

PACTT Lab Quarterly

Spring 2025 | Issue 3

Lab Updates

It's been an exciting season for our research team! Congratulations to our director, Dr. Sarah Tevis, on her new role as Section Head of Breast Surgical Oncology and Co-Director of the Diane O'Connor Thompson Breast Center—an incredible recognition of her leadership and impact on breast cancer care and patients.

We're also thrilled to celebrate five of our lab members successfully matching into residency and one into internship —well done! Turn to page 2 to learn more.

Our team shared the lab's research at four major conferences, with several members earning Best Poster Presentation honors. On top of that, we've had multiple manuscripts published, continuing to push the boundaries of discovery and innovation. Here's to more milestones ahead!

Pet of the Quarter

Burton (Burt) is a 4 year old yellow labrador. He enjoys lounging on the couch, long off leash runs, and raiding the garbage can. He is a fierce defender of 5 and 7 year old little girls who need protection from time outs or bedtime, but he is terrified of men in hats and people carrying boxes. His best friend is a 12 year old boy who selected him from the litter as a puppy because he was the only puppy athletic enough to escape the enclosure.

Burt's a unique character, full of contradictions and boundless affection. What a good boy.



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Match Day 2025



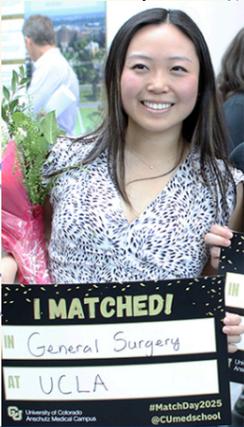
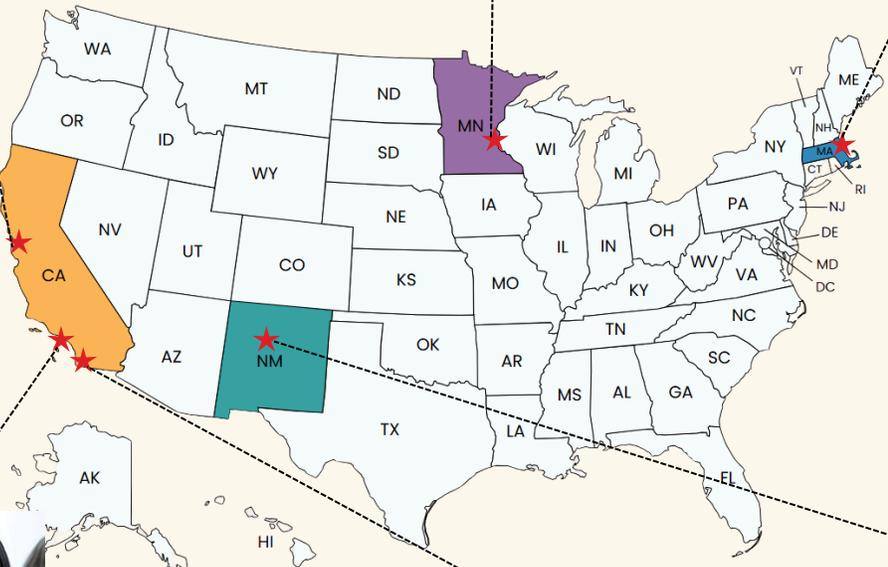
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Center



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General Surgery, UC San Diego
Medical Center



Alec McCranie, PGY-1
Plastic Surgery Intern, University of
New Mexico SoM

Editorial: Embrace with Caution: Reflecting on the Limitations of AI in Patient Communication

Sarah Leslie, Jakob Durden, Sarah Tevis

In this invited response, we reflect on the rising use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT in healthcare, particularly how patients turn to these platforms for information about serious diagnoses like breast cancer. While these technologies offer an exciting opportunity to enhance patient education and engagement, we urge caution in their adoption.

Our commentary was informed by findings from Park et al., who evaluated ChatGPT's accuracy in responding to breast cancer questions. The results? A mixed bag. They revealed that the tool provided **inaccurate medical information 24% of the time** and **frequently cited fabricated sources**, raising major concerns about the reliability of AI-generated health content.

Additionally, we note that ChatGPT's responses were written well above the **recommended sixth-grade reading level**, creating potential barriers for patients trying to navigate complex medical information on their own.

Through this editorial, we wanted to highlight the need for **increased provider involvement and better patient education**. Clinicians must be prepared to discuss the strengths and limits of tools like ChatGPT with their patients—particularly as AI becomes more integrated into the everyday health information landscape.

We also emphasize the **ethical concerns around data privacy** and the risks associated with patients unknowingly sharing personal health information on non-HIPAA-compliant platforms.

Ultimately, our goal in writing this piece was to **advocate for transparency, accuracy, and accountability**—both from developers of these tools and from the healthcare systems embracing them. GenAI has great potential, but it's our responsibility to make sure it's being used safely, thoughtfully, and in ways that truly benefit patients.

"AI is a tool, not a replacement for empathy, accuracy, or clinical judgment."

Leslie SE, Durden JA, Tevis SE. Embrace with caution: The limitations of generative artificial intelligence in responding to patient health care queries. *Cancer*. 2025 Jan 1;131(1):e35651. doi: 10.1002/cncr.35651.

Editorial: The Critical Role of Nurse Navigators in a Transparent Era

Ellie O'Brien et al.

Expanding transparency in healthcare, especially through open notes and real-time patient access to records, is reshaping patient needs and expectations. While access empowers patients, it also creates confusion and emotional strain, particularly when information is delivered without explanation.



Nurse navigators are essential in this new environment. They help patients understand what they're reading, navigate their care and care team, and make sense of complex decisions required during vulnerable and emotional moments.

Transparency must be paired with clarity and connection, and nurse navigators offer both. To ensure patients receive the best care and make the best decisions possible, **we must invest in their role as critical partners** in delivering compassionate, coordinated care.

O'Brien EA, Ludwigson A, Higgins MG, Tevis S. Who's on the healthcare team? Nurse navigators in the era of information transparency. *Am J Surg*. 2024 Nov 6;116070. doi: 10.1016/j.amjsurg.2024.116070.

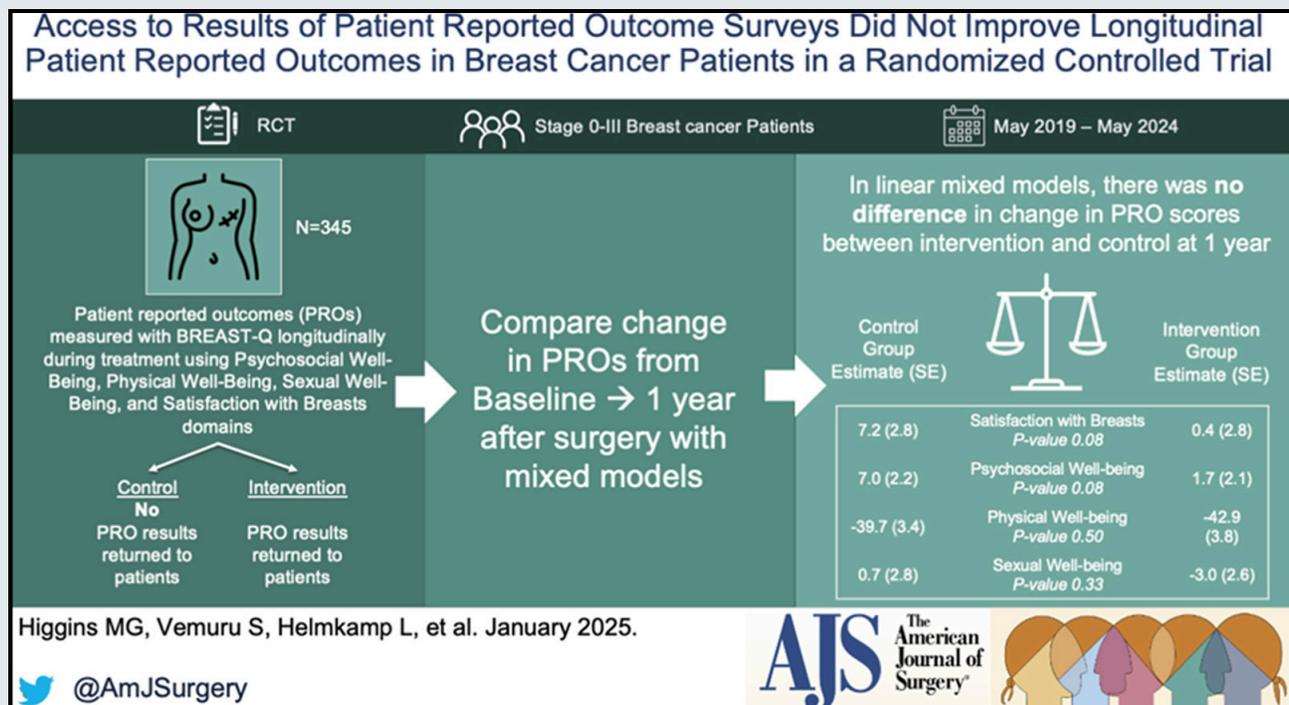
Original Research: Giving Patients Access to Their PROs – What Happens Next?

Madeline Higgins et al.

In this randomized trial, we investigated what happens when patients are given access to their own patient-reported outcome (PRO) results through an electronic portal. While the intent was to improve transparency and engagement, many participants found the data confusing or distressing without clinical guidance.

This work highlights the importance of contextualizing sensitive information, especially as digital access expands. Simply providing data isn't enough—we need to support patients in interpreting what that data means for their care and recovery.

"Giving patients access is a first step. Helping them make sense of it is the real challenge."



Higgins MG, Vemuru S, Helmkamp L, Adams M, Colborn K, Parris H, Huynh V, Christian N, Ahrendt G, Lee C, Kim S, Matlock D, Cumber E, Tevis S. Access to results of patient reported outcome surveys did not improve longitudinal patient reported outcomes in breast cancer patients in a randomized controlled trial. Am J Surg. 2025 Jan;239:116054. doi: 10.1016/j.amjsurg.2024.116054.

Original Research: Med Ed – Helping Patient Understand Their Reports in Real Time

Bridget Foy et al.

While the immediate release of clinical notes is intended to **promote patient access and transparency**, patients are often left to read **complex, medicalized language without context or provider support** – potentially leading to confusion or anxiety. We developed a **Chrome extension for patients (MedEd)** that provides real-time summaries and definitions directly into the patient portal.

In our initial beta-testing of the tool, **patients reported they found it useful** when reviewing medical reports. Our findings show that even small digital supports may make a big difference in helping people feel informed. Our next steps include making refinements based on patient-input and pilot testing the tool.

Foy B, Ludwig A, Mott NM, Adams M, Higgins MG, Vemuru S, Wolverton D, Yi J, Sams S, Lin CT, Miles R, Taft N, Baurle E, Cumber E, Tevis S. Helping patients navigate the immediate release of medical records: MedEd, a novel patient engagement technology. Am J Surg. 2025 Jan;239:115977. doi: 10.1016/j.amjsurg.2024.115977.

Kudos Corner - Celebrating Our Team!

- Shout out to **MS2 Jackie Grubel** for being awarded Best Poster Presentation at the 2024 Medical Student Research Symposium
- **PGY3 Jakob Durden** was recognized at the UCH poster contest for best poster. He showcased an initiative to reduce rates of perioperative venous thromboembolism at the 2025 Patient Safety Conference!
- **PGY1 Alec McCranie's** original and, might I add, gorgeous illustration was featured on the cover of the Journal of Surgical Research.
- His article *Exploration of Patient Retention in Seeking a Second Opinion: A Retrospective Cohort Study* was published in the same issue
- High five to **MS2 Allie Nielsen** for the publication of her undergraduate research thesis – a testament to her hard work and research excellence!
<https://www.jci.org/articles/view/180278>
- We also had presentations at multiple national conferences this spring and have even more coming up.



We're so proud of the creative and scholarly achievements across our team!

Here, There, Everywhere



Holiday Party 2024



Academic Surgical Congress (ASC)
February 2025



Academic Surgical Congress (ASC)
February 2025



ISSWSH
March 2025



American College of Surgeons (ACS)
Clinical Congress, October, 2024



UC Health's 2025 Patient Safety Conference



Southwest Surgical Congress (SWSC)
April 2025

Currently Recruiting



Understanding and promoting quality of life and sexual well-being after breast cancer treatment.

We are recruiting breast cancer patients to participate in a series of online surveys that will help us understand the quality of life over the course of treatment and survivorship.

If you are interested in learning more about this study and potentially participating, please follow the link or QR code below and complete the interest form:

<https://redcap.link/PROsurvey>

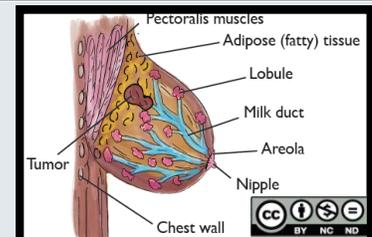
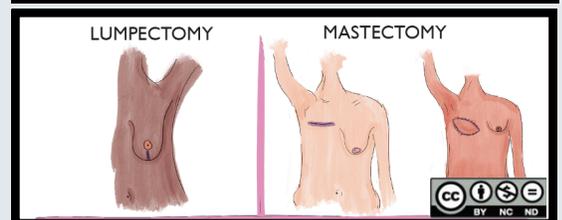


Update: Breast Cancer Surgery Decision Aid

We're excited to share that we've entered Phase II in the development of our decision aid (DA) designed to support breast cancer patients choosing between lumpectomy and mastectomy. In Phase I, we gathered in-depth feedback on the beta version from breast cancer survivors and healthcare providers, focusing on design, content, usability, and overall experience.

As part of our Phase II work, we've partnered with Dr. Maria Baimas-George—a transplant surgery fellow, illustrator, and author of several educational books, including one on breast cancer—to refresh and enhance the illustrations in the DA.

We anticipate launching recruitment in late spring or early summer to evaluate the DA's feasibility in real-world settings. Additionally, we plan to conduct focus groups with breast cancer survivors this summer to co-design data displays of patient-reported outcomes, laying the groundwork for future personalized decision aids.



Illustrations by Maria Baimas-George
<https://strengthofmyscars.com/pages/meet-our-team>
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