

Hamish Hwang, MD, FRCSC, FACS, Sharadh Sampath, MD, FRCSC, S. Morad Hameed, MD, MPH, FRCSC, FACS

# General Surgeons of British Columbia launches province-wide peer mentorship program

The UBC Reticulum website was launched in May 2019 to help connect general surgeons in British Columbia. Now with the help of industry funding, General Surgeons of BC has launched a province-wide peer mentorship grant program.

In May 2019, a secure, interactive, multifunctional website ([www.ubcreticulum.com](http://www.ubcreticulum.com)) was launched to create a virtual network of general surgeons, both community and academic, across British Columbia. Funded by a grant from the UBC Strategic Investment Fund, the website was created to provide a knowledge hub to support the clinical care of patients, research, and education. It became an invaluable tool for province-wide communication during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> The utility of the virtual surgical network is exemplified by a popular new video feature through which surgeons can share strategies, techniques, and innovations in surgical care seamlessly across the province [Figure 1].

Buoyed by the success of UBC Reticulum, the UBC Division of General Surgery adapted the website as a platform for a new

province-wide mentorship grant program, which launched in January 2022. Surgeons can self-declare interest in mentoring their peers on a procedure-specific basis, on a searchable section of the site [Figure 2]. The intent of the mentorship program is to universally improve access to and quality of surgical care across the province by creating opportunities for peer mentoring and coaching.

Barriers to peer mentorship include loss of clinical time, travel expenses, and administrative costs. The mentorship grant aims to remove these barriers for any general surgeon in the province

who identifies a willing mentor or wishes to undertake a mentorship project as a mentee. Funding comes from General Surgeons of BC, a Section of Doctors of BC, as well as from industry sponsors. At the time the program launched, sponsors included BD, Ethicon, Medtronic, Pendopharm, and Stryker. Surgeons approved for a grant receive funding equivalent to the Doctors of BC specialist sessional rate for administrative preparation, such as applying for temporary privileges, nonclinical meetings between mentor and mentee, travel costs, accommodation, and weekday time away from clinical practice.

---

*Dr Hwang is a clinical associate professor at the University of British Columbia and associate head of the UBC Division of General Surgery. Dr Sampath is a clinical assistant professor at UBC and head of the Division of General Surgery at Richmond Hospital. Dr Morad Hameed is an associate professor of surgery and critical care medicine at UBC and head of the UBC Division of General Surgery.*

---

*This article has been peer reviewed.*

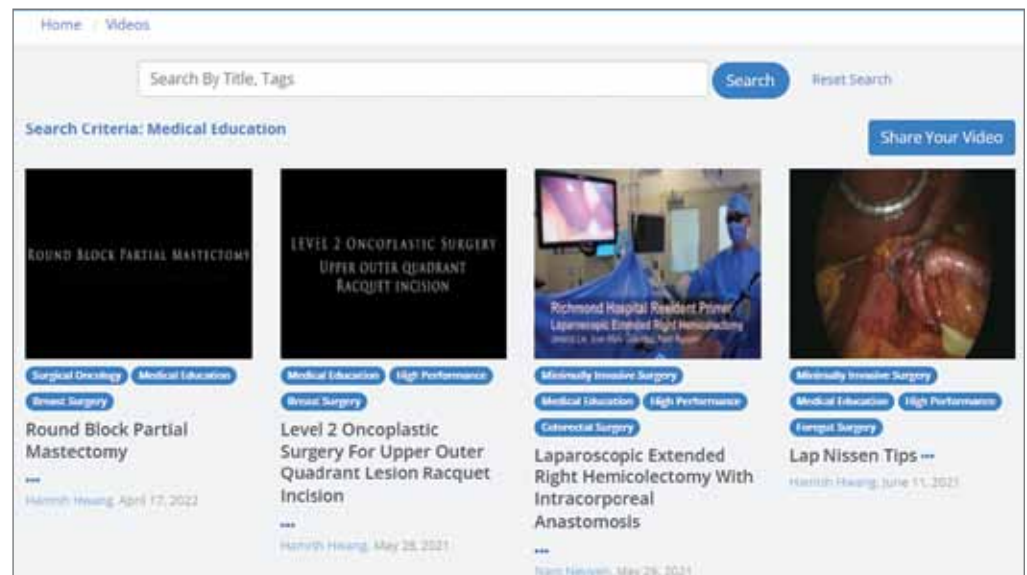


FIGURE 1. Screenshot of the searchable repository of user-posted videos on the UBC Reticulum website.

Examples of mentorships include one surgeon visiting another to see how a surgical procedure is done or having a mentor visit to give feedback on how a procedure could be improved. Other possibilities include review of recorded videos for surgical coaching or live feedback during broadcasted intraoperative videos. The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons has a framework in which both mentor and mentee surgeons can obtain Maintenance of Certification credits for these activities.

The first recipient of a UBC Reticulum Mentorship Grant was Dr Nicole Robbins, a general surgeon in Williams Lake. She spent a week with the colorectal surgery team at St. Paul's Hospital. Here are some of her comments about the program:

“The access to the program in terms of low administrative burden is great. In many programs or grants for physicians the paperwork burden is onerous and becomes a disincentive to apply.

“Access to CME has been especially challenging since COVID. I really appreciated the chance to be hands-on in the OR and present to listen to the discussion and teaching of senior learners such as fellows.

“The chance to work again with surgical profs from residency was wonderful. Everyone was welcoming. I thought often of how isolated rural surgeons can be in the OR. I was envious at times of the five or so surgeons and trainees who were all contributing or learning from some of the more complex cases.

“When I was completing my residency (finished in 2010) the number of laparoscopic bowel resections being done was minimal, and as a senior resident we did not receive much training as it was reserved for staff or fellows. It was, therefore, helpful to focus on these procedures and ask questions again.

“I can see how doing a mentorship like this could be a way of helping with rural surgeon burnout and help with recruitment and retention in community sites. Also, inviting subspecialized surgeons to community ORs would then become easier and less intimidating.”

Surgeons from around the province have already begun to follow Dr Robbins' lead in exploring a diversity of mentorship and technical coaching opportunities.

Expert Mentors on **Transanal TME (TaTME)** (3)

Expert Peers on **Transanal TME (TaTME)** (9)

Graduation cap icon indicates that you are a mentor!

<p><b>Aslani, Nava</b> Full Time Surgeon Lions Gate Hospital</p>	<p><b>Brown, Carl</b> Full Time Surgeon St. Paul's Hospital</p>	<p><b>Chiu, Chieh Jack</b> Full Time Surgeon Vancouver General Hospital U.B.C. Health Sciences Centre Hospital</p>
<p><b>Jenkin, Daniel</b> Full Time Surgeon Nanaimo Regional General Hospital</p>	<p><b>Karimuddin, Ahmer</b> Full Time Surgeon St. Paul's Hospital Mount Saint Joseph Hospital</p>	<p><b>Meneghetti, Adam</b> Full Time Surgeon Vancouver General Hospital</p>
<p><b>Parapini, Marina</b> Resident</p>	<p><b>Raval, Manoj</b> Full Time Surgeon St. Paul's Hospital</p>	<p><b>Recsky, Magdalena</b> Full Time Surgeon Kelowna General Hospital</p>
<p><b>Schneiderreit, Nathan</b> Full Time Surgeon Nanaimo Regional General Hospital</p>	<p><b>Wallace, Tom</b> Full Time Surgeon Royal Inland Hospital</p>	<p><b>Vikis, Elena</b> Full Time Surgeon Royal Columbian Hospital Eagle Ridge Hospital &amp; Health Care Centre</p>

FIGURE 2. Screenshot of a sample search for mentors by procedure.

The UBC Reticulum Mentorship Grant is an innovative new program that will capitalize on the collegiality that exists among general surgeons in BC and will support a culture of coaching and lifelong learning, improving access to high-quality surgical care across the province. The application process is simple; general surgeons with ideas for mentorship projects are encouraged to contact the Division at general.surgery@ubc.ca. ■

#### Competing interests

None declared.

#### Reference

- Hwang H, Manoharan S, Zabolotniuk T, Morad Hameed S. UBC Reticulum: A novel website connecting general surgeons in BC during the COVID-19 crisis. *BCMJ* 2020;62:172-173.