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The Richard B. Capps, MD, Professor
of Hepatology

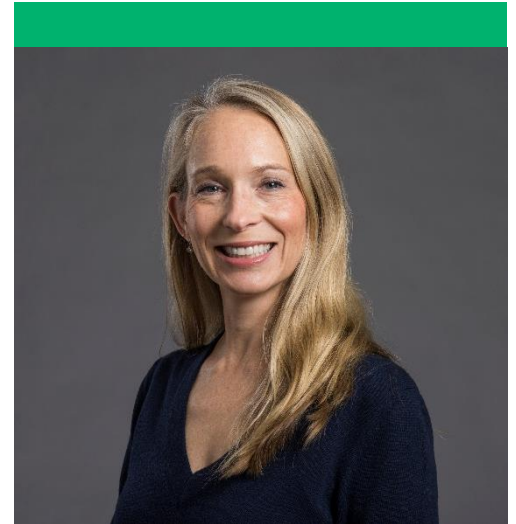
Advancement of Medicine

In 2025, we continued to improve management pathways for steatotic liver disease (fatty liver). Liver disease rates have been steadily increasing over the years, with nearly 1 in 3 Americans suffering from chronic liver disease. Highlights of the year included expanding our fatty liver disease care cascade to include the combination of metabolic and alcohol-associated liver disease.

Research

Funds from the Capps endowment have been critical in supporting our research projects, which are focused on alcoholic liver diseases and funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, or NIAAA, at the National Institutes of Health, or NIH. The endowment continues to support the NIH-funded ACCELERATE PACE study, which is a prospective continuation of the retrospective ACCELERATE AH study focusing on outcomes of early liver transplantation for patients with alcoholic liver disease. As part of this collaboration, **Sheila Eswaran, MD, MS**, and team have contributed to the national and international field of hepatology with seven published peer-reviewed articles.

The Capps Endowment has also been vital in supporting the Liver Cancer Multidisciplinary Clinic, which is staffed by hepatology, surgery and interventional radiology. We continue to see increased referrals for new liver cancer, which continues to be a leading diagnosis for liver transplantation. We have expanded our program to include other malignancies involving the liver, such as colorectal cancer metastasis and intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma. This integrated, centralized clinic focuses on patient care, education and research with our liver cancer team at RUSH MD Anderson Cancer Center.





Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease, or MASLD, is the most prevalent cause of liver disease in the U.S. The endowment supports **Sujit Janardhan, MD, PhD**, and his ongoing efforts to optimize management of MASLD through a subspecialty pathway supported by an advanced practice provider, or APP, and to integrate MASLD management into primary care.

Over the past year, the Weight Intervention in Liver Disease, or WILD, program and its related endeavors have been highly productive. Support from the chair has been instrumental in providing Dr. Janardhan with the resources to pursue and enrich these endeavors. Over the past year, we have begun a transformational change in the WILD program to expand into a comprehensive MASH clinical program. This has involved a large-scale collaborative planning effort involving all members of the WILD team to bring the vision of the Rush Comprehensive MASH Program, or RCMP, into reality. Each member of the program has championed one of the pillars of the RCMP, with the mandate that the pillar be beneficial to patients and referring providers, have an executable scope and be amenable to academic investigation.

These pillars include:

- **Patient access:** Maximizes availability for the patient most desperately in need while providing support to less critical MASLD patients
- **Medication optimization:** Incorporates newly approved MASH-directed pharmacotherapy while continuing to optimize pharmacotherapy for metabolic comorbidities
- **Patient education:** Delivered via print, audio and video media to help educate patients and providers on MASH, obesity and metabolic syndrome through
- **Comprehensive metabolic screening and assessment:** Offered in conjunction with the Rush Metabolic Health consortium
- **Lifestyle optimization:** Includes exercise, diet coaching, and barrier identification and elimination
- **MASH-related clinical outcome monitoring:** Tracks weight loss, assessment and treatment of comorbidities, initiation of MASH-related pharmacotherapy and clinical outcomes, e.g., improvement in clinical markers of MASH (liver function tests, steatosis, elastography/fibrosis). The RCMP remains in a planning phase due to space and availability



restraints, and to understaffing in hepatology, but we hope to hold pilot clinics and begin creating resources and infrastructure for data collection in the next few months.

Our fourth obesity-trained APP, Laura Ritchie, NP, DNP, is scheduled to complete her obesity certification in the next few months.

In addition, national recognition of our WILD and MASH programs has led to several opportunities for academic productivity, collaboration and further media exposure/public education. The activities outlined below have been supported by the Capps endowment.

MASH original research publication

Sujit Janardhan, MD, PhD¹, Anna Mageras, MPH², Robert E. Schwartz, MD, PhD³, Sonal Kumar, MD, MPH³, George Therapondos, MD, MPH⁴, Holly Jain, MD, MHA⁵, Mohanish Savanth, MHA⁵, Kristi Cohn, MHA⁵, Brendan Mcquillen, MD, MS¹, Phil Oravetz, MD, MPH, MBA⁴, Jihae Jeon, MPH², Jake Debroff, MD², Rama Hussein, DO², Ziyu Liu, BS³, Himel Mallick, PhD³, Ruth Kniuksta, MS¹, Meena B. Bansal, MD²; Impact of EHR-Enabled MASLD Care Pathways to Improve Detection of Advanced Fibrosis in Adults with Type 2 Diabetes. Manuscript in preparation for submission to *Hepatology Communications*

MASH-related clinical trial publication

Sanyal AJ, Newsome PN, Kliers I, Østergaard LH, Long MT, Kjær MS, Cali AMG, Bugianesi E, Rinella ME, Roden M, Ratziu V; ESSENCE Study Group. Phase 3 Trial of Semaglutide in Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatohepatitis. *N Engl J Med.* 2025 Jun 5;392(21):2089-2099. doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa2413258. Epub 2025 Apr 30. PMID: 40305708.

MASH-related research abstracts

- Real-World Safety and Monitoring Practices in Patients Receiving Resmetirom (Rezdiffra) for MASH: A Single Center Retrospective Review. Rosario, D et al., presented at 2025 American College of Gastroenterology, or ACG, meeting
- Successful Implementation of MASH Screening Guidelines for Detection of Advanced Fibrosis in High-Risk Patients in a Primary Care Setting Using Electronic Health Record-Based Care Pathway Infrastructure. McQuillen, B et al., presented at the 2025 ACG meeting



- Evaluating the Impact of Electronic Health Record Embedded Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatotic Liver Disease Care Pathways to Improve Detection of Advanced Fibrosis in Adults with Type 2 Diabetes. Presented at The Liver Meeting 2025

WILD/MASH academic opportunities

- Participation in the MASH Care Pathways collaborative, an advisory board and think tank designed to inform best practice guidance for the implementation of MASH screening programs and optimal care of MASH and metabolic syndrome patients; MASHNet via Petauri/The Kinetix Group (ongoing)
- Co-founding members/steering committee for the Rush Metabolic Health Consortium and related Healthy Living Program (ongoing) — We are still assessing opportunities for institutional and grant funding, but we have continued enrolling patients into the program via the preventative medicine clinic with Elizabeth Simkus, NP, DNP. This project helped facilitate our multidisciplinary MASH clinic.
- Consultative engagement for development of the Target-Metabolic national database program (ongoing)
- Consulting agreement with Novo Nordisk and Madrigal Pharmaceuticals (both companies with newly approved treatments for MASH)
- CLDF Annual Abstract Review: MASH. The Liver Meeting. November 2025

MASH/obesity-related speaking engagements

- Rush Into GI (multiple presentations on MASH with WILD members as faculty)
- MetALD: What It Is and How to Manage It. Laura Ritchie, NP, DNP
- Debate | GLP-1 or Resmetirom: Options for Treatment. Sujit Janardhan, MD, PhD, and Nancy Reau, MD
- Major Advancement in MASH Management Provided by the Chronic Liver Disease Foundation and the Global NASH Council. Sujit Janardhan, MD, PhD (Accredited Symposium)
- Optimizing Screening for Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH) Using EHR-Based Care Pathways. National Webinar. Speaker: Sujit Janardhan, MD, PhD, Oct. 25, 2025



- Updates on the Evaluation and Management of MASH from the 2025 Liver meeting. Rush Liver Conference. November 2025
- Invited Speaker: Hepatology Update for the Non-Hepatologist DDW 2026 (MASH review)

Media/invited manuscripts/interviews

Bariatric Surgery May Improve Outcomes for Patients with MASH, Study Finds (media interview of Sujit Janardhan, MD, PhD, for online publication by Stephanie Brown). VeryWell Health. Mar 28, 2025

Grant funding

- Evaluating the Impact of Integrating Optimal Reflexive MASH Care Pathways Within the Electronic Health Record. \$120,000 grant award from NovoNordisk/MASHnet (ongoing)
- Target-LD: National Deidentified Database of Patients With Chronic Liver Disease, including the AASLD Cirrhosis Quality Consortium

Biorepository

Your generosity supports our vital work maintaining Rush University Medical Center's Liver Disease Biorepository. At Rush, a large cohort of patients with liver disease receives care through the Section of Hepatology. Equal to Rush's mission to provide state-of-the-art care for these patients is its research mission. As one of the nation's leaders in academic medicine, Rush University Medical Center offers many different clinical trials for a variety of liver diseases. We aim to expand the research mission to coordinate a wide variety of basic, translational and health services studies.

Crucial to this mission is access to accurate and robust phenotyping of patients through comprehensive patient-level data. With this goal in mind, this protocol has several objectives. The primary objective of this protocol is to create a database that supports researchers' access to patient-level information in a time-efficient and confidential manner, thereby improving the quality of care delivered at our institution while also generating new medical knowledge. While the goals of future research utilizing this database are varied, its creation will enable the collection of necessary patient data for retrospective research on all patients who agree to participate in this dataset. The second objective of this protocol is to obtain permission from the database participants to be contacted for participation in future research if they appear eligible for a study based on the medical information available within the database. The third objective of this protocol is to collect biological



specimens for use in future basic, translational and clinical investigations. The final objective of this protocol is to collect data on quality of life, functional status and other relevant metrics that are not routinely collected during the clinical care of patients with chronic liver disease.

Trainee Education

Finally, your generosity supports a Transplant Hepatology Fellowship. This intensive one-year program allows residents and fellows to design and execute projects that would otherwise not be possible as part of their clinical training and research.

Presentations and Publications – Abbreviated

Posters

- Rosario Lora D, Blumenstein A, Post Z, Janardhan S, Reau N. Real-World Safety and Monitoring Practices in Patients Receiving Resmetirom (Rezdiffra) for MASH: A Single-Center Retrospective Review. Poster Presented at the ACG Scientific Meeting 2025
- Rosario Lora D, Post Z, Biglin M. Suboptimal Surveillance in IBD Patients with Ileal Pouch-Anal Anastomosis: A Single-Center Experience. Poster Presented at the ACG Scientific Meeting 2025
- Herrera Mercedes, Sarah MD; Strzepka, Jessica MD; Sakuraba, Atsushi MD, PhD; Rosario, Dauris MD. Isolated Jejunal Stenosis as a Rare Presentation of Crohn's Disease in the Setting of Latent Tuberculosis Infection. Poster Presented in the ACG Scientific Meeting 2025

Publications

- Abdelmotelib I, Rosario Lora D, Abdelhalim O, Abosheaishaa H, Eswaran S, Reau N. Guillain-Barré Syndrome Mimicking Autoimmune Hepatitis: A Rare Entity. *ACG Case Rep J.* 2025;12(10):e01842. Published 2025 Oct 1. Doi:10.14309/crj.0000000000001842
- Rosario Lora D, Post Z, Reau N. Immune Checkpoint Inhibitor-Related Hepatitis: Beyond the Guidelines. *World Gastroenterology Organisation.* 2025; 30(3). Published September 2025.
- Rosario Lora D. Esophageal Varices, Screening and Prophylaxis. AASLD, Liver Fellow Network. Published in July 2025. <https://www.aasld.org/liver-fellow-network/core-series/back-basics/back-basics-esophageal-varices-pathophysiology>



In Progress

- Submitted to Digestive Disease Week and European Association for the Study of the Liver
- Real world experience with MASLD and resmeterom
- Assessing patients undergoing joint surgery for unrecognized liver disease
- Efficacy of second-line therapy in patients with primary biliary cirrhosis not achieving biochemical remission with ursodiol
- Single-center experience on rates of hepatitis D testing and electronic medical record coding in patients with known hepatitis B infection (pending IRB submission and approval)
- Non-cirrhotic, non-malignant portal vein thrombosis: single-center retrospective study of natural history and treatment outcomes (pending IRB submission and approval)

Presentations

In addition to the extensive list of publications, our group presented this research at several academic congresses. Thanks to your support, our faculty's success is also a major impetus for engaging our residents and fellows in pursuing academic projects.

The Year Ahead: 2026 and Beyond

Liver morbidity and mortality are driven by three primary etiologies: liver cancer, MASLD and alcohol use disorder. Over the next year, we will continue to build our Steatotic Liver Disease Program and work to improve our liver cancer pathway through a multidisciplinary endeavor with hepatology, solid organ transplant and addiction. We have an incoming Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education transplant hepatology fellow. We also have secured an embedded GI fellow who wants to do transplant hepatology training during her third year, confirming the enthusiasm and opportunities our department offers. We are working to have our inaugural Donald Jensen, MD, visiting professor. Dr. Jensen was the original recipient of the Richard B. Capps, MD, Professorship and is the current Richard B. Capps Emeritus Professor.



With Gratitude

Your altruism truly embodies the spirit of **Dr. Capps**. He was a dedicated scholar and a master clinician. He dedicated his life to advancing science while also uplifting amazing patient care. The patient was always the center of his mission, and his patients ensured his legacy continues. As such, our department prioritizes patient-centered research and trainee education in deploying this generous funding in his memory.