South Texas Chapter ACS Chapters American College of Surgeons NEWSLETTER

From the Chapter President

Welcome to the inaugural South Texas Chapter of the American College of Surgeons Newsletter! We have a chapter rich in clinically skilled surgeons, groundbreaking surgeon scientists, revered surgical educators, experts in surgical policy and advocacy, and the best and brightest medical students and surgical trainees in the nation. My role as your president is to highlight the great work being done in our chapter locally and provide you connections to the educational and leadership programs offered by the College nationally. The focus of my presidency is to build a chapter that will sustain itself through coaching our current talent and mentoring our future talent to excel to their fullest surgical potential.

This newsletter is our first attempt at introducing our local leadership and the roles each person plays. It is my hope that current FACS will become more involved with our organization and that Residents and Associate Surgeons will be inspired to join the American College of Surgeons in the future.

Member Highlights – *Meet the Officers of South Texas ACS!*

President – David Santos, MD, FACS
President-Elect – Celia Ledet, MD, FACS
Vice President – Ravi Radhakrishnan, MD, FACS
Treasurer – Hop Tran Cao, MD, FACS
Secretary – Richard Lu, MD, FACS
Immediate Past President – Lilian Kao, MD, FACS

ACS Meetings & Opportunities

ACS Clinical Congress 2026
Washington, DC | September 26–29, 2026

ACS Innovation Summit
Chicago, IL | March 11-12, 2027

Other National Meetings

Academic Surgical Congress (AAS/SUS)
Washington, DC | Feb 9-11, 2027

AHPBA Annual Meeting 2027
Miami Beach, FL | Mar 11-14, 2027

ASE/Surgical Education Week
San Antonio, TX | Mar 30 – Apr 3, 2027

SAGES 2027 Annual Meeting
Las Vegas, NV | Apr 6-9, 2027

APSA 2027
San Diego, CA | May 12-15, 2027

DDW/SSAT 2027
Washington, DC | May 15-18, 2027

American Surgical Association 2027
Houston, TX | Apr 15-17, 2027

Regional Events

Texas Surgical Society
217th Meeting Fall 2026
San Antonio, TX | Oct 9-11th 2026

Committee *on Trauma*

Chair: Carlos Palacio, MD, FACS

Overview

The American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma (ACS COT) works to improve injury prevention, trauma care, and patient outcomes across the continuum of care. The South Texas Committee on Trauma supports these efforts through education, system development, quality improvement, advocacy, and collaboration among trauma stakeholders throughout the region.

Key Initiatives

Current priorities include strengthening regional trauma systems through the Regional Medical Operations Center (RMOC), expanding first responder education through the Prehospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS) program, and improving initial trauma care through Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) courses and the Stop the Bleed initiative.

The committee is also supporting development of a prehospital whole blood program to reduce preventable deaths and remains actively engaged in injury prevention and advocacy efforts.

Recent Activity

Over the past year, the committee successfully conducted 80 regional ATLS courses, helping educate providers across South Texas. The committee also hosted its first in-person Resident Paper Competition in San Antonio, with Dr. Ava Mokhtari of Baylor College of Medicine representing the region at the national ACS COT Paper Competition.

In addition, the committee continued to support trauma quality improvement efforts through participation in the Texas Trauma Quality Improvement Program (TQIP) collaborative administered by TETAF.

Upcoming Opportunities

Members interested in trauma care, education, advocacy, or quality improvement are encouraged to become involved with the South Texas ACS Committee on Trauma. A call for abstracts will be released soon for this year's Resident Paper Competition in San Antonio and the Region 6 Resident Paper Competition in McAllen.

For more information, contact Dr. Carlos Palacio at chplmd@gmail.com.

Committee *on Cancer*

Chair: Makesha Miggins, MD, FACS

Overview

The American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC) establishes quality standards for cancer care programs through the Optimal Resources for Cancer Care guidelines, including the Operative Standards for Cancer Surgery. As State Chair, Dr. Miggins serves as a resource for CoC-accredited programs and Cancer Liaison Physicians (CLPs), providing guidance on standards implementation, accreditation requirements, and quality improvement efforts.

Key Initiatives

The committee is focused on supporting CoC-accredited programs through education, quality improvement, and data-driven performance assessment. Key resources include the National Cancer Database (NCDB) and the Cancer Quality Improvement Program (CQIP), which help programs evaluate clinical outcomes, benchmark performance, and identify opportunities to improve cancer care.

The committee also promotes engagement in national CoC initiatives and research efforts, including studies evaluating implementation of ACS cancer care standards across accredited programs.

Recent Activity

The NCDB has released the 2024 Participant User File (PUF), providing investigators at CoC-accredited programs access to cancer data spanning 2004-2024. This resource supports research and quality improvement efforts throughout the cancer care community.

In addition, the 2025 Cancer Quality Improvement Program (CQIP) Report is now available through QPort. The report provides participating programs with benchmarking data on quality measures, short-term outcomes, and long-term outcomes, including five-year survival rates for commonly treated cancers.

Upcoming Opportunities

Several opportunities are available for CoC programs and Cancer Liaison Physicians this fall:

- CLP Virtual Meeting: September 16
- CoC Annual Plenary Sessions: September 26 in Washington, DC (registration included with ACS Clinical Congress registration)

Cancer Liaison Physicians are also encouraged to participate in the AESOP Study, a five-year, National Cancer Institute-funded initiative evaluating implementation of CoC Operative Standards and their impact on cancer care. CLPs at programs undergoing site visits may receive a brief survey and will receive a stipend upon completion.

For questions or support related to CoC programs and accreditation activities, members are encouraged to contact Dr. Miggins at mvmiggins@mdanderson.org.

Annual Meeting Planning Committee

Chair: Grace Ng, MD, FACS

Overview

The Annual Meeting Planning Committee is responsible for developing a dynamic and engaging conference that reflects the breadth of surgical practice across South Texas. The committee works to ensure that meeting content represents a diverse range of surgical specialties, practice settings, and career stages, from trainees to experienced surgeons in practice.

Key Initiatives

The committee focuses on creating a high-quality educational program by identifying relevant topics, selecting impactful presentations, and promoting participation from surgeons throughout the region. A key priority is encouraging members to share their expertise through abstract submissions and educational presentations that highlight innovation, research, and best practices in surgical care.

Help shape the 2027 South Texas Chapter, American College of Surgeons Annual Meeting by joining the Program Planning Committee.

Planning Committee members will help:

- Select timely educational topics
- Recommend and recruit engaging speakers
- Help grade abstracts
- Recruit exhibitors and sponsors
- Promote the meeting to colleagues
- Create a valuable experience for attendees

Your ideas, expertise, and connections can help make the 2027 Annual Meeting a success. We invite you to join the Planning Committee and help build an outstanding program for the South Texas surgical community. Our first meeting is Wednesday, September 16th at 4:30pm on Zoom. We will send you the zoom link after you submit the form below.

Young Fellows Association

Chair: Sarah Samreen, MD

Overview

The South Texas ACS Young Fellows Association Committee supports surgeons under age 45 as they navigate the early stages of their careers. The committee is committed to fostering mentorship, professional development, leadership growth, and meaningful engagement within both the South Texas Chapter and the American College of Surgeons.

Key Initiatives

The committee's priorities include creating opportunities for networking, mentorship, education, career development, and leadership. By building connections among early-career surgeons, the committee seeks to strengthen professional relationships and encourage greater participation in ACS activities and programs.

Recent Activity

The committee has continued building a stronger community of Young Fellows by promoting opportunities for collaboration, idea sharing, and engagement within the Chapter. Efforts have focused on increasing visibility and involvement of early-career surgeons across South Texas.

Upcoming Opportunities

Looking ahead, the committee plans to expand opportunities for networking, mentorship, and participation in Chapter activities. Young Fellows are encouraged to become involved by attending events, contributing ideas, developing new initiatives, or pursuing leadership opportunities within the Chapter.

RAS Committee

Resident & Associate Society

Chair: Megan McClanahan, MD

Overview

The South Texas Chapter of the American College of Surgeons (ACS) continues to expand its Resident and Associate Society (RAS) Committee, an initiative dedicated to strengthening the engagement, leadership development, and professional growth of surgical residents and young surgeons throughout South Texas. The committee supports the Chapter's mission by creating opportunities for trainees and early-career surgeons to participate in ACS activities, develop leadership skills, build professional networks, and ensure their voices are represented at local, state, and national levels.

Key Initiatives

The RAS Committee is focused on building a stronger regional surgical community by connecting residents, medical students, young surgeons, and ACS Fellows across South Texas training programs. A resident-led leadership structure is being developed, with opportunities for involvement in education, communications, advocacy, mentorship, and global surgery.

Advocacy initiatives will include participation in Texas Surgeons Advocacy Day, the ACS Leadership & Advocacy Summit, advocacy writing workshops, and discussions on healthcare policy. The committee also hopes to support resident participation in national ACS programs through travel awards and stipends.

Recent Activity

Over the past year, the committee has continued to grow its foundation by fostering collaboration among trainees and young surgeons across the region. Efforts have focused on establishing leadership opportunities, expanding engagement within the South Texas ACS Chapter, and developing programs that support professional development and mentorship.

Upcoming Opportunities

A major priority for the coming year is increasing resident participation in the 2027 South Texas ACS Annual Meeting. The committee is also developing a Preparing the Academic Surgeon Seminar Series, with planned topics including leadership development, research careers, surgical advocacy, fellowship and job interviews, contract negotiation, and emerging surgical techniques.

Residents and young surgeons interested in education, research, leadership, advocacy, mentorship, or community engagement are encouraged to get involved. Early participants will have the opportunity to help shape committee programs, serve in leadership roles, and define future priorities while building meaningful connections across the South Texas surgical community.

WIS Committee

Women in Surgery

Chair: Jessica Buicko Lopez, MD, FACS

Overview

The South Texas ACS Women in Surgery Committee is focused on strengthening the network of women surgeons across the Chapter and creating meaningful opportunities for mentorship, professional development, leadership, and engagement. The committee aims to support women surgeons at every career stage by fostering connections and building a strong professional community.

Key Initiatives

Current priorities include developing a comprehensive database of women members within the South Texas Chapter, including practicing surgeons, residents, fellows, and interested medical students, to improve communication and engagement.

The committee is also establishing a structured mentorship program that connects medical students and residents with practicing surgeons while pairing junior faculty with more senior women surgeons for career development, leadership guidance, and sponsorship. In addition, a mentorship database is being created to facilitate mentor-mentee matches based on specialty, geographic location, career stage, and professional interests.

Recent Activity

The committee has focused on assessing membership, strengthening communication among women surgeons throughout the region, and laying the foundation for mentorship and networking programs that support career development and leadership growth.

Upcoming Opportunities

As these initiatives continue to develop, members will have opportunities to participate in mentorship programs, contribute to committee activities, and help shape future networking and leadership opportunities for women surgeons within the South Texas Chapter. The committee welcomes involvement from practicing surgeons, trainees, and medical students interested in supporting and advancing women in surgery.

Join A Committee

Get involved with the South Texas Chapter of the American College of Surgeons by joining a committee! Share your experience, collaborate with fellow members, and help guide the Chapter's educational programs, membership initiatives, advocacy efforts, and annual meeting activities.

Protect your body. Prolong your career. Ergonomics Quick Hits

1. Open Surgery
Build a strong foundation

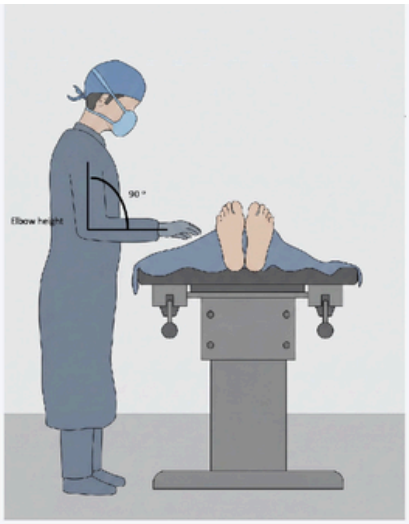

Image courtesy of Dr. Diego Lima

Neutral posture at a glance

Quick Check:
Elevated Shoulders or flared elbows often mean the table is too high

TABLE HEIGHT

- ✓ Set the table for the tallest surgeon; use step stools for other team members.
- ✓ Position the patient's abdomen at 70–80% of the tallest surgeon's elbow height.

HEAD AND UPPER BODY

- ✓ Keep neck and thoracic flexion under 20°; avoid extension.
- ✓ Relax the shoulders and limit abduction to 30°.
- ✓ Keep elbows close to the torso, ideally near 90°.

LOWER BODY

- ✓ Stand with feet shoulder-width apart and weight evenly distributed.
- ✓ Keep knees soft, not locked; consider an anti-fatigue mat and supportive footwear.

2. Laparoscopic Surgery
Eyes up. Shoulders down.

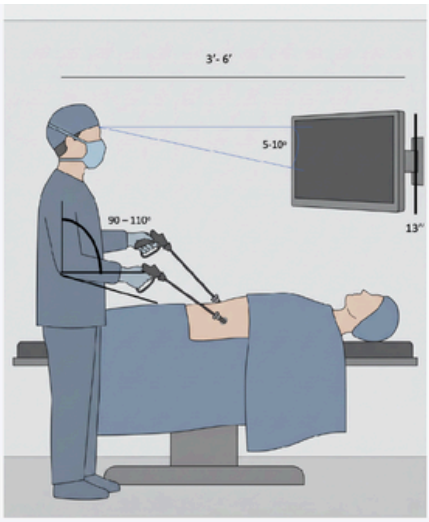

Image courtesy of Dr. Diego Lima

Neutral posture at a glance

Quick Check:
Move the monitor to the surgeon, not the surgeon to the monitor.

MONITOR

- ✓ Place the monitor directly in the surgeon's line of sight.
- ✓ Set the top of the screen near eye level.
- ✓ Use an approximately arm's-length viewing distance when practical.

WORKING POSTURE

- ✓ Keep elbows near the torso, shoulders relaxed, and wrists neutral.
- ✓ Avoid reaching or sustained shoulder abduction caused by trocar or equipment placement.

INSTRUMENTS

- ✓ Select ergonomic handles suited to the surgeon's hand size to reduce fatigue and repetitive strain.

3. Robotic Surgery
Optimize the console

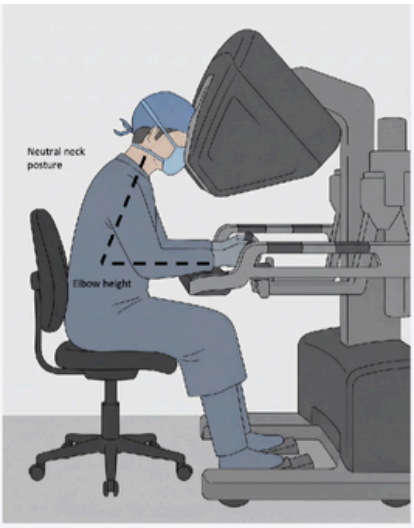

Image courtesy of Dr. Diego Lima

Neutral posture at a glance

Quick Check:
Leaning into the console is a cue to reposition the seat and viewer.

VIEWER AND HANDS

- ✓ Set the viewing angle about 15° below the horizon.
- ✓ Rest the head lightly on the headrest.
- ✓ Clutch frequently to return wrists and shoulders to neutral.

SEAT

- ✓ Sit close enough to maintain an upright posture.
- ✓ Use lumbar support and locking casters when available.
- ✓ Keep thighs parallel to the floor and knees near 90°.

PEDALS

- ✓ Support both feet and limit dorsiflexion to less than 25° during pedal activation.

Cross Chapter Research Opportunity

Cholecystostomy Tube Surgery

Dr. George Philip, with the Texas Tech Health Sciences Center School of Medicine, is the Principal Investigator (PI) conducting this study to fill a gap in research related to the use of cholecystostomy tubes. Our hope is that this study will allow us to understand how acute cholecystitis is being managed, specifically in regards to the timing of surgery relative to the use of cholecystostomy tubes. Take the survey by scanning the QR code: