

2025
**RESEARCH &
TEACHING**
AWARDS

Morris F. Collen, MD

Pioneer, Clinician, Researcher, and Teacher



The TPMG Research and Teaching Awards were established in 2003 to acknowledge the extraordinary accomplishments of practicing clinicians who also excel in research and teaching.

In 1948, Morris F. Collen, MD, became one of the seven founding physicians of The Permanente Medical Group. As a clinician, researcher and teacher, Dr. Collen made significant contributions to TPMG colleagues and Kaiser Permanente members. Today, he is recognized internationally for his pioneering work in applying computer technology to medicine.

From 1953 to 1961, Dr. Collen served as physician-in-chief at KP San Francisco. He became director of Medical Methods Research (now the KP Division of Research) in 1961, ending his tenure in 1979 when he became director of the Division of Technology Assessment.

Dr. Collen's work in medical computing attracted national attention. He was elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Science in 1981 and served as chair of the Library of Medicine's Board of

Scientific Counselors from 1985 to 1987. As a scholar-in-residence from 1987 to 1993, he wrote a definitive history of medical applications of the computer. From 1983 onward, Dr. Collen served as a consultant with the KP Division of Research, where he remained an enthusiastic supporter of research and teaching in TPMG.

Dr. Collen passed away in 2014 at age 100.

"To be a good physician, you have to keep up with what is new, which means you have to be involved in research and training. Patient care is our first obligation, and to maintain a high quality of care, we must also research and teach. And we do."

Ashok Krishnaswami, MD, MAS, FACC

Cardiology, KP Greater San Jose Area



**Morris F. Collen Research Award,
Career Contribution**

For 25 years, Ashok Krishnaswami, MD, has maintained an intensive clinical schedule while pursuing a busy research career aimed at improving care for older adults with cardiovascular disease. His research addresses critical issues in geriatric cardiology including deprescribing, digital health, cognitive disorders, and outcomes related to percutaneous and surgical cardiovascular procedures.

"I started doing research in clinical trials, where I was a local principal investigator for multicenter trials," says Dr. Krishnaswami, chief of cardiology with KP Greater San Jose Area. "I realized that asking somebody else's questions wasn't necessarily what I wanted to do. How do I ask the questions that I want?"

The answer was to pursue training in clinical research methodology at the University of California, San Francisco, and since then Dr. Krishnaswami has been principal investigator of more than a dozen research studies. "My work is focused on looking beyond the patient's chronological age to understand their biological age and level of frailty."

Dr. Krishnaswami is a national leader in the American College of Cardiology, and has published nearly 200 peer-reviewed or web-based articles and given about 100 scientific presentations.

"His publications have directly contributed to greater awareness of the importance of geriatric conditions in cardiovascular decision-making, shaping how aging-related factors are

integrated into cardiovascular clinical practice," says Meena Pai, MD, physician-in-chief of KP Greater San Jose Area.

And Dr. Krishnaswami helps to train the next generation of physicians as a lecturer and mentor for TPMG's graduate medical education programs (Internal Medicine and Cardiology).

"Dr. Krishnaswami points out that we need to think carefully about older adults with complex geriatric conditions and how the risks and benefits of invasive cardiac procedures may differ for them," says Betty Suh-Burgmann, MD, chair of the KP Northern California Central Research Committee. "With dedication and perseverance, he is translating his research findings into better care for older patients."

"Working with TPMG is an incredible joy, especially as a researcher. You have access to data sets and internal grants to support your work. It's a great, great avenue for pursuing your interest in research."

Dana Clutter, MD, FIDSA

Infectious Diseases, KP South San Francisco



**Morris F. Collen Research Award,
Recent Publication**

“While streptococcal bacteremia is fairly common, physicians have a surprisingly small amount of data to guide them in choosing optimal antibiotic treatments,” says Dana Clutter, MD, Infectious Diseases physician at KP South San Francisco.

Streptococcal infections that move into the bloodstream are a common cause of hospitalization and are associated with significant mortality, with approximately 16% of those infected dying from its complications. For many decades, the standard course of treatment has been 2 weeks of intravenous antibiotics, but their prolonged use is also associated with numerous side effects and complications.

“We aimed to determine if switching from intravenous to oral therapy was as effective as entirely intravenous therapy, and whether shorter regimens were as good as longer ones,” Dr. Clutter says.

Dr. Clutter’s study included more than 1,400 adult patients treated for uncomplicated streptococcal bacteremia from 2013 to 2020 in KP Northern California. She found no differences in serious outcomes (infection recurrence, hospital readmission, or mortality) between 5- to 10-day and 11- to 15-day courses of antibiotic treatment, and no significant risks associated with switching from intravenous to oral antibiotics when leaving the hospital.

“The impact of this research is that if patients can receive shorter durations of treatment, we can eliminate side effects such as drug toxicity, drug resistance, and *C. diff*

infections, as well as central line infections and blood clots,” says Ed Kao, MD, KP South San Francisco physician-in-chief.

Published in the journal *Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy* in August 2024, the study is the largest to date of patient outcomes by duration and route of therapy for uncomplicated streptococcal bacteremia.

“Not only is Dr. Clutter a busy infectious diseases clinician taking care of patients,” says Betty Suh-Burgmann, MD, chair of the KP Northern California Central Research Committee, “but she has also gone the extra step of trying to improve their care by advancing knowledge about a problem she sees often in practice.”

“I like to have data to inform the recommendations that I’m making, to ensure that they’re accurate and are going to be successful and as low risk as possible to the patient.”

Dustin Mark, MD

Emergency Medicine and Critical Care Medicine, KP East Bay



**Morris F. Collen Research Award,
Recent Publication**

When a patient shows up in the emergency room with a sudden, painful headache, a CT scan is usually the first test the doctor orders. If the CT scan does not diagnose a severe, life-threatening brain hemorrhage, the next test recommended is a lumbar puncture, or spinal tap, an invasive test that takes more time to obtain results than scans and has a high rate of false-positives.

Over years of practice, Dustin Mark, MD, emergency medicine physician at KP Oakland, noticed that physicians seemed to be ordering noninvasive CT angiograms, a more-detailed scan with contrast dye, more often as a secondary diagnostic test.

“When we are faced with diagnostic dilemmas, there are lots of advantages to finding noninvasive methods of screening that are scientifically validated,” says Rita Ng, MD, FACC, physician-in-chief of KP East Bay.

With colleagues from the KP CREST Network of emergency department researchers, Dr. Mark designed what is believed to be the first study assessing changes in diagnostic strategies for sudden headaches with CT angiograms. “We wanted to quantify this trend and make sure that it was safe.”

The study, which reviewed more than 198,000 headache cases at 21 emergency departments across KP Northern California between 2015 and 2021, was published in *JAMA Network Open* in 2024 with co-investigators from the CREST Network. It found that CT

angiograms were indeed being ordered as a secondary diagnostic tool more often than lumbar punctures, and that patient safety was not compromised by this trend. CT angiograms also identified more unruptured brain aneurysms, which provides an opportunity to monitor these patients going forward, though more studies are needed to determine the long-term consequences.

“Dr. Mark has a knack for honing in on the clinically challenging problems that our physicians face,” says John W. Morehouse, MD, FACEP, physician-in-chief of KP East Bay. “This study shows that an imaging-forward approach is equivalent and effective, safe and efficient.”

“I love answering questions and doing a deep dive into things. At TPMG, I can pursue my academic interests while remaining at the bedside, which is where I prefer to be most of the time.”

Kevin D. Nguyen, MD, FAAHPM

Palliative Medicine & Life Care Planning, KP East Bay



TPMG Teaching Award for Excellence in
Continuing Medical Education

As a physician, Kevin Nguyen, MD, has always been drawn to the sacred space created within each clinical encounter and the healing power of empathetic communication. After joining TPMG in 2012, he began exploring opportunities to support colleagues to deepen their communication skills with seriously ill patients and their loved ones.

“It’s been an incredibly meaningful journey for me to help advance our broader understanding about palliative medicine and the skills that we can apply to caring for patients living with serious illness,” says Dr. Nguyen, KP East Bay chief of Palliative Medicine and Life Care Planning.

While most clinicians recognize the importance of having complex conversations with patients, few receive formal training during their medical education. “These conversations are often anxiety-provoking, because you’re talking about some of the most tender and difficult topics that many families will ever face,” says John W. Morehouse, MD, FACEP, KP East Bay physician-in-chief.

Using cognitive roadmaps with defined communication skills, Dr. Nguyen helps trainees and colleagues deepen their skills and enhance the care experience for patients and their families, and guides clinicians to find more meaning in their work. He has provided countless hours of teaching and coaching to medical students, graduate medical trainees, clinical staff, and physician colleagues—both across KP and nationally—via simulated skills-based workshops, grand

rounds and invited presentations, and clinical bedside teaching.

“His contributions to continuing medical education, clinical care, and patient support are unparalleled, and he stands out as a paragon of teaching excellence in every domain,” says Ted O’Connell, MD, FAAFP, director of Medical Education for KP Northern California.

Adds KP East Bay physician-in-chief Rita Ng, MD, FACC: “Many of us go into medicine because we want to heal, but there’s a whole other side that’s about preserving and maintaining the dignity of the entire lifespan. Dr. Nguyen brings out the very best in our profession and teaches us that medicine is about humanity.”

“A key value that I bring to education around serious illness is to begin with the foundational belief that every learner wants to be the best clinician possible.”

Nur-Ain Nadir, MD, MEHP

Emergency Medicine, KP Central Valley



TPMG Teaching Award for Excellence in Undergraduate and Graduate Medical Education

Nur-Ain Nadir, MD, joined TPMG in 2018 as founding residency director of KP Northern California's first and only Emergency Medicine residency. "I always intended to be a clinician, but along the way I was told that I was a good educator and that steered me into medical education," says Dr. Nadir, Emergency Medicine physician at KP Modesto.

The new Emergency Medicine residency supports a medically underserved region with a chronic physician shortage. Dr. Nadir's program has been fully matched since it launched in 2021, and many physicians that she trained have gone on to careers with TPMG.

"Dr. Nadir is an engaging and enthusiastic educator who can teach a group of learners and individualize learning for each person in the room," says Ted O'Connell, MD, FFAFP, director of Medical Education for KP Northern California.

Dr. Nadir completed a fellowship in medical simulation and is internationally recognized as a pioneer in the development of simulation curricula and models. A strong believer that active learning is the best way to teach emergency medicine, she established monthly interprofessional simulation programs for residents and faculty.

"In clinical medicine many critical situations just don't happen frequently enough to practice, and simulation allows deliberate practice of infrequent but critical cases for better and safer patient

outcomes," says Dr. Nadir, associate professor at KP Bernard J. Tyson School of Medicine and lead physician for TPMG Regional Risk and Patient Safety Simulation.

Her efforts to gain academic accreditation for the new Emergency Medicine residency program excited KP Central Valley clinicians to join the faculty and, with her encouragement, publish more than a dozen peer-reviewed studies before the program even started.

"Dr. Nadir's dedication, energy, and passion have been instrumental in establishing and building our academic program," says Sanjay Marwaha, MD, physician-in-chief of KP Central Valley. "Her commitment to fostering a supportive and collaborative environment is the hallmark of a great teacher."

"The first thing I tell my residents is be prepared to work hard, and the second is to treat every single patient as if they are your own family."

Previous Award Recipients

2020-2024

Morris F. Collen Research Award

2024

Gillian Kuehner, MD, Surgery, KP Napa-Solano
Calvin Kuo, MD, Spine Surgery, KP Oakland
Matthew Solomon, MD, PhD, FACC, Cardiology, KP Oakland

2023

Robert W. Chang, MD, Vascular Surgery, KP South San Francisco
Minggui Pan, MD, PhD, Oncology & Hematology, KP Santa Clara

2022

Kern Guppy, MD, PhD, Neurosurgery, KP Sacramento
Keane Lee, MD, Cardiology, KP Santa Clara
Tran Nguyen, MD, Pediatric Hospital-Based Medicine, KP Roseville

2021

Ronald Melles, MD, Ophthalmology, KP Redwood City
Bethan Powell, MD, Gynecologic Oncology, KP San Francisco
Thomas Urbania, MD, Radiology, KP Oakland

2020

Dan Li, MD, Gastroenterology, KP Santa Clara
Nareg Roubinian, MD, Pulmonary Medicine, KP Oakland

Teaching Award for Excellence in Continuing Medical Education

2024 Marcos Siqueiros, MD, Internal Medicine, KP Santa Clara
2023 Jennifer Grando Ting, MD, FACC, Cardiology, KP San Francisco
2022 Sumanth Rajagopal, MD, Infectious Diseases, KP Oakland
2021 Ingrid Lim, MD, Emergency Medicine, KP San Francisco
2020 Diane Chan, MD, Pediatrics, KP North Valley

Teaching Award for Excellence in Undergraduate & Graduate Medical Education

2024 Brian Lin, MD, Emergency Medicine, KP San Francisco
2023 Christy M. King, DPM, Foot and Ankle Surgery, KP Oakland
2022 Kian Mostafavi, MD, Vascular Surgery, KP San Leandro
2021 Amanda Williams, MD, MPH, FACOG, Obstetrics and Gynecology, KP Oakland
2020 Cheryl McBride, DO, Emergency Medicine, KP Santa Rosa

Visit tpmgawards.kp.org for a complete list of award recipients.