

2026 | SIDNEY R GARFIELD, MD

# EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION AWARD



**PERMANENTE MEDICINE®**  
The Permanente Medical Group



## About the Sidney R. Garfield, MD **Exceptional Contribution Award**

The Exceptional Contribution Award was established by the Board of Directors of The Permanente Medical Group in 2000 to recognize physicians who are instrumental in the development and dissemination of ideas and programs that have a significant impact on patients, colleagues, and the broader community.



## **Sidney R. Garfield, MD**

Physician Founder  
Kaiser Permanente

**"Keep your arms on each other's shoulders  
and your eyes on the stars for innovation and  
change in the future."**

## **Sidney R. Garfield, MD was the physician founder of Kaiser Permanente and one of the great innovators of 20th century American health care delivery.**

Dr. Garfield was a surgeon and visionary. He first applied the novel principles of prepayment, prevention, and group medical practice in the 1930s, while he was providing medical and hospital services for construction workers building the Colorado River Aqueduct in the Mojave Desert.

Then, during World War II, he developed a medical care program for hundreds of thousands of workers and family members at Kaiser shipyards in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Vancouver/Portland area, and at the Kaiser Steel Mill in Southern California. His health care system focused as much on the prevention of illness as on caring for the sick.

Dr. Garfield looked for innovations in health care throughout his career. In the 1950s, his revolutionary hospital designs drew international praise. In 1960, he was in the vanguard of physicians who embraced the computer as a tool that could radically improve the delivery of medical care.

Historians writing about events of the 1900s see the work of Dr. Garfield in co-founding Kaiser Permanente as one of the major social contributions of the century.

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## **Dinesh Kotak, MD**

Oncology  
KP North Valley

**"We should strive to make sure that the right thing to do is also the easiest thing to do."**

# Digital Transformation of Cancer Care

Cancer care is among the most complex challenges in modern medicine—and Dr. Dinesh Kotak, oncologist at KP North Valley, has spent his career making it simpler, smarter, and more precise for every clinician and patient across Kaiser Permanente.

As the TPMG Hematology/Oncology Information Technology lead, Dr. Kotak partnered with regional IT leaders, chiefs of oncology, and frontline oncologists to build evidence-based clinical decision support tools—embedded directly into KP HealthConnect, right at the provider’s fingertips. As a result, cancer care pathways covering virtually every cancer type and stage are now available across all eight KP regions, used by nearly all KP oncologists, with more than 80 percent of chemotherapy and immunotherapy orders completed through the platform.

To support physicians managing abnormal blood results, Dr. Kotak led development of the TPMG Benign Hematology Platform, a self-service digital tool that delivers real-time guidance and enables one-click ordering. Physicians now place more than 1,500 hematology orders through the platform every month.

Recognizing the growing population of cancer survivors, Dr. Kotak and his colleagues built the nation’s first digital cancer survivorship tool, which automatically identifies survivors, notifies them when follow-up is needed, and equips clinicians with the tools to facilitate outreach and ordering.

Other cancer treatment digital innovations developed by Dr. Kotak and his colleagues include the Expert Review Program, which connects treatment teams with national experts within KP; an AI model to help reduce no-shows at infusion centers; a self-help symptom management platform for chemotherapy and immunotherapy patients; and several regional and national projects that bring teams together with a common goal—to provide patients and members with nation-leading cancer care.

“With his groundbreaking, innovative work, he has transformed how we deliver cancer and hematology care at TPMG and nationally,” says Dr. Tatjana Kolevska, TPMG associate executive director.



## **Scott Yang, MD, PhD**

Cardiology

KP Greater Southern Alameda Area

**"We can book patients quickly and close to home, directly discuss findings with ordering cardiologists, and review images together in conferences to learn as a group. All of this leads to better decisions and better outcomes for our patients."**

# Expansion and Regionalization of Cardiac MRI Services in Northern California

Cardiac MRI is the most comprehensive imaging test for evaluating heart disease, providing detailed assessment of cardiac structure, function, tissue injury, and blood flow. Despite its clinical value in guiding diagnosis and treatment decisions, cardiac MRI has historically been limited in availability because of the technical complexity and specialized training required to provide it.

To address limited access to cardiac MRIs for KP patients, Dr. Scott Yang pioneered TPMG's first cardiac MRI program at KP Santa Rosa in 2009. Then, as TPMG regional chair for cardiac MRI, he single-handedly launched cardiac MRI programs at additional KP medical centers; recruited cardiologists with MRI training; and personally trained more than 30 MRI technologists, while also mentoring physicians. Dr. Yang leads a cardiac MRI team of 13 cardiologists and radiologists who meet regularly to review complex cases, implement best practices, and drive continuous program improvement.

The program now serves patients at 13 KP medical centers, providing more than 1,300 cardiac MRIs annually. From children with congenital heart disease to seniors with complex cardiomyopathies to patients

with pacemakers and defibrillators, KP Northern California heart patients now have access to this advanced imaging technology close to home, where none previously existed.

Innovations championed by Dr. Yang include advanced imaging techniques, streamlined guidelines within KP HealthConnect, a regional safety protocol for performing MRIs in patients with pacemakers and defibrillators, standardized nomogram calculators to measure aorta sizes and cardiac volumes, AI-assisted scanning, and remote supervision technology, which allows patients in the Central Valley and other underserved areas to access cardiac MRI expertise without traveling hundreds of miles.

"Dr. Yang has a collaborative, problem-solving mindset, trying to not only solve local problems but also scale solutions regionally," says Howard Dinh, MD, TPMG chair of cardiology chiefs for Northern California. "He has a tremendous work ethic, often coming in during his own free time and on weekends to support patients and colleagues. And he truly has a heart of gold."



## **Christopher Hamerski, MD**

Gastroenterology  
KP San Francisco

**“Interventional endoscopy has evolved over the years to integrate techniques from interventional radiology and surgery, merging these together to find endoscopic solutions for complex procedures and trying to make them as minimally invasive as possible.”**



## **Gene Ma, MD, FASGE**

Gastroenterology  
KP Greater San Jose Area

**“The impetus was to provide interventional endoscopic services for complex gastrointestinal, biliary, and pancreatic conditions in an organ-sparing surgery alternative, while providing geographic equity so that patients could have access to these crucial services across the region.”**

# Regional Advanced Endoscopy Program

Interventional endoscopy procedures use flexible camera-equipped endoscopes—sometimes integrated with ultrasound—to diagnose and treat complex disorders of the digestive tract using minimally invasive, surgery-sparing techniques. Under the leadership of Dr. Christopher Hamerski of KP San Francisco and Dr. Gene Ma of KP Greater San Jose Area, a team of highly skilled endoscopists now provides these state-of-the-art endoscopy techniques to patients across KP Northern California at specialty centers at Fresno, Sacramento, San Francisco, and San Jose.

As TPMG regional lead (Dr. Hamerski) and associate lead (Dr. Ma) for interventional endoscopy, they developed new workflows for referring patients to the Interventional Endoscopy Program and quickly transferring them to the closest specialty center for treatment, providing improved access to advanced endoscopy for patients across the region. Over a 5-year period, advanced endoscopy procedures increased 267 percent across KP Northern California, to about 5,000 annually.

The program delivers cutting-edge, minimally invasive, interventional endoscopy for complex gastrointestinal conditions—many previously deemed untreatable—

such as endoscopic resection of early cancers, palliation of malignant obstructions, intervention for biliary and pancreatic issues, and “third space” procedures inside the gastrointestinal tract wall. Several complicated procedures that had been routinely referred out to academic centers are now performed primarily within the KP system.

Dedicated mentors, Drs. Hamerski and Ma created a regional quarterly case forum and expanded TPMG’s fellowship training in interventional endoscopy. The broader availability of surgery-sparing endoscopic procedures across KP Northern California has shortened hospital stays for patients with complicated gastrointestinal conditions from 14 days to 5 days on average, reduced complications, and lowered mortality in an especially vulnerable population of patients.

“Whether innovating their practice or evaluating emerging technologies, they remain deeply attuned to how these interventions can be responsibly integrated to serve the broader community,” says Smita Rouillard, MD, TPMG associate executive director.



**Fernando Velayos, MD,  
MPH, AGAF**

Gastroenterology  
KP San Francisco

*"The plan was to develop something new, something big, something regional. From the beginning, the inflammatory bowel disease program was designed to be a hub-and-spoke model, where patients can get outstanding care no matter where they live."*

# Regional Inflammatory Bowel Disease Program

Fernando Velayos, MD, joined TPMG in 2017 as chair of the first KP Northern California Regional Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Program, with a mandate to overhaul care for about 35,000 IBD patients across the region.

Ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease—collectively known as inflammatory bowel disease—are lifelong gastrointestinal conditions, which occur in about 1 percent of the U.S. population. Caring for chronic IBD involves the meticulous consideration of evidence-based pharmacologic, surgical, immunosuppressive, and fertility concerns.

Dr. Velayos, KP San Francisco chief of Gastroenterology, created a regional IBD program to support more than 150 TPMG gastroenterologists with easy-to-access clinical expertise, standardization, and care guidelines. The Crohn's and Colitis Advisory Board, comprised of 20 IBD specialists based at 13 KP Northern California medical centers, now holds weekly multidisciplinary case conferences. A key component of the Regional Inflammatory Bowel Disease Program was the establishment of an IBD pharmacy program, which collaborates with specialty pharmacists to assist physicians with therapy orders, treatment initiation and dose optimization, and long-term patient monitoring.

This integrated care model has decreased care disparities based on geography or socioeconomic status, since IBD patients in underserved areas no longer must travel long distances or take time off from work to receive care at distant medical centers (or from third-party referrals).

IBD research and scholarship are central to Dr. Velayos's program. In partnership with physicians and pharmacists from three KP regions and the TPMG Division of Research, he published the largest U.S. study on the real-world effectiveness of biosimilar IBD drugs, resulting in a regionwide transition to equally effective, less-expensive medications. Physicians with the Regional IBD Program have authored or co-authored more than 30 peer-reviewed research papers, received KP Community Health grants, and presented at national meetings.

"Dr. Velayos's dedication to improving patient care, fostering professional development, and driving innovation has had a profound impact on our organization and the community," says Smita Rouillard, MD, TPMG associate executive director.



## **Molly Burnett, MD**

Teleneurology  
KP East Bay

**"Just like stroke in the brain, treatment of stroke in the eye is critically time-dependent. The faster that we can treat patients, the more likely they are to recover their vision."**



## **Aubrey Gilbert, MD, PhD**

Neuro-Ophthalmology  
KP Napa-Solano

**"Patients with acute retinal artery occlusion need immediate workup and management to prevent another potentially even-more catastrophic stroke. The fundus camera accelerates diagnosis and gets patients on the right pathway quickly."**



## **Dana Sax, MD, MPH**

Emergency Medicine  
KP East Bay

**"We evaluated 5,000 patients over 2 years who came in with acute visual loss. Their care was about 35 minutes faster when we used the fundus camera."**



## **Robin Vora, MD**

Ophthalmology  
KP East Bay

**"In ophthalmology a picture is worth a thousand words, and it often dictates what care looks like. This camera is the key to bridging the time gap and getting patients diagnosed sooner."**

# A Vision to Rapidly Diagnose and Manage Stroke in the Eye

When a patient shows up in the emergency department with sudden vision loss, every minute counts.

Central retinal arterial occlusion (CRAO) is a stroke in the eye, which manifests with acute vision loss. Like other types of stroke, the window to administer clot-busting treatment to try to prevent permanent, severe visual impairment is only 4.5 hours.

In 2022, Dr. Molly Burnett, neurologist at KP San Francisco and director and chief of teleneurology at TPMG; Dr. Aubrey Gilbert, neuro-ophthalmologist at KP Napa-Solano; Dr. Dana Sax, emergency medicine physician at KP East Bay; and Dr. Robin Vora, retina specialist at KP East Bay and chair of ophthalmology at TPMG, formed a partnership to rapidly evaluate and manage patients who arrive at KP Northern California emergency rooms with sudden vision loss.

All KP emergency departments now activate a treatment pathway to take high-resolution pictures of the back of the eyes with a stationary fundus camera. If the on-call ophthalmologist confirms CRAO, the KP Northern California Telestroke system is

activated, allowing the on-call vascular neurologist to evaluate the patient rapidly by video with concurrent neurovascular imaging. Shared decision-making is then undertaken with the patient to pursue intravenous fibrinolytic therapy, which can dissolve clots and restore blood flow to the eyes.

The fundus cameras are now in place in all 21 emergency departments across KP Northern California, helping to expedite patient care. While only about 17% of patients with untreated CRAO regain functional vision, KP patients receiving intravenous fibrinolytic therapy have had better visual outcomes: they are nearly twice as likely to experience improvement, and more than five times less likely to worsen compared with untreated patients.

“This team of visionary physicians has successfully designed and operationalized a groundbreaking pathway, which aligns stroke neurology and ophthalmology in a way that is life-altering for patients,” says Dr. Monica Kendrick, physician-in-chief at KP San Francisco.

Sidney R. Garfield, MD

## Exceptional Contribution Awardees

### 2025

#### **Ravi S. Bains, MD**

Spine Surgery, KP East Bay  
Spine Surgery Excellence

#### **Louai Bilal, MD**

Inpatient Psychiatry, KP Greater Southern  
Alameda Area  
Inpatient Med-Psych Unit

#### **Stacy Fletcher, MD, FAAFP**

Adult and Family Medicine, KP Napa-  
Solano  
Reward Efficiency. Set Priorities.  
Empower Teams.

#### **Alicia McCarthy, MD**

Maternal-Fetal Medicine, KP Diablo  
Service Area  
Super SmartPhrases

#### **Kirtan Patel, MD**

Internal Medicine, KP Diablo Service Area  
Super SmartPhrases

#### **Molly Tolins, MD**

Emergency Medicine KP East Bay  
Peer Outreach Support Team

### 2024

#### **Gregg Gayre, MD**

Ophthalmology, KP San Rafael  
Enterprise Eye Care Imaging  
Modernization

#### **Gregory Marelich, MD**

Critical Care Medicine, KP South  
Sacramento  
TeleCritical Care

#### **Bonnie Quiroz, MD**

Ophthalmology, KP North Valley  
Enterprise Eye Care Imaging  
Modernization

#### **Jitesh Vasadia, MD**

Cardiology, KP Santa Rosa  
Amiodarone Monitoring Program

### 2023

#### **Douglas Balster, MD, PhD**

Pediatrics, KP Redwood City  
Gender Expression Care

#### **James Click, MD**

Dermatology, KP Diablo Service Area  
Home Phototherapy for Psoriasis

#### **Katherine Clyman, MD**

Dermatology, KP Diablo Service Area  
Home Phototherapy for Psoriasis

#### **Maisha Draves, MD**

Family Medicine, KP Napa-Solano  
Home Phototherapy for Psoriasis

#### **Daniel Greninger, MD**

Pediatric Ophthalmology  
KP Diablo Service Area  
Pediatric Vision Screening

#### **Ngoc Pham, MD**

Dermatology, KP Santa Clara  
Home Phototherapy for Psoriasis

Please visit [tpmgawards.kp.org](https://tpmgawards.kp.org) for a complete list of award recipients

**Priya Rao, MD**

Hospital Medicine, KP San Jose  
Subcutaneous Diabetic Ketoacidosis  
Treatment

**Charles Shih, MD**

Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery  
KP East Bay  
Gender Expression Care

**Jennifer Slovis, MD**

Family Medicine, KP East Bay  
Gender Expression Care

**2022**

**Simon Ashiku, MD**

Thoracic Surgery, KP East Bay  
Gastric-Esophageal Cancer Program

**Subhendra Banerjee, MD**

General Surgery, KP Fresno  
Senior Surgical Program

**I-Yeh Gong, MD**

Medical Oncology  
KP South Sacramento  
Gastric-Esophageal Cancer Program

**Yan Li, MD**

Medical Oncology, KP East Bay  
Gastric-Esophageal Cancer Program

**Betty Suh-Burgmann, MD**

Gynecologic Oncology  
KP Walnut Creek  
Standardized Ultrasonography-Based  
Ovarian Cancer Risk Assessment

**Swee Teh, MD**

Gastrointestinal Surgery  
KP South San Francisco  
Gastric-Esophageal Cancer Program

**2021**

**Allen Fischer, MD**

Neonatology, KP Walnut Creek  
Early Onset Sepsis Calculator

**Mark Gasparini, MD**

Urology, KP South San Francisco  
Kidney Stone Prevention Program

**Tatjana Kolevska, MD**

Oncology, KP Vallejo  
Transforming Oncology  
& Hematology Care

**Michael Kuzniewicz, MD**

Neonatology, KP San Francisco  
Early Onset Sepsis Calculator

**Charulata Ramaprasad, MD**

Infectious Diseases, KP San Jose  
Covid-19 Pandemic Response

**2020**

**Gabriel J. Escobar, MD**

Hospital Operations Research  
KP Division of Research  
Advance Alert Monitor

**James Jang, MD**

Cardiology, KP San Jose  
Helping Low-Income and  
Homeless Populations

**Leonid Pravoverov, MD**

Nephrology, KP Oakland  
Optimal Renal Replacement  
Therapy

**David Witt, MD**

Infectious Diseases, KP Oakland  
Preventing Hospital-Acquired Pneumonia

The background is a gradient of blue, transitioning from a lighter shade on the left to a darker shade on the right. Several white, thin, curved lines and shapes are overlaid on the background, creating a modern, abstract design. These shapes include a large, rounded rectangle on the left, a smaller rounded rectangle in the center, and a large, curved shape on the right that resembles a stylized 'C' or a partial circle.

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