

# GOOD HEALTH™

A HEALTHCARE JOURNAL FROM SANSUM CLINIC • ISSUE 24 • WINTER 2020



**VAPING & E-CIGARETTES  
PART TWO**

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**PALLIATIVE CARE &  
ADVANCE CARE  
PLANNING**

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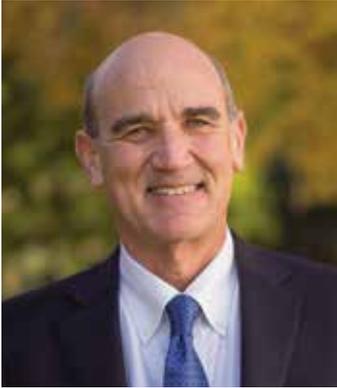
**SPOTLIGHT ON  
RHEUMATOLOGY:  
MEDICAL DETECTIVES**

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**SMART CHOICES  
LONG-TERM WEIGHT LOSS**



## Dear Patients,



Two-way communication is the key to successful relationships. You may have heard this mantra from a spouse, parent, coach or therapist, but it also directly applies to healthcare and the trust we aim to build with our patients. Whether in our homes, at our jobs or at the doctor's office, this kind of communication involves good listening, asking questions, taking responsibility and calmly expressing what we'd like others to understand. Research shows when we communicate well as an organization and our patients' voices are heard, they follow their treatment plans more closely and they are more satisfied with their care.

Communication between parents, students, doctors and school officials about vaping is at an all-time high. Sansum Clinic pediatrician Dr. Dan Brennan is regularly discussing the rising numbers of severe lung injuries and deaths from e-cigarettes with parents and their children. He's dedicated another column to this serious subject on page 2.

We've asked our patients what is most important to them, and a common response is they want personalized care within a reasonable amount of time. One of our direct responses to address this need is the hiring of additional physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners in many of our locations. Backed by extensive and rigorous training, physician assistants and nurse practitioners, who together are known as Advance Practice Providers or APPs, allow us to see more patients with greater attention and follow-up. Read about the 40+ APPs who are working throughout the Clinic on page 20.

The use of technology can improve communication or thwart it, depending on your perspective. We're using our technology powers for good by outfitting some of our medical teams with Motorola headsets. You can learn how these radios are specifically purposed to improve care and service on page 1.

Many of our patients are diagnosed with illnesses or diseases that require the collaboration of physicians from several specialties. The ability of these medical groups to communicate and share information effectively is essential to providing the best treatment possible. This issue includes two articles where the type of communication synergy comes into play. Our cover story on page 18 focuses on local mom and consultant Lisa Murphy Rivas, whose weight loss success with the medically-supervised Doctors' Weight Management Program sprang from a partnership between her primary care doctor, coaches and counselors. A similar team strategy is helping rheumatology patients who often face complex conditions that are extremely difficult to diagnose. Sansum Clinic's five rheumatologists, profiled on page 16, are keen medical investigators who constantly discuss their cases amongst themselves and with other specialists to unravel the medical mysteries they encounter.

Two-way communication is a vital part of our partnership with our patients and helps to paint an important picture of how Sansum Clinic functions every day. We value your input and hope you will take the time to tell us how we're doing, whether you click the "Share Your Story" button on our website homepage, fill out a survey or comment card, or verbally share with one of our staff members what would make your experience with us better. We're listening.

Sincerely,

Kurt N. Ransohoff, MD, FACP  
CEO and Chief Medical Officer

## GOOD HEALTH

A free publication from  
Sansum Clinic published  
three times a year

ISSUE 24 • WINTER 2020

Sansum Clinic's mission is to provide an excellent healthcare experience, recognizing our first priority is the patients we serve.

Sansum Clinic is accredited by the  
Institute for Medical Quality

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Chief Medical Officer*

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# Improving Customer Service

## Using Communication Technology



Vykllynn Garcia, Certified Ophthalmic Assistant



Adilene Hernandez Sotelo, Medical Services Coordinator

You may have noticed medical team members wearing two-way radio headsets. While these devices were originally designed for the retail and hospitality markets, they are helping our employees to better communicate with each other in several departments including Ophthalmology, Optometry, Urgent Care, Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, Allergy & Immunology, and Dermatology.

Doctors, technicians and medical service coordinators can quickly contact each other anywhere within the office.

If a patient has a question at check-in, medical services coordinators can get an answer without having to leave their post. They can also monitor wait times and streamline information that needs to be relayed to the doctor.



Motorola headsets

“Using the headsets has allowed for better clarity of patient flow. With these in place, all staff can be informed and on the same page. It allows us to address delays in care more effectively and efficiently,” explains Kim Hurley, Sansum Clinic Director of Operations & Clinical Coordination. 🌻

## GOODHEALTH

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*This magazine is not intended to provide medical care. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor. All information in this publication is for educational purposes only.*

# Teens, parents, doctors & educators Fuming Over Local Trends in Teen Vaping

YOUR HOMETOWN DOC – DR. DAN BRENNAN

I couldn't believe my eyes the other morning. While on my way to the office I saw a teen riding his skateboard to junior high. He was visibly out of control and headed down a steep hill at an accelerated rate of speed. Heavy traffic. No helmet. Just the kind of thing that every parent (and pediatrician) has nightmares about.

As I looked closer to see if I happened to recognize the boy, he upped the ante by pulling out a vape pen, taking a hit and then raising his arms up like he just won the X Games - all while trying to regain control of his board.

After I arrived at the office, I replayed this visual over and over, trying to sort out what was more alarming: out-of-control skateboarding down a hill, in rush hour traffic without a helmet, or just how addicted some of our local teens have become to e-cigarettes?

My day continued with office visits by teenagers who wanted to tell me about how much vaping had impacted their lives, in just the first few weeks of school.

A few months ago I wrote my first column on teen vaping with the hope of educating myself and other parents about the troubling trends in our community surrounding teens and e-cigarettes.

I offer you this second column on e-cigarettes to present serious, new health concerns and to share some recent perspectives from patients, parents, colleagues and educators.

## New reports of severe lung injury and deaths associated with vaping

Recently, the CDC announced that it is investigating over 1,600 cases of severe lung injury and at least 30 deaths associated with e-cigarettes. Here is what we know so far. Nearly 75% of the cases are male, 67% of the patients are between the ages of 18-34 years, 16% are younger than 18 years old and **all** of the reported cases have a history of vaping – with the majority admitting to vaping THC/marijuana.

THC is the main psychoactive compound found in marijuana that creates a “high”.

Of the reported deaths, several of these are from California. Health officials are also concerned that we have seen local cases of severe lung injury associated with vaping THC.

## HOW ARE OUR LOCAL TEENS BEING IMPACTED BY E-CIGARETTES?

Since the start of school, I have already heard several heartbreaking stories from local teens.

These sad tales involve some very bright and well-rounded students who have either dropped out of school or have changed schools due to new addictions to flavored nicotine or THC-containing e-cigarettes.

Several other teens (who don't vape) confided in me that they have had to cut-off friendships (and are now feel isolated) because “all of their friends vape, all of the time”. Some are no longer comfortable palling around with peers they have known since kindergarten – friendships spanning 10 or more years.

When I consider how many of my patients are struggling with anxiety, depression and mood swings related to their vape addiction, it has *me* feeling anxious and depressed.

When I ask *what* most kids are vaping, the two most common responses are “Juuls” and “Dabs”.

What are Juuls and Dabs? Juuls are e-cigarettes that look like USB devices and come with pre-filled, flavored, supercharged nicotine pods. Dabs are vape pens that can be filled with a highly concentrated THC-containing liquid (marijuana).

When I ask *where* kids are vaping at school, I consistently hear about vaping in school bathrooms and sometimes *in* class, *during* class.

When I ask *how* kids are getting Juul pods and THC/marijuana,



Dr. Jinny Chang, Allergist, and Dr. Dan Brennan, Pediatrician, examining lung damage due to vaping

I am told that they are being purchased from other kids at school, off the internet and in some cases from their friends' parents!

#### WHAT ARE PARENTS SAYING?

Unfortunately, most parents don't really know the extent of what is going on – until it is too late. Many come to me after their kids have been sent to the principal's office or after they have discovered contraband at home. While kids are VERY aware of the different brands, flavors and trends, most parents have not been able to wrap their head around just how prevalent teenage vaping is locally.

One of the more concerning trends I am hearing about has to do with parents supplying their kids (and their kids' friends) with THC and allowing them to get high. Unsuspecting parents are fuming when they find out, after the fact, that their adult friends have been providing THC, vape pens and a place to get high to their children.

Other parents come to me asking why schools are allowing vaping to occur on campus? Their kids are coming home and telling their parents that they aren't comfortable using bathrooms at school because of vaping. Others have shared stories of student-athletes vaping nicotine and THC on team buses and before/after games to relieve stress and "soreness".

#### WHAT ARE DOCTORS SAYING?

Until a few months ago, I really had no idea just how bad teen vaping was in our community. As I speak with more of my colleagues, I think we are all waking up to the reality that many of our patients are already addicted to flavored nicotine and THC/marijuana e-cigarettes.

The CDC report of over 30 vaping-related deaths and over 1600 others who have developed severe lung disease is a stunning turn of events. The report of having this sudden-onset, severe vape-related lung disease locally has been a wake-up call to many in our medical community.

*Story continues on page 4*

## Smoking Hot Facts

- An e-cigarette is a handheld electronic device that allows a person to inhale aerosolized substances such as nicotine or THC/marijuana in a discreet way.
- E-cigs may look like regular cigarettes/ cigars or may be stealthily designed to look like a pen, USB flash/thumb drive, battery charger, watch or an asthma inhaler.
- The current generation of e-cigs can deliver up to 6 times the amount of nicotine as the first generation of e-cigs, making it especially addictive. One Juul pod can contain the nicotine equivalent of 20 cigarettes.
- E-cig manufacturers cleverly use “flavors” such as cotton candy, fruit, cereal flavors, coffee and chocolate to mask the harsh taste of nicotine, making it easier for kids to tolerate large quantities of nicotine.
- Nicotine can cause permanent “rewiring” of a teenage brain that can alter attention span, memory function and the ability to learn. Nicotine can also enhance a teenager’s impulsivity and cause irritability, anxiety, mood swings and learning difficulties.
- The CDC is investigating over 30 deaths and at least 1600 cases of vaping related lung disease. 🍷



Juuls are e-cigarettes that look like USB devices and come with pre-filled, flavored, supercharged nicotine pods. (Dr. Dan Brennan / Noozhawk photo)

Continued from page 3



While experts are still trying to figure out what ingredient(s) in the e-cigarettes may be to blame, preliminary reports indicate that vaping THC/marijuana or “dabbing”, seems to be the most common risk factor.

It is scary to think that local kids have access to and may be vaping a life-threatening chemical in their vape pens right now – as you are reading this column.

### The educator perspective

I have personally seen some of what has been confiscated at our local schools and it is disturbing. Local educators and administrators have confirmed what teens and their parents have shared with me about vaping at school – that it is routinely happening on campus, in bathrooms, between classes and even inside of classrooms.

I recognize a sense of helplessness from teachers who wonder why this is allowed to happen so openly on their campuses.

#### WHAT CAN WE DO?

The number one thing we can do as a community is to continue to talk about the dangers of teen vaping. We need to communicate openly and partner with our kids, their friends, fellow parents, parents of younger kids, educators and local leaders. We must demand more public awareness and accountability.

We need to get rid of flavored e-cigarettes. The flavors in e-cigarettes cover the harsh taste of nicotine and allow kids to take multiple hits without an overwhelming sense of nausea. Because of flavors, some teens can vape an entire Juul pod in a day – that’s the equivalent of smoking two packs of cigarettes! The candy and fruity flavors are also very enticing to kids.

Some cities, states and chain stores have taken steps to ban flavored e-cigarettes. Breaking news from Washington, D.C., is that a nationwide ban on flavored

nicotine may be coming in a matter of weeks. If you understand just how pervasive an issue this is for our youth, you will understand why this is so important.

Our schools need to make education and enforcement a priority. Ask any student, teacher or administrator on a junior high or high school campus and I bet that most could tell you exactly *which* bathrooms are used for vaping. If we know *where* it is happening and *when* it is happening, then *why* is it allowed to continue? It is worth the resources to better monitor these locations either with school personnel or with vape detectors (think smoke detector, but for vape). School-based education about the dangers of e-cigarettes needs to start by 6th grade for students and their parents.

Banning flavored nicotine is not the whole story. The popularity of teenagers vaping highly concentrated THC/marijuana is emerging as a larger threat. Although THC/marijuana is not supposed to be legal for underage consumption, it seems to be readily available.

Vaping THC seems to be more closely associated with severe vaping-related lung injury and recent vaping deaths. Just because it is “legal” doesn’t mean that it is safe and without significant health risks to our youth.

Coaches can use their leadership roles to talk to their athletes about taking better care of their bodies. Vaping THC or nicotine is detrimental to an athlete’s physical and mental health. Some local high school coaches have successfully implemented voluntary drug testing programs with their student-athletes and this is a trend that would certainly send a strong message to an entire student body.

Adults, especially parents and local leaders, must set a good example. If an adult chooses to partake, at least do it away from your kids and please don’t become a supplier for other kids in our community.

## Choose to inhale oxygen

Our lungs were created to inhale oxygen. With so many environmental efforts to keep our air clean, we are seeing an alarming trend of people wanting to breathe in chemicals, oils, heavy metals and other toxins directly into their fragile lungs.

Tonight, as you remind your teen not to forget to wear his helmet, don’t be afraid to ask him what he knows about vaping. 🌻

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*Dr. Dan Brennan is a board-certified Pediatrician in the Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine Department. Dr. Jinny Chang is a board-certified Allergist in the Allergy & Immunology Department. Both departments are located at Sansum Clinic’s facility at 51 Hitchcock Way. For more information, please visit [www.sansumclinic.org](http://www.sansumclinic.org).*

## Jinny Chang, MD, Allergist

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have received more than 1,000 cases of vaping-associated pulmonary injury (VAPI). The cases are from all over the country, including cases here in Santa Barbara County,” said Jinny Chang, MD, Allergist. “We want to inform the public that 80% of those with VAPI are less than 35 years old. Even people in good health are at risk. We are urging all our patients to stop vaping given the number of unknown factors surrounding this new condition.” 🌻



Dabs are vape pens that can be filled with a highly concentrated THC-containing liquid. (Dr. Dan Brennan / Noozhawk photo)



# A Passion for Women's Health

**K**atrina Mitchell's passion for women's health began while researching her senior honors thesis at Bowdoin College, a small liberal arts school in coastal Maine. As she wrote about the involuntary sterilization of Native American women, she set her post-graduation sights on a job where she could directly impact female health. She took a job at an inner-city Philadelphia women's health center and before long, the dream of attending medical school was born. After completing the required science courses through a Bryn Mawr College post-baccalaureate program, she was accepted at Dartmouth Medical School and began the long road to becoming a fellowship-trained breast surgical oncologist with a unique and specialized focus. Katrina Mitchell, MD, IBCLC, FACS is now the second breast surgeon on the Ridley-Tree Cancer Center breast care team alongside 20-year veteran, Rosa Choi, MD, FACS.

Raised in California's central valley, Dr. Mitchell knew that despite the expansive route taken to acquire her education and training, she would one day return to her home state. Until then, she was determined to build her skill set at top institutions. Her first exposure to surgery came during her internship and residency at New York Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center. "I liked the procedural aspects of it, the problem-solving aspects of it, and I liked that you could do it anywhere in the world," she comments. Her residency included time spent at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and three years of research with Cornell's partner hospital in Tanzania, a country that has one physician per 50,000 patients. On the ground and in the villages of east Africa, Dr. Mitchell assisted with surgical education projects, helped with research on a frequently-misdiagnosed parasitic infection affecting women, volunteered as a flight surgeon for a Kenyan medical education foundation and wrote a grant for a

pediatric burn unit. She witnessed how the local healthcare infrastructure was ill-equipped to deal with the many cases of surgical trauma. This experience confirmed for Dr. Mitchell that a career blending surgery and public health would suit her best. "Even within the U.S., there is a lot of inequality in healthcare and supporting women no matter their



Katrina Mitchell, MD, IBCLC, FACS with son, Becker

background and caring for them when they have a diagnosis is important to me," she says. Once back on U.S. soil, Dr. Mitchell began a breast surgical oncology fellowship at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Texas, one of the best training and treatment centers in the world. She immersed herself in the latest forms of breast cancer treatment and research, and upon completion launched a new breast cancer surgery program at an MD Anderson network hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This valuable clinical experience included learning to use the SAVI SCOUT® technology. Surgeons place the SCOUT, a small, wireless reflector, into the breast and then use a handheld device that emits a signal to precisely target what needs to be removed. This often results in better cosmetic outcomes because less tissue is taken out of the breast.

The arrival of Dr. Mitchell's son expanded her personal interest into the kinds of questions facing younger breast cancer patients, like 'Can I continue breastfeeding?' 'Are all cancer treatments safe if I am breastfeeding?' 'If I have cancer now, could I breastfeed in the future?' 'Could cancer affect my fertility?' She dove into the research on breastfeeding and cancer, and how it might affect the women she treated. A keen



student of breast anatomy, she began caring for patients with complications of breastfeeding and ultimately became a lactation consultant herself. “Even with an increase in national breastfeeding rates, there is still a lot of lag in terms of medical support and education,” she stresses. “We have little education on the physiology of the breast in medical school and little if at all in residency.” To fill this gap, Dr. Mitchell developed a breastfeeding medicine course for breast surgeons that she’s offered at medical association meetings in the U.S. and abroad. “Cancer doctors need to know this when they are making decisions on surgery,” she confirms. “We know cancer really well, but we need to maintain a connection to the physiologic function.” While Dr. Mitchell readily expounds on the benefits of breastfeeding, she’s eager to know if breastmilk itself could reveal hidden information on a woman’s predisposition to breast cancer. She is partnering with the University of Massachusetts Breastmilk Lab on a Department of Defense-funded study that will examine if breast cancer and breast cancer risk can be accurately accessed from a breast milk sample.

While Memorial Sloan Kettering and MD Anderson provided Dr. Mitchell with a view of cancer research and treatment on a grand scale, she prefers the kind of personalized care offered in a smaller setting. “You can actually be much more involved in a patient’s care in a smaller location, following them every step of the way,” she explains. She’s devoted to the idea of multidisciplinary care not solely focused on surgery. “It’s about all the resources we have to care for these women. The wonderful community of people here, from the nurses to the navigators to those scheduling surgery, it’s very appealing.” For patients who require procedures, Dr. Mitchell is a firm believer they should be seeing surgeons who only do breast surgery. “This is a nuanced, super-specialized aspect of medicine. It’s not just taking out a mass. It’s understanding what kind of breast cancer it is, whether you can do any breast preservation, whether chemotherapy should be done before or after surgery. I really value having a surgical partner who has been in practice for two decades. That experience over time is extremely helpful,” she says of Dr. Choi. For now, Dr. Mitchell is bringing her “village mindset” to town and is resigned to meet every oncologist, gynecologist, midwife, social worker, therapist, internist (and the list goes on) to surround herself with a tribe of experts on behalf of her patients. While the subject of breast cancer treatment and research can be heavy at moments, even the most serious of surgeons needs some comic relief. Dr. Mitchell’s four year-old son, Becker, excels in this arena. He brings out the silly side of his physician mother and you may find them chasing each other alongside the surf at a local beach, smiling in the California sunshine and soaking in all the free goodness Santa Barbara has to offer. 🌻

*To schedule an appointment with the Breast Surgery Department, please call (805) 879-0680.*



Breast surgeons Katrina Mitchell and Rosa Choi with the Breast Surgery Program team

## RIDLEY-TREE CANCER CENTER

### BREAST SURGERY PROGRAM

“At Ridley-Tree Cancer Center, we work with a team of other physicians and staff to support women through all stages of their cancer care. Our goal is to provide compassionate and coordinated care that tailors treatment to each individual patient, and recognizes the importance of patient wellbeing in the process.”

— DR. KATRINA B. MITCHELL  
BREAST SURGEON



# A Work of Heart



Roberta and Stan Fishman with “George”

If you noticed a figure in the Healing Garden trimming the hedges, you may be surprised to learn this is not a newly-hired landscaper but rather a life-size trompe l’oeil sculpture titled “Gotcha!” created by world-renowned sculptor Seward Johnson. The artist’s cast bronze creations have been featured around the world in museums and public places like Times Square and Rockefeller Center in New York City, Pacific Place of Hong Kong, Les Halles in Paris, and Via Condotti in Rome. Gotcha! is a gift from the Roberta and Stan Fishman Collection to Sansum Clinic for Ridley-Tree Cancer Center. The citizens of Santa Barbara may already be familiar with Johnson’s other statue “Nice To See You” which is located downtown at the La Arcada Court and is listed in the Smithsonian Art Inventory of National Sculptures.

The Fishmans fondly nicknamed this incredible piece of art “George” when they acquired him more than 20 years ago. “All of our children and grandchildren grew up with George. He became a member of the family,” explains Roberta. “He looks so real we justified the purchase by saying it was like adding extra security.” When the couple moved from their

longtime home, they weighed where they might relocate George so others could experience the same joy and pleasure they received. They have spent a lifetime supporting many local organizations but their affection for Ridley-Tree Cancer Center has grown over the last few years as a result of their friendship with Bobbie and Eddie Rosenblatt. Bobbie is chair of Sansum Clinic’s Art Committee. Roberta and Stan sponsored the building’s Patient Education and Intake Office and ultimately decided the Healing Garden was perfectly-suited for George’s new residence. The thought of patients viewing the whimsical sculpture from the treatment rooms on the third floor greatly motivated them both. Roberta hopes when those fighting cancer see George, it gives them a reason to go on. “I can’t feel their pain but I would like to alleviate some of that if there is a way,” she expresses. Gotcha! will be the focal point sculpture in the outdoor space, an accompaniment to the design that highlights the simplicity of the natural surroundings. George is now the garden’s own gardener for many years and for many generations to come. “Gotcha! will

truly enhance the experience for all. He has been entrusted to us and he will be the newest member of our family,” remarked Kurt Ransohoff, MD, FACP, Sansum Clinic CEO and Chief Medical Officer.

Even though they’ve never sold one item from their personal art collection, this gift for the Healing Garden felt right. “This piece was our special treasure,” shares Stan. “And I am thrilled.”



The Fishmans celebrated their 65th anniversary this year and their wish, according to Stan, is to inspire others to serve their community in whatever way they are able, no matter their age. “We tell our children this and we try to show them that you can always give of your time and give of yourself.” 🌻

Presented by the Cancer Foundation of Santa Barbara and UCSB Arts & Lectures

## Genetics, Cancer & You

Featuring Dr. Mary-Claire King, the Scientist Who Discovered the BRCA1 Cancer Gene

Thu, Feb 6 / 7:30 PM / Arlington Theatre / **FREE**

A free public event on the genetics of inherited cancers – from gene discovery to precision medicine and public health – featuring Dr. Mary-Claire King, renowned scientist and fierce advocate for human rights.



(805) 893-3535 | [www.ArtsAndLectures.UCSB.edu](http://www.ArtsAndLectures.UCSB.edu)

## Community Lecture Series at Wolf Education & Training Center

We are excited to announce our 2020 Winter/Spring lectures.

Ridley-Tree Cancer Center and the Cancer Foundation of Santa Barbara host free lectures open to patients and the community to discuss relevant topics in cancer care and cancer prevention.

For more information or to RSVP, please email [events@ridleytreecc.org](mailto:events@ridleytreecc.org) or call (805) 879-5698.

Did you miss a lecture? Don't worry, you can watch it online! Visit [ridleytreecc.org](http://ridleytreecc.org) to access recordings of our past lectures.

### Upcoming Lectures

**E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults**  
**Jessica Barrington-Trimis, PhD**  
 Assistant Professor of Preventative Medicine – University of Southern California (USC)  
 Wednesday, January 29

**Managing Taste and Smell Problems: Why Does My Food Taste Different?**  
**Sarah Washburn MS, RDN, CSO**  
 Oncology Dietitian Nutritionist  
 Ridley-Tree Cancer Center  
 Thursday, February 20

**Personalized Medicine: Redefining Cancer Treatment**  
**Julie Taguchi, MD & Mukul Gupta, MD**  
 Medical Oncologists  
 Ridley-Tree Cancer Center  
 Thursday, March 26

**Countering Chemo Brain: Cancer Related Cognitive Impairment**  
**Linda M. Ercoli, PhD**  
 University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) – Semel Institute for Neuroscience & Human Behavior  
 Thursday, April 23

**Advances in Melanoma and Skin Cancer Prevention**  
**Julian Davis, MD, MA**  
 Medical Oncologist  
 Ridley-Tree Cancer Center  
 Thursday, May 28

## RevitaLash® Cosmetics at Ridley-Tree Cancer Center



Thanks to the generous support of RevitaLash® Cosmetics and the Cancer Foundation of Santa Barbara, the Ridley-Tree Cancer Center offers image enhancement services to help patients revitalize their image during and after cancer treatment. This partnership adds to the programs currently offered at the Cancer Center by supplying hair loss enhancement supplies such as wigs, turbans, wig caps and skin care products. ☀

To learn more about the program, please contact (805) 879-5690.

# Look Homeward, Doctor

## Dr. Cristina Harnsberger Returns to Her Hometown as Sansum Clinic's New Colorectal Surgeon

ED BAUM



Colorectal Surgeon Dr. Cristina Harnsberger pictured with Andrea Hodossy, Registered Nurse Specialist

**I**n 2002, a San Marcos High School student took a few moments away from her duties as a volunteer orderly at Cottage Hospital to peek through a window and get a sense of what goes on in an operating room during surgery. Those early experiences in healthcare set Cristina Harnsberger, MD, on a path that would include 16 years of medical training and education and take her far from her beloved hometown of Santa Barbara and back again.

In 2018, Dr. Harnsberger was completing her fellowship in colon and rectal surgery at University of Massachusetts Medical School when she heard about a career opportunity that would bring her full-circle. Greg Greaney, MD, a Sansum Clinic colorectal surgeon for 30 years, was retiring.

“My husband and I had always wanted to return to the West Coast because it’s home, and our families are in Southern California and in Santa Barbara,” Dr. Harnsberger says. “When I heard that Dr. Greaney had announced his retirement and that Sansum Clinic was searching for a surgeon to replace him, I jumped at the opportunity. It was beyond my wildest dreams that I would ever get to come back and help serve the community that has given so much to me.”

Her new position at Sansum Clinic began in July 2019. Dr. Greaney graciously decided to stay for a few months to help her transition into practice. “Dr. Greaney has been wonderful,” Dr. Harnsberger says. “He is helping ensure that the transition goes smoothly for everyone, including patients he has cared for over

a number of years so there are no gaps in patients' care. He is a fantastic surgeon. I have very big shoes to fill."

## Top Training in the Latest Surgical Techniques

Both of Dr. Harnsberger's parents majored in biology at University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) and her mother taught biology to junior high school students at Laguna Blanca School in Santa Barbara. Inspired by her parents' studies, she majored in molecular and cell biology at University of California Berkeley. Summers home from college provided an opportunity to work with mentors in Santa Barbara. She shadowed her primary care physician and another internist in the community.

Guidance from those doctors stimulated her interest in a career in medicine and motivated her to seek the best possible education and training. She attended University of California Irvine (UCI) for medical school and then University of California San Diego (UCSD) for residency where she developed a love for general surgery. Mentors at UCSD inspired her to go into colorectal surgery, leading her to the colorectal surgery training program at the University of Massachusetts.

Her UCSD residency included two years of research with the minimally invasive surgery division. "I was fortunate to have excellent teachers," she says. "The people I worked with in residency and fellowship are leading the way in minimally invasive surgical procedures and innovative approaches to colorectal surgery."

Advances in bioengineering are helping this field evolve with the development of new devices and techniques that allow doctors to make smaller incisions during surgery, leading to a quicker recovery time and less pain post-surgery for patients who are candidates for these techniques. Among these are laparoscopic surgery and robotic surgery. Dr. Harnsberger shares insight on robotic surgery. "The device is called the robot, but it is controlled 100 percent by the surgeon and does not move independent of the surgeon," she explains. "Engineers have been able to make these instruments and cameras very small so surgeons don't need to cut as much tissue. But I would like to emphasize to patients that the outcome of their surgery is likely no different whether doctors use the robot, laparoscopic techniques, or go through the traditional open incision. The difference is recovery time. New techniques typically enable patients to return to their normal lives more quickly."

## Big City Care in a Small Community

Today Dr. Harnsberger is double board-certified in general surgery and colorectal surgery. She treats a wide range of conditions. One of the most common is colorectal cancer, which can be prevented in many cases if detected early. National guidelines recommend that everyone over the age of

45-50 should get a colonoscopy, sooner in some cases. A primary care physician can help patients determine the best time to get their first colonoscopy.

Another common issue among Dr. Harnsberger's patients is diverticulitis, which she says is more common than colon cancer among the patients in her care. Diverticulitis occurs when pouches in the wall of the colon become infected or inflamed. Symptoms can be non-specific and include lower abdominal pain, nausea, and low appetite. "We don't know what triggers an attack of diverticulitis, so it is difficult to prevent," she says. "But a high fiber diet is helpful." In most cases, diverticulitis does not need to be treated with surgery. It can be treated with antibiotics and medically supervised fasting. Dr. Harnsberger also treats a variety of conditions including inflammatory bowel disease, which is a spectrum of disease that includes Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. And she treats colon polyps that are too large to be removed by the gastroenterologist during a colonoscopy. Many of these surgeries can be performed with minimally invasive techniques.

"In-hospital recovery time for one of these abdominal surgeries can be anywhere from three to five days," she explains. "We're also speeding recovery time by giving patients regular food the day after surgery. Research supports the safety of this approach. A couple decades ago, patients would have a tube in their nose helping drain out the stomach after surgery and would be very gradually started on liquids."

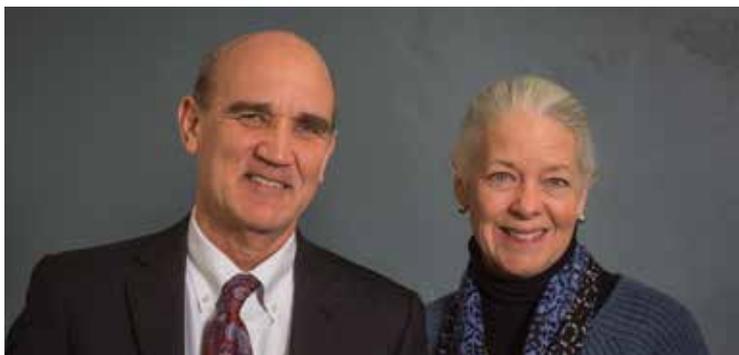
Although Santa Barbara is a relatively small city, patients who undergo these procedures at Sansum Clinic receive world-class care. "The resources that we have in Santa Barbara are very extensive in relation to the size of our community," Dr. Harnsberger says. "Thanks to the generosity of donors in the area, we have the ability to provide the level of top-notch care that would be delivered at major academic medical centers. The contributions from these donors allow us to attract excellent physicians, resources, and personnel. So we can provide exceptional care for patients with complex cases who might otherwise be diverted to Los Angeles or the Bay Area."

Dr. Harnsberger sees her new position at Sansum Clinic as a chance to return a favor for the community that has been extremely kind to her. "I was given a scholarship for medical school by an anonymous local donor through the BP Foundation and through the Santa Barbara Scholarship Foundation," she reveals. "I had my entire medical school tuition paid for. As a result, I came out of training with almost no debt. The privilege to give back to this community is wonderful. I'm thankful to Sansum Clinic for the opportunity to help anyone in the Santa Barbara area who requires my expertise." 🌻

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**To schedule an appointment with the Colon & Rectal Surgery Department, please call (805) 681-7500.**

# How You Can Help



*Sansum Clinic re-invests earnings back into the community by continually improving care, equipment and services for our patients.* In an era of diminishing insurance reimbursements, the Clinic's commitment to providing high-quality care relies increasingly on the generosity of our donors.

**Your philanthropic support will make a critical difference in helping Sansum Clinic to achieve that goal!**

**Won't you join us today with a year-end gift to support our efforts?**

Our list of funding priorities includes the **Lovelace Fund for Medical Excellence**, which encompasses the Physician Housing and Facility Improvement Programs to assist us in the recruitment and retention of outstanding physicians; our new **Palliative Care and Advance Care Planning Program** for patients with critical illness, and state-of-the-art **Equipment and Technology**, with a third 3-D mammogram machine at the top of the list.

We are truly grateful for every gift we receive, no matter the amount. Your support contributes to the good health of everyone in our community. **You are an important partner in our current and future success.** Working together we can continue to better serve you, our patients and the community.

We take pride in the fact that we have been caring for our community for nearly 100 years. Exploring new and better ways of delivering expert, compassionate medical care is central to our mission of serving the needs of our community. We consider it our privilege to serve you and we hope you will invest in Sansum Clinic with a gift today.

Please accept our deepest gratitude for your consideration and warmest wishes for a healthy and joyous holiday season! 🌟

Sincerely,

Janet A. Garufis  
Chair, Board of Trustees

Kurt N. Ransohoff, MD, FACP  
CEO and Chief Medical Officer

***P.S. Your support helps us shape the future of healthcare in our community. Every gift we receive helps to make a difference!***

## Dear Patients,

As the year comes to a close, we reflect on all that we have to be grateful for at Sansum Clinic. **We are grateful for our outstanding physicians and staff** who ensure our patients are well cared for and make it their mission to provide an excellent healthcare experience, recognizing our first priority is the patients we serve.

**We are grateful for the continued support of our donor community**...who serve an incredibly important role in helping us provide the high quality healthcare our community needs and deserves and has come to expect from us.

Here are just a few things we've done this year to further enhance the patient experience:

- Expanded Urgent Care Hours from 8:00 am to 7:00 pm every day of the week
- Opened two new departments – Pain Management and the Palliative Care and Advance Care Planning Program
- Established the Women's Health Initiative to bring greater focus to the special healthcare needs of women
- Introduced WELL, the newest communication tool that connects patients to Sansum Clinic via two way text message

September was the second anniversary of the opening of the Ridley-Tree Cancer Center at Sansum Clinic. The Cancer Center was fully funded through philanthropic support from major philanthropists like Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree and Virgil Elings, and many generous community donors. Our goal is to provide every patient and their family with the best possible care, close to home.

Medical excellence is a never-ending journey. We continue to focus our efforts on keeping pace with the latest medical advancements and further enhancing our patients' healthcare experience with new programs and services. Many people don't realize that **as a nonprofit organization**,



Sansum Clinic launched the Women's Health Initiative following our Women's Council event for women by women in May. That event featured six of our female physicians talking about the latest advancements in their medical specialties. The event was extremely well received and the response from our guests was an enthusiastic request to bring greater focus to the special healthcare needs of women.

The Women's Health Initiative will support educational forums for women and will enable us to continue purchasing state-of-the-art medical equipment and providing unique services directed specifically at enhancing women's health.

At the top of the list of priorities for the Women's Health Initiative is the purchase of an additional 3-D Mammogram Machine to supplement the two 3-D machines currently in operation at Sansum Clinic. Always in high demand, these machines provide greater accuracy, earlier detection, decreased recall rates and improved patient experiences when compared to earlier mammography equipment. We expect to order the third 3-D mammogram machine early in 2020.

In spring 2020 the Women's Council and Women's Health Initiative will host another women's health event featuring yet another dynamic line up of our female physicians. In the survey conducted following the May event we found that our guests were interested in topics such as lifestyle, nutrition and exercise, preventive care and women's wellness, stress management, urinary issues, weight management, and advance care planning.

In the last two decades, Sansum Clinic has come a long way in its support of women's healthcare. In the year 2000, only 20% of our physicians were female and now, nearly 20 years later, 42% of our physicians are women, specializing in fields that have historically been dominated by male physicians, like urology, colorectal surgery, and other surgical specialties.

Sansum Clinic currently provides medical care to 128,964 patients (816,415 visits) and 56 percent of those patients are female. 🌟

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*For more information about the Women's Health Initiative contact Dru A. Hartley, Director of Philanthropy at Sansum Clinic at [dhartley@sansumclinic.org](mailto:dhartley@sansumclinic.org) or by phone at (805) 681-7726. Please consider making a gift to the Women's Health Initiative using the remittance envelope in this issue or online at [www.sansumclinic.org/donate-now](http://www.sansumclinic.org/donate-now).*

## Thoughtful Holiday Giving

Kathleen Mayes has a bench in front of the Elings Eye Center on Foothill. She is grateful for the compassionate care she received from her physicians and medical staff and gave a gift in their honor. Her plaque reads: *With special thanks to Sansum Clinic for your dedication to the good health of our community.*

Sansum Clinic has benches at most of our facilities and a bench is a wonderful gift idea in honor or memory of someone special in your life.

Another lovely gift idea is a tree. We have a pathway from the Elings Pavilion to the Elings Eye Center at our Foothill campus with six beautiful trees, each with its own decorative grate. We'd be happy to make a personalized plaque at the base of the tree as part of the gift to Sansum Clinic. 🌟



*There are any number of gift options within Sansum Clinic and the Ridley-Tree Cancer Center. For further information contact: Dru A. Hartley, Director of Philanthropy at Sansum Clinic at [dhartley@sansumclinic.org](mailto:dhartley@sansumclinic.org) or by phone at (805) 681-7726.*



# Palliative Care & Advanced Planning Care Program



Dr. Deborah Meyers with Ridley-Tree Cancer Center Patient Navigator, Dawn Elliott

**W**hile operating a busy internal medicine practice in Washington state, Deborah Meyers, MD, sometimes visited her seriously-ill, aging patients in their homes. Her hospice worker friends considered her a true colleague because of her calm temperament and the ease with which she cared for those facing the end of life. Her passion for these types of patients recently led her to Santa Barbara to direct Sansum Clinic's new Palliative Care & Advance Care Planning Program. The Ridley-Tree Cancer Center will be her home base since its staff cares for many of the oncology patients in the area however her team will also assist the large number of pulmonary, cardiology, nephrology, neurology and other patients within the community. Along with a physician assistant or nurse practitioner, a medical social worker, a nurse and a care coordinator, Dr. Meyers will connect with a patient's primary care doctor, other specialists and care providers to address physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs. The team will make sure patients understand their diagnoses and will help to create individualized plans to alleviate suffering and provide extra support. "Very often, these patients are only seen in a very narrow realm by physicians. In palliative care, we invite patients to bring all of themselves, to paint the picture of what is going on with them," explains Dr. Meyers. The palliative care team members will aim to create a safe, inviting

environment that feels much different than a traditional medical appointment. When patients can share how they are coping, if they have a support system, if they are able to fill and effectively use medications, if they are experiencing symptoms like pain, breathlessness or nausea, the palliative care team can gather people and resources to help. "Patients can really express what they are going through and they can ask questions. Everything is free-flowing and it allows us a depth that many other departments don't get to reach into," says Dr. Meyers.

Palliative care is a growing field now rooted in current medical research that confirms when patients choose it over routine care, they are more comfortable, less depressed, and often live longer. The decision to receive palliative care is also beneficial for patients since it often results in fewer emergency room visits and hospitalizations as a result of better symptom management and more coordinated care with all members of the healthcare team aware of the patient's health care goals and wishes. Also, when a palliative care plan is involved, the length of time in hospice is greater and results in more support and services for patients and their families during the terminal stages of illness. The Sansum Clinic team will help patients to clarify their *healthcare* goals and will work with them to document their wishes and preferences, including advance care planning and

end-of-life goals, as their disease progresses. The palliative care team will also participate in regular care team meetings where they will discuss challenging cases, offering an expanded look at the patient's illness and needs. Patients will initially be seen at the cancer center, but the future intent is to see them around the Clinic, at home or in the hospital. "The desire is to make things as easy as possible for patients, especially when things become critical," notes Dr. Meyers. When that moment arrives, she adds, the palliative care team can surround families with the care they need most. "The time around a person's death deserves as much respect, energy and support as the first part of life," says Dr. Meyers.

It takes great finesse and relationship building for physicians to share their most fragile patients with a palliative care team but Dr. Meyers brings years of knowledge and experience. She funded her University of Washington Medical School education through scholarships, work-study programs and a job as a phlebotomist during the height of the AIDS epidemic. She completed her internal medicine residency at Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle. As an internal medicine doctor in an outpatient practice, a hospitalist and a director of a local hospice organization, she broadened her view on the best methods to help patients and their families managing life-threatening disease. She ultimately sought palliative care board certification by the American Board of Internal Medicine, the highest national standard for the specialty, and helped to found the Palliative Care Program at Everett Clinic, a physician-group with 30 sites across the Snohomish and King counties in Washington state. As a hospitalist, a palliative care provider and Associate Medical Director at Providence TrinityCare Hospice in the Los Angeles area, Dr. Meyers observed up close how continuity of care greatly benefits patients. While her education may be grounded in western medicine, she is a lifetime student of alternative methods to treat pain, reduce stress and provide healing, such as acupuncture and meditation. She trained at Metta Institute, with one of the founders of Zen Hospice in San

Francisco on meditation and other practices specifically geared to assist those nearing end-of-life. She is excited to refer cancer patients to the wide array of wellness programs at Ridley-Tree Cancer Center. "I keep my mind open because these things have true significance and I think we can continue to explore greatly in this field," she confirms.

A cohesive and cooperative connection to other palliative care experts in the community was a priority for Dr. Meyers. She knew Santa Barbara had a nationally-renowned hospice program but before she even considered the move, she needed a friendly, collaborative network of palliative care doctors who understood the deep commitment, involvement and intensity often associated with this kind of work. "We look for our clan," remarks Dr. Meyers. "It is crucial that we all work together. It is good for our patients." She was thrilled to discover a group of palliative care physicians like Michael Kearney, MD with a history of dedication to palliative care who would not only welcome her arrival, but offer to cover her patients during any absence like a vacation or meeting attendance, so the type of specialized care they offer could continue. Philanthropic support for Sansum Clinic's Palliative Care & Advance Planning Care Program allowed for the hiring of Dr. Meyers and for the program to take shape. Funding from major donors J.S. Bower Foundation, William Williams, Natalie Orfalea Foundation and Lou Buglioli, Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree, Benjamin Wayne and Valerie Mizuhara, Warren and Mary Lynn Staley and Hollye and Jeff Jacobs, make it possible for more patients in Santa Barbara to have improved quality of life when they need it most. "It speaks highly of this community, that we value this kind of care, support it and embrace it," notes Dr. Meyers. "They have allowed us to launch something that many would think was just a dream, so I am very grateful." 🌻

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*To schedule an appointment with the Palliative Care Department, please call (805) 879-0675.*



**Fabrizio Michelassi, MD**  
Lewis Atterbury Stimson Professor & Chairman  
Surgeon-in-Chief  
Weill Cornell Medicine

Please save **Thursday, March 12** at 5:30pm for the **Visiting Professor of Surgery Reception and Presentation** at the Ridley-Tree Cancer Center.

Sansum Clinic's Visiting Professor of Surgery Education Program provides expert educational seminars for practicing Santa Barbara surgeons and physicians. More importantly, it allows surgical residents in training at Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital the chance to interact with the icons, leaders and outstanding teachers of the art of surgery. 🌻



# Rheumatologists: Medical Detectives



Caption: Sansum Clinic Rheumatology Department (left to right) Christian Powell, MD, Susan Lemon, DO, Ena Sharma, MD, Sara Taroumian, MD, Stuart Segal, MD

**Rheumatology** (roo-mah-tal-uh-gee) *noun*; a medical science devoted to the diagnosis and therapy of musculoskeletal diseases and related systemic autoimmune conditions. These include many forms of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, osteoporosis, gout, lupus, tendinitis, scleroderma, polymyositis, polymyalgia rheumatica, bursitis, ankylosing spondylitis and back pain.

Rheumatologists are in many ways keen and analytical medical investigators. In order to decode the complicated mix of symptoms that patients present, these physicians must gather clues from comprehensive physical exams, medical histories, lab results, and digital imaging to reach a diagnosis. “We do detective work, a bit like Sherlock Holmes, to unravel the mystery and try to put it together,” explains Stuart Segal, MD, a 29-year veteran of the Sansum Clinic Rheumatology Department. “There are a lot of tests out there ordered by doctors which are non-specific. We have specialized training to decipher the tea leaves so to speak. It’s a very complex and cognitive specialty.” Rheumatology involves the treatment of more than 100 musculoskeletal diseases and systemic autoimmune conditions. Patients range in age from young adults to senior citizens, something Susan Lemon, DO enjoys because of the continuity of care and the ability to problem-solve with a person over the course of a lifetime. A common presentation among the patient population is pain due to inflammation which most often affects joints or in other cases

tendons, ligaments, bones, muscles, and possibly internal organs. While there is no known cure for many of these conditions, early diagnosis, intervention and proper medical attention can dramatically impact a patient’s quality of life.

As the largest rheumatology physician group between Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area, the Clinic’s team sees local patients as well as others who drive many hours for specialized care. Whether referred by a primary care doctor or by another specialist, these patients are frequently looking for the cause of their symptoms, which can sometimes involve multiple parts of the body. In addition to a comprehensive physical exam, the Clinic’s rheumatologists utilize an array of in-office, high-tech tools including portable ultrasound machines that roll room-to-room. Dr. Segal calls these hands-on machines “a rheumatologist’s stethoscope” because of their critical nature to everyday use. “You can pick it up, put it in your hand, and see below the skin. It’s our super power,” he describes. The ultrasound technology is also an important aid in joint and spinal injections. High-tech bone density scanners are also used by the rheumatologists. Along with endocrinologists, they read bone density imaging reports for the entire clinic, which total 30 to 40 studies a day.

False positives are a regular occurrence with rheumatologic

tests so many are not conclusive. This is where having a staff of five board-certified, fellowship-trained rheumatologists can truly make the difference. A mix of doctors, some with decades of clinical experience and others who more recently completed their fellowship training, means extra insight into cases that require dedicated analysis before confirming a diagnosis and treatment plan. In addition to department meetings, the physicians take noon-hour walk breaks together for a breath of fresh air and a chance to discuss the most complicated patients. With the rarity of some conditions they treat, having several opinions on complicated cases that require lengthy investigation is necessary. “It’s lovely to work in a multi-specialty group with excellent quality of care and have four colleagues who are all well-trained and trustworthy,” notes Dr. Lemon. Sansum Clinic’s shared health record facilitates the exchange of important information aiding patient care. While this multi-doctor specialty group healthcare model is critical to solving the kinds of tough cases found within rheumatology, it’s uncommon in cities the size of Santa Barbara. Currently, the demand for care from patients with conditions like arthritis is outpacing the supply of rheumatologists, according to the American College of Rheumatology. This past year, Sansum Clinic added an additional rheumatologist to keep up with the increasing need.

Great advances in the treatment of rheumatologic conditions have occurred over the past 20 years with the advent of biologic and related medications. These newer treatments control many rheumatic diseases much better than older medications. Remission is now achievable with many patients who have conditions formerly-considered crippling. Within Sansum Clinic’s Rheumatology Department, an on-site infusion suite allows patients to avoid a hospital visit and receive their intravenously-delivered medications under direct supervision of their doctor and two rheumatology nurses. The nurses also offer one-on-one instruction for patients on how to self-administer biologic medications. Joint and spine injections can be administered during an office visit if needed. Drug acquisition and the lengthy insurance coverage process that accompanies it, is a regular part of a rheumatologist’s job. Doctors who are nimble and knowledgeable on how to navigate barriers can help patients get the medications and procedures they need, according to Dr. Lemon. “It is a complex insurance authorization process and it’s helpful to have physicians who are more facile on the ins and outs,” she adds. In June of 2019, the American College of Rheumatology surveyed 1,517 adults living with rheumatic disease in the U.S. and reported that although 90 percent had health insurance, 57% struggle to afford their medications, highlighting the important role a physician plays in navigating the unwieldy maze of insurance coverage.

The entire rheumatology team is committed to staying current on the latest advances within their specialty and to helping the next generation of rheumatologists. Dr. Segal and Dr. Lemon attended a global conference in Madrid this past summer to immerse themselves in the latest ideas on research and



Dr. Stuart Segal with one of two portable ultrasound machines

treatment, safety data and rare disease states. The department hosts internal medicine residents from Cottage Hospital, so the students can receive exposure to a specialty they may not have considered. The physician team also has strong connections to local charities and organizations that assist patients challenged by rheumatologic conditions. Dr. Lemon is an active board member for the central coast chapter of the Arthritis Foundation. “It’s a great opportunity to do community philanthropy,” she says. Dr. Segal and Dr. Lemon participate in annual community lectures to educate the public on disease awareness and treatment. The doctors’ passion for their specialty clearly extends beyond the exam room and is completely focused on bringing the latest developments within their field home to their patients. 🌸

### Sansum Clinic rheumatologists are available at the following locations:

#### Pesetas Multi-Specialty Clinic

215 Pesetas Lane, Santa Barbara, CA 93110

Phone: (805) 681-7500

Hours: Monday - Thursday 8:00 am-5:00 pm

Friday 8:00 am-12:00 pm

#### Solvang Specialty Care

2040 Viborg Road, Suite 140, Solvang, CA 93463

Phone: (805) 686-5370

Hours: (closed daily from 12:00-1:00 pm)

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 8:30 am-5:00 pm

Tuesday 9:30 am-5:00 pm

Friday 8:30 am-12:00 noon

# Smart Choices

## Yield Sustainable Results for Lisa Rivas

### Consultant Achieves Long-Term Weight Loss Success

ED BAUM

**L**isa Rivas, who continues to keep off the weight she lost two years ago, says, “It sure is nice to get up every morning and know that all of the clothes in my closet actually fit me.” Lisa’s weight loss achievement brings a range of lifestyle and health improvements. “There are physical improvements such as better agility and getting more restful sleep, but others are more psychological,” she says. “Previously, I didn’t feel good about myself. I didn’t have much energy, so I was less inclined to go out and be active.” Attaining long-term success was not without challenges for the busy working mother of two teen boys. With the guidance of the Sansum Clinic Doctors’ Weight Management Program, Lisa defined realistic goals, identified program options that were feasible for her lifestyle, and established supportive strategies.

Both of Lisa’s parents struggled with their weight while Lisa was growing up. Her mother lost 100 pounds through the program some years ago. But the victory was fleeting. “I watched my mom continue the same lifestyle she had when she was heavy, and she put the weight back on,” Lisa shares. “Consequently, I was hesitant to go into the program because I thought it wasn’t sustainable. I thought it might deliver a quick loss but without lifelong results.” Despite her hesitation, Lisa committed to the program.

Lisa first enrolled in Phase One of the program in 2010. She lost 50 pounds in six months on the HMR Decision Free® diet. “I felt I needed an aggressive plan that would give me no choices,” she says. The Decision Free diet uses meal replacements along with behavior-based classes, coaching, and medical supervision. She eventually regained most of the weight because she didn’t continue with the Phase Two classes, which is where people learn to keep the weight off. “I didn’t understand the value of Phase Two, so I left,” she explains. “Without that guidance, I fell back into my old lifestyle and eating habits.”

“Phase Two of the program gives people the tools and support they need to take weight loss beyond a short-term achievement and make it a sustainable lifestyle,” says Donna Gill, manager of the Doctors’ Weight Management Program. “Through coaching, goal setting, accountability, and sharing with peers, Phase Two provides people with practical strategies about how to make the right choices to maintain the success they achieve in Phase One.”



Lisa Rivas with family

### Refining Her Approach

Eight years later, Lisa returned to Phase One of the program. This time she was able to maintain her weight loss results over the long term. “When I went into the program the second time, I did it with different intentions,” she says. “I knew I needed to learn to include more fruit and vegetables in my diet than I had previously. That led me to select the Healthy Solutions® option in the program.”

“While the Decision Free diet is the most aggressive diet we offer, utilizing solely HMR meal replacements, the Healthy Solutions option is a moderate diet that incorporates fruits and vegetables in addition to HMR meal replacements,” Donna explains. “It is a structured plan that is easy to follow.”

Lisa says other key differences in her second experience with the program included defining a target weight that was reasonable for her lifestyle and following up with a commitment to attend the weekly Phase Two classes. “The program’s health coaches helped me establish a weight goal that I can manage and successfully sustain,” she says. “In Phase Two, they help patients develop a focus that includes insights such as knowing the difference between when we are making excuses and when we are truly challenged by our environment or ourselves. And they do it in a very caring way.”

The Phase Two classes, like Phase One classes, meet once a week in a group setting. “I love my health class,” Lisa says of the Phase Two meetings. “It gives me the tools I need to keep me focused on maintaining my 28-pound loss. They are there to catch me when I fall into old habits such as late night eating and not measuring my portions. The struggle some of us have with our weight doesn’t have to do with hunger. It has to do with what is in our hearts and minds when we rely on food in an unhealthy way. The classes remind us that this occurs and to use our own personal accountability tools to meet our goals. Accountability is key. If I’m cheating, I’m cheating myself.”

## The Ability to Make Lasting Change

“Being active outdoors is my happy place,” Lisa says. “I love exercise and now it’s more enjoyable than ever.” She cites an example. “When we recently went to Mammoth Mountain ski resort, I noticed that the elevation didn’t hit me as hard as it did others, which I attribute to carrying less weight. Had I been the weight I was two years earlier, I probably would have had trouble getting outdoors and being active at the higher elevation.”

Lisa shares advice for people who are considering the Doctors’ Weight Management Program. “After working to lose weight in Phase One, I urge you to give yourself the gift of Phase Two,” she says. “In Phase Two, a five-pound gain is only a five-pound gain, and you can take it off again. I learned in my first attempt that without the support of Phase Two, a five-pound gain could turn into ten, and then fifteen, and more. Suddenly all the hard work from Phase One is gone. Phase Two provides the tools you need for long-term success in keeping the weight off. And it’s not only about maintaining. I lost an additional four pounds in Phase Two.”

She adds that it is important for people to choose the diet that is appropriate for them. “There are two markedly different options and they are both very effective,” she explains. “The health coaches will help you decide which is the better choice depending on your lifestyle and the types of food you prefer. If you need to learn to limit your calorie intake while keeping fruits and vegetables in your diet, choose the Healthy Solutions option.”

She says that while on the Healthy Solutions plan in Phase One, you can order something from a restaurant menu that includes only fruits and vegetables, which worked well for her. “But for people who are eating too much of everything, I would advise that they choose the Decision Free option,” she cautions. “This plan makes it easier, given the deluge of food choices available.”

“People often think this program is only for people who have a lot of weight to lose,” Lisa says. “It’s not just for people who want to lose a hundred pounds. Catch the weight gain at twenty-five pounds before it gets to fifty. Give yourself the ability to make lasting change. Get help to lose the weight and support to keep it off.” 🌻

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*Lisa Rivas is an independent consultant and journalist. Her work is focused on public relations, government relations, and non-profit management. She was raised in Santa Barbara, California, and enjoys outdoor activities including running, walking, hiking, and biking.*

*To learn more about the Doctors’ Weight Management Program, please call (805) 563-6190 or sign up to attend an informational orientation session, offered twice weekly at 51 Hitchcock Way, Santa Barbara, California.*

*Average weight loss for the in-clinic Healthy Solutions® plan is 28-37.5 lbs. based on research studies conducted in people who completed between 12-26 weeks.*

## Nine-Week Fast Track to Weight Loss

The Doctors’ Weight Management Fast Track session participants follow the HMR Program, a research-based program ranked #1 by U.S. News and World Report for fast weight loss in the 2019 Best Diets ratings.



The diet consists of a low-calorie meal plan which includes fruits, vegetables and HMR meal replacements.

Sign up to attend an information session by January 6 to reserve your spot in the upcoming Fast Track Session which begins January 15, located at our Hitchcock clinic in Santa Barbara.

### Session dates:

Wednesday, January 15 - Wednesday, March 25

### Call, email or sign up online:

Doctors’ Weight Management Program  
51 Hitchcock Way, 2nd Floor  
Santa Barbara, CA 93105

(805) 563-6190

[hmrprogram@sansumclinic.org](mailto:hmrprogram@sansumclinic.org)

[www.sansumclinic.org/doctors-weight-management-program](http://www.sansumclinic.org/doctors-weight-management-program)

# Advanced Practice Providers

## An Extra Layer of Care



**O**n a busy afternoon, the waiting room at the Sansum Clinic Urgent Care is filling up with patients. Manager Mimosa Bitter, BSN, RN looks constantly at the staffing grid to ensure the providers can treat the sickest patients quickly while still tending to the others minus long wait times. Here, a team of nine physician assistants (PAs) and three nurse practitioners (NPs) speeds up the process without sacrificing quality patient care. They have extensive experience that allows them to see patients just like a doctor. They often are the ones who follow up with patients once they leave Urgent Care to discuss test results and treatment plans.

PAs and NPs are medical professionals in a category known as advanced practice providers or APPs. They are highly-skilled, versatile members of the medical team. They can evaluate and examine patients, order tests to determine a diagnosis or gauge symptoms, prescribe some medications, and assist in certain procedures. Having that extra layer of support means more patients can be treated in a timely fashion. It lets the doctors focus on physician-only tasks and brings other highly-qualified, collaborative team members into the mix, especially helpful when additional opinions are needed on complicated cases. For many patients, the kind of care they receive from a physician assistant or nurse practitioner so closely mirrors seeing a doctor, the only hint of a difference may be their title monogrammed on their white lab coat. “Having advance practice providers on

staff has allowed us to offer same-day appointments Monday through Friday, even during the busy winter months,” explains Bitter. “Without them, patients would wait longer and the physicians would quickly burn out.”

Physician assistants enter competitive Masters Degree programs often after working in roles involving direct patient contact. Their rigorous education is modeled on medical school training and includes thousands of hours in extensive clinical rotations throughout various disciplines to round out their experience. The PA curriculum emphasizes treating the “whole patient” and includes coursework on patient education, preventive care, and chronic care management. Nurse practitioners are registered nurses who hold advanced degrees, either a master of science in nursing or doctor of nursing practice. Both physician assistants and nurse practitioners need national certification and state licensing. While the physician supply is growing slowly, around 1% annually when balanced out by retirement rates, the number of NPs and PAs is expected to grow nationally by 6.8% and 4.3%, according to a 2018 survey released by The Center for Interdisciplinary Health Workforce Studies at Montana State University, Dartmouth College Economics Department and the National Bureau of Economic Research. At Sansum Clinic and around the country, the growing advanced practice provider population is filling a critical gap. Longer life spans and patients’ improved access to healthcare through the Affordable Care Act translates into more

people wanting personalized healthcare within a reasonable amount of time. At nearly 20 of Sansum Clinic's locations, more than 40 APPs are directly addressing this need. "We have found that these dedicated and knowledgeable professionals are an integral part of the health care team," says Marjorie Newman, MD, Sansum Clinic Medical Director. "We've increased the number of APPs over the past several years and not only have we been able to enhance access to care, but we have also found that patients are very appreciative of the additional time and attention that the APPs may be able to provide."

Many Sansum Clinic physician assistants and nurse practitioners have years of experience within their specialties. This gives them greater insight and clinical knowledge of specific conditions and helps them to build closer relationships with patients. "In oncology, we actually get more face time with patients because of the frequency of visits. We really do get to know them," explains Amanda Sweet, PA-C, Oncology Physician Assistant at Ridley-Tree Cancer Center. "With the scope of practice that we have, patients don't have to go through two or three different people in order to get action on what they need." In addition to Urgent Care, and Oncology and Hematology,

Sansum Clinic employs advanced practice providers in Internal Medicine, Family Practice, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Cardiology, Orthopedics, Pediatrics, Endocrinology and the Anti-Coagulation Clinic. Kara Jones is a family nurse practitioner in Sansum Clinic's Cardiology Department. She's worked exclusively in cardiology for eleven years, the last four with her nationally-renowned heart team. Kara and a second nurse practitioner can evaluate symptomatic patients, saving them a trip to the emergency room. "I let patients know that I work closely with our cardiologists and if I have questions or a patient wants me to review something with a doctor, I can do that," she says. Kara's team guides patients through various heart procedures, following them through their hospitalization and follow-up, so one consistent person is tracking their case. Clinic physicians recognize the value of APPs as an extension of their care. They often introduce the APPs to patients to explain how they are integrated. Some patients who have already registered the value of these medical team members have selected their trusted APP as their primary healthcare professional. While some parts of the future healthcare landscape may be difficult to predict, it appears that APPs are likely to be a stable and constant presence at Sansum Clinic for a long time to come. 🌸

## Visionary Donors Launch Nuclear Medicine Campaign

**Campaign  
to Advance  
ON THE CENTRAL COAST**

# Nuclear Medicine

Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree has made a \$500,000 gift to kick off the \$6 million

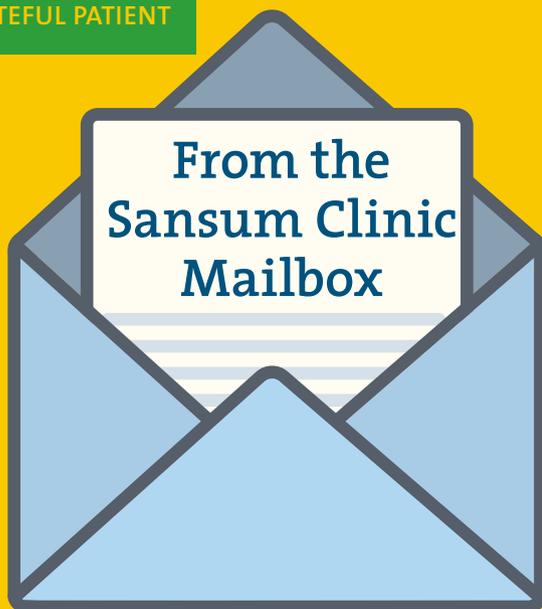
Campaign to Advance Nuclear Medicine on the Central Coast together with gifts of \$100,000 from Brent and Sue Bickett and Denny and Bitsy Bacon. "We are excited to initiate the next evolution of the Ridley-Tree Cancer Center at Sansum Clinic with a campaign to modernize the Nuclear Medicine department and secure the most advanced digital PET/CT and SPECT/CT technology available at this time", announced Kurt N. Ransohoff, MD, CEO of Sansum Clinic and Lori Willis, Executive Director of the Cancer Foundation of Santa Barbara.

Nuclear Medicine plays a critical role in cancer diagnosis and treatment by capturing images that deliver vital information about the function of cells and major organs. This involves the use of radioactive materials to create images that allow clinicians to study the structure and measure the function of organs and to identify tumors, areas of infection or other disorders. Utilizing digital PET/CT and SPECT/CT

technology offers many benefits including improved image resolution allowing for detection of smaller lesions, a reduction in a patient's CT radiation dose by up to 82%, an enhanced patient experience with reduced wait times, as well as the ability to offer cutting-edge therapy with radiopharmaceuticals.

In 2019, the department performed 2,255 PET/CT scans and saw more than 4,000 patients. Nuclear medicine specialists Drs. Bill Pace and David Carlson are united on what differentiates their department from others in similarly-sized communities. They agree it is having the most advanced technology combined with their specialized training, board-certification and experience that puts them on par with esteemed academic institutions. 🌸

*We invite the community to join in this opportunity to ensure the best Nuclear Medicine diagnostic and treatment capabilities are available in our community. If you are interested in a tour of the Nuclear Medicine facility or want to get involved with this project, please contact Dru A. Hartley, Director of Philanthropy at Sansum Clinic at (805) 681-7726 or Lori Willis, Executive Director at the Cancer Foundation of Santa Barbara at (805) 898-2187.*



*It is with great pleasure that we are able to contribute to the welfare and growth of Sansum Clinic. My wife Kathy and I both find it a pleasure to have such a quality medical facility nearby.*

*Although we are here in San Luis Obispo county, and represent only 4% of your client population, we have discovered that your schedulers go out of their way to accommodate our same-day drive from Pismo Beach for multiple appointments.*

*Our experiences with serious issues, like joint replacement, have been smooth, problem free events with experts in their specialty like Dr. James Zmolek. His gift of trouble-free super surgery is only surpassed by his excellent communication skills.*

*Dr. George Messerlian, before his retirement, was also a favorite visit for me. He was a competent, comforting Doctor who was also very good at patient communication. But his replacement, Dr. Todd Engstrom, has also been a wonderful experience and has instilled confidence in me with his excellent advice, guidance, and technical medical information. His "Sansum Way" is right on the mark for me, who always needs to know the extra, why.*

*As I embrace 80, I feel that I am in good hands as I flow into the exciting years left. Keep up the good work.*

*With appreciation,*

*Bob and Kathy LaFollette  
Pismo Beach, CA*

# Patient Business Services



## Patient Business SERVICES

*Ensuring an Exceptional Revenue Cycle Experience*

Changes are underway in the Sansum Clinic financial departments which work on receiving payment for the healthcare services we provide here in our community. These team members who manage billing and insurance will now be known as the Patient Business Services Department.

Their new logo is a colorful puzzle with interlocking parts, a reflection of the many people who gather and document important patient information each day across more than 22 clinic locations. From the medical services coordinator who handles registration to the doctor who documents an office visit, each employee plays a critical role, according to Chief Financial Officer Alex Bauer.

Bauer and his team began an organization-wide educational effort this fall so all Sansum Clinic staff could have better understanding of this process. Managers examined how to refine and improve this giant data haul at every stage. "We are focused on making this as easy and streamlined as possible for our patients. It's an effort to get it right for the patient, so their services are covered or paid for," explains Bauer. Even for someone who has a law degree, an MBA and years of accounting experience, this executive can relate to patients navigating the difficult plain of health insurance coverage. "Even when I look at my own insurance explanation of benefits document, I find it confusing to read. And I kind of live this stuff every day. We want to help patients understand," says Bauer.

New features coming to our Electronic Health Record and MyChart applications in the spring of 2020 will offer many useful upgrades for our patients. Sansum Clinic's Applications and Analytics VP Sean Johnson is leading the charge to bring the latest digital information technology improvements to our system, so access is quick and easy, and our patients receive better quality of care. "For the first time, patients will be able to schedule appointments directly from their computers and smartphones. Patients will also be able to check-in for their appointments, make payments, request estimates, as well as send questions directly to the Patient Business Services Department about their account," describes Johnson. 🌟

# Awards & Recognition

**SEVERAL SANSUM CLINIC PHYSICIANS WERE RECOGNIZED IN THE INDEPENDENT'S BEST OF SANTA BARBARA ISSUE:**

Dr. Saida Hamdani won Best Pediatrician; Dr. Jerold Black was nominated for Best Pediatrician.

Dr. David Phreaner, Dr. Liana Gonzalez and Dr. Rachel Kernoff were nominated for Best General Practitioner.

**SANSUM ALSO HAD A STRONG SHOWING IN THE SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS READERS' CHOICE AWARDS**

Dr. Saida Hamdani won the Best Pediatrician category, with Dr. Dan Brennan as runner up.

Dr. Andrew Mester was recognized Best Ear Nose & Throat physician.

Dr. Glenn Hollingshead & Dr. Richard Ponce tied as runners up for the Best Family Doctor category.

Dr. Douglas Katsev was runner up for Best Lasik Surgeon.

Sansum Clinic was recognized as Best Medical Facility.

**SANTA YNEZ VALLEY NEWS BEST OF THE VALLEY RECOGNIZED DR. KEVIN BECKMAN AS BEST DOCTOR AND SANSUM COUNTRY CLINIC AS BEST FAMILY PRACTICE**

Dr. Jay Winner, Family Practitioner at Sansum Clinic's State Street Family Medicine office, recently published several articles in *Family Practice Management Journal*: "Beyond Burnout: Addressing System-Induced Distress", "Reducing Frustration and Increasing Fulfillment: Mindfulness", and "Reducing Frustration and Increasing Fulfillment: Reframing". 🌻



SAIDA HAMDANI, MD



JEROLD BLACK, MD



DAVID PHREANER, MD



LIANA GONZALEZ, MD



RACHEL KERNOFF, MD



DAN BRENNAN, MD



ANDREW MESTER, MD



GLENN HOLLINGSHEAD, MD



DOUGLAS KATSEV, MD



JAY WINNER, MD



RICHARD PONCE, MD



# Welcome New Providers

## **SAMUEL ALTHAUSER, DO**

Psychiatry Department  
State Street Psychiatry & Psychology  
3916 State Street, Suite 300, Santa Barbara

Dr. Samuel Althausen joined the Psychiatry Department in September. He earned his Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine and then went on to complete his general psychiatry residency at Loma Linda University Medical Center where he was also chief resident.

## **RYAN ARNOLD, MD**

Urgent Care  
Pesetas Multi-Specialty Clinic  
215 Pesetas Lane, Santa Barbara

Dr. Ryan Arnold joined the Urgent Care Department in September. He received his medical degree at Loma Linda University School of Medicine while completing internships and residency at Cooper University Hospital. Dr. Arnold is certified by the American Board of Emergency Medicine.

## **ASHLEY DUNN, MD**

Ear, Nose & Throat Department  
Foothill Medical & Surgical Center, Elings Pavilion  
4151 Foothill Road, Santa Barbara

Dr. Ashley Dunn, otolaryngologist, joined the ENT Department in August. She earned her medical degree from the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California and completed her surgical otolaryngology residency training at Yale School of Medicine, where she was also chief resident.

## **CAGNE HENRIKSEN, PA-C, EMT-P**

Urgent Care  
Pesetas Multi-Specialty Clinic  
215 Pesetas Lane, Santa Barbara

Cagne Henriksen, PA, joined Pesetas Urgent Care Department after graduating from the Stanford School of Medicine, Foothill College. She is certified by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants.

## **CHARLES HUNT, AuD**

Audiology Department  
Foothill Medical & Surgical Center, Elings Eye Center  
4151 Foothill Road, Santa Barbara

Charles Hunt, AuD, joined the Audiology Department in October. He earned his audiology credential at Northern Illinois University and has been practicing as an audiologist in Orange County for the past few years.

## **LINDSAY KATONA, DO, MPH**

Hospitalist Program  
Pueblo Multi-Specialty Clinic  
317 W. Pueblo Street, Santa Barbara

Dr. Lindsay Katona joined the Hospitalist Program in September. Dr. Katona earned a Master of Public Health at Columbia University in New York and then went on to earn her Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Katona recently completed her internal medicine residency at Cottage Hospital.

## **DEBORAH MEYERS, MD**

Palliative Care & Advance Care Planning  
Ridley-Tree Cancer Center at Sansum Clinic  
540 W. Pueblo Street, Santa Barbara

Dr. Deborah Meyers joined Sansum Clinic in October to lead our new Palliative Care & Advance Care Planning Program. Dr. Meyers earned her medical degree from the University of Washington and went on to complete her internal medicine residency at Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle. After completing her residency she worked at the Everett Clinic and Providence Regional Medical Center where she worked in an outpatient practice, and also worked as a hospitalist for several years.

## **KATRINA B. MITCHELL, MD, IBCLC, FACS**

Surgical Oncology Department  
Ridley-Tree Cancer Center at Sansum Clinic  
540 W. Pueblo Street, Santa Barbara

Dr. Katrina Mitchell is a board-certified, fellowship-trained surgical oncologist who has joined the breast care program at Sansum Clinic and the Ridley-Tree Cancer Center. Dr. Mitchell went to Bowdoin College, then Dartmouth Medical School. She completed her surgical residency at New York Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, before doing a breast surgery fellowship at MD Anderson in Houston. For the last few years, she has been on the MD Anderson faculty at their program in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Dr. Mitchell is an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC).

## **MARIE CLAIRE LAMB, MD**

Internal Medicine  
Pesetas Multi-Specialty Clinic  
215 Pesetas Lane, Santa Barbara

Dr. Marie Claire Lamb joined the Internal Medicine Department in early October. Dr. Lamb earned her medical degree at the University of Queensland and Ochsner Health System program in Brisbane, Australia and New Orleans, Louisiana. Dr. Lamb completed her internal medicine residency at the University of Florida Health Hospital & Malcolm Randall Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Gainesville, Florida where she was the chief resident of the primary care track and was a member of the Gold Humanism Honor Society.



SAMUEL ALTHAUSER, DO



RYAN ARNOLD, MD



ASHLEY DUNN, MD



CAGNE HENRIKSEN, PA



CHARLES HUNT, AuD



LINDSAY KATONA, DO, MPH



DEBORAH MEYERS, MD



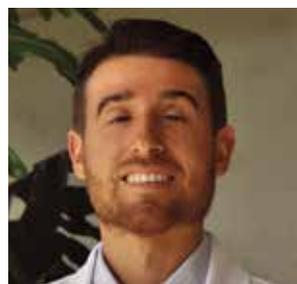
KATRINA B. MITCHELL, MD, IBCLC



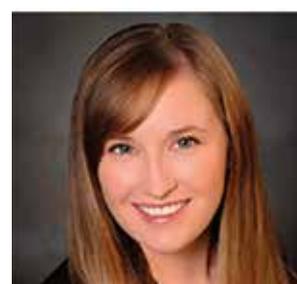
MARIE CLAIRE LAMB, MD



BRIAN NG, OD



JASON SOLWAY, DO



MEGHAN WALLMAN, MD



HONEYLETTE WONG, NP

**BRIAN NG, OD**

Optometry Department  
Pueblo Multi-Specialty Clinic  
317 W. Pueblo Street, Santa Barbara

Dr. Brian Ng joined the Optometry Department in September. Dr. Ng graduated from Western University Health and Sciences College of Optometry. He is affiliated with the California Optometric Association and American Optometric Association.

**JASON SOLWAY, DO**

Dermatology Department  
Pueblo Multi-Specialty Clinic  
317 W. Pueblo Street, Santa Barbara

Dr. Jason Solway joined the Dermatology Department in September. He earned his Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree from Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Florida and then went on to complete his dermatology residency at Largo Medical Center in Largo Florida, where he was also chief resident.

**MEGHAN WALLMAN, MD**

Obstetrics & Gynecology Department  
515 W. Pueblo Street, Santa Barbara

Dr. Meghan Wallman joined the Obstetrics & Gynecology Department in September. Dr. Wallman earned her medical degree from Creighton University School of Medicine and completed her residency at Phoenix Integrated Residency in Obstetrics & Gynecology (PIROG), which is a collaborative program of the Maricopa Integrated Health System (Maricopa Medical Center) and St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona. Since completing her residency Dr. Wallman has been working in an Ob/Gyn group practice at St. Luke's Health System in Boise, Idaho.

**HONEYLETTE WONG, NP**

Medical Oncology & Hematology  
Ridley-Tree Cancer Center at Sansum Clinic  
540 W. Pueblo Street, Santa Barbara

Honeylette Wong, NP joined Ridley-Tree Cancer Center in October and comes to us from Ventura County Medical Center, where she practiced for the last nine years. She received her Adult/Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner degree from Grand Canyon University and nursing degree from Ventura Community College. 🌻

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**Diabetes & Pre-Diabetes Basics**  
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Most programs are free of charge and open to all members of our community.  
(866) 829-0909 [www.sansumclinic.org/health-and-wellness](http://www.sansumclinic.org/health-and-wellness)