

11th Annual Central California Trauma Symposium



May 16th, 2025
Clovis Veteran's Memorial District

0700-0800
0800-0805
0805-0850

Registration, Breakfast, and Exhibitor Booths

Welcome

Empathy in Healthcare and Enhancing Mobility Benefits for Hospitalized Patients

Presented by: John Meccico, PA, Heather Crockett, RN

0850-0920

ECMO in Trauma

Presented by: Appajosula Rao, MD

0920-0950

Comparing Pediatric Trauma Care: Dedicated Pediatric Centers vs. Adult Centers?

Presented by: Shannon Castle, MD, FACS, FAAP vs. Jim Davis, MD, FACS

0950-1010

BREAK – Visit the Exhibitor Booths

1010-1110

Evidence-Based Medicine in Trauma: What Does That Look Like?

Presented by: Walter Biffl, MD, FACS

1110-1220

Spinal Cord Injury Management: Panel Discussion

Presented by: Andrea Long, MD, FACS, Nimar Kahlon, MD, Mia Natalia, CEO, Wade Veneman, RRT, Paul Smith, PT

1220-1310

LUNCH – Visit the Exhibitor Booths

1310-1410

Navigating Uncertainty: Prognostic Challenges in Severe TBI Management

Presented by: Nathan Deis, MD, FRCSC, FACS

1410-1440

Shot to the Gut: Management of Abdominal Gunshot Wounds

Presented by: Elliot Williams, MD

1440-1510

Managing the Impact of Gang Violence on Healthcare Workers

Presented by: Lt. Andre Benson, Fresno Police Dept. MAGEC Metro Commander

1510-1525

BREAK

1525-1625

Baby on Board: Pregnancy in Trauma

Presented by: Gillian Schmitz, MD, FACEP

1625-1655

History of CPR and its Place in Trauma Care

Presented by: David Jeffcoach, MD, FACS

1655-1725

State of Trauma in the Central Valley

Presented by: Larry Sue, MD, FACS



John Meccico, PA-C

Fueled by a deep passion for medicine and an unwavering commitment to service, John Meccico has dedicated his career to advancing trauma care. Since earning his degree from Hahnemann University in Philadelphia in 1994, he has remained steadfast in his mission to provide critical care when it matters most.

In 2009, John brought his expertise to Fresno, becoming an integral part of the Trauma/ACS team. His dedication to patient care and leadership in the field earned him the prestigious TULIP Award (Trauma's Unique Leaders and Innovating Professionals) in 2024—an honor recognizing his outstanding contributions to trauma medicine. Beyond his professional responsibilities, he has been a devoted volunteer at the Fresno Rescue Mission since 2016, offering support and encouragement to those in need.

Outside his professional life, John embraces the passions that enrich his life—whether refining his skills in Jiu Jitsu, rallying behind the Philadelphia Eagles, or indulging in the nostalgia of a classic Philly cheesesteak or a great Italian meal. More than just pastimes, these traditions offer him comfort, camaraderie, and the timeless joys that make life truly rewarding.



Heather Crockett, RN, BSN, CRRN, NPD-BC®

Heather Crockett brings over 20 years of healthcare experience to her role as a Clinical Nurse Educator for Leon S. Peters Rehabilitation at Community Regional Medical Center in Fresno. She began her educational career at California State University, Fresno as a Smittcamp Family Honors Scholar, where she earned her Bachelors of Science in Nursing. She then went on to pursue specialty certification in Rehabilitation Nursing in 2009 and Nursing Professional Development in 2017. She was recently honored with the prestigious RN Educator of the Year Award from Community Medical Centers.

Heather currently serves as an Operational Area Project Champion for the system-wide implementation of the Johns Hopkins Activity and Mobility Promotion Program. She recently certified as an educator for the Johns Hopkins Mobility Advocate training program and serves as the Vice-Chair of CMC's Nursing Professional Practice Council. Her knowledge and insights have been shared through presentations at the Trauma Centers Association of America Conference and the John's Hopkins Activity and Mobility Promotion Virtual Conference.



A. Sarada Rao, MD

A. Sarada Rao, MD is board certified in surgery and surgical critical care. She began her educational career at the University of Maryland at College Park, Maryland, where she earned her Bachelor's Degree in Biological Sciences with an emphasis on Physiology and Neurobiology. She then pursued her medical degree at Georgetown University School of Medicine. Dr. Rao completed a general surgery residency through Eastern Virginia Medical School and subsequently finished her fellowship in surgical critical care at R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center. Her volunteer efforts extend her work. She has worked in emergency departments, alcohol treatment centers, and student-driven free clinics. Dr. Rao has also volunteered for the nonprofit Cozumel Coral Reef Restoration Project in Cozumel, Mexico, which aims to protect and conserve coral reef systems.



James W. Davis, MD, FACS

In 2010, James W. Davis, MD, FACS was appointed the Steven N. Parks Endowed Chair of Surgery at UCSF Fresno. Dr. Davis currently serves as the Chief of Surgery at Community Regional Medical Center, a Professor of Clinical Surgery and the Program Director of the Acute Care Surgery Fellowship Program at the UCSF Fresno Center for Medical Education and Research.

Dr. Davis earned his medical degree from the University of Iowa in Iowa City. He completed a surgery internship at Highland General Hospital in Oakland, California and completed his surgery residency training at Maricopa Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona. Subsequently, Dr. Davis completed his trauma fellowship at the University of California, San Diego. He is board certified by the American Board of Surgery, with added qualification in surgical critical care.

Dr. Davis assembled the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma Verification at Community Regional Medical Center Level I Trauma Center, the first such verification in Fresno County. Dr. Davis also served as the first Chair of the Central California Regional Trauma Coordinating Committee (CRTCC) and continues to work with other hospitals in five county regions to improve and standardize trauma care within the area. A number of initiatives from the CRTCC have been noted as "best practices" at the State Trauma Advisory Committee.

Dr. Davis also served as the Program Director for the Acute Care Surgery Fellowship Program, in which he and his team have expanded coverage of emergency general surgery. Established in 2009, the fellowship program includes trauma, surgical critical care, and emergency general surgery. This is a new fellowship nationally; the UCSF Fresno program was the fourth in the country to be approved and the first to be approved within the state of California.

Dr. Davis served as the region nine chief for the Committee on Trauma for the American College of Surgeons. He also served as the president and member of the Western Trauma.



Shannon Castle, MD, FACS, FAAP

Board certified in general surgery, surgical critical care and pediatric surgery by the American Board of Surgery, Dr. Shannon L. Castle, FACS, FAAP joined Valley Children's Specialty Medical Group as a pediatric surgeon in 2018.

Prior to her current role, Dr. Castle worked at Children's Hospital Los Angeles and as a clinical instructor at University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine.

Dr. Castle's clinical and research interests include pediatric trauma, critical care and nutrition. She is actively involved in her professional network as a member of the American College of Surgeons, American Pediatric Surgical Association, Pediatric Trauma Society, Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma and Association for Academic Surgery. Dr. Castle has shared her expertise in various lectures, abstracts, presentations, chapters and multiple peer-reviewed publications including the Journal of Pediatric Surgery, Journal of Surgical Research and Laboratory Investigation.

Dr. Castle earned her medical degree from University of California, San Diego where she also completed her residency in general surgery. She went on to complete fellowships in surgical critical care, pediatric surgery and minimally invasive surgery at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.



Walter Biffi, MD, FACS

Walter Biffi, MD is a surgeon with specialized training in general, trauma and emergency surgery. He is medical director of trauma and acute care surgery at Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla.

Dr. Biffi is committed to providing patients the most effective, evidence-based and cost-efficient care available. In his role as trauma medical director he leads an interdisciplinary team of surgeons, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and other specialists who are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to treat patients with life-threatening injuries at the Barbey Family Emergency and Trauma Center.

As a trauma and acute care surgeon, Dr. Biffi provides a full range of surgical interventions to treat injuries ranging from falls and life-threatening car accidents to stabbings or gunshot wounds. His clinical interests include thoracic and chest wall reconstruction, in addition to the cost-effective management of gallstone-related diseases.

Dr. Biffi has conducted extensive research in the field of trauma and acute care surgery, including studies on the immune system and inflammatory response to injury, the immunological effects of transfused blood and acute respiratory syndrome. His research has been published in numerous medical journals and scientific publications, including Annals of Surgery, The Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery, The Journal of the American College of Surgeons and The World Journal of Emergency Surgery. He is invited frequently to present at national and international conferences, including the Clinical Congress of the American College of Surgeons.

When not treating patients, Dr. Biffi enjoys golf and hiking.



Andrea Long, MD, FACS

Andrea Long is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Surgery at the University of California, San Francisco, Fresno Center for Medical Education and Research. Dr. Long received her Bachelor's Degree in Biochemistry from the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri, graduating Magna Cum Laude, and her medical degree from the University of Missouri School of Medicine in Columbia, Missouri. Her general surgery residency was completed at Mercer University/Medical Center of Central Georgia, Macon, Georgia. Her surgical critical care and acute care surgery fellowships were completed at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, North Carolina.

Dr. Long joined the Department of Surgery's core faculty team in General and Critical Care Surgery at Community Regional Medical Center (CRMC) in 2016. In her role as teaching faculty, Dr. Long's activities consist of clinical and didactic education, mostly in the clinical setting. The trainees include medical students, general surgery residents, residents from other specialties rotating on the surgical service, and fellows in Surgical Critical Care and Acute Care Surgery. Dr. Long has a strong interest in simulation based education, global health, complex hernia reconstruction, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) health care. She has participated in volunteer clinical and medical education experiences in Ghana and Tanzania.

Dr. Long is also the lead in developing a more robust curriculum for ultrasound use in the ICU for Surgical Critical Care and Acute Care Surgery. This development will place CRMC Surgical ICU on the cutting edge of hemodynamic and point-of-care diagnostic evaluation in the Surgical ICU. Dr. Long is an Associate Fellow of the American College of Surgeons and a member of the Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma, the American Medical Association, and the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association.



Nimar Kahlon, MD

Dr. Nimar Pal Kahlon is a physiatrist based in Fresno, California, affiliated with Community Regional Medical Center. Originally from Selma, CA, she earned her medical degree from the University of California, Davis, School of Medicine. Dr. Kahlon has been practicing physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) for over six years, with a clinical interest in neurorehabilitation.

Drawn to UC Davis for its comprehensive clinical training and strong sense of community, Dr. Kahlon appreciated the opportunity to explore the full spectrum of PM&R while being surrounded by supportive faculty, staff, and fellow residents.

Outside of medicine, Dr. Kahlon enjoys spending time outdoors, traveling, and indulging in culinary adventures. When not in the clinic or hospital, she can often be found helping on her family's farm.



Wade Veneman, RRT-ACCS, RCP

Wade Veneman brings a wealth of commitment and 21 years of experience to the Respiratory Therapy Department at Community Regional Medical Center. For the past 15 years, he has served as a Clinical Educator, leveraging his strong background in critical care to mentor and guide his colleagues. Wade's clinical passion and expertise lie in critical care, mechanical ventilation, and airway management, making him an invaluable resource within the department.

Beyond his direct patient care and educational roles, Wade is deeply invested in the advancement of respiratory therapy. His commitment to the field is evident in his active participation in research and his contributions to the professional knowledge base through several publications focused on critical care and mechanical ventilation.



Mia Natalia, CEO

Mia Natalia is an entrepreneur, keynote speaker, and the founder of Mia Natalia Industries, LLC and Philomath Center. A former firefighter turned business owner, Mia's life took a dramatic turn after sustaining a T9 complete spinal cord injury. Her journey of resilience, identity transformation, and purpose now fuels her mission to empower others through storytelling, leadership, and trauma-informed insights. As a speaker, she brings a unique blend of lived experience and professional grit to audiences seeking motivation, clarity, and actionable change.



Paul Smith, PT, DPT

Paul D. Smith is a staff physical therapist and site coordinator for clinical education at Community Regional Medical Center, Fresno. Dr. Smith graduated from CSU, Fresno with his Master's in Physical Therapy in 1995. He then returned to school in 2012 to earn his post-professional Doctorate in Physical Therapy at the University of Montana in 2015.

Dr. Smith has spent the majority of his 30 plus years of clinical practice in Acute Care strongly advocating for early rehab involvement, including exercise and mobility, for critically ill patients.

Dr. Smith is a longtime, active member of the American Physical Therapy and the California Physical Therapy Associations. He has served in various capacities of leadership including Director and Vice- President of CPTA. He currently serves on the Reference Committee for the CPTA Assembly of Representatives as well as a newly appointed member to the CPTA Ethics Committee. Previous appointments included the CAL-PT-PAC serving as a Trustee and Chair for nearly 10 years. Dr. Smith's contributions to profession advocacy have taken him to Sacramento and Washington D.C. meeting frequently with legislative staff and elected representatives at both the State and Federal levels. Dr. Smith is an Expert Consultant to the Physical Therapy Board of CA. Dr. Smith is also a clinical representative to the Northern CA Clinical Education Consortium and Clinical Education Commissioner for the American Council of Academic Physical Therapy.



Nathan Deis, MD FRCSC, FACS

Nathan Deis completed medical school and residency at University of Alberta and went on to complete his fellowship training in Spine Surgery and Critical Care Medicine at University of Calgary. He specializes in cervical/neck conditions, thoracic conditions, lumbar conditions and spinal conditions.

Dr. Deis has been an Advanced Trauma Life Support instructor and gave lectures on head trauma and clinical skills to physicians. He has also given multiple presentations on topics such as management of acute head trauma, metabolic monitoring in the intensive care unit, and neurocritical care. In his free time, Dr. Deis participates in triathlons and cycling events.



Elliot Williams, MD

Education and Training

- AAST Acute Care Surgery Fellowship – Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center – Los Angeles, CA
- Research Fellowship, Division of Trauma, Surgical Critical Care, Burns, and Acute Care Surgery– UC San Diego – San Diego, CA
- General Surgery Residency– UC San Diego – San Diego, CA
- General Surgery Internship– UC San Diego – San Diego, CA
- Doctor of Medicine– UC San Diego – San Diego, CA
- Post-Baccalaureate Premedical Certificate – Goucher College – Baltimore, MD
- Bachelor of Arts, Psychology – University of California, Los Angeles – Los Angeles, CA

Licensure & Certifications

- American Board of Surgery – Surgical Critical Care
- American Board of Surgery
- Advanced Trauma Operative Management
- Fundamentals of Laparoscopic Surgery
- Advanced Surgical Skills for Exposure in Trauma



Lt. Andre Benson, Fresno Police Dept.

Fresno Police Lieutenant Andre Benson has been with the Fresno Police Department for nearly 29 years. Lieutenant Benson is an honorably discharged Military Combat Veteran and dedicated his law enforcement career to combating gang violence. Lieutenant Benson has held the following assignments.

- *Hired at the Fresno Police Department in 1996

- *Patrol Officer

- *Neighborhood Police Officer

- *Violent Crime Suppression Team

- *12 years on the Fresno Police Department SWAT Team

- *Plain Clothes "Undercover Officer"

- *Felony Assault Detective (Responsible for investigating every African American Gang Related shooting in the City of Fresno)

- *Homicide Detective

- *Patrol Sergeant

- *Homicide Sergeant (While a Homicide Sergeant was responsible for supervising 2 mass shootings that occurred in Fresno)

- *Nighttime Field Commander

- *Current Commander of the Multi Agency Gang Enforcement Consortium (MAGEC). Team consists of two tactical teams, one undercover intel detective team, one undercover VICE team, and one undercover intelligence team. In addition to FPD personnel, the team also consists of one member from the Department of Homeland Security (HSI), one member of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Clovis Police Department, Fresno County Sheriff's Department (FSO), Fresno County Probation, Fresno County District Attorney's Office, and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.



Gillian Schmitz, MD, FACEP

Gillian Schmitz, MD, FACEP is a Professor at the Uniformed Services University and the Vice Chair of Education at the Navy Medical Center in San Diego, California. She served as a board member and past president of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), representing 40,000 physicians nationwide. Dr. Schmitz obtained her medical degree from the Loyola Stritch School of Medicine and completed her emergency medicine residency at the University of North Carolina. She has had an extensive career and has practiced emergency medicine across the country. She brings over 20 years of clinical experience in urban, rural, military, and academic practice settings. She is a nationally recognized researcher, speaker, and educator.



David Jeffcoach, MD, FACS

David Jeffcoach is a Trauma and Critical Care surgeon who grew up in the Central Valley. After completing medical school at UC Davis, surgical residency in Tennessee, and trauma fellowship at UCSF-Fresno, he moved with his family to Sodo, Ethiopia where he was the Chair of Surgery and General Surgery Residency Program Director for four years at Soddo Christian Hospital. His primary fields of interest are global surgery, surgical education, and trauma systems management. He returned to Fresno and is currently an Assistant Clinical Professor of Surgery at UCSF-Fresno.



Lawrence Sue, MD, FACS

Lawrence Sue is an Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Surgery at the University of California San Francisco, Fresno, UCSF Fresno Center for Medical Education and Research. Dr. Sue received his Bachelor's Degree in Biology at the University of California, Los Angeles, and his medical degree at the University of Health Sciences/The Chicago Medical School, North Chicago, Illinois, where he was elected into the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society. Dr. Sue not only completed his General Surgery Internship and Residency Program at UCSF Fresno but he went on to complete both his Surgical Critical Care Fellowship and Trauma Surgery Fellowship at UCSF Fresno as well. Dr. Sue has been a core faculty member in the Department of Surgery since 2007. His clinical and didactic teaching involve medical students, residents and fellows in Surgical Critical Care and Acute Care Surgery. Dr. Sue's mentoring activities include, operating, rounding, and evaluating throughout the academic year and encouraging improvement in medical students, residents and fellows technical skills as well as encouraging involvement in research. Dr. Sue's focus includes: general surgery, trauma, surgical critical care, medical education, trauma prevention, laparoscopy, tactical medicine and prehospital trauma care.

Accreditation Statement

- Community Medical Centers is accredited by the California Medical Association (CMA) to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

Confidentiality Statement

- Any Protected Healthcare Information (PHI) discussed in this meeting is intended for learning purposes only and is not to be discussed outside of the conference.

Target Audience

- Emergency Physicians, Trauma Surgeons, Neurosurgeons, Critical Care Nurses, Emergency Room Nurses, Emergency Medical Providers, Respiratory Therapists, Intensivists, Researchers and Scientists in the field of Critical Care and Trauma.

Educational Objectives

- Have a better understanding and implement current trauma and critical care management trends in the emergency and ICU settings and apply this to achieve better outcomes.
- Acquire specific training techniques and new metrics for teaching and monitoring resuscitation performance, and add this competency to one's practice.
- Be able to identify early intervention and new therapies in managing trauma patients, put that knowledge into practice and show how this can improve patient outcomes.

ADA Statement

- Community Medical Centers is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for participants with disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact the Physician Education Communications Outreach Department at least two weeks in advance at 559-724-4450 or e-mail CMCPECODepartment@communitymedical.org

Credit Designation Statement

- Community Medical Centers designates this live activity for a maximum of 7.2 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s)[™]. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Disclosure Statement

- Activity Director Lawrence Sue, MD, and activity planner Rachel Van Noy, RN, have no financial relationships to disclose.

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