

Surgery Strategic Clinical Network – Leadership Team

Dr. Jonathan White - Senior Medical Director



Dr. Jonathan White is a Professor of Surgery in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry at the University of Alberta. He has practiced general and colorectal surgery at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton since 2006.

Dr. White holds a Master's Degree in Medical Education from the University of Calgary and has won national and university awards for his innovation and leadership in education. As the University's first Tom Williams Endowed Chair in Surgical Education, he led the implementation of multiple new programs and is the first surgeon ever selected as a 3M National Teaching Fellow.

He has published over 40 peer-reviewed papers and 120 peer-reviewed podcasts and has given over 200 presentations at national and international meetings. His interests include public engagement, innovation and transformational leadership

Jill Robert - Senior Provincial Director



Jill Robert is the Senior Provincial Director of the Surgery and Bone & Joint Health Strategic Clinical Networks. She has extensive experience in strategic business collaboration and clinical informatics. She has led several large-scale change management projects in health care. Some include Alberta Surgical Wait Times, an initiative to standardize measurement of elective surgery wait times with the aim to improve access to surgery; and the Patient Care Information System, Calgary, on which Jill was the Surgery Clinical Adoption lead for the Zone.

Jill holds a BSc in Nursing with additional education in primary health care and critical care. She has nursing expertise in cardiovascular care, critical care and coronary care including the delivery of clinical nursing education in both long term and acute care settings.

On a personal note, Jill lives in Calgary with her husband and daughter who enjoy the arts and playing in Alberta's great outdoors.



Tim Baron – Executive Director



Tim brings experience in leadership, policy development, and program management to his role in the Surgery SCN. Tim is privileged to work with great teams across AHS and is passionate about creating evidence informed improvements that are measurable, sustainable, and benefit both patients and healthcare providers.

Tim's clinical background is in physiotherapy, graduating from the University of Alberta in 1997. He has over 10 years of clinical experience in a variety of settings including acute care, continuing care, home care, and outpatients. Tim received a Master of Business Administration from the University of Calgary in 2009.

Dr. Mary Brindle - Scientific Director



Dr. Brindle is a pediatric surgeon and the director of The EQUIS (Efficiency Quality Innovation and Safety) Research platform at Alberta Children's hospital. This chair-supported program tackles health system issues as they relate to pediatric surgery and develops innovative solutions through the international and national collaboration. As part of this work, she leads the international ERAS neonatal abdominal surgery team. She is also developing point of care tools for improving surgical safety for children and adults in collaboration with researchers from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) as well as Ariadne Labs at the Harvard School for Public Health and the Canadian Patient Safety Institute. Her research has been presented internationally and has been funded locally and nationally including funding from CIHR. Mary also sits on the steering committee of the Canadian Pediatric Surgery Network and the Canadian Association for Pediatric Surgery research program. The work of EQUIS has a strong focus on implementation science as well as quantitative and qualitative research.

Dr. Sanjay Beesoon – Assistant Scientific Director



Sanjay Beesoon studied for a Master's in Public Health (with Specialization in Epidemiology) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, under the Fulbright Scholarship, administered by the US Department of State. He subsequently completed a PhD in Medical Sciences at the University of Alberta under the Alberta Innovates Health Solutions scholarship. While studying for his PhD, Sanjay won multiple academic awards and prizes among which are the Graduate Student Interdisciplinary Research Award, Andrew Stewart Memorial Graduate Prize, PhD Dissertation Fellowship and winning the First Dynalife Lab Prize for top research paper in Lab Medicine and Pathology on two occasions. Sanjay was recently the Lead Scientist, Safe and Healthy Environments, Population, Public and Indigenous Health for AHS. He is a published bilingual (English and French) public health professional with 25 years of wide-ranging experience in epidemiology, toxicology and clinical laboratory research.

Sanjay looks forward to work collaboratively with Alberta Surgical Community to build research and innovation capacity in Alberta through the Surgery SCN.

Lesley Barker - Manager



Lesley is the Manager of the Surgery SCN. She has a clinical background in Nursing with front line and extensive management experience in the operating room and various outpatient clinics.

Previously she worked for Interior Health Authority in BC as site lead for the Provincial Surgical Strategies Initiatives, including the implementation of surgical waitlist management, site led central booking, and the Hip & Knee Surgical Optimization Program. She was the health authority representative for planning and implementation of a provincially standardized education plan for perioperative nursing.

She has experience as an ACATs site lead, has a passion for quality improvement, is LEAN certified and is currently completing her Master of Nursing with a focus on Leadership.

Bryan Atwood - Provincial Lead, ACATS



Bryan is the Provincial Lead of the Alberta Coding Access Targets for Surgery project (ACATS), the provincial initiative for surgical wait time measurement, management and reporting. Bryan is passionate about patient-centric improvements in healthcare, aiding the system to function better for our clients.

Bryan has over 22 years of healthcare experience including clinical front-line support in the emergency department and operating room, and leading projects such as the Calgary Zone emergency department rapid access zone development, acute hospital discharge planning, and community mental health and seniors' health access improvements. Bryan helped develop the AHS Improvement Way (AIW) program and deliver hundreds of AIW courses to embed quality in select areas of AHS.

Bryan has dual BSc degrees in Biology and Psychology Neuroscience, a diploma in computer software development, is a Certified Six Sigma Black Belt for quality improvement. In November of 2017, Bryan started his MBA specializing in Strategic Planning.

Dr. Tara Klassen - Research Scientist, Surgery & Research Priorities & Implementation



Dr. Tara Leah Klassen is the Scientific Lead of the Evidence Decision Support Program (EDSP) and the Provincial Advisory Council on Surgical Innovation (PACOSI). These programs work together; to help guide evidence-based decisions on the responsible introduction of health technologies and surgical innovations across Alberta.

Tara is an experienced translational scientist and disease biology researcher with over >15 years' experience collaborating with basic, clinical, translational and industrial partners. Tara holds a BSc Specialist degree in Zoology from Brandon University, and a PhD in Biological Sciences from the University of Alberta. She has won multiple awards for her innovation, teaching and research, including the Brandon University Inaugural Outstanding Young Alumni Award, the University of Alberta Excellence in Teaching Award, and the American Epilepsy Society Young Investigator Award, twice. Her professional interests include value added research, program optimization, technology implementation and management, visual communication, and scientific knowledge translation.

David Chakravorty – Provincial Lead, National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP)



David started with the Calgary Health Region (CHR) in 2010 as a Patient Concerns advisor and moved into the Calgary Zone Quality Improvement area in December 2011. Prior to working for the CHR, David worked for the Canadian Mental Health Association in Calgary as an outreach worker and advocate. David also has experience in community-based rehabilitation, corporate sales, and experiential education.

David holds a Bachelor of Physical Education from the University of Calgary, and Master of Science Degree from the University of Utah (thesis). David has publication credits based on research and quality improvement projects he has participated in over the years.

David has certifications in Institute for Healthcare Communication CARE training, is a certified AHS Disclosure (DUMO) instructor, and is a certified AHS Green Belt and AIW instructor. David joins the NSQIP program with a desire to support improved outcomes and patient experience for those accessing AHS surgical services.

Suzanne (Sue) Higgins – Acting Provincial Manager – ERAS Alberta



Sue comes to this position with a wealth of clinical nursing experience in critical care, medicine, obstetrics, primary health care, and surgery across North America. This includes operational experience within Alberta and working group relationships with Alberta Health.

Sue has been involved in several large provincial initiatives from the Provincial Community and Rural Maternity Care Plan through to Provincial policies. This has involved facility and community health service reviews and clinical services re-design work in many local geographic areas within Alberta. Surgical and maternity health service planning has been a priority within this work, bringing care as close to home as possible for patients. Development of several surgical planning tools and methodologies to understand sustainability of service will be an asset to upcoming work.

Sue has a passion for patient focused care. Her field research in Africa centered on women and children's health access issues and primary health care. Her education is both clinical and broad across political systems that support the rights and choice of patients and their daily needs.

Lynne Malmquist – Senior Consultant



Lynne supports the important initiatives and activities of the Surgery SCN. Lynne has worked with a diverse range of stakeholders, programs and services in the public and non-profit sectors. Within Alberta Health Services this includes the Southern Alberta HIV Clinic, Addiction and Mental Health, Seniors Health SCN and the Bone and Joint Health. The common theme throughout has been her commitment to the improvement of programs and services.

Some of the tools in her kit include: B.A. (English); Masters (Sociology); Conflict Resolution Certificate (Negotiation); training in change management and a ruler.

Spending time with nature brings her joy (whether it's hiking, walking, paddling a canoe or snowshoeing). Visual arts are also another great source of inspiration for Lynne.