

May 07, 2020 | By Heather Buschman, PhD

Ruth S. Waterman, MD, Named Chair of the Department of Anesthesiology

Ruth S. Waterman, MD, has been named chair of the Department of Anesthesiology at University of California San Diego School of Medicine and UC San Diego Health.

“Given her clinical acumen, creativity and deep care for her patients, it’s no surprise that Dr. Waterman is a truly valued colleague and respected leader — here at UC San Diego, but also throughout the field of anesthesiology,” said Steven Garfin, MD, interim dean of UC San Diego School of Medicine. “I personally enjoy working with her and I’m excited for the new innovations and approaches she has in store for her team, her patients and our organization.”

Waterman joined the faculty at UC San Diego in 2013 and has served as interim chair of the department since 2018. In her role as chair, Waterman will continue to oversee clinical care and overall department operations in both La Jolla and Hillcrest. She and the department provide anesthesia for patients undergoing surgical and therapeutic procedures, treat acute and chronic pain, and provide medical management for patients with critical illnesses and severe injuries.

“What I love about anesthesiology is the complexity,” Waterman said. “We cover so many different diseases, patient conditions and medications — we are in every part of the hospital every day — and we need to maintain a lot of knowledge to make quick decisions that could have a huge effect on a patient’s life. I know that it can look like it doesn’t take much, but in fact anesthesiologists are constantly thinking about their patients and making modifications for their safety and comfort.”



Ruth S. Waterman, MD, chair of the Department of Anesthesiology at UC San Diego School of Medicine and UC San Diego Health.

Waterman came to UC San Diego with a research interest in how anti-inflammatory stem cells can help patients suffering from pain and was a member of a start-up pursuing its therapeutic use. After the technology was purchased by an international stem cell therapeutic company, she pivoted toward the use of big data and predictive modeling to improve patient care in the perioperative space.

Waterman's academic research has been published in peer-reviewed journals and books, including *PLOS ONE* and *Stem Cell Translational Medicine*. She holds a patent for "Germ-Resistant Communication and Data Transfer/Entry Products," a technology that was used in products manufactured by Fellowes, Inc. and ThyssenKrupp.

She also enjoys teaching and mentoring medical students, residents and fellows at UC San Diego School of Medicine. Waterman has received numerous recognitions for her efforts, including the Department of Anesthesiology Outstanding Teacher Award in 2016. In 2017, Waterman received the UC San Diego School of Medicine Physician of the Year award due to her outstanding work at UC San Diego Health, including her leadership during the licensing and opening of Jacobs Medical Center.

"I'm very proud of our anesthesiology team as a whole — there are so many wonderful, talented clinicians that I get to work with each day," Waterman said. "We have the privilege of working on some of the most complex and unique cases, and we continually provide outstanding and safe care together."

Looking ahead, Waterman sees a growing role for big data in her team's ability to optimize patient care. Already, her department is using predictive modeling and other techniques to better personalize their approaches to patient care, as they work to answer questions, such as why some people experience more post-operative pain than others, how obesity plays a role in safe outpatient surgery, how depression might make it more difficult for a person to recover from surgery, and how different combinations of therapy may change a patient's length of stay in the hospital.

"I'm always thinking about how we can do better for our patients," she said. "And I believe we're in the best possible position to do that here at UC San Diego, where we are lucky to work side by side with bioinformaticians, statisticians and many other experts excited to help us advance the science of anesthesiology and patient care."

Waterman conducted her residency at Tulane University School of Medicine and earned her medical degree from Louisiana State University School of Medicine. After completing a research fellowship in anesthesiology at Ochsner Medical Center in New Orleans, she joined

that department, specializing in liver transplantation.

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