

Pennsylvania Surgical News

September 2023

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A collaborative monthly publication of the Keystone and Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapters of the American College of Surgeons providing resources and educational content for the Pennsylvania Surgical Community

Keystone *Chapter*

ACS Chapters American College
of Surgeons

Metropolitan Philadelphia
Chapter

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September 2023



Robbi-Ann M. Cook, CAE
Executive Director

Fall is here and it has been a busy month of September. The Metro Philadelphia Joint Annual Dinner Meeting, a collaborative effort with the Philadelphia Academy of Surgery, was held at the Bellevue Hotel in Philadelphia and was a sold out event. A total of 150 attendees were on hand to hear from Dr. E. Christopher Ellison, ACS President, and from the Abstract Poster Winner, Dr. Valerie Luks, who presented her research project at the podium prior to Dr. Ellison's keynote lecture. Were you captured at the meeting? Check out the photo montage in this issue to see if you can find yourself, or your colleagues.

As I prepare this month's issue of the newsletter, the Metro Philly Chapter's 15th annual Mock Oral Boards has just ended. Over 100 participants took part in today's oral boards. We are grateful for our attendings who gave up their Saturday to mentor and exam 66 residents and prepare them for the "real" boards. I would be remiss if I did not call out the stellar committee members who make this event a success every year. Drs. Sanjay Reddy and Renee Tholey have been working with their successors, Drs. Ani Kohli and Sunil Karhadkar to prepare them to take over this event next year. The hours this team have put into preparing schedules, assigning exam rooms and exam questions, and communicating to both examiners and examinees, and then today, moderating and moving 66 residents through the process does not go unnoticed by me. I am sure most who have not sat in their seat understand the process needed to run Mock Orals seamlessly. Our surgical leaders, program directors, and program coordinators should be proud to have these colleagues working to prepare their residents for their next career move.

Remember, the local Chapters are an extension of the American College of Surgeons. Your voice here in Pennsylvania is needed to tackle legislative issues, practice concerns, and provide resources and mentoring. If you have not taken the leap to join the local Chapter, you are encouraged to make that commitment to your local colleagues.

As always, if you have comments, suggestions, or an article of interest, please email me at rcook@rmcmanagementsolutions.com.

Robbi

Robbi-Ann M. Cook, CAE
Executive Director, Keystone & Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapters

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Robbi-Ann M. Cook, CAE
Shannon Marie Foster, MD, FACS



Shannon Marie Foster, MD, FACS
Keystone Chapter
Immediate Past President

Meanderings from A Wandering Surgeon

Physician (Cannot) Heal Thyself

Reprinted from the March 2022 Issue

Landmark Legislation Provides Platform for Mental Health Awareness and Care

All physicians, regardless of specialty, are under constant scrutiny and stress. When one of us makes a mistake, a life is at risk. When we err, we fail, as there is always negative impact. How each of us responds to this exhausting level of pressure is very personalized. Often, we are trained and conditioned to compartmentalize. Maybe we have an excellent support system. Well-chosen activities and families may provide balance and distraction. Better yet, some of us evaluate, debrief, and grow in daily habits and methods of self-care.

For each of us, there are, have been, and will be times when we are overwhelmed, uncertain, and find ourselves mired in self-doubt. Whether true, or fair, or not, our own harsh evaluation will inevitably lead to overpressure - further missteps, failures and confounding dissatisfaction – and can create a viscous circle of fatigue, overextension, and resentment where we become incapable of a high level of performance. This is burnout. This is why people leave the profession.

But for some, the cycle becomes ever more vicious, with despondency and no path of escape visible.

More than 400 physicians die by suicide each year. Most without any precedent mental health issues or diagnoses. The only common risk factor amongst them: they were physicians.

At these moments of greatest weakness and vulnerability – where do we turn? The stigma and fear of admitting a need for help, of asking for opportunities to rest and repair, of admitting mental health needs is harsh and has never been on the side of physicians. Even trusted colleagues will judge us as weak and no longer worthy. Gaps in work time, extended leave, and any medical health issues/diagnoses will follow each of us from state licensing board to hospital credentialing committee, and will remain a mark on the records ad infinitum. **THIS. MUST. CHANGE.**

On Friday, March 18, 2022 President Biden signed the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act into law. The law aims to reduce and prevent suicide, burnout, and mental and behavioral health conditions among healthcare professionals.

Who was Dr. Lorna Breen? She was a well-regarded and successful Emergency Department Director at Allen Hospital in Manhattan who was truly on the front lines of COVID. She treated confirmed COVID patients, contracted COVID herself, and cared for an overwhelming number of sick patients with limited supplies. Surrounded by the dying, without a break or a cure in sight, Dr. Breen became overworked and despondent. She shared with her family and friends these mounting feelings, but was afraid to seek or ask for official help. She did not want to lose her job or her license and was afraid of judgement and stigma. Laura Breen died by suicide on April 26, 2020.

Using her story as a spearhead to raise the issues of awareness of mental health and physician suicide, a bipartisan, bicameral bill was introduced and is now Public Law No: 117-105: The Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act.

This bill establishes grants and requires other activities to improve mental and behavioral health among health care providers.

Specifically, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) must award grants to hospitals, medical professional associations, and other health care entities for programs to promote mental health and resiliency among health care providers. In addition, HHS may award grants for relevant mental and behavioral health training for health care students, residents, or professionals.

Additionally, HHS must conduct a campaign to (1) encourage health care providers to seek support and treatment for mental and behavioral health concerns, and (2) disseminate best practices to prevent suicide and improve mental health and resiliency among health care providers.

HHS must also study and develop policy recommendations on improving mental and behavioral health among health care providers, removing barriers to accessing care and treatment, and identifying strategies to promote resiliency. Furthermore, the Government Accountability Office must report on the extent to which relevant federal grant programs address the prevalence and severity of mental health conditions and substance use disorders among health care providers.

What does this mean for all physicians? What can it mean for me? For you? Change the stigma and open the conversation. Support the process of raising and evaluating awareness of mental health in your team, your community and at your institution. By acknowledging that we all are

vulnerable and in need, we create a platform to empower and protect each one of us.

You are not alone.

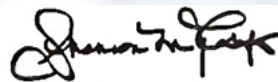
It is ok to not be ok.

Please don't wait anymore – ask for help.

References

Dr. Lorna Breen Heros Foundation:
www.drloreabreen.org

H.R.1667 - Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act: www.congress.gov



Shannon Marie Foster, MD, FACS is Immediate Past President of the Keystone Chapter. She also serves as the PA Chapters Collaborative Task Force Chair, and at the national level as a Governor-at-Large, PA Liaison to CoT and WiS Committees, DEI Outreach Workgroup, Board of Governors Executive Committee, and the Communications Pillar Lead

US Surgeons Are Killing Themselves at an Alarming Rate. One Decided to Speak Out

This was the headline of an article that popped up in a recent post that caught my attention this week. The article, written by [Christina Frangou](#), for *The Guardian*, shares the story of Carrie Cunningham, a surgeon at Massachusetts General Hospital, who, after losing a friend and quietly grappling with illness, found a way to tell her story and a new way to save lives.

Please take a moment to read this compelling journey of one surgeon who faced her colleagues and peers to expose the “silent story” of the profession.

[Full Article](#)

- Robbi Cook, CAE



The Operative Word from JACS: The Culture of Burnout and Well-Being

In this episode, Dr. Jamie Coleman is joined by Dr. Carter Lebares from the Department of Surgery at the University of California San Francisco. They discuss Dr. Lebares' recent **study** at 16 academic general surgery training programs, in which residents indicated a perceived lack of value congruence with leadership regarding occupational well-being.

Clinical Congress Is Almost Here! October 22-25, 2023 Boston, MA

Register today! Hotel space is selling quickly. Click below to register. Additional details on educational offerings can be found [HERE](#).

Join your ACS colleagues from across Pennsylvania for an informal networking event on Monday, October 23rd immediately following the Chapter Leaders Event (4:00-5:30 PM). Location will be announced shortly.

See the [full list of Didactic Courses](#)
See the [full list of Skills Courses](#)



Dates and Deadlines See Events 2024 ACS Cancer Conference Abstracts Due October 2 Submit Today In-Person ACS Coding Course November 2-4 in Chicago, IL Register Today ACS Health Services Research Methods Course November 30-December 2 in Chicago, IL Register Today	Career Connection Career Opportunities Plastic Surgeon Penn State Health, Lancaster, PA Breast Surgeon Lahey Hospital & Medical Center, Newburyport, MA Emergency General Surgeon Kaiser Permanente Northern California, Oakland Academic Vascular Surgeon Charleston Area Medical Center, WV Claim CME
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E. Christopher Ellison & Matthew Philp



MPACS-PAS Annual Joint Dinner Meeting—September 18, 2023

Bellevue Hotel | Philadelphia



MPACS Council, Dr. Ellison & Poster Winners



Valerie Luks



Robert Josloff

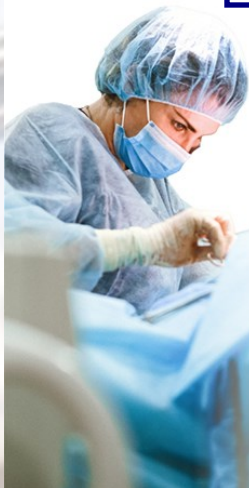


The Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapter Annual Business Meeting
Planning Committee Thanks Our 2023 Meeting Sponsors!

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15th Annual MPACS Mock Oral Boards—September 30, 2023

66 Examiners from 11 Philadelphia Institutions | 66 Examinees from 11 Philadelphia Residency Programs

Preparing our future surgical colleagues for a successful Oral Board Examination.



**Facilitators: Sanjay Reddy (FCCC); Renee Tholey (Jefferson)
Ani Kohli (Jefferson); Sunil Karhadkar (Temple)**





WHY JOIN AN ASSOCIATION?

Associations are stronger than ever. By joining, you get members-only perks, exclusive advertising and networking opportunities, and a whole lot of exposure for yourself and your institution. **Get on board and see the difference!**

NETWORKING

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JOIN US!

Contact us to learn more about the benefits of membership today!

Be a Voice for YOUR Surgical Community!

Join Your ACS Local Chapter Today and be part of the momentum to move the surgical community forward.

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[Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapter Membership](#)

Or contact Executive Director, Robbi Cook (rcook@rmcmanagementsolutions.com) for additional information.