



In This Issue

President's Message	1
ESS @ Clinical Congress	2
ESS During COVID-19	3-4
ESS Logo and Branding	5
ESS Staff Updates	5
ESS Committee Reports	6-8
» Program	
» Diversity & Inclusion	
» Membership	
» Mentorship	
» Outreach	
» Research	
ESS Service Updates	9

Upcoming Events

ESS Annual Business Meeting.....	9/18
Military Session @ Clinical Congress Scientific Forum.....	10/3
Churchill Lecture	10/6
ESS Symposium.....	10/8-9
Pryor Lecture.....	10/9
Region 13 COT Papers	11/18

Contact Us

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Facebook: Excelsior Surgical Society

Annual Newsletter

September 2020

» My role as the elected President of the Excelsior Society is truly humbling and a privilege. During my time on the Executive Council as Navy Representative and Secretary, I have developed a strong sense of the need to foster the Society as the “Home” for military surgeons –Active Duty and Reservists in Surgery as well as Surgical Sub-specialties.

At the end of World War II, combat surgeons gathered to develop a sense of community and to discuss war-time lessons learned. The meeting was held at the Excelsior Hotel in Rome, Italy, and the original Excelsior Surgical Society (ESS) was founded. The society faded with the passing of founding members, but it was re-born with the established partnership between the Military Health System and American College of Surgeons (MHSSPACS) in 2014.

Excelsior serves as the military chapter of the American College of Surgeons and continues to evolve in ways to serve the military surgery community. This year we are formalizing several committees, and we encourage all members to get involved to shape our society through active participation.

In conjunction with the 2020 American College of Surgeons Virtual

Clinical Congress, the Excelsior Program Committee will hold the 5th Annual Excelsior Surgical Society Symposium entitled, “Enterprise-wide Surgical Care” on Thursday and Friday, Oct 8- 9. We look forward to expanding our reach to our members and prospective members with this virtual format.

Our request from our near 400 Society members is feedback and engagement. This Annual Newsletter provides an overview of the activities of this past year. Please get involved with the committees and help us serve you, our members.

We would like to thank you for your service and encourage you to keep your thoughts and prayers focused on our deployed service members who are securing our safety and freedom.

CAPT Gordon G. Wisbach, MD
President, Excelsior Surgical Society





ESS Leadership 2020 Executive Council



President

CAPT Gordon Wisbach, MD, MBA, FACS
Naval Medical Center San Diego



Vice-President (President Elect)

Col Todd Rasmussen, MD, FACS
Uniformed Services University



Secretary

Col Jeremy Cannon, MD, SM, FACS
University of Pennsylvania



Treasurer

LTC Danielle Holt, MD, FACS
Blanchfield Army Community Hospital



Councilperson at Large, US Army

COL Jennifer Gurney, MD, FACS
US Army Institute of Surgical Research



Councilperson at Large, US Navy

CDR Matthew Bradley, MD, MS, FACS
Walter Reed National Military Medical Ctr



Councilperson at Large, US Air Force

Col Peter Learn, MD, FACS
Uniformed Services University



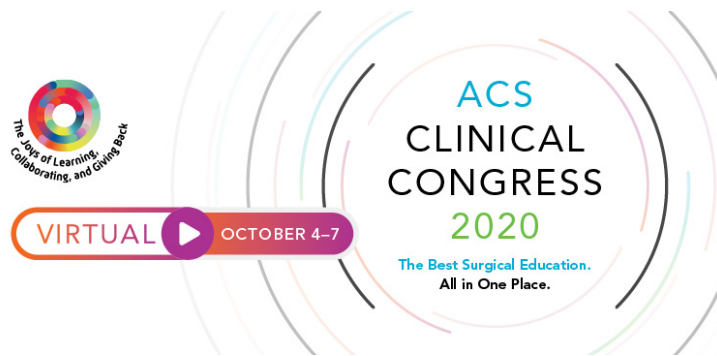
Councilperson at Large, Res/Natl Guard

Col David Zonies, MD, MPH, FACS
Oregon Health & Science University



Councilperson at Large, Civilian

COL (Ret) Maggie Brandt, MD, MHSA, FACS
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Ctr



ESS @ Clinical Congress 2020

Excelsior Surgical Society

Edward D. Churchill Lecture

Tuesday, October 6, 2020 | Time 0900-1000 CDT
Presiding Officer: CAPT Gordon G. Wisbach, MD, MBA, FACS
Lecturer: MG Jonathan Woodson, MD, FACS, US Army Reserve



Scudder Oration on Trauma

Tuesday, October 6, 2020 | Time 1300-1355 CDT
Presiding Officer: Eileen M. Bulger, MD, FACS
Lecturer: Gregory J. Jurkovich, MD, FACS



Military Session @ Clin Cong Scientific Forum

Saturday, October 3, 2020 | Time 1600-1645 CDT
Moderating: CDR Matthew Bradley, MD, MS, FACS
MAJ Jason Bingham, MD, FACS
Col Peter Learn, MD, FACS



5th Annual ESS Symposium Highlights

“Enterprise-wide Military Surgical Care”

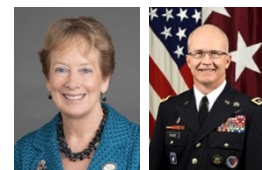
Thursday, October 8, 2020

“State of the Excelsior Surgical Society”
President Gordon Wisbach, MD, FACS
“Military Services Surgical Communities”
Consultants Updates and Panel Discussion



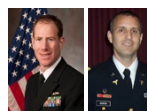
Friday, October 9, 2020

Army Major John P. Pryor Lecture
“Trust in Action”
Julie Freischlag, MD, FACS
CEO Wake Forest Baptist Health
Dean, Wake Forest School of Medicine



“Enterprise-wide Military Surgical Care”

State of the DHA, LTG Ronald Place, MD, FACS
Clinical Readiness Program, CAPT Eric Elster, MD, FACS
Successful Mil Surgical Career, COL Matt Martin, MD, FACS





ESS During COVID-19

In late winter and spring 2020, members of the Excelsior Surgical Society were called upon to assist with the national response to COVID-19. Here are some of their stories....

Interview with LTC Guy “Travis” Clifton, MD, FACS

ESS: LTC Clifton, thank you for taking time out of your busy day to share your story. When did you join the military?

Clifton: I graduated from West Point in 1998 and then attended Vanderbilt on an HSPS scholarship. After graduating from the BAMC surgical residency in 2012, I served as a General Surgeon at Fort Campbell for two years and then completed my Surgical Oncology training at MD Anderson.



ESS: What's your current practice like?

Clifton: I'm one of four Surgical Oncologists at BAMC. I have a great practice where I see primarily Surgical Oncology patients of all types with some General Surgery mixed in. It's especially satisfying since our HPB volume has basically doubled in past several years thanks to a cooperative agreement with the VA. From an administrative standpoint, I'm also the chief of general surgery, which I really enjoy.

ESS: You recently deployed in support of the COVID-19 pandemic response. Can you tell us about your experience?

Clifton: I was mobilized as part of the 11th Field Hospital from Ft. Hood to the Javits Center in New York City. We were there with another Field Hospital and then eventually a Navy unit also, with the USPHS running the response.

Initially we saw only non-COVID patients. But then our mission morphed into taking COVID patients as well, including those with persistent O2 requirement or challenging dispositions. Although we were staffed like a surgical field hospital, we didn't have CT or Operating Room capabilities since our focus was really on managing severe respiratory failure in complex patients often with a number of comorbidities.



In addition to managing the inpatients in full PPE for 8-hour shifts, I worked as a liaison and went to hospitals to help them identify patients that would be well-served in our facility. I really wanted our center to become the “easy button” for these hospitals with EDs completely full of very sick patients. Over the six weeks I was there, our total volume was something like 1,095 patients with a peak census of about 400-500 patients

ESS: What was the most unusual or interesting part of the experience for you?

Clifton: I had a chance to conduct a study on a point of care COVID test called the rapid lateral flow antibody test. And I'm in the process of writing this up now, actually.

ESS: What was the value of having surgeons deploy for an infectious pandemic?

Clifton: As surgeons, we are all super comfortable with inpatient care and making tough decisions on short notice. So our surgeon-heavy team really added a lot to this mission that included physicians and other team members whose practices are primarily outpatient.

ESS: Would you like to share anything else with the ESS membership?

Clifton: This experience demonstrated the wide applicability of my wartime skills. I also was very impressed with the physicians, nurses, and other providers rose to the occasion without complaint. They adapted and did the job. This was very heartening. It speaks to the great men and women in the military.





ESS During COVID-19 (con't)

Interview with

CDR Tamara J. Worlton, MD, FACS

»» ESS: CDR Worlton, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule. Can you tell us how you joined the service?



Worlton: I grew up as an Army brat and attended New Mexico State close to where my family was stationed at Fort Bliss. I learned about USUHS from an Army recruiter. I graduated in 2003 after transferring to the Navy. I trained in the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) surgical residency program. After serving for a year on the USS Lincoln, I did my MIS fellowship at the Cleveland Clinic.

ESS: Can you tell us a bit about your current practice?

Worlton: After my fellowship, I joined the NNMC and Walter Reed practice that was in the process of combining. I was able to expand the new Bariatric Program, and I also developed a robust foregut surgery and robotic practice.

ESS: In addition to your busy MIS practice, you also have a focus on global surgery. What can you tell us about that?

Worlton: I now serve as Director of USU Global Surgery and Director of Surgical Operations of the Center for Global Health Engagement (GHE). Over the past few years, I have been able to offer insights on both trauma care, trauma systems, and also bariatric surgery to our international partners. Many people don't realize that obesity is such a significant global problem and that bariatric surgery has an important role to play. In many cases, the laparoscopic surgical skills of our international colleagues really amaze me—they hand sew everything. So often, our role is to help

build a program around the surgical procedure to ensure optimal outcomes. We also have a tri-service Directory of those interested in GHE. If you want to take part, e-mail me (address in the DoD Global).

ESS: I understand you were awarded a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship to continue your work. How did you come to apply for this and how will it fit into your active service?

Worlton: A Fulbright alum at USUHS nominated me for the award. I will be working in a general surgery teaching program in Shri Lanka with, again, a trauma and bariatric focus. The details of my time are still being worked out, but it will likely be in the form of a TAD (TDY) for several months in-country.

ESS: You recently deployed on the USNS Comfort for the pandemic response. What was that like?

Worlton: I had recently returned from a 5-month deployment to South America and the Caribbean on the Comfort. The ship was basically dismantled for maintenance and had to be rapidly configured for this mission. Many aspects of the mission from the staffing to the status of supplies were uncertain, which really stressed the whole team. When we arrived in New York, our mission quickly changed from a COVID-negative to a COVID-positive focus. We quickly maxed our ICU capacity with very sick patients. We also did a number of surgical procedures during this deployment (see *Annals of Surgery* E-pub ahead of print. PMID: 32740240)

ESS: What was the most unusual or interesting part of the experience for you?

Worlton: Patient acuity, the need for advanced ICU care management, and amazingly, the challenges of going back to paper charting. I also noticed there was more fear and anxiety among our team compared to a combat mission. This was a very different experience from our typical deployments into combat or a humanitarian crisis area.

»» Meanwhile, Col Mark Bowyer, MD, FACS led a socially-distanced ASSET Plus course on the USU campus. **Left:** Attendees get timely instruction in operative trauma management from national experts under some very “watchful eyes.” (What’s wrong with this picture?) **Right:** The ASSET Plus course is notable for its added sense of realism and urgency. (Who is that masked man? [2nd from left])





ESS Logo and Branding



Early in his tenure, ESS Immediate Past President COL (Ret) Rob Lim, MD, FACS articulated his vision for the ESS: We need to update our society's "brand." The focal point of this effort started with a new society logo. After soliciting input from numerous stakeholders including past presidents of our organization, the MHSPACS leadership, and current members, a new logo was born! The new logo was revealed during the opening ceremony of the 2019 Excelsior Surgical Society Symposium in San Francisco, California. This was only possible thanks to the efforts of the ESS Executive Officers and ESS Staff including Garrett Kirk and LT Trent who worked tirelessly with the design and graphics arts teams to complete this work and to create a very professional presentation for the membership.

The new logo retains the symbolism of the original logo by marking the date of the ESS founding in Roman numerals and by placing the Romulus and Remus image at the top of the logo—significant as the symbol of Rome where the inaugural meeting occurred. The new ESS logo now includes the official date for the re-activation of the Society in 2015, also in Roman numerals. Service-specific graphics and colors for the Army, Navy, and Air Force are also presented in the shape of a shield representing our strength through unity and collaboration. Finally, the Rod of Asclepius appears in the center of the shield in the form of a scalpel, the quintessential tool of our profession.



ESS Staff Updates

Garrett Kirk, MHSSPACS Program Manager, and 2LT Johnathan Trent, MHSSPACS Administrative Coordinator, have been working from home since March while continuing to support Excelsior remotely. In May, 2LT Trent received TDY orders to attend the US Army Engineer Basic Officer Leaders Course (BOLC), a training path designed for commissioned officers in the Army. Following graduation from BOLC training, 2LT Trent will begin Sapper Training School in October, a 28-day leadership course based at Ft. Leonard Wood, MO. Those members who know him will not be surprised that he is passing all of his tests with flying colors and that he is even enjoying the experience...despite the 6 mile, 70-lb dry rucks in the sweltering Missouri heat.

While 2LT Trent has been out of the office, Ms. Jennifer Gregory has been serving as the MHSSPACS Administrative Coordinator. Currently, Ms. Gregory and Mr. Kirk are hard at work coordinating Excelsior's first-ever virtual Clinical Congress Business Meeting and Symposium, even as they continue to coordinate the Quality, Trauma Systems, and Educational activities for the MHSSPACS under the direction of Dr. M. Margaret Knudson, MD, FACS. Ms. Gregory has proven to be a tremendous resource for both the Society and the Strategic Partnership. We have been blessed by her skill and attention to detail and are thrilled to have her on board!





ESS COMMITTEE UPDATES

Program Committee

Chair: CAPT Gordon Wisbach, ESS President

Co-Chair: COL Todd Rasmussen, ESS Vice President

The Program Committee plans the annual ESS Symposium. We listen to suggestions from our membership to create an agenda that caters to the military-civilian partnership and participants at both the trainee as well as the senior level. This year, the Program Committee sought to make travel funding more widely available for the annual Excelsior Surgical Society Symposium. However, the COVID-19 pandemic made this a moot point due to travel restrictions. So we changed emphasis to delivering our first Virtual ESS Symposium. This opportunity will allow us to deliver our annual scholarly forum more widely to our ESS members, prospective members, and supporters overcoming geographical and funding limitations both this year and into the future.

As part of the ACS Congress military track, we are responsible for organizing the annual Army Major John P. Pryor and Churchill Lectures. These named lecturers are giants in the field of surgery and, respectively, are Dr. Julie Freischlag and MAJ GEN (Dr.) Jonathan Woodson. We look forward to their insightful presentations. Although we will not be able to gather in-person this year, we look forward to having all of you attend the Virtual ESS Symposium, and we are hopeful to visit with you all in-person in 2021!

Diversity & Inclusion Committee

Chair: MAJ Michelle Buehner

Co-Chair: MAJ Chonna Kendrick

Executive Council Member: LTC Danielle Holt

This committee came out of the original Women's Committee with a charge to address issues unique to women and minority surgeons serving in the Armed Forces and to promote an inclusive program and membership. The Diversity & Inclusion Committee has worked hard to develop a survey for our members to better understand the needs and perspectives of our members with regards to these issues so that we can better serve you. The link went out on Monday, 17 AUG as part of CAPT Wisbach's 3rd Update from the President and will also be sent out via social media. Please take a few minutes to give us your thoughts.





ESS COMMITTEE UPDATES (cont.)

Membership Committee

Chair: LTC Danielle Holt
Co-Chair: COL Kirby Gross
Executive Council Member: LTC Danielle Holt

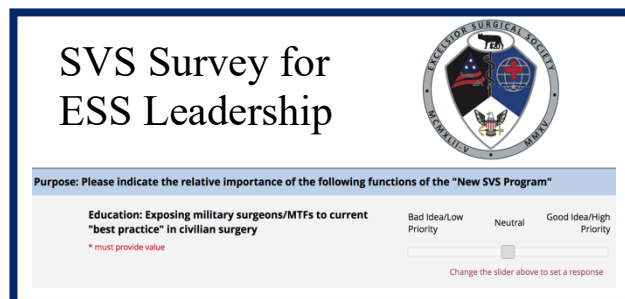
In 2019, the Finance Committee was re-named the Membership Committee in recognition of the close relationship between the financial wellbeing of the organization and our ability to serve our members' needs. The committee provides financial oversight and stewardship of the legacy funds from both the Wratten Society and the Society of Air Force Clinical Surgeons. This year, the Membership Committee has worked with the ACS to provide discounted dues for military members for both Excelsior and ACS membership. The Membership Committee has also worked with the Diversity and Inclusion Committee to develop a survey to better understand the needs of you, our members. When you receive this survey, please take a few minutes to complete it so that we can shape the future of our organization to best serve our members. The Membership Committee is also working with the Mentorship Committee to provide outreach to HPSP Students with an interest in surgery.

Mentorship Committee

Chair: LTC Sue Gillern
Co-Chair: MAJ Maggie Gallagher
Executive Council Member: Col Peter Learn

The Mentorship Committee provides resources for the education, residency, professional development, and CME needs of military surgeons. The committee has focused on building and expanding our network of military surgical providers as well as providing mentorship throughout their careers. This year, the Mentorship Committee reached out to all military medical students at both USUHS and civilian medical schools with an interest in a surgical career. The Committee will pair students with military surgical mentors who will work with the students as they advance through medical school and residency. The Committee has also created a Facebook Group as a place for students to ask questions and network with the military surgical community. Please feel free to join the "Excelsior Surgical Society Mentorship and General Surgery Interest Group" and provide insight to these students!

The Mentorship Committee has also been working to re-start the Senior Visiting Surgeon program that was so invaluable during OIF and OEF. This effort started with a needs assessment and vision survey of the ESS leadership. With this input, the Mentorship Committee has been busily making plans to develop a Visiting Professor-type experience for reciprocal visits between senior military and civilian surgeons with the goal of restarting this program in 2021. The Committee looks forward to further building upon invaluable military-civilian relationships.





ESS COMMITTEE UPDATES (cont.)

Outreach Committee

Chair: LCDR Pam Choi
Co-Chair: LCDR Luke Johnston
Executive Council Member: Col Jeremy Cannon

The Outreach Committee has been central to our efforts to both “brand” and market the organization. Projects undertaken this year included a comprehensive review of the ESS web site which will be re-vamped in the coming months. This will include areas for announcements and up-to-date information that will improve upon the more static content on the current site. The web site will also include a section titled “From the Archives” where we plan to post content from the original “Excelsior Surgical Club” along with other items of historic interest.

We are also working on a membership directory and outreach materials including a short flyer and a longer brochure that explain our organization’s mission and activities. Please check the web site throughout the year as we add new content: facs.org/military.

Research Committee

Chair: CDR Matt Bradley
Co-Chair: MAJ Jason Bingham
Executive Council Member: Col Todd Rasmussen

The Research Committee moderates the Region 13 ACS Committee on Trauma (COT) paper competition as well as a military-specific session during the Scientific Forum portion of the Clinical Congress. Although traditionally, the ACS COT Region 13 Paper Competition is held during the ESS Symposium, this year, the competition will be held separately to accommodate the programmatic changes. This year’s ACS COT Region 13 Paper Competition will be held on Wednesday, 18 NOV from 1500-1700 EST. We will send out updates on the virtual format as they become available.

Meanwhile, the Military Session of the Scientific Forum will be held on Saturday, 3 OCT from 1600 to 1645 CDT. Please plan to join us in support of the investigators who have spent so much time and effort seeking to advance the science of military surgery.

The Research Committee has also started exploring options for journal sponsorship. Many surgical organizations are able to disseminate their proceedings and their scientific knowledge products in the surgical literature through such partnerships. In order to achieve this goal, we need to ensure a high degree of rigor in our scientific presentations. To that end, we would like to call upon our members to send us your best research efforts so that we can begin to justify such a partnership going forward.





ESS SERVICE UPDATES

US Army

COL Jennifer Gurney

The Army continues to leverage all avenues to encourage and promote military civilian partnerships. Lots of efforts with the JTS have improved surgical standardization of training courses. We continue to encourage young surgeons to get involved with Excelsior Surgical Society and to stay active in academics. I look forward to returning from Afghanistan and to connecting with many of you in the virtual ESS Business Meeting and the Symposium.

US Navy

CDR Matthew Bradley

The Excelsior Surgical Society has a strong and active membership group. We continue to grow through our Membership, Outreach, and Diversity and Inclusion Committees. We are excited to host another scientific session at the 2020 virtual ACS Clinical Congress showcasing military-relevant research.

US Air Force

Col Peter Learn

We continue to work toward building membership in the ESS through direct messaging and social media engagement. Through the Mentorship Committee, we are developing a roster of active duty surgeon mentors to connect with medical students and reimagining the Senior Visiting Surgeon program in the era of COVID-19.

Reserve/National Guard

Col David Zonies

The guard and reserve continues play an important role in total force surgical readiness. We are working to increase engagement of our stakeholders (traditional reserve, IMA, guard) with the ESS. We also are working to foster transition paths from active duty to reserve in support of continued service during important career and life-changing events.

Civilian

COL (Ret) Maggie Brandt

The ESS spent the fall and winter planning a great in-person meeting for 2020. We did not envision the pandemic or the effects on all of us. Even though we are not able to get together for meetings and for fellowship, we are able to connect and support each other. Looking forward to this year's meeting and hope you will be there too.

