

PACTT Lab Quarterly

FALL 2026 | ISSUE 4

Lab Updates

What a season for the PACTT Lab! We're proud to celebrate six of our lab members who matched into residency on Match Day 2026. Turn to page 2 to see where they're headed. Our research program manager, Sarah, started coursework as a DrPH student at the Colorado School of Public Health - congratulations! We're also thrilled to welcome George and Elise to the team, visit page 3 to get to know them.

Our work was on display at several conferences this year, with Dr. George Burnet even winning the People's Choice Poster Award at Health Services Research Day. We also published new research, including a new decision aid and a pilot study of our online sexual health video series, which is currently recruiting. Also, don't forget to join us in October for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. See page 10 for ways to get involved! So excited about all of our achievements so far, and can't wait for more to come!

Pet of the Quarter

Moose (age 4) is depicted here gazing longingly at his one true love...butter. Moose mostly spends his time sleeping (presumably dreaming about how to get his paws on more butter) and will spend



so much time snoozing in the same spot that his owners have wondered if he needs prophylaxis for venous thromboembolism. On the rare occasions that he is awake, he enjoys hunting for hair ties, chattering at the birds outside, or amusing PACTT lab members during Zoom meetings by chasing the reflected sunlight glinting off George's watch.

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Contact Info

Email: breastsurgerystudy@cuanschutz.edu
Website: <https://pacttlab.com/>



Visit Pg. 11 to learn how to stay connected with the PACTT Lab!

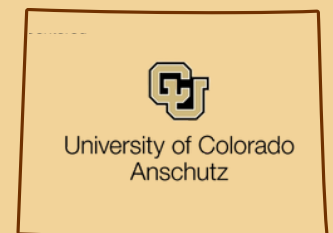
MATCH DAY 2026



Rebekah A. Davis, MS4
Family Medicine,
University of California,
San Diego



Jasmine Jeon, MS4
Anesthesiology,
Mount Sinai West



Ella Canty, MS4
General Surgery,
University of Colorado



Allie Nielsen, MS4
Obstetrics-Gynecology,
Central Michigan
University



Micaela Roy, MS4
Internal Medicine,
University of Washington



Cassidy Yoshida, MS4
General Surgery,
University of Hawaii

STAFF UPDATES

We are thrilled to welcome George and Elise to the PACTT Lab!



George is a PGY-3 general surgery resident here at the University of Colorado, School of Medicine. He is joining us for his next two research and academic development years, and we couldn't be more excited! A little more about George...he's a Pennsylvania native who graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a BS in Neuroscience and a BA in History & Philosophy of Science. His passion for improving care for breast cancer patients was ignited while George was a medical student in University of Colorado's Multidisciplinary Breast Care course, and now he's stuck with us :). In his free time, George enjoys backpacking, skiing, and traveling with his wife, Carson (and spending time with their cat, Moose!).

Elise first joined the PACTT Lab in the summer of 2023 and has transitioned into a full-time role as a Research Services Professional. She recently graduated from UCLA with a BS in Biochemistry and is also currently applying to medical school. Elise is passionate about developing decision aids and empowering patients to become active participants in their own care. Outside the lab, she enjoys baking, solving crossword puzzles, and spending time with her little brother, Stanley.



LAB SHOUT-OUTS!

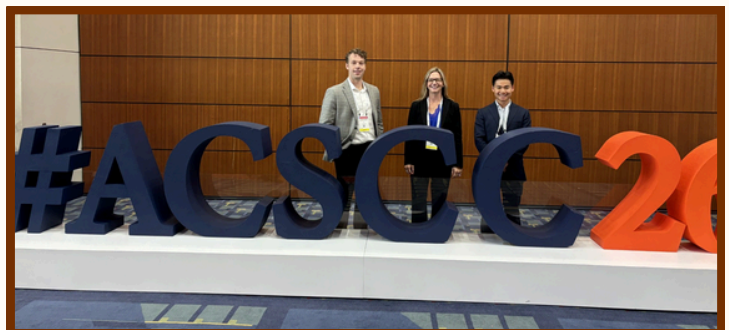
Health Services Research Day - People's Choice Poster Award!



Congratulations to PGY3 George Burnet for winning the People's Choice Poster Award at the 2026 Health Services Research Day. His poster evaluates the accuracy and comprehensiveness of ChatGPT in generating surgical treatment plans for patient-specific breast cancer scenarios. The findings reveal that while AI performance is evolving, the models frequently omit critical surgical procedures, therefore authors conclude that ChatGPT is currently not recommended for independent patient use due to a high rate of unsafe plans and fabricated medical citations.

The PACTT Lab REPRESENTS at the 2026 American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress!

At ACS 2026, Dr. Sarah Tevis, Dr. Jakob Durden, and MS4 David Chen represented the lab and highlighted several ongoing research initiatives. As part of this work, Dr. Jakob Durden presented the lab's ongoing efforts to develop a breast cancer surgical decision aid designed to support shared decision-making in early-stage disease. Preliminary findings from a randomized study showed that the novel decision aid, which incorporates longitudinal quality-of-life projections for breast-conserving therapy and mastectomy, was well received by patients, who found it balanced, informative, and useful. Decision quality, conflict, and regret outcomes were comparable to patients who were provided a standard decision aid, supporting the feasibility and acceptability of implementing this tool in clinical practice.



Original Research: IDECIDE: A Breast Surgery Decision Aid Built on What Patients Actually Experience

Our study built and tested IDECIDE, a decision aid for women choosing between breast-conserving surgery and mastectomy for early-stage breast cancer. The two options offer similar survival outcomes, so the decision often comes down to how patients want to live afterward. Many decision aids don't include long-term quality-of-life data, which means patients often learn how surgery affected others only after they've decided.

BACKGROUND	ALPHA TESTING
- Surgery is the primary treatment for early-stage breast cancer - Breast-conserving surgery and mastectomy offering similar survival outcomes - Shared decision-making (SDM) and patient decision aids (PDAs) help patients weigh options - Many existing PDAs lack long-term quality of life (QoL) data - Our PDA integrates long-term QoL patient reported outcomes (PROs) data from breast cancer survivors to support SDM between patients and clinicians in early-stage breast cancer treatment	Participants: 9 female patients with Dx stage 0-III breast cancer (≥ 12 months post-surgery) 6 clinicians Surveys: AI: PEMAT for Printable Materials to assess understandability and actionability Patients: Ottawa Hospital Decision Regret Scale, Brief Health Literacy Screening Tool, tailored version of the Ottawa Hospital Patient Decision Aids Acceptability tool Clinicians: IPDAS, tailored version of the Ottawa Hospital Patient Decision Aids Acceptability tool Qualitative Interviews: Semi-structured patient interviews explored usability and perceived impact of QoL data on patient decision making. Analyses: - Survey data were summarized descriptively. - Interview transcripts were thematically coded using rapid qualitative analysis.
DEVELOPMENT	
- PROs source: Ongoing longitudinal BREAST-Q surveys completed by breast cancer patients Development Framework: The <i>Ottawa Decision Support Framework and the International Patient Decision Aid Standards (IPDAS)</i> Design and Content: Multidisciplinary team: surgeons, oncologists, SDM experts, and patient advocates Refinement: Feedback-driven iterative updates to visual aids, language, and overall document structure	

Results

Both patients and clinicians rated the tool very highly.

- Patient ratings: 98.7% for understandability and 92.0% for actionability.
- Clinician ratings: 100% for understandability and 95.2% for actionability.
- Length: 100% of patients found the length and amount of information appropriate.

Patients liked the clarity, the visual aids, and the inclusion of quality-of-life data. They also suggested additional content and improved formatting. Clinicians recommended addressing contralateral breast surgery and endocrine therapy concerns.

EXAMPLE MODIFICATIONS

Original Surgery Displays

Updated Surgery Displays

Original QoL Displays

What might my life look like with each OPTION?

These illustrations are from women who are living with breast cancer. How do you feel about the quality of life after breast surgery?

Remember: breast cancer treatment can affect your quality of life.

Updated QoL Displays

What might my life look like after each OPTION?

What's Next?

Next, we will test IDECIDE across multiple breast centers through a randomized trial (pending funding), partner with patients to further refine the data displays, and use our PRO database to build a version showing the predicted quality of life trajectory based on individual factors.

Adams M, Durden JA, Leslie SE, Vemuru SR, Higgins MG, Matlock DD, Baimas-George M, Daly R, Lee C, Colborn K, Fisher CM, Christian NT, Kaoutzanis C, Egan K, Tevis SE. IDECIDE breast surgery patient decision aid: Development and testing of a quality of life-integrated decision support tool. *Support Care Cancer*. 2026;34:955. doi:10.1007/s00520-026-11199-4.

Original Research: Closing the Gap: Sexual Health Education for Breast Cancer Patients, One Video at a Time

Madeline Higgins et al.
University of Colorado

A new single-arm pilot study suggests an online video series could help fill a gap in sexual health resources during breast cancer treatment.

What We Studied:

Sexual health side effects during breast cancer treatment are common and distressing, but patients often don't expect them. Researchers created an online educational video series and gave it to newly diagnosed patients within one month of diagnosis or surgical evaluation. Six months later, patients completed a follow-up questionnaire on whether the videos were acceptable, appropriate, and feasible. In total, there were 28 participants with an average age of 48.

The Results Were Encouraging

The researchers concluded that an online video series has the potential to be an acceptable, appropriate, and feasible educational resource, bridging a critical gap in sexual health support for breast cancer patients.

Why It Matters

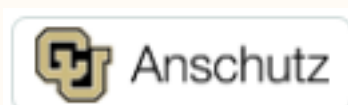
Patients often lack adequate sexual health resources during treatment, even though these side effects can affect intimacy, body image, and quality of life. Short videos that patients can watch privately fit a topic that often gets overlooked in busy clinic visits.

What's Next...

See below!

Higgins MG, et al. Preliminary evaluation of the acceptability, appropriateness, and feasibility of an online sexual health educational video series for breast cancer patients. *Support Care Cancer*. 2026 Jan 26;34(2):130. doi: 10.1007/s00520-026-10381-y

CURRENTLY RECRUITING: "Improving Breast Cancer Patients' Self-Efficacy and Sexual Health Quality of Life: A Randomized Controlled Trial"



EMPOWER

Educational Moments for Patient's Ongoing Wellbeing and Empowerment

We are expanding the sexual health online educational video series for breast cancer patients at the University of Colorado and Denver Health!!!

We are currently recruiting women newly diagnosed with breast cancer to take part in a study of an online sexual health educational resource. Participants complete four short surveys over six months, receive a gift card for each survey, and are randomly assigned to either an online educational video series or an emailed link to another educational resource.

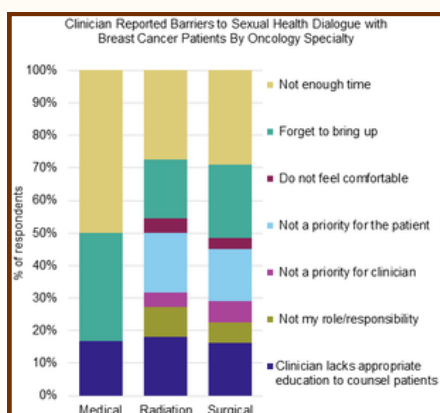
If you are interested in learning more about this study and potentially participating, please email breastsurgerystudy@cuanschutz.edu or call (303) 724-6020. You can also tell your provider you're interested, and they will connect you with our research team.

OTHER NEW AND ONGOING STUDIES

Ongoing Study: Provider Comfort Discussing Sexual Health

This survey study of 30 medical, surgical, and radiation oncologists at eight institutions examined why sexual health side effects are so rarely discussed with breast cancer patients. The top barriers were lack of time (70%), forgetting to bring it up (50%), and inadequate education (37%). Some radiation and surgical oncologists also didn't see it as a patient priority. Fewer than half felt "very confident" in their knowledge of these side effects, and most had low confidence in their ability to treat them, with surgical oncologists reporting the least confidence. Most respondents said they would welcome comprehensive and

ongoing training. Some suggested specialty-specific education, templated language, and EHR prompts to support these conversations.



We are still recruiting!

Interested medical, surgical, oncologic clinicians, including APPs, treating breast cancer patients can email to sarah.leslie@cuanschutz.edu for more information.

Nielsen A, Higgins MG, Adams M, Leslie SE, Zimmario LA, Bozzuto L, Spivey T, Rojas K, Cortina C, Heelan A, Coons H, Baurle E, Tevis S. Identifying Oncologists' Barriers to Discussing Sexual Health Concerns with Breast Cancer Patients. ASBrS Conference. April 2025. Las Vegas, NV

New Study: Understanding Administrative Harm in Surgery

Administrative harm refers to the unintended negative effects that administrative decisions can have on the people who deliver care and the patients who receive it. While this has been studied among hospitalists ([Burden et al.](#)), little is known about how administrative harm affects surgeons, so our team is surveying and interviewing surgical residents, fellows, and attendings to learn what they experience and what might help. The findings will guide recommendations for measuring and reducing administrative harm, with the goal of improving work structures for surgeons and, ultimately, care for patients.

We are grateful to everyone who has already taken part. Surgeons who are interested in participating can find the survey link [here](#) or scan the QR Code.



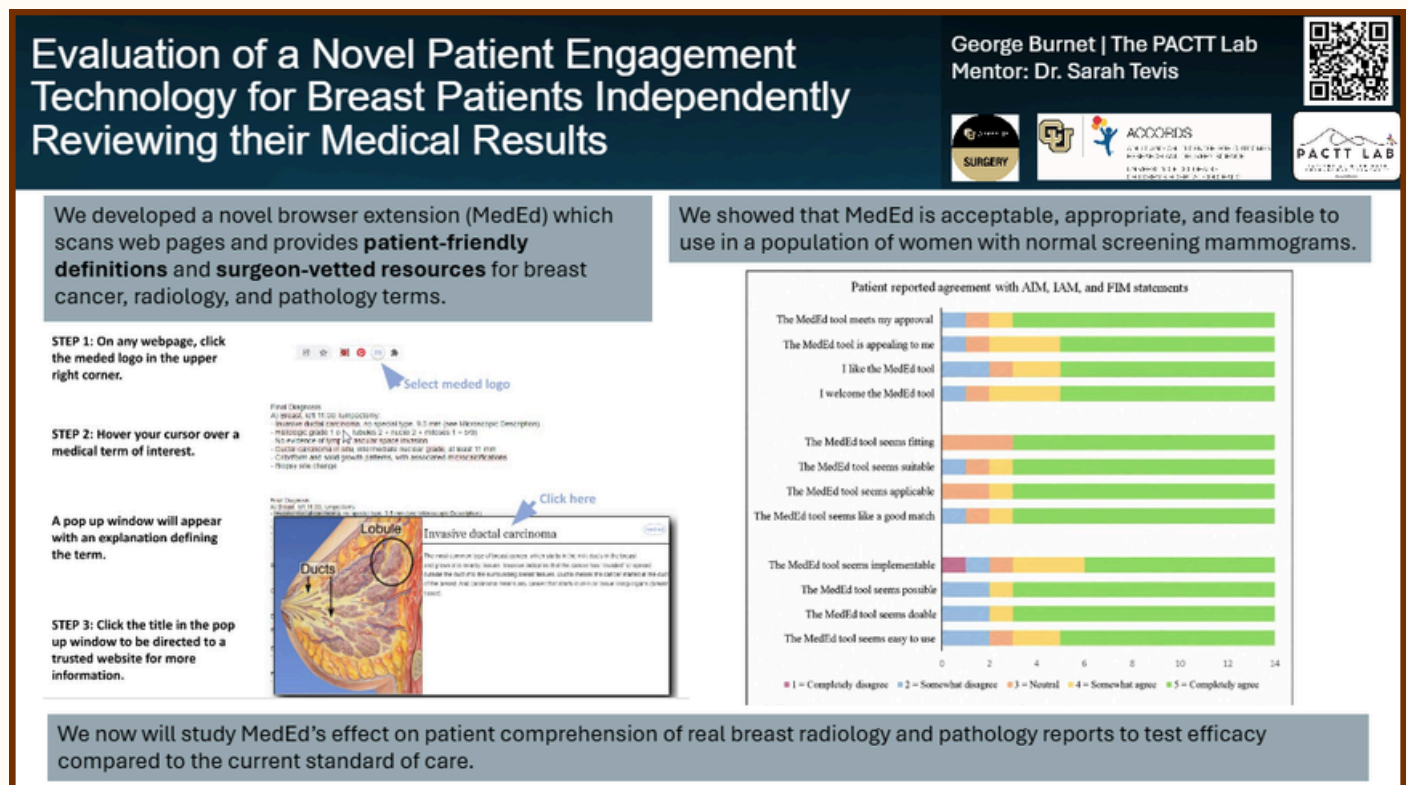
CONTINUED...

New Study: Helping Patients Make Sense of Their Medical Results via MedEd, a Chrome plugin

Patients often see their radiology and pathology reports before they talk with their care team, and the medical language can be hard to follow. To help, the PACTT Lab developed MedEd, a browser extension that scans a web page and gives patient-friendly definitions of breast cancer, radiology, and pathology terms. Patients hover over a term to see a plain-language explanation and can click through to a trusted, surgeon-vetted resource for more information.

In an early test led by MS4 David Chen with women who had normal screening mammograms, patients rated MedEd as acceptable, appropriate, and feasible, with most choosing "completely agree" on each measure. The next step is to study how MedEd affects patients' understanding of real breast radiology and pathology reports, compared with the current standard of care.

Dr. George Burden is presenting this visual abstract for MedEd at a CU Research Retreat. Go George!



THE PACTT LAB'S STAMP COLLECTION



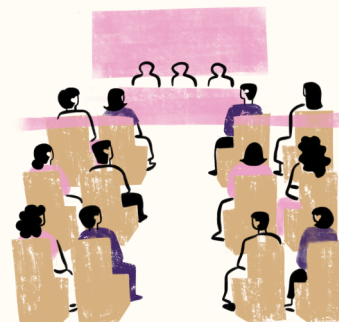
OCTOBER: BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH!



This Breast Cancer Awareness Month, join us at one of these events to learn more, show your support, and connect with our community!

Breast Cancer Survivorship Conference

Join the Diane O'Connor Thompson Breast Center for its 3rd annual Breast Cancer Survivorship Conference on Saturday, October 3rd, 9 a.m.-12 p.m., at the Anschutz Health and Wellness Center in Aurora. Enjoy expert talks on sexual health, mental health, and lymphedema, a cooking demo, stretching with Barre3, and a vendor hall. RSVP: 720-848-1654 or amy.holleran@uchealth.org.



UCHealth Pretty in Pink at Making Strides Against Breast Cancer of Colorado

Sunday, October 11, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., at the Tivoli Quad on the Auraria Campus in Denver. Join a 2-mile community walk, speakers, entertainment, and a vendor expo, and celebrate survivors, thrivers, previvors, and caregivers. Register as a team or individual at MakingStridesWalk.org/Colorado.

Komen Colorado MORE THAN PINK Walk

Saturday, October 17, at Denver City Park. The event site opens at 7:30 a.m., with the opening ceremony at 9:00, the walk at 9:20, and a post-walk celebration at 10:00. Join thousands of Coloradans to support patients, honor survivors and loved ones, and fund breast cancer research. Register at komen.org/community/colorado.



Breast Cancer Wellness Series (ongoing)

UCHealth offers a free quarterly series on living well with breast cancer, open to the public. Topics rotate through sexual health, lymphedema, treatment-induced menopause, and psychological well-being. Registration is required, and you'll receive an email link to the class after you sign up. Register at <https://bit.ly/46YLJvB>

CURIOUS ABOUT THE PACTT LAB?

Joining our team:

The PACTT Lab welcomes individuals of all backgrounds who are strongly motivated to pursue research and who are looking for a research experience wherein disciplined, thoughtful, and open examination of our focal topics is highly encouraged. We look forward to hearing from and meeting you!

Please use the link or QR code below to submit a Prospective Lab Member Application:

https://ucdenver.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5cF5QzSS70TAgJw



****Undergraduates who are interested in participating in research should contact Cancer Research Experience for Undergraduates (CREU).**

Signing-up for the newsletter:

Loved learning about the PACTT Lab's research?

Sign up for our newsletter to stay up to date on our latest findings, events, and opportunities!

Email breastsurgerystudy@cuanschutz.edu and tell us you'd like to subscribe. Can't wait to hear from you!



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