



Faculty Updates



Charles Fraser MD, Assistant Professor, Cardiothoracic Surgery

Dr. Fraser joined CT Surgery May 1, 2026. He earned his medical degree from McGovern Medical School at UT Health Science Center in Houston. He completed general surgery residency and cardiac surgery research training at Johns Hopkins Hospital, followed by cardiothoracic surgery fellowship at the Hospital of the UPENN and congenital cardiac surgery fellowship at CHCO. Dr. Fraser comes to us from Dell Children's

Medical Center as part of the Texas Center for Pediatric and Congenital Heart Disease. His clinical focus includes complex neonatal heart surgery, valve repair, airway disease, and aortic disease, with research centered on outcomes following pediatric heart surgery.



Phayvanh Pecha, MD, PhD Assistant Professor, Otolaryngology, COS

Dr. Pecha joins ENT in COS June 1, 2026 and is coming to us from MUSC and specializes in complex pediatric airway, sleep-disordered breathing, and craniofacial conditions. Dr. Pecha earned her MD from the University of MN and completed her otolaryngology residency at the University of Utah, followed by a pediatric otolaryngology fellowship MUSC. Dr. Pecha also completed an MPH during her fellowship training. Her academic work focuses on health equity,

pediatric sleep-disordered breathing, and outcomes in cleft and craniofacial surgery.



Tess Simpson, PhD, Associate Professor

Dr. Simpson has been hired as the psychologist supporting the Pediatric Burn and Trauma Center. For over a decade, Dr. Simpson worked in the Department of PMR, where she served as Co-Director of the Concussion Program and of the Spina Bifida and Spinal Cord Injury Clinic at CHCO. Dr. Simpson will partner closely with surgical, medical, and multidisciplinary teams within the CCS to integrate psychological care into the treatment of children and families

navigating serious injury and recovery.



Cindy Buchanan, PhD, has been appointed as the inaugural section head for Integrated Services within the PMHI. She officially transitioned into this role effective March 1, 2026. In her new role, Dr. Buchanan is responsible for advancing strategic initiatives and driving implementation within the PMHI Section of Integrated Services. In addition to her clinical work in Urology and PAG, Dr. Buchanan also serves as the Surgical Psychology and Behavioral Health Program Lead for the CCS. Congrats Cindy!

Staff Updates



Congratulations to **Jessica Renner**, Director of Operations for the Health Pavillion, who was recently recongized among Denver Business Journal's 40 under 40. Each year the publication honors professionals across multiple industries for providing extraordinary business and community leadership. In her role, Jessica has lead critical efforts in revenue cycle optimizations, streamlined financial workflows and increased price transparency for patients who live in underserved communities and are in need of dental care. A passionate advocate for pediatric public health, she has also championed Medicaid access and primary care equity across Colorado, helping ensure that children from underserved communities have access to essential healthcare services.



CHCO's annual **Courage Classic Bicycle Tour** is coming up **July 18-19th** at Copper Mountain. The Courage Classic is Children's Colorado's largest fundraising event of the year, and your support, whether you ride, cruise, donate, or volunteer, helps ensure children in our region get the world-class care they deserve. There are many ways to participate- learn more [here!](#)



The CCS hosted the **9th annual Research Symposium** in February 2026. Many thanks to all of the presenters, reviewers and to the ROCS team for coordinating another terrific event. The winners were:
Outstanding Poster Awards- Mustafa Saeed (Urology), Nathanael Bunnell (Plastics), Parker Juels (ENT), Annie Talbot (Peds Surg)
Outstanding Podium talks- Yan Zhou (Neurosurgery), Cindy Li (Neurosurgery), Gabriella Ciancimino (Dental), Nicholas Drysdale (CT Surgery), Yan Zhou (Neurosurgery)
CONGRATS to all the winners!



Save the date for the **10th annual Research Symposium** scheduled for **Friday February 19th 2027**.

Congratulatory Corner



Todd Hankinson MD, Neurosurgery was awarded an NIH R03 for the project, "Optimizing Pre-clinical Models of Admantinomatous Craniopharyngioma"



Aubrey Armento MD, Orthopedics was awarded an NIH K23 for the project, "A Prospective, Longitudinal Investigation of Physical Activity and Bone Health among Female Adolescents Recovering from Restrictive Eating Disorders"

Chaitanya Puranik, PhD, MDS, Dental won the CU System AI Recognition Award: AI for teaching and learning for his project "AI-Integrated Pediatric Dental Education: Advancing Trauma Training, Communication, and Competency-Based Assessment."

Chris Discolo, MD, ENT, has assumed the role of Associate Vice Chair of Academic Affairs for the Department of Otolaryngology

The Mentored Scholarly Activity program has selected **Dr. Sarah Gitomer, ENT** for the 2026 Mentor of the Year Award.

Steven Scott, MD, PAG was the recipient of the 2026 Distinguished Clinician Award by the School of Medicine.

Tricia Huguelet, MD, PAG is the President-Elect of the North American Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology

Stephen Newton, MD, ENT, has graduated from the IU Kelly School of Business - Physician MBA Program

Steven Moulton, MD, Pediatric Surgery, was awarded a HIE Impact Microgrant through CU Anschutz Innovations for his Twistomy project.

Benjamin Borg, MD, Research Resident in **CT Surgery** has been awarded a University of Colorado School of Medicine StARR program award. He is also the recipient of the 2026 Spring Enduring Hearts-PHTS Investigator Award to support investigators in the field of pediatric heart transplantation research

New and Noteworthy

Dr. Friedman, ENT, was featured in a Channel 7 news story about a new sleep apnea device [Colorado boy is the first U.S. pediatric patient to get new sleep apnea device](#)

The Healthy Smiles clinic was recently featured in a School of Dental Medicine article [Why Primary Teeth Matter — And How Pediatric Dentists Helps Families Thrive](#)

Dr. White, Orthopedics was featured on 9 news [Arvada boy with dwarfism thrives at school thanks to doctor who goes the extra mile](#)

Dr. McLaughlin, Pediatric Surgery was featured in a KKTU story [Children's Hospital Colorado Springs noticing increase in appendicitis cases](#)

Dr. Erika Valentine, Orthopedics was interviewed along with her patient on 9News [Teen overcomes hip dysplasia](#)

Dr. Aretakis, Orthopedics was interviewed on a podcast for JAAOS regarding a recent publication [Risk of Refracture in Proximal Both Bone Forearm Fractures in Children](#)

Service



For the past 17 years, a dedicated five member World Pediatrics surgical team has traveled to Belize to provide critical orthopedic care for children with conditions such as clubfoot, bone abnormalities, cerebral palsy and spina bifida. Leadership of this impactful work is transitioning to **Aaron Boyles, MD, Orthopedics**. In response to growing demand, the program has expanded from one team to two teams per year helping reduce wait times and extend life-changing care to more children.