



15 Facets of Living Life Fully

CLINICIANS AND RESEARCHERS

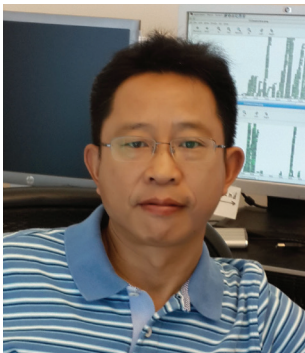


DR. ALEX BEFELER, MD

"A busy life encourages the importance of time. It is satisfying to be able to give the gift of time to patients with the transformational process of liver transplant."

Alex S. Befeler joined the faculty in 1998 as professor in the Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at Saint Louis University School of Medicine following his training at the University of Chicago. He is currently the Medical Director of Liver Transplantation. His research interests include liver cancer, primary sclerosing cholangitis, management of complications of chronic liver disease, and transplant hepatology.

Befeler coordinates clinical research projects as part of the Early Detection Research Network of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). He is principal investigator for international studies for liver cancer and for hepatorenal syndrome, a deadly complication of cirrhosis. Befeler is also the Program Director for Saint Louis University School of Medicine's new Liver Transplant Hepatology Fellowship. As an active member of the American Association for the Study of Liver Disease (AASLD), he is currently the Chairman of the Continuing Medical Education Committee and member of the Scientific Program Committee.



XIAOFENG FAN, MD, PHD

"Saint Louis University provides a rich environment which allows me to be fully dedicated to my work while satisfying my need to help patients."

Dr. Fan received his MD and PhD from Nanjing Medical College, China. After his postdoctoral training in Nottingham University, UK, he joined the Saint Louis University in 1996 as faculty member in the Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology, Department of Internal Medicine. Using an integrative approach that combines evolution, molecular biology and immunology, Dr. Fan investigates various types of liver diseases, including hepatitis B, hepatitis C and liver cancer. He invented two novel methods for nucleic acid amplification that allows the exploration of liquid biopsy in clinical use. He has been funded by numerous National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants with an ongoing research project targeting viral discovery in a wide spectrum of liver diseases.



KAREN JOHNS, RN

"It has been a privilege to use my pay-it-forward spirit and serve as a conduit between patient and doctor in the miracle procedure of liver transplant."

Karen Johns graduated in 1979 from Saint Louis University School of Nursing. She began her career as a dialysis nurse 20 years ago, caring for veterans at the John Cochran VAMC. She was introduced to transplant by Dr. Paul Garvin, who later moved the transplant program to Saint Louis University Hospital. In 1988, Karen became the dialysis coordinator at DePaul Health Center. She has worked as a transplant coordinator at Saint Louis University for 19 years and is senior coordinator in the Center for Abdominal Transplantation. She is a charter member of the local International Transplant Nurses' Society. Karen states; "It has been a privilege to serve as a member of the transplant team and witness the changes and improvement in transplantation, making it a miracle."



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RANJIT RAY, MS, PHD

"I was lucky to have nurturing parents, teachers who actively engaged with their students, and now like-minded colleagues with diverse expertise who share my love for the work we do here at Saint Louis University."

Ray completed his MS and PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Calcutta, India in 1983. He then joined the University of Alabama at Birmingham for post-doctoral research. Ray became Associate Professor at Saint Louis University School of Medicine in 1993 and Professor in 2000.

Ray's research activities focus on molecular mechanisms of virus-host interactions, pathogenesis, and vaccine development, including hepatitis C virus (HCV). He conducts studies in understanding the metabolic disorders mediated from chronic HCV infection and liver disease progression. Currently, Ray is investigating mechanistic insights of HCV associated liver fibrosis and hepatocyte growth promotion. In a United States, Japan collaborative study Ray's group is focusing on understanding the gain of immune function after hepatitis C virus eradication.

Dr. Ray is a member of different professional organizations and serves as a reviewer in NIH peer review system. His various aspects of basic research have been funded by the NIH, and he participated in a number of ancillary studies on multicenter initiated projects. He has published more than 133 research articles and serves a number of scientific journals as a reviewer or editor.



RATNA RAY, PHD

"Losing my mother to liver disease spurred my curiosity and my drive to find answers and cures through research. To save even one more life brings me joy and a fuller life."

Ratna Ray completed her PhD from the University of Calcutta, India, in 1985 and her post-doc training in the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Ray became Assistant Professor in 1993 at Saint Louis University School of Medicine and Professor in 2005.

Ray works to understand the mechanisms of hepatitis C virus persistence and end stage liver disease progression in humans. Her research group made a significant contribution in understanding the links between HCV and host cell factors in disease progression. She is interested in identifying non-invasive biomarkers for early detection of HCC from different racial/ethnic patients. Ray's laboratory is engaged in cancer biology, currently investigating its role in tumor microenvironment including immune modulation using oral and breast cancer model systems.

Ray's international research is supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). She is represented in more than 120 peer-reviewed publications. Ray is an active member in the cancer and virology research communities, serves as permanent and frequent ad-hoc member of NIH study sections, served as a reviewer, editorial board member, and academic editors for scientific journals.



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HARVEY SOLOMON, MD FACS

"After 20 years in liver service, life has shifted and allowed me to find time to explore new challenges like participating in triathlons and teaching. Both activities allow me to see my previous work in perspective and live life more fully."

Solomon attended Antioch College majoring in Chemistry and Hebrew University Hadassah Medical School in Jerusalem. He completed a residency in general surgery and participated in several bariatric procedures, with additional focus on Non-Alcoholic (NASH). He completed a research fellowship and liver and kidney transplant training at Baylor University in Dallas, TX. In 1991, he came to Saint Louis University School of Medicine as the head of the abdominal transplant area until 2011. For the past several years, Solomon has held several teaching posts in anatomy and surgical education. He continues organ retrievals and dialysis vascular access in his medical career.

Solomon attributes his study of Hebrew as a reason for his interest in becoming a surgeon. He met his wife, Miriam, of 47 years, born in Brussels, Belgium after WWII to Holocaust survivors, in Jerusalem. She also studied Chemistry. They have three children, Ruth, Michael, Tamar. Solomon is an avid jogger and participates in triathlons. He enjoys spending time with his grandson, Elijah, hiking in the Cascades.



JOHN TAVIS, PHD

"As a scientist, I have a burning curiosity, a visceral need to find solutions. To be able to change the abstract into potential treatments that help so many people is incredibly satisfying."

Tavis received his PhD in molecular biology from Pennsylvania State in 1990 and post-doctoral studies with Dr. Don Ganem at the University of California, San Francisco. Since 1994, Tavis has been an investigator at Saint Louis University School of Medicine. Currently as professor of virology, his lab has focused on HBV since its inception and is currently pursuing basic biochemistry and antiviral drug discovery targeting the viral ribonuclease H. Additional interests include HCV genetics and anti-herpesvirus drug discovery.

He has served on the American Cancer Society peer review panel and the NIH VirB study section. He is currently a member of the American Cancer Society's Council on Extramural Grants, a member of the Governing Board for the ICE-HBV consortium seeking to guide evidence-based efforts to cure HBV, and chairs the Scientific Advisory Council for the annual International HBV molecular Biology meeting.

John has been married to his wife of 47 years, Maureen Donlin, PhD, research professor.



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JEFF TECKMAN, MD

“My driving force is making sick kids well. Sometimes we do that, ‘one kid at a time,’ such as with a liver transplant, but it is also exciting to do it ‘a disease at a time’ through research. Research allows us to prevent disease in entire groups of kids. Very satisfying...”

Teckman is the Director of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Hepatology in the Department of Pediatrics at Saint Louis University School of Medicine. He has 25 years of research experience in liver disease focusing on how liver damage happens and how to stop it.

Teckman is a leader in the study of the genetic liver disease, Alpha-1-antitrypsin deficiency, and has been involved in studies of cystic fibrosis liver disease, liver birth defects and hepatitis C. He has worked on a range of basic science projects and participated in multiple human studies and drug trials. Jeff is blessed by his wife, Jennifer and their two children.



CHINTALAPATI VARMA, MD

“An early desire to explore liver surgery has brought me from India to the UK to New York and finally to Saint Louis. Along the way, I have learned to give my fullest both to my work and my family, thanks to my wife, who is my driving force.”

Chintalapati Rathna Varma, MD, FRCS, FACS, earned his medical degree in 1984 from the Armed Forces Medical College, in India. He completed residency training in general surgery in India and the United Kingdom before completing a fellowship in multi-organ transplant and hepatobiliary surgery at the Mount Sinai Medical Center, New York. Varma was previous director of the live donor liver transplant program when he was at Saint Louis University School of Medicine from 1997 to 2004 before leaving to join the Methodist Specialty & Transplant Hospital in San Antonio, Texas. He then was recruited to establish a new

liver transplant program and direct the multi-organ transplant program at Geisinger Health System in Pennsylvania.

Varma re-joined the Department of Surgery's Division of Abdominal Organ Transplantation in July 2015 and is currently the Surgical Director of the Pediatric Liver and Kidney Transplant Program. He performs liver, kidney and pancreas transplants, laparoscopic live donor nephrectomies and complex hepatobiliary and pancreas surgery at SSMHealth Saint Louis University Hospital and has a particular interest in pediatric liver and kidney transplantation. He is interested in advancing live donor liver transplants in children and adults in the future in carefully selected patients.

Married for 30 years to his wife, Sree C. Varma, MD, an internist at Saint Louis University School of Medicine. He has a son who is graduating from college and is going into healthcare investment banking. He enjoys traveling with his family to Europe and in his spare time enjoys yoga and works out to stay fit and healthy.