AND CU WELCOMES DR. MITCHELL J. COHEN

Dr. Mitchell Jay Cohen has joined the Denver Health Medical Center as the Director of Surgery and is also a professor in the Department of Surgery at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

Cohen was most recently a professor of surgery in residence at the University of California-San Francisco and San Francisco General Hospital, where he also served as the associate trauma medical director and director of trauma research.

At Denver Health, Cohen will provide overall leadership to the department of surgery and will be responsible for strategic planning, clinical services and professional and business performance. He will provide oversight to the department that houses Denver Health’s regional American College of Surgeons verified Level 1 Trauma Center.

At CU, Cohen will have research space on the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and the Denver Health campus. His clinical work will be based at Denver Health.

Cohen received his medical degree from the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York in 1997 and did his surgical residency at Rush University in Chicago and a research fellowship at Loyola University Medical Center. He moved to the University of California-San Francisco’s Department of Surgery for a fellowship in trauma and critical care.

Cohen assumed his roles at Denver Health and the University on Aug. 15, 2016.

Denver Health had lost its chief of surgery in a wave of departures of top doctors that began last year and continued into 2016, raising questions about leadership at the venerable Denver institution. In March, Arthur Gonzalez, CEO of Denver Health for the past four years, announced his retirement effective June 30.

Dr. Bill Burman, president of Denver Health’s staff, has been named interim CEO while the board of directors conducts a national search for a chief executive.

HONORS : AWARDS : ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Congratulations 2017 UCH Medical Staff Award Winners

Randall Meacham, MD
President’s Award for Leadership

Cheryl Meguid, DNP
Full-Time Allied/Associate Staff Clinician of the Year

Anne Wagner, MD
Extraordinary Service

Congratulations 2016 El Paso County Medical Society Outstanding Physician Award Winners Colorado Springs

Tiffany Willard, MD
Leadership Award

Keyan Riley
Clinical In-Patient Award

Bradley Wallace, who is working with Dr. Steve Abman in the Pediatric Heart Lung Center laboratory, received the Outstanding Research Award at the Young Investigators Forum on Neonatal Cardiopulmonary Biology recently held in Chicago. It was especially exciting because he was at the earliest stage in his career compared to other investigators in the group. Bradley did an outstanding job. Congratulations on this great accomplishment.

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Dr. Elizabeth Pomfret and Dr. James Pomposelli. Photo by Matthew Kaskavitch, University of Colorado Hospital Communications

TRANSPLANT DIVISION WELCOMES WIFE-HUSBAND TEAM TO FACULTY

The Division of Transplant Surgery is pleased to introduce two new faculty members.

Elizabeth Pomfret, MD, PhD, is our new Division Chief. An internationally recognized leader in living-donor liver transplantation, Dr. Pomfret comes to us from the Boston area, where she served as Chair of the Department of Transplantation and Hepatobiliary Surgery at Lahey Hospital and Medical Center.

The Division is also proud to welcome Dr. Pomfret’s husband, James Pomposelli, MD, PhD, to our faculty. With deep experience in multi-organ transplant, Dr. Pomposelli has particular clinical expertise and research interest in the liver.

In bringing this accomplished couple from Massachusetts to Colorado, the CU Department of Surgery has gained the two most experienced living-donor transplant surgeons in the United States. Between the two of them, Drs. Pomfret and Pomposelli have performed nearly 300 living-donor organ transplants (and counting).

More than 40 years ago, the first-ever liver transplant in the world was performed at UCH by Dr. Thomas Starzl. Today, the UCH Transplant Center has grown to be the largest and most comprehensive center in the Rocky Mountain region.

Since then, UCH has performed over 1,800 overall adult liver transplants, and over 2,000 kidney transplants.

“The University of Colorado School of Medicine is seen as a national leader, providing expert and innovative care for patients, and we’re proud to be able to recruit some of the very best surgeons to join our team,” said Dr. Richard Schulick, chair of the CU School of Medicine Department of Surgery.

More than 2,500 Coloradans are currently waiting for a lifesaving transplant. Register to be an organ, eye and tissue donor at the Driver’s License Office or online anytime at DonateLifeColorado.org.

AN EVEREST SUMMIT AFTER AN INJURY ORDEAL

By: Tyler Smith, UCH

One day in June 2013, Michael Gordon, MD, a hand surgeon at University of Colorado Hospital, was called to the Emergency Department. There he met a 28-year-old woman named Kim Hess who had badly broken her wrist and hand.

The circumstance of the injury was unusual. Hess, from Steamboat Springs, had sustained the break on her descent from the summit of Denali (elevation 20,310 feet) in Alaska. Gordon was contemplating what promised to be a complicated surgery to repair three broken bones when Hess made a startling statement. Gordon needed to make her hand perfect, she said. She was going to climb Mount Everest next year.

“She saw the injury as a bump in the road,” Gordon recalled. He anticipated a far more formidable challenge. “I didn’t see climbing Everest as a likely scenario; certainly not in that time frame.”

Not quite three years later, Kim Hess toiled toward Everest’s 29,029-foot summit. Behind her lay tens of thousands of feet of forbidding terrain she had traversed through thinning air. She had reached that point after a long struggle to overcome other barriers—those imposed by her injury. They were in their own way just as daunting as the ice, snow, wind and rocks of Everest.

And just as she and her fellow climbers relied on one another in their bid to conquer Everest, Hess had needed the help of Gordon and other providers to vanquish the physical limitations caused by the Denali debacle.

That mishap threatened to derail what had been a dream of Hess’s for a good portion of her life: to reach each of the seven summits, the highest peaks on each continent. She had conquered her fourth, Denali, on June 23, 2013 and was the lead in descending with a fixed line—a rope nailed into the side of the mountain. It was snowing as the team attempted to navigate a challenging bulge in the rock. A crevasse lay beneath them.

As Hess put her foot in a kicked-in step for leverage to get around the bulge, it broke away. Weighted down by an 80-pound pack, she lost her balance and fell. The rope wrapped around her left arm and snapped her wrist. She found herself lying across the crevasse, her hand grotesquely twisted. She yelled for help, bringing a team member who made a splint for her hand and began helping

Kim Hess completed her comeback from an injury on Denali by summiting Mount Everest on May 21, 2016. (Photo courtesy Kim Hess)

This publication is viewable online at: http://issuu.com/slangesurgery/docs/January_2017_dos_newsletter
A helicopter went into survival mode,” she said. “We need to set this thing better,” she told her team member. They did, he holding her fingers and she pulling her elbow back to reset the splint with her hand at least in the right position. She felt blood flowing back to her fingers. They got down to camp at about 14,000 feet, and Hess spent the next two days waiting for a helicopter to get her off the mountain.

The pain was excruciating, untouched by Tylenol, the only medication available. She endured. “Shock is a beautiful thing that your body can do. I went into survival mode,” she said.

A helicopter finally airlifted Hess to a hospital in Anchorage, where a specialist unsurprisingly told her she’d needed surgery three days ago. “I’ve been stuck on a mountain,” she told him.

Unwilling to stay in Anchorage for two or three weeks post-surgery, Hess caught a red-eye flight to Denver, where her parents live. Her mother contacted a family friend, Patricia Schulof, then a social worker at UCH. Schulof helped to arrange for Hess to get to the hospital’s ED soon after she landed at DIA.

Gordon arrived and hastily arranged what turned out to be a surgery lasting six-and-a-half hours. Hess had broken both of the left radius and ulna bones, which lie on the thumb and pinky side of the forearm, respectively. She had also fractured the fourth metacarpal, the bone of the ring finger. Gordon inserted plates, pins and screws to set the breaks. Two months later, he performed a second surgery to remove the pins. By that time, Hess was no longer denying the severity of her injury. She had met some of the world’s great physical challenges, largely on the strength of her will and endurance, but now her hand injury humbled her. Bone breaks were nothing new. She had had 26 of them before the Denali injury. But she wasn’t prepared for the indignity of having to ask her dad to help her put on a shoe on and tie the laces, relying on her roommate to open a jar, or asking a friend to braid her hair to get it out of her face. On top of that, Hess had climbed Denali with a broken foot. She couldn’t drive a car or walk on crutches. She was on combinations of drugs to control her pain.

In June 2014, a year after the accident, Gordon removed the plates in the radius and ulna bones and did a carpal tunnel release to relieve numbness in her hand. Hess’s dream of attempting an Everest ascent that year was long gone. Gordon all along had told her that recovery from such a serious injury was going to take a long time, but she hadn’t been prepared for the glacially slow pace.

“It was a year of feeling like I was being beaten down over and over,” she said. “I felt like the dream was over, that I wouldn’t see Everest. I went to a dark place.”

Hess had returned to Steamboat Springs to go through physical and occupational therapy at Yampa Valley Medical Center shortly after Gordon removed the pins in late August 2013. Emily Van Wieren, MS OTR/L, CHT, a certified hand therapist at Yampa Valley, recalled that Hess had extremely limited range of motion in her fingers and wrist. She couldn’t rotate her hand from the palm down to the palm up position. Van Wieren said she began therapy with tiny steps, moving Hess’s wrist only slightly.

“We did only as much as the wrist would allow,” Van Wieren said. “We didn’t force the bones and muscles to move.”

Hess initially felt crushed by her struggles with seemingly simple tasks: touching each finger of her left hand to her thumb and squeezing putty. When Van Wieren asked her to pick up sponges and put them in a basket, she got a jolt.

“I looked at this woman and said, ‘Are you serious right now? My brain’s not broken. I just broke my arm and hand,’” Hess recalled. Then she tried to pick up the sponges. She realized she couldn’t. She started crying… .

Hess’s repaired wrist stood the physical test during the Everest ascent last spring. She’s in the middle, clutching the rope, in this photo.
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| February 6, 2017 | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Preparing for the ACGME Surgery  
Mark Nehrer, MD  
Professor, Vascular Surgery  
University of Colorado Hospital  
Translational Approaches to Acute Traumatic Coagulopathy  
Mitch Cohen, MD  
Professor, GITES  
Denver Health Medical Center |
| February 13, 2017 | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | SIMPL Procedural Learning & Evaluation Application Training  
Brian George, MD  
Executive Director  
Procedural Learning and Safety Collaborative  
Yanik Bababekov, MD, MPH  
Marshall K. Bartlett Surgical Research Fellow  
Massachusetts General Hospital |
| February 20, 2017 | No Conferences                                         |             | Holiday  
President’s Day |
| February 27, 2017 | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Biliary Atresia: Past, Present & Future  
Jonathan Roach, MD  
Assistant Prof., Pediatric Surgery  
Children's Hospital Colorado  
Management of Acute Limb Ischemia  
John Eun, MD  
Assistant Prof., Vascular Surgery  
VA Eastern Colorado Health |
| March 6, 2017   | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Developing ERAS Pediatrics  
Duncan Wilcox, MD  
Professor, Urology  
Children’s Hospital Colorado  
Surgical Treatment of Diverticulitis  
Michelle Cowan, MD  
Assistant Prof., GITES  
University of Colorado Hospital |
| March 13, 2017  | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Bile Duct Injury  
Kendra Conzen, MD  
Assistant Professor, Transplant  
University of Colorado Hospital  
Controversies in the Management of Colorectal Liver Metastasis  
Ana Gleisner, MD, PhD  
Assistant Professor, GITES  
University of Colorado Hospital |
| March 20, 2017  | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Title to be Announced  
J. Christian Winters, MD  
Vice Chancellor for Clinical Affairs  
Chairman, Department of Urology  
Louisiana State University Healthcare Network |
| March 27, 2017  | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Creating a QI Curriculum for Residents  
Ashley Yavra, MD  
Assistant Prof., Vascular Surgery  
University of Colorado Hospital  
The Riddle of Sphincters  
Alberto Pena, MD  
Professor, Pediatric Surgery  
Children’s Hospital Colorado |
| April 3, 2017   | Henry Swan Visiting Professorship                      | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Title to be Announced  
K. Craig Kent, MD  
Dean’s Chair in Medicine  
The Ohio State University College of Medicine |
| April 10, 2017  | Pomerantz Lectureship                                 | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Title to be Announced  
Nasser K. Altorki, MB, B.Ch  
Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery  
Weill Cornell Medical College |
| April 17, 2017  | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Surgical Management of Early Stage Lung Cancer  
Michael Weyant, MD  
Assoc. Prof., CT Surgery  
University of Colorado Hospital  
Controversies in Breast Imaging  
Kshama Jaiswal, MD  
Assistant Prof., GITES  
Denver Health Medical Center |
| April 24, 2017  | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Using the Leg for Spare Parts  
Frederic Deleyiannis, MD, MPH  
Professor, Plastic & Recons. Surgery  
Children’s Hospital Colorado  
Mechanical Support for the Failing Pediatric Heart  
Max Mitchell, MD, PhD  
Professor, Cardiothoracic Surgery  
Children’s Hospital Colorado |
| May 1, 2017     | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Teaching Across the Generations  
Jennifer Bruny, MD  
Assoc. Prof., Pediatric Surgery  
Children’s Hospital Colorado  
Mechanical Circulatory Support 2017  
Joseph Cleveland, MD, PhD  
Professor, Cardiothoracic Surgery  
University of Colorado Hospital |
| May 8, 2017     | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Coalition for Quality Geriatric Surgery  
Thomas Robinson, MD  
Professor, GITES  
VA Eastern Colorado Health  
Liver Transplantation for Hepatocellular Carcinoma  
Elizabeth Pomerfet, MD, PhD  
Professor, Transplant  
University of Colorado Hospital |
| May 15, 2017    | H. James Fox Visiting Professorship                    | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Title to be Announced  
Charles M. Balch, MD  
Professor of Surgery  
University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center |
| May 22, 2017    | Grand Rounds                                           | 6:30 am - 8:00 am | Have We Advanced Beyond Supportive Care in Patients with Frostbite?  
Anne Wagner, MD  
Associate Professor, GITES  
University of Colorado Hospital  
Controversies in the Management of Bladder Cancer  
Shandra Wilson, MD  
Associate Professor, Urology  
University of Colorado Hospital |