



Corporal Michael J. Crescenz Philadelphia VA Medical Center



Jean-Claude G. D'Alleyrand, MD, MSE



Joseph Bernstein, MD



L. Scott Levin, MD



Eric Hume, MD



Andrew Kuntz, MD



Hannah Lee, MD, PhD



Harvey Smith, MD



David Steinberg, MD



Timothy Costales, MD



Jean-Claude G. D'Alleyrand, MD, MSE



Sherif Sherif, MD

This past academic year has been one of growth and change for the Orthopaedic team at the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center (CMCVAMC). In August 2023, David Steinberg, MD stepped down after graciously serving as Interim Chief for the preceding two years. Dr. Steinberg helped keep the Orthopaedic ship afloat during that time, in addition to managing his busy Hand Surgery practice and extensive research activities. Dr. Steinberg has been succeeded by Jean-Claude G. D'Alleyrand, MD, a retired Army Traumatologist who came to us from Landstuhl Germany. Bringing his own perspective as a Veteran patient, Dr. D'Alleyrand has been focused on increasing the delivery of high-quality surgical care to as many Veterans as possible.

In addition to changes in our leadership, CMCVAMC has also gained a new Sports surgeon, Liane Miller, MD, who brings capabilities to our section that are particularly advantageous for our younger patients, such as hip arthroscopy and cartilage restoration. She also has a great interest in shoulder instability, including recurrent dislocations. Her dedication will augment the existing shoulder practice of Andrew Kuntz, MD, who, in addition to being a passionate researcher and surgeon for rotator cuff pathology, is the only VA surgeon in our region performing shoulder arthroplasty. We've also grown our Spine Surgery service with the addition of Sherif Sherif, MD, augmenting

the practice of long-time VA Spine surgeon, Harvey Smith, MD. In addition to treating the full complement of degenerative and compressive spinal disorders, Dr. Sherif also brings additional capabilities and extensive training in complex spine and spinal deformity correction. Penn Orthopaedics now covers 100% of the spine pathology here at CMCVAMC, and we could not do so without the tireless efforts of Jennifer Sheehan, CRNP and Samantha McDevitt, PA-C. The tireless patient advocacy and professionalism they showed during the transition from a joint Neuro-Ortho Spine effort to a completely Orthopaedic one has been nothing short of inspirational.

During this period of transition, our Veteran patients have benefited from increased surgical access, with the Ortho team boosting surgical case volume by roughly 40% over the last five months compared to previous years. This increase is primarily due to a 50% increase in arthroplasty cases, an initiative spearheaded by Drs. Eric Hume and Timothy Costales in December. Their arthroplasty efforts have been augmented by Drs. Joseph Bernstein and Andrew Kuntz. As a result, CMCVAMC Orthopaedics is on pace to provide the most arthroplasty surgery in the region by next year.

In addition to delivering quality surgical care to our patients and educating our next generation of Orthopaedic



Figure 1. VA Secretary Denis McDonough, VA researchers, and local Veterans gather to celebrate the opening of the new CReATE Motion Research Center at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center on March 27, 2024

Surgeons, our team has also been extremely productive on the research front in partnership with the McKay Orthopaedic Laboratory and the CMCVAMC Translational Musculoskeletal Research Center. Dr. Steinberg continues his Merit grant-funded research and was selected to be the Orthopaedic co-investigator for the CMCVAMC Cartilage Regeneration using Advanced Technologies to Enable Motion (CReATE Motion) Center, in partnership with investigators at the Atlanta VA. This research enterprise, with over \$6M of direct research funding over a 5-year period, supports research innovations in cartilage regeneration and ways to restore joint function. The Center is such an important effort that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony (Figure 1).¹ Hannah Lee, MD has been awarded a prestigious five-year Career Development Award (CDA), an important milestone in her already storied research career. Dr. Miller has recently received her first VA grant, a two-year SPiRE grant, a pilot grant that is a steppingstone to what will assuredly be a stellar research career. Drs. Kuntz and Smith have both been repeatedly funded by VA Merit grants and continue to be so, with Dr. Smith publishing a cover article in *Science Translational Medicine*, a preeminent journal with

incredibly stringent publication criteria. Dr. Bernstein is currently applying for his second Merit grant and continues to investigate and publish on a number of conditions that are important for the Veteran patient population while also serving as a Deputy Editor for *Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research*. He also recently published *Orthopaedia*, a free peer-reviewed textbook for students and practitioners, helping to deliver quality Orthopaedic care worldwide, independent of cost.

While our colleagues' research efforts are impressive and will help future generations of Veteran patients, we could not treat our current patients without the devotion and professionalism of our Advanced Practice Providers and skilled Orthopaedic Nurses. Chip Staska, PA-C has been at CMCVAMC for a great many years, a constant force of calm professionalism in the face of high staff and resident turnover. We have been quite fortunate to have Eric Drennan, PA-C, a Navy Veteran himself, join our ranks and bring his love of his fellow Servicemembers to our team. Our superb Orthopaedic Nurses, Alex David, RN and John Yohannan, RN are instrumental to the care navigation and preoperative coordination that our complex patients require. Without their help and that of Ms. Sheehan and

Ms. McDevitt, we could not deliver the care that our noble patients deserve. We, and our patients, are truly grateful for all they do.

There are very few easy military careers and most of our patients continue to carry heavy burdens, physically and emotionally, many years after taking off their uniforms for the last time. Regardless of their reasons for serving or what they did while in uniform, our Nation is a better place for their sacrifices. The Orthopaedic team of CMCVAMC takes great pride in serving these patients as they have served

us, and we will continue to fulfill our mandate to provide them with world-class care, ease their suffering through musculoskeletal research, and educate our Nation's next generation of surgeons.

References

1. **Sprey E. VA opens new research center to seek novel arthritis treatments.** *VA Res Curr.* 1 April 2024. <https://www.research.va.gov/currents/0424-VA-opens-new-research-center-to-see-novel-arthritis-treatments.cfm>.