

2024 RESEARCH AND TEACHING AWARDS

PERMANENTE MEDICINE®
The Permanente Medical Group

Morris F. Collen, MD

Pioneer, Clinician,
Researcher, and
Teacher

"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."



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.

Gillian Kuehner, MD

Surgery, KP Napa-Solano

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

"After we get research results, it's immensely gratifying to see how its implementation makes a huge difference for our patients and their families, as well as in our providers' confidence in their patients' care."



Gillian Kuehner, MD, says her most important research project was her first: a study on the management of rare and difficult-to-diagnose tumors called papillary lesions. Partnering with the KP Northern California Division of Research, she presented findings at a large breast cancer conference and published the results in *Annals of Surgical Oncology*.

“That was my favorite paper, because it really got us off to a running start,” says Dr. Kuehner, who will retire with more than a quarter-century as a breast surgeon at KP Napa-Solano. “In the past we would excise all papillomas, and now we can monitor most lesions and reassure patients that it’s fine to leave them as is.”

Dr. Kuehner and colleagues have published 13 peer-reviewed journal articles since 2018, in research areas that have directly led to dramatic improvements in breast cancer management, treatment, and surgery at KP and beyond.

“Her legacy is that we have a much more patient-centered breast cancer program, and we have a group that is continually engaged in improvement,” says Betty J. Suh-Burgmann, MD, chair of TPMG’s Central Research Committee.

Research led by Dr. Kuehner showed that same-day discharge after mastectomy is safe and preferable for patients; breast surgeons can use ultrasound to accurately localize breast lesions, sparing patients from additional presurgical procedures; breast surgery patients do better with postoperative opioid-free pain management; and telehealth was effective during COVID for managing breast cancer and general surgery patients.

In addition, Dr. Kuehner’s research showed the importance of annual mammograms to detect secondary cancers after diagnoses of ductal carcinoma in situ, expanded opportunities for breast cancer patients to participate in surgical clinical trials, and helped decrease re-excision rates after lumpectomy.

“She’s consolidated breast cancer care into an evidence-based, single point of care,” says Christopher Walker, MD, physician-in-chief of KP Napa-Solano. “Women not only feel comfortable and connected with the team that’s taking care of them but also have a path going forward that’s influenced by the best models of care and research.”

Calvin Kuo, MD

Spine Surgery, KP Oakland

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

"This paper allows me to speak more candidly with patients, to reassure them that we efficiently perform lumbar spinal fusions with reproducible outcomes, and they can enjoy their quality of life in the future."



"I see so many patients who are 80 and older, and they want to live out their golden years with full health, be fully active and functional, and take care of themselves and have a good quality of life," says Calvin Kuo, MD, spine surgeon at KP Oakland. "A common question is whether or not they can have elective lumbar surgery, and spinal fusion if necessary, in a safe way as they get older."

Understanding whether elective lumbar spinal surgery is safe for older patients was the key impetus for Dr. Kuo's study, "Are Octogenarians at Higher Risk of Complications After Elective Lumbar Spinal Fusion Surgery? Analysis of a Cohort of 7,880 Patients From the Kaiser Permanente Spine Registry," published in the *Spine Journal* in 2022.

"Our patients are getting older, they're getting more challenged, and we all want them to live their very best lives," says Rita Ng, MD, FACC, physician-in-chief of KP Oakland. "Dr. Kuo's research enables us to do that with an evidence-based lens and the strongest research and analytic capability possible."

Dr. Kuo and his research partners analyzed data from 7,880 patients in the KP Spine Registry who underwent elective lumbar spinal fusion surgery over a 10-year period for degenerative disk disease or spondylolisthesis, a painful slippage of the spine's vertebrae.

Compared with patients between 50 and 79 years of age, those over 80 had no higher risk of reoperation within 2 years and no differences in the risk of complications such as readmission, emergency room visits, pulmonary embolism, deep vein thrombosis, or mortality. Spinal punctures known as durotomy during the surgery and pneumonia within 30 days were more likely.

"What Dr. Kuo has been able to do for older patients is to provide a large degree of reassurance that their outcomes, in the hands of KP Northern California surgeons, are equal to those at younger stages of life," says John W. Morehouse, MD, FACEP, CPPS, physician-in-chief of KP Richmond.

Matthew Solomon, MD, PhD, FACC

Cardiology, KP Oakland

Morris F. Collen Research Award
for Recent Publication

"We built the largest database in the world for patients with aortic aneurysms so that we could help patients make the best decisions about when to perform open-heart surgery."



When cardiologist Matthew Solomon, MD, PhD, FACC, joined KP Oakland more than a decade ago, he started seeing numerous patients with ascending thoracic aortic aneurism, or TAA, a bulge and weakening of the body's largest and most important artery.

"It became clear very quickly that there was a huge lack of evidence in how to best take care of these patients," Dr. Solomon says. "The data was based on a few hundred patients, and I knew that we had thousands in our system."

Appointed to the KP Northern California Division of Research's Physician-Researcher Program, Dr. Solomon commenced the largest study ever conducted on TAA, to help resolve controversy among cardiologists and surgeons over when open-heart surgery was necessary to protect patients from life-threatening aortic tears.

"Dr. Solomon is passionate about creating new avenues of learning, about research that advances our field," says Rita Ng, MD, FACC, cardiologist and physician-in-chief of KP Oakland.

The study reviewed the cases of 6,400 TAA patients in KP Northern California between 2000 and 2016 and found that those with an aorta measuring 6 centimeters or larger were at significantly higher risk of tears than those with smaller aortas.

The results were published in *JAMA Cardiology* in 2022 with Dr. Solomon as lead author and numerous co-authors affiliated with the KP Northern California Center for Thoracic Aortic Disease and Division of Research.

"Dr. Solomon and his team have done an exceptional amount of work," says John W. Morehouse, MD, FACEP, CPPS, physician-in-chief of KP Richmond. "The careful, collaborative effort of many hundreds of people over many years yielded these important results."

The practice-changing study supports current cardiology guidelines, which recommend surgery to correct TAAs primarily in patients with aortas 5.5 centimeters or larger.

"Patients weren't able to feel confident about how safe it was to be observed versus how safe it was to have surgery," says Betty J. Suh-Burgmann, MD, chair of the TPMG Central Research Committee. "Dr. Solomon's study shows that for patients with smaller aneurysms, observation is very safe."

Marcos Siqueiros, MD

Internal Medicine, KP Santa Clara

Teaching Award for Excellence in
Continuing Medical Education

"The collective dedication of my colleagues to embracing the values of equity and inclusion and meaningfully elevating the care experience of marginalized communities has been a motivator for me and will continue to be until I retire."



“Gender-affirming care is a mindset and philosophy of care delivery, a patient-centered model that focuses on compassion, cultural humility, and service,” says Marcos Siqueiros, MD, regional lead of transgender care experience for KP Northern California.

Throughout his career, Dr. Siqueiros has taken on leadership roles in medical education around gender-affirming care, LGBTQ+ health, and long COVID medicine.

“He has driven our whole program to provide exceptional, welcoming care to these patient populations,” says Rakesh Chaudhary, MD, physician-in-chief of KP Santa Clara.

The driving force behind improving LGBTQ+ patient care experiences at KP, Dr. Siqueiros designed a multifaceted educational strategy to address barriers to care, including the “Pathways to Gender-Affirming Care” program, TPMG’s first regional CME series on LGBTQ+ health topics, and the enduring “Introduction to Gender-Affirming Care” modules on KP Learn, which have been completed by over 4,000 learners.

Likewise, during the COVID-19 pandemic Dr. Siqueiros stepped up to help provide daily regional informational briefings, and he was subsequently tapped to develop and lead the long COVID program.

“He is having a dramatic impact on how our physicians care for patients, and most importantly, those that are either historically marginalized or overlooked,” says Ted O’Connell, MD, FAAFP, director of medical education for KP Northern California.

Dr. Siqueiros cocreated clinical guidelines for long COVID, developed an educational curriculum for physicians, and helped create online resources and the long COVID support class series for patients. In addition to basic clinical information, the class provides a sense of community for long COVID patients by offering opportunities to connect with other patients and share experiences.

“At the beginning of the COVID pandemic I saw a lot of parallels to the AIDS epidemic,” Dr. Siqueiros says. “There was a lot of fear and misinformation and even dismissing the very real experiences that patients were facing. That ignited in me the idea that our patients and providers need a stable message from a trusted resource that was calm, consistent, and based in science.”

Brian Lin, MD

Emergency Medicine, KP San Francisco

Teaching Award for Excellence in
Undergraduate and Graduate Medical Education

"It's of utmost importance to me that I teach in a way that is always respectful of the student, and also teach them the importance of being respectful, present, and accountable to their patients."



“Before I became a doctor, I wanted to be a teacher,” says Brian Lin, MD, TPMG director of undergraduate medical education and program director of the KP Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (KLIC) at KP San Francisco. “That was my ambition, but medicine was also in my blood.”

Dr. Lin’s father is a KP physician and his mother was a nurse, “so I was kind of born to do this,” he says. “The way I reconciled it is that I realized I could be a teacher within medicine.”

“He is passionate about medical education,” says Ted O’Connell, MD, FAAFP, director of medical education for KP Northern California. “Many students have commented on how invested he is in their success and their involvement with medicine, and that he follows up with them long after they’ve finished their rotations.”

Developed by Dr. Lin and launched in 2019, KLIC-SF is a comprehensive curriculum and mentorship program for 3rd-year medical students. In addition to rotations in multiple specialties, learners build their own patient panels, attend biweekly and monthly educational meetings, receive quarterly assessments, and participate in reflection sessions.

The TPMG physicians who train the clerkship students also receive in-depth guidance and support from Dr. Lin.

“The best approach I recommend for any clinician who teaches is to realize that students are learning from every observation they make about the way you work. When we teach expository knowledge, like a medical fact, we are giving them a chapter or a page from our playbook. But what we role model in our interactions with patients, with staff, and with other physicians—that speaks volumes.”

Always the educator, Dr. Lin has given dozens of invited lectures on emergency medicine at local, regional, national, and international meetings and conferences; hosted grand rounds for academic residencies; served as a peer reviewer and contributor to numerous journals and blogs; and recorded more than 20 segments on medical podcasts.

“No matter how unassuming the patient’s case might appear, Dr. Lin always finds a teachable moment,” says Monica Kendrick, MD, physician-in-chief of KP San Francisco. “His outstanding clinical bedside teaching is what most impresses his colleagues and learners.”

Previous Award Recipients

2019-2023

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

Morris F. Collen Research Award

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

2019

David Baer, MD, FACP, Oncology, KP Oakland
Douglas Corley, MD, PhD, Gastroenterology, KP San Francisco
Theodore Levin, MD, Gastroenterology, KP Walnut Creek
Andrea Wickremasinghe, MD, Neonatology, KP Santa Clara

Teaching Award for Excellence in Continuing Medical Education

- 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
- 2019 Neelesh Kenia, MD, Pediatrics & Sports Medicine, KP San Francisco

Teaching Award for Excellence in Undergraduate & Graduate Medical Education

- 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
- 2019 Mary Patton, MD, FACP, Internal Medicine, KP Oakland

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