



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY  
Philanthropy &  
Alumni Engagement

*At the Heart of Excellence*



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY  
MEDICAL COLLEGE  
OF GEORGIA



# At the Heart of Cardiovascular Excellence

“We’re trying to make a real difference in patients’ lives.”

—Neal Weintraub, MD, chief of Cardiology and  
Kupperman Eminent Scholar in Cardiovascular Medicine

## THE NEED

In our part of the South, health disparities and a lack of local, specialized services have historically led to increased patient morbidity and mortality. Here at the Division of Cardiology at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University, our patients are why we do what we do.

**Our vision involves continuous evolution toward excellence in translational research, clinical care and advanced education—all to save lives and improve the lives of patients suffering from cardiovascular disease.**

Much of what we do is done quietly, without much fanfare. But our passion is what sets us apart. For patients and families affected with a serious cardiovascular problem, our goal is to be here for you, whatever your need. And for our alumni, who are a vital part of our history, we strive to be great stewards of your legacy.

## DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS

- Potential translational research into a novel medical therapy for aortic aneurysm.
- Research into gene variants that together lead to increased risk for heart disease and cancer, with a goal of developing new treatment pathways.
- The region’s only adult ECMO program, launched just prior to COVID-19.
- The only regional clinical programs in cardiac sarcoidosis, cardio-oncology and cardio-obstetrics.
- Clinical shadowing program for PhD candidates so they understand the real impact of research to patients.
- Highly competitive cardiology fellowship, rejuvenated electrophysiology fellowship and new interventional cardiology fellowship.



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY  
**MEDICAL COLLEGE  
OF GEORGIA**



## At the Heart of Cutting-Edge Care

### New Clinical Services

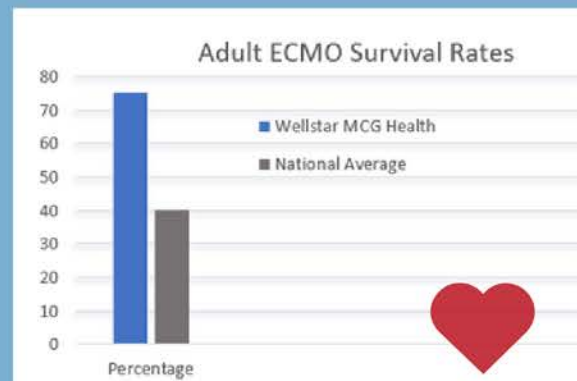
Within Heart and Vascular Care at Wellstar MCG Health, the Division of Cardiology has launched new clinical programs in the past three years to focus on the greatest needs of our patients: Shock, respiratory failure, heart inflammation, and heart disease related to cancer or pregnancy. Encounters with patients are how we change health care for the better, and your support is vital to these efforts.

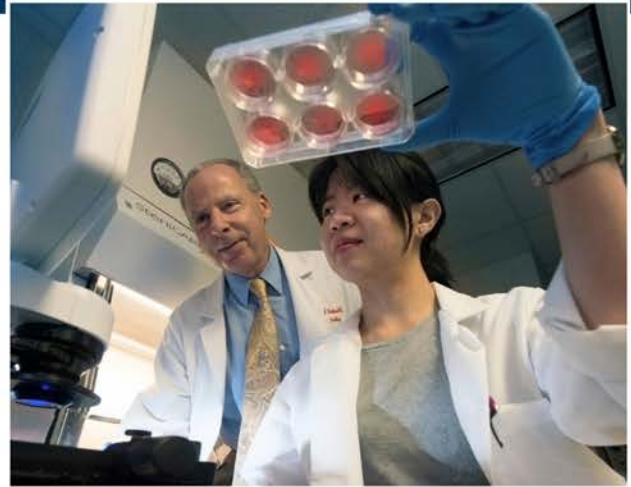
These latest clinical programs include:

- **Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO)** – more often used in neonates but increasingly in adults– is a lifesaving therapy that can help patients survive otherwise deadly conditions. During ECMO, a pump circulates blood through an artificial lung back into the bloodstream to help the heart and lungs recover. Wellstar MCG Health is the only health system in Georgia outside of Atlanta to offer ECMO for adults. Available 24/7, the program started just before COVID-19 and involves cardiology, cardiothoracic surgery, critical care, respiratory therapy, perfusion and pharmacy.
- **Sarcoidosis Clinic** – Although it's relatively rare, sarcoidosis tends to be more prevalent in the South and in African Americans. The autoimmune disease causes growth of granulomas, or inflammatory cells, in the body, most commonly the lungs, lymph nodes, eyes, skin, heart and other organs. When involving the heart, sarcoidosis usually kills patients within a few years unless treated properly. The Division of Cardiology collaborated with the Division of Rheumatology to create a specialty sarcoidosis clinic to help better diagnose and treat patients outside of Atlanta.

- **Cardio-Oncology** – The Division of Cardiology is collaborating with the Georgia Cancer Center to offer the region's only cardio-oncology program. Cancer treatments may lead to heart problems, but the program also is taking a closer look at how individuals with cancer may be predisposed to have heart problems and vice versa. The ultimate goal is to provide education and personalized health care to treat and prevent both underlying diseases.
- **Cardio-Obstetrics** – Georgia has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. A new cardio-obstetrics program at Wellstar MCG Health, supported by the state, is conducting outreach into rural areas of Georgia to help women understand their cardiac risk factors before they become pregnant and to provide counseling and care after pregnancy and for the rest of their lifetime.

### At the Heart of Excellence





## At the Heart of Advancing Research

### RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY

At the Medical College of Georgia Vascular Biology Center, a tight-knit group of clinicians and scientists collaborate with like-minded investigators from other fields of study across campus. It's a model that allows the VBC to move quickly and make advances that may be harder to achieve at larger institutions. ***But, the reality is that grant funding for research is hard to get and harder to sustain.*** Without reliable financial support, such as philanthropy, labs are often forced to let research staff go, losing a wealth of experience and placing critical research projects on hiatus.

#### Specific studies among our greatest needs include:

- **Aortic aneurysm:** After 20 years of research, Dr. Neal Weintraub is on the cusp of moving into clinical studies for a new medical therapy for aortic aneurysm, working in collaboration with the MCG Department of Surgery. The drug, currently in phase 3 trials with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (non-narcotic) to treat chronic pain has been found to inhibit an enzyme that is highly expressed in the liver and appears to be important in promoting aneurysms. The research has also identified a promising biomarker that may help identify patients at risk for aneurysm, which would allow us to treat patients at an earlier stage of the disease. Aneurysms that rupture have an up to 90% mortality within 48 hours if left untreated or treated improperly.
- **Heart disease-cancer link:** MCG surpassed other grant applicants including the medical schools at Harvard and Vanderbilt to become one of only four centers to receive

initial funding from the American Heart Association to study the link between heart disease and cancer. Working with the university's Georgia Cancer Center and its Georgia Prevention Institute, the Division of Cardiology and Vascular Biology Center are examining gene variants that may help explain why African Americans are at higher risk for certain cardiac and metabolic conditions but are protected against others and why their prostate and breast cancer mortality rates are higher.

**This fiscal year the MCG Division of Cardiology has been awarded \$8.8 million in research funding for the following:**

- Four R01 (Research Project) grants from the National Institutes of Health
- Three American Heart Association grants
- One U.S. Department of Defense grant
- One cardio-obstetrics grant
- Six active clinical trials

**Please scan the QR code for more details.**



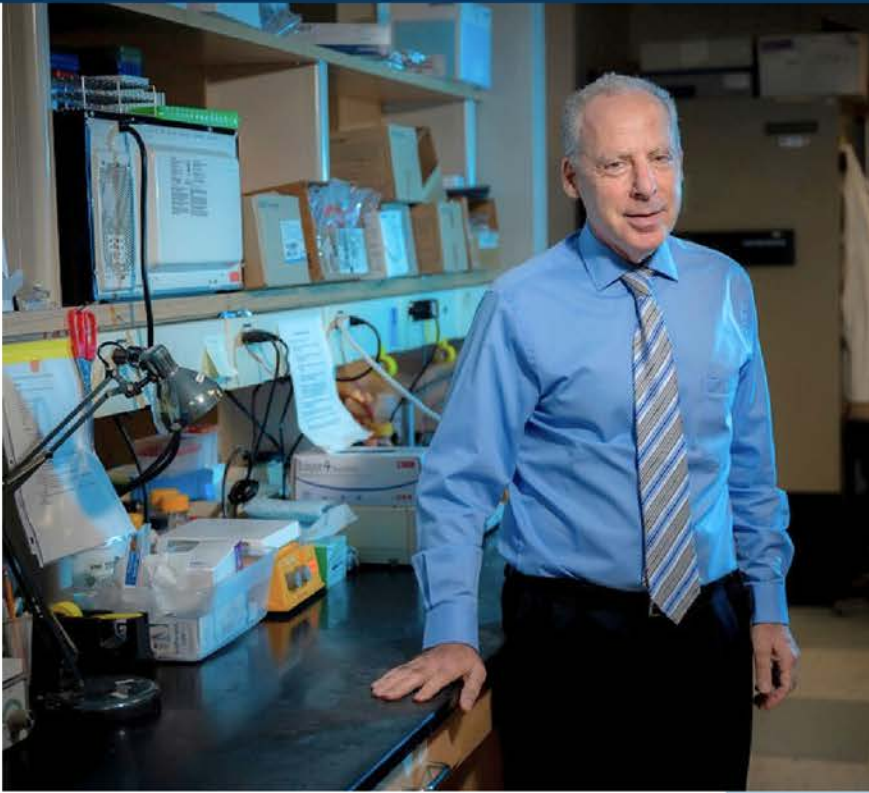


## At the Heart of Education and Training

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- With a favorable faculty to fellow ratio and our large volume, diversity and complexity of patients, fellowship training at the Division of Cardiology continues to be highly competitive. For PhD candidates majoring in vascular biology, we offer not only a collaborative research environment but also high-impact translational research opportunities with internationally recognized faculty. *Your support in educating the next generation of cardiac physicians and scientists helps our shared legacy continue to thrive.*
- In 2023, the division had 843 applicants for five cardiology fellowship slots. Our fellowship program has a strong legacy, graduating cardiologists who go on to establish successful careers both here in our state and across the nation to help meet the critical national shortage of cardiologists.
- Within the past several years, we also relaunched our advanced electrophysiology fellowship and added an interventional cardiology fellowship. The electrophysiology fellowship is a two-year program, and both programs currently offer one fellowship slot per year.
- An important part of training for PhD students in vascular biology is clinical shadowing. This helps students not only understand the real impact of their research to the lives of patients but also how to speak about their work to a lay audience, in everyday terms.

MCG Division of Cardiology trainees go on to practice in Georgia as well as Massachusetts General Hospital, Mount Sinai Medical Center, Shands Hospitals at the University of Florida, Baylor Scott & White, Loyola Medicine and many others.



“My desire to help people and my incredible curiosity are what led me to medicine and science.”

—**Neal Weintraub, MD**

*Chief of Cardiology and  
Kupperman Eminent Scholar  
in Cardiovascular Medicine*

## About the Chief

Neal Weintraub, MD, chief of cardiology and Kupperman Eminent Scholar in Cardiovascular Medicine, is an active clinician, researcher and administrator. Weintraub was voted one of America’s Top Doctors for six consecutive years by Best Doctors in America, Inc., and his research has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health since 1997—a milestone achieved by only a few. He is also a Georgia Research Alliance Eminent Scholar and regularly serves as an NIH grant reviewer.

Growing up in Albany in southwest Georgia, Weintraub had an early interest in science and medicine, further influenced by the physicians caring for him in the community and who trained at MCG. After his own training, he always dreamed of returning to his home state and working at the alma mater of those physicians who were such a strong early influence.

### Education

- MD, Tulane University
- Residencies in Internal Medicine, Emory University and University of Illinois
- Fellowships in Cardiovascular Disease and Clinical Pharmacology, Saint Louis University

### Previous Appointments

#### University of Cincinnati College of Medicine

- Co-Director, Cardiovascular Center of Excellence
- Stonehill Professor of Medicine
- Director, Cardiovascular Division

#### University of Iowa College of Medicine

- Medical Director, UI Heart Care
- Professor of Medicine, Cardiology Division
- Interim Director, Cardiology Division

# Cardiology Funding Opportunities

You are at the **heart** of our greatest needs and greatest opportunities.



## How You Can Make an Impact

You can help by making a gift to an existing cardiology-related fund, establishing a new fund or designing your own unique way of giving. Here are a specific examples:

### Vascular Biology Research Center naming opportunity: \$10 million

This is a transformative opportunity for a funder to catalyze growth in internationally recognized research focusing on cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes—three major health conditions now at epidemic proportions.

### Endowed chair: \$500,000 minimum

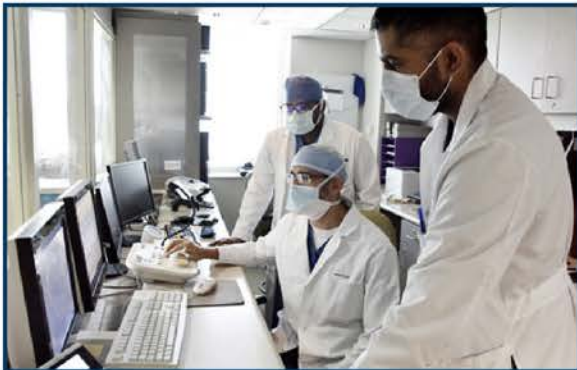
In the highly competitive industry of health care, endowed chairs help public universities recruit and retain excellent clinical and research faculty members. The Division of Cardiology would like to create a new Chair in Cardiovascular Imaging (\$1 million minimum) to help grow our capabilities in diagnosis and management of heart conditions.

### Research endowment: \$500,000 minimum

An endowment provides ongoing stable support of research outside of grants and grant cycles, allowing discoveries to advance more quickly. A \$500,000 endowment provides, on average, \$17,500 annually.

### Lectureship endowment: \$100,000 minimum

Through lectureships, invited national and international experts in cardiology share their clinical findings and research discoveries with faculty, staff, fellows and students.



## Annual Needs

- Community Education/Outreach: \$10,000 annually
- Fellowship Education Fund: \$25,000 annually
- Fellowship Academic/Research Fund: \$25,000 annually
- Individual Lectureships/Conferences: \$30,000 annually
- Clinical Program Support: \$100,000 annually
- New Imaging Fellowship: \$100,000 annually

*Leave a Legacy*

### Name An Endowment

Not only can you help support students, faculty or programs in perpetuity through an endowment, but you can name your fund in memory or honor of a loved one, a mentor or someone special and leave a legacy.



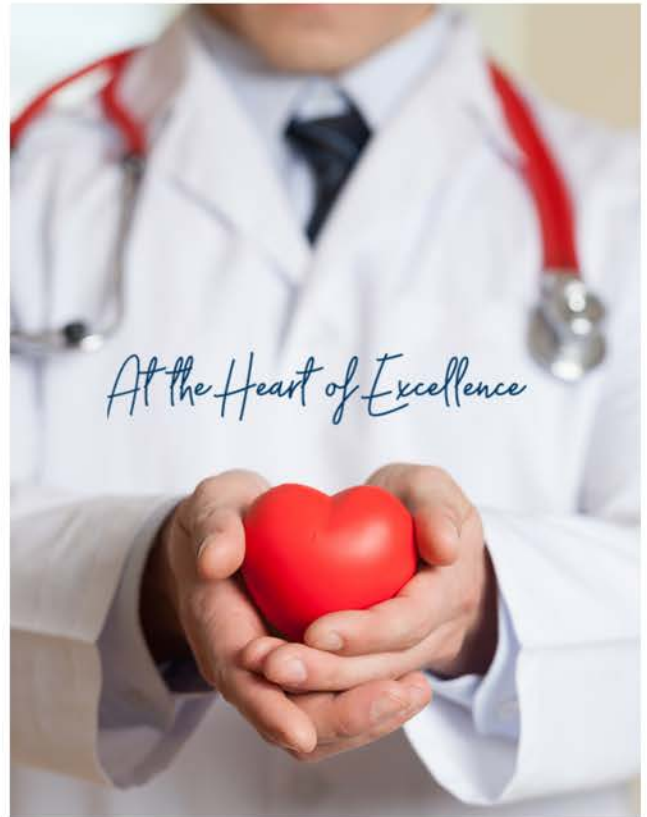
**AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY  
MEDICAL COLLEGE  
OF GEORGIA**

## At the Heart of Excellence

- 2023 American Heart Association: Get With The Guidelines Heart Failure: Gold Plus Recognition
- American College of Cardiology Accreditation for Electrophysiology
- IAC-accredited Echocardiography
- AACVPR-Certified Program



For a complete list of existing MCG Division of Cardiology Funds, please visit [augusta.edu/giving/give.php](http://augusta.edu/giving/give.php) or scan the QR code to take you to the fund list and search the full fund list for “cardiology.”



For more information about giving to the Division of Cardiology at the Medical College of Georgia, please email [philanthropy@augusta.edu](mailto:philanthropy@augusta.edu) or call 706-721-4001.



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY  
**MEDICAL COLLEGE  
OF GEORGIA**