



# THE FELLOWSHIP

The Newsletter of the FOUNDATION for SURGICAL FELLOWSHIPS



Winter 2013

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## FSF Board Member Highlight: From Generation to Generation

Tom Dent, MD



Dr. Tom Dent

Dr. Thomas L. Dent has devoted his entire career to teaching and mentoring the next generation of medical students and surgical trainees. Consequently, sitting on the founding board of The Foundation for Surgical Fellowships (FSF) was a logical next step for him. Participating in our mission to fund future generations of surgeons was a natural fit. He believed strongly in the inevitability and crucial importance of an organization whose primary goal would be to fund high-quality fellowships, unencumbered by conflict of interest issues.

Dr. Dent says: "Due to all of the new IRS rules, corporations are not permitted to directly fund these vital programs that are greatly needed to train the next generation of caregivers. The FSF helps to alleviate this problem."

Dr. Dent was on the faculty of the University of Michigan Medical School from 1969 to 1984. From 1984 to 2001, he was director of the surgical residency program and chair of the department of surgery at Abington (PA) Memorial Hospital and professor of surgery at Temple University School of Medicine.

Dr. Dent retired from clinical practice in 2001 and relocated to Santa Barbara, CA. He has published and lectured extensively on a variety of subjects including surgical education, gastrointestinal surgery and endoscopic techniques. He is a founding member and past president of the Society of American Gastrointestinal Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES) and was also president of the Frederick A. Collier Surgical Society, the Philadelphia Academy of Surgery and the Association of Program Directors in Surgery. He served on the ACGME Residency Review Committee for Surgery from 1993-1999.

Because of his lifelong commitment to the education of surgical trainees, especially in the field of gastrointestinal surgery, Dr. Dent enthusiastically accepted an invitation to join the board of the Foundation for Surgical Fellowships. It afforded him a golden opportunity to use his clinical and teaching experience to help recommend the appropriate funding for deserving fellowship programs.

Dr. Dent fondly remembers his association with the FSF Board: "I was happy to be part of the initial formulation of measurements of quality that were used to rank the programs and then fund them appropriately. This, to me, is the ideal relationship between medical industry and surgical education. In the future, as funding for surgical education becomes more difficult to obtain from the government, private industry will have to participate like this more and more. Everyone benefits: industry, surgical training programs, individual trainees and, most importantly, future patients who will have better-trained surgeons providing their care"

As Dr. Dent steps down from the FSF Board of Directors, we look back and reflect with profound gratitude. The Foundation has grown and prospered, due in no small part to his diligent efforts and passionate dedication to our cause.

Dr. Dent will always be part of this organization, his contributions resonating now and into the future. From the FSF Board and Staff, Fellows and Program Directors, we deeply thank him for his enthusiastic service over the last three years. He has played a significant role in helping to build and grow the Foundation so that it might continue to support generations of highly skilled surgeons that will follow in his footsteps.

**“Dr. Dent will always be part of this organization, his contributions resonating now and into the future.”**

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**Help us turn today's innovation into tomorrow's life-saving patient care by donating so we can keep training Fellows!**

For more information on giving to the Foundation, contact Colleen Elkins at 310.424.3332, ext. 114 or email info@surgicalfellowships.org.

## FSF Fellows Leading the Way

### Q&A with Matthew Y.C. Lin, MD



Dr. Mathew Lin

On December 5, 2012, Matthew Y.C. Lin, M.D., now a faculty member at UCSF in the Department of Surgery, Division of General Surgery, sat down for a Q&A session where he discussed his experiences as an MIS/Bariatric surgical fellow at UCSF and its impact on his career.

#### **What initially attracted you to the Fellowship in Minimally Invasive & Bariatric Surgery at UCSF?**

I wanted to augment my general surgery residency with advanced training in minimally invasive surgery techniques. The MIS and Bariatric Fellowship, supported by a grant from the Foundation for Surgical Fellowships (FSF), offered an immersive didactic experience in advanced laparoscopic procedures and the opportunity to operate alongside outstanding surgeons at UCSF. It also afforded teaching opportunities and the promise of doing cutting-edge clinical research in laparoscopic surgical techniques.

#### **What was the most significant research you conducted as a surgical fellow?**

I was lead author on a pilot study of 26 morbidly obese patients awaiting a kidney or liver transplant. These patients underwent laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy, a minimally invasive procedure that removes most of the stomach and reshapes it into a small tube or sleeve. According to our data, the procedure significantly improved their chances of undergoing successful organ transplantation. When we announced our findings at the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery in June, the story was picked up by ABC News and received extensive coverage.

#### **How would you describe your clinical experience and level of responsibility?**

I gained critical exposure to the most advanced techniques in laparoscopic surgery and received training on the latest state-of-the-art surgical instruments. I was mentored by expert faculty in the UCSF Department of Surgery, operating alongside them in a wide variety of complex procedures including esophagectomies, gastrectomies, bariatric surgery and advanced endoscopies. As an attending surgeon with clinical instructor status, I had a high level of autonomy and was able to follow my own patients.

#### **Could you describe your experience in teaching?**

I played an active role in the education of surgical residents and medical students. I took residents through cases and served as an instructor to community surgeons in advanced laparoscopic surgical techniques. I also participated along with UCSF surgical faculty in mentoring international surgeons. I immensely enjoyed those experiences. The FSF fellowship served as a bridge from residency to academic surgery. The fellowship was an outstanding opportunity to both give and receive. I was mentored by faculty and then allowed to impart that wisdom to others.

#### **How did the FSF fellowship prepare you for your future career as a surgeon?**

Your marketability as a surgeon is greatly enhanced when you gain advanced laparoscopic experience – and especially at UCSF, which is one of the nation's leading academic surgery programs. The experience of presenting research findings at a national meeting was an invaluable experience. It gave me a sense of confidence in sharing experiences with colleagues. During my fellowship, UCSF evaluated my skills as a surgeon, my interactions with patients, and my commitment to research. The department then realized I would be an excellent fit for the program and offered me a faculty position. The FSF fellowship opportunity made this possible - it opened the door for me, for which I am deeply appreciative.

### **SAVE-THE-DATE: Meet and Mingle with the Minds of Advanced Surgery**

**April 19, 2013**

Baltimore Convention Center during SAGES Surgical Spring Week. For more information, please contact the Foundation Office at 310.424.3332, ext. 138 or visit [www.surgicalfellowships.org/events.php](http://www.surgicalfellowships.org/events.php).

*By Invitation Only. More Information to Follow.*



*During the Advanced Laparoscopic/Endoscopic Colorectal fellowship year (2011-2012) funded by the FSF, Dr. Marylise Boutros had the opportunity to work on over ten research projects at Cleveland Clinic Florida under the direction of the program director Dr. Steven Wexner. In addition Dr. Boutros did 21 podium and 4 poster presentations at regional, national and international meetings. Her paper on Gracilis transposition was awarded the First Prize Cleveland Clinic Florida Surgical Podium Research Award and the Second Prize South-Florida Chapter Clinical Research Award.*



*2011 FSF Fellow, Dr. Lee Farber and Tufts University School of Medicine, MIS Fellowship Program Director Dr. David Earle doing volunteer work in India last June with the organization Operation Hernia.*



## Mission Statement

The Foundation for Surgical Fellowships exists to fund high quality fellowships in various areas of surgery, including but not limited to flexible endoscopy, minimal access surgery, and other related disciplines. Through a blinded application and review process, the Foundation will identify and distribute funds to qualified organizations based on criteria of excellence. The Foundation for Surgical Fellowships will promote and support the continued availability of postgraduate surgical training opportunities of the highest quality.

## Vision Statement

The Foundation for Surgical Fellowships (FSF) envisions a surgical community that is better educated in advanced surgery with the ultimate goal of improved patient care.

## Minimally Invasive Surgery: The Evolution of Fellowship

Adrian Park, MD, Stephen M. Kavic, MD, Tommy H. Lee, MD, and B. Todd Heniford, MD

**Background:** The field of postgraduate minimally invasive surgery/gastrointestinal surgery (MIS/GIS) training has undergone substantial growth and change. To determine whether fellowships are meeting a strategic need in training, we conducted a survey to assess the current status and trends of change in MIS/GIS fellowships.

**Methods.** A survey was distributed to fellows currently in MIS/GIS programs in the United States and Canada in 2003 and 2006. Fellows were asked to describe demographics as well as their experience both during fellowship and residency. We compared this with aggregate data of resident experience through the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) case logs, data tracked by industry, and program data from the Fellowship Council (FC) web site.

**Results:** There were 54 responses to the 75 surveys distributed in 2006 (72% response rate). MIS fellows performed more laparoscopic cases during their residency than the average graduating chief resident, but did not feel competent to perform advanced laparoscopic surgery. However, combining fellowship numbers with residency numbers does suggest that the total experience provides competency in a wide variety of procedures.

**Conclusions:** It seems that the MIS/GIS Fellowship is meeting a real need among graduating surgical residents; fellows felt unprepared for clinical practice at the completion of residency. It is encouraging to note the improvements in fellowship structure, standards, and overall experience, brought by the efforts of the FC. It is hoped that this report of the state of MIS fellowship with a comprehensive review of current data will aid in further evaluation and improvement. (Surgery 2007;142:505-13.)



For the full research article please visit the FSF website using this link:  
[www.surgicalfellowships.org/research/2007Park\\_Surgery.pdf](http://www.surgicalfellowships.org/research/2007Park_Surgery.pdf)

## RECOGNIZING PARTNERS: *Intuitive Surgical*

The leadership of the Foundation for Surgical Fellowships is proud to announce that thanks to our new partnership with Intuitive Surgical – and starting with the 2013 funding cycle – the Foundation will be offering a limited number of Fellowship opportunities in robotic techniques within the current surgical disciplines already funded.

“We are extremely proud to continue our investment in surgeon education by partnering with The Foundation for Surgical Fellowships,” says Myriam Curet, MD, Chief Medical Advisor, Intuitive Surgical. “Providing optimal surgical education and training is a core goal that we share with the FSF. Better surgery for better patient outcomes is not just technology dependent – it requires an investment in developing surgeons with the skills necessary to advance the practice of minimally invasive surgery.”

Intuitive Surgical’s mission is to extend the benefits of minimally invasive surgery to the broadest possible range of patients, while providing extraordinary value for the surgeons and medical centers that use da Vinci surgery. In fact, for the past 5 years, Intuitive Surgical has sponsored Clinical Robotics Fellowships to support additional training in robotics surgery. Their partnership with us is a perfect alliance, since the sole function of FSF is to create and support training fellowships. We share a common goal and, with this synergy, we intend to accomplish great things together.

“Technological advancement and innovation in minimally invasive surgery – for both surgical training and practice – has always been accomplished through deep collaboration with surgeons themselves” Adeena Bleich, the Executive Director of the FSF noted, “Our shared goal of seeing better trained surgeons capable of providing better patient outcomes makes this partnership a natural fit for the two organizations and we hope that Intuitive will continue to engage with the Foundation in a meaningful way for many years to come.”

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“Providing optimal surgical education and training is a core goal that we share with the FSF.”

– Myriam Curet, MD  
Chief Medical Advisor, Intuitive Surgical

## From the President: Sustaining Post-Residency Fellowships

Greg Stiegmann, MD



Dr. Greg Stiegmann

We send out a heartfelt “thank you” to everyone who supported the Foundation for Surgical Fellowships during 2012 – it truly was another great year. I am proud to be part of the leadership and granting efforts of the FSF. We continue to grow. In just three short years, the Foundation has been able to expand to almost 150 Fellowship training programs in a wide variety of minimally-invasive surgical fields including: Bariatric, Colon and Rectal, Hepato-Biliary, General MIS, and Thoracic.

I'd like to take a moment now to acknowledge an important member of our FSF family and express our deep gratitude to Dr. Thomas Dent for his years of service on our Board of Directors. You have been an inspiration to us all, Tom, and we wish you good fortune as you move forward on your journey. Please know that the fine example of dedication and creativity you have set will help guide our Foundation into the future.

Looking ahead, the Foundation board and staff are continuing our mission of advancing state-of-the-art surgical training. We have already identified funds for the next funding cycle for Robotic Fellowships within the disciplines already funded.

As exciting as this all is, there are roadblocks before us. In these challenging economic times, the FSF simply cannot sustain our current level of funding without obtaining the support of the greater surgical community.

As many of you may already know, more than 80% of surgical residents are now pursuing fellowship training after they complete their residencies. Research suggests that fellowships are meeting a real need among graduating surgical residents who need more practice with advanced minimally invasive procedures before going into clinical practice. Additional research suggests that the learning curve for postgraduate surgeons receiving fellowship training will significantly improve outcomes during a surgeon's early experience. (If you are interested in reading some of these research articles in detail, please visit the FSF website at [www.surgicalfellowships.org/work.php](http://www.surgicalfellowships.org/work.php))

While I look forward to working diligently with my fellow FSF Board members towards sustaining post-residency fellowships, we're going to need your help. We need more partners to help us identify individuals and other entities that will donate funding to support this critical training - training that leads to surgical innovation and better patient care. If you would like to get more involved in the work the Foundation is doing or if you know others who might align with our cause, please contact Adeena Bleich, the Executive Director of the Foundation at [Adeena@SurgicalFellowships.org](mailto:Adeena@SurgicalFellowships.org).

Sincerely,

Greg Stiegmann, MD

President, Foundation for Surgical Fellowships

**“We send out a heartfelt ‘thank you’ to everyone who supported the Foundation for Surgical Fellowships during 2012 – it truly was another great year.”**

## FSF Board of Directors

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Top row from left: Jonathan Sackier, Anthony Senagore, Ravi Chari, Dennis Fowler, Greg Stiegmann, Andrew Resnick, Bruce Wolff, Richard Satava. Bottom row from left: Kenneth Forde, Thomas D'Amico, J. Patrick O'Leary, Edward Felix, Harvey Sugarman, Thomas Dent, Donald Risucci. Not pictured: Harmik Soukiasian, MD and J. Kelly Wright Jr., MD

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