

DERMATOLOGYNEWS

FALL 2025 | NEWSLETTER

RESEARCHSPOTLIGHT

Dr. Emanual Maverakis: Bridging Immunology and Dermatology to Revolutionize Patient Care

Distinguished immunologist Dr. Emanual Maverakis believes that "immunology plays a pivotal role across all medical specialties, but its connection to dermatology is especially profound." Inspired by this connection, he became a professor of dermatology, specializing in treating patients with severe immune-mediated skin diseases, combining his passion for immunology with his commitment to patient care. "The field has an enormous impact on alleviating patient suffering, which makes the work incredibly rewarding," he says.

Outside of clinical care, Dr. Maverakis conducts basic science and translational research as the director of the UC Davis Immune Modeling, Analysis and Diagnostics Shared Resource (IMADSR), helping to oversee the immunology program of the UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center. One of his tasks is to design and conduct the ancillary studies for the cancer center's Phase I immunotherapy clinical trials. He is also well known for his collaborative research efforts, which have elucidated the pathophysiology of many common and rare dermatologic diseases.

Reflecting on his more than two-decade career at UC Davis, Dr. Maverakis recalls the early days of the dermatology department. After completing his residency at UC Davis, he joined the faculty in 2007, during a time when clinical and research resources were far more limited.

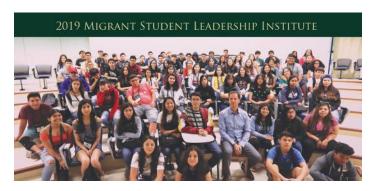


Dr. Emanual Maverakis conducts research at the UC Davis Immune Modeling, Analysis and Diagnostics Shared Resource.

"We didn't even have overhead lights for the operating rooms, and the clinic was a small fraction of its current size," he recalls. "To see how far the department has come and to have been a part of that growth is something I am very proud of."

- EMANUAL MAVERAKIS, Ph.D.

Dr. Maverakis is especially passionate about mentorship. Funded by a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Mid-Career Award, he mentors early-stage investigators in patient-oriented research. He values the relationships he has built with junior faculty and residents, and fondly recalls his own mentor, Dr. Eli Sercarz, whose guidance was instrumental in his academic and professional development. "Dr. Sercarz was the first to give me an opportunity to excel and the resources to do so. Even today, many of my closest colleagues are people Eli introduced me to," Dr. Maverakis says.



Each summer, Dr. Emanual Maverakis hosts a special collegepreparation camp for migrant high schoolers in Sacramento.

His dedication to mentorship also extends into the community. Each summer, Dr. Maverakis hosts a college-preparation camp for 50 to 150 migrant high school students, offering guidance, encouragement and a glimpse of the opportunities higher education can provide. For him, inspiring and supporting the next generation is one of the most meaningful parts of his work.

A note from the Department Chair



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to the Fall Edition of the Department of Dermatology Newsletter. We have much to celebrate as we move into the heart of this beautiful fall season here in Sacramento.

In June, we honored a fabulous group of graduating senior residents. Some pursue advanced fellowship training, while others take their dermatologic expertise directly into community practice. We are especially pleased to welcome Dr. Anita Savell, one of our graduates, to the faculty. She will focus on medical education and clinical care.

Over the past three years, several former UC Davis Dermatology residents have returned to join our growing practice, meeting the rising demand for dermatology services in the Sacramento region. Thanks to efficient

practice management and continuous recruitment, our patient wait times have steadily improved, helping us keep dermatology accessible to the community.

Our commitment to outstanding quality of care has not gone unnoticed — more than six of our dermatologists were recognized on Sactown Magazine's Best Doctors list last year. Our specialists provide comprehensive services, from general dermatology to subspecialty clinics in contact dermatitis, vitiligo (see the profile on Dr. Victor Huang in this issue), hair disease, autoimmune disorders, skin cancer surgery, hidradenitis and pediatric skin care.

I am deeply grateful to our residents, staff, physician assistants and faculty physicians for their dedication to making UC Davis an exceptional place for advanced skin care. Beyond clinical excellence, our research program is thriving, highlighted in this issue by a feature on the groundbreaking immunological work of Dr. Emanuel Maverakis and colleagues.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, which offers a closer look at the people and discoveries that make UC Davis Dermatology remarkable.

Sincerely yours,

Sam T. Hwang M.D., Ph.D.

Chair and Professor of Dermatology UC Davis School of Medicine UC Davis Health

FACULTY Achievements

UC Davis Dermatology Professors Honored by Women in Medicine and Health Sciences

Dr. Maija Kiuru and Dr. Athena Soulika of the Department of Dermatology on their recent promotions to Professor.

The Women in Medicine and Health Sciences (WIMHS) program recognized both physicians for this exciting career milestone, highlighting their exceptional contributions to patient care, research and mentorship.

Dr. Kiuru and Dr. Soulika have each advanced the field of dermatology through innovative clinical practice and collaborative scholarship, while also serving as role models for the next

generation of women in academic medicine. Their promotions underscore UC Davis Health's commitment to excellence, equity and the advancement of women leaders across the health sciences.







Maxwell Fung, M.D., Athena Soulika, Ph.D., Maija Kiuru, Ph.D., and William J. Murphy, Ph.D., attended the Women in Medicine and Health Sciences program celebration.



Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Oma Agbai, M.D. **Advancing Multicultural Dermatology** and Mentorship

A Journey of Purpose and Community Impact

Early in her career, Dr. Oma Agbai discovered a passion for multicultural dermatology that would guide her path in medicine. As a C.S. Livingood Clinical Research Fellow at Henry Ford Hospital, she laid the groundwork for a career dedicated to advancing the field and improving patient care.

"I developed a passion for multicultural dermatology as I deepened my understanding of its significance. Along the way, I discovered an incredible network of mentors, colleagues and future peers who inspired and shaped my journey," Dr. Agbai says.

In 2012, Dr. Agbai matched with UC Davis for her dermatology residency, and since then, her journey has been one of purpose, innovation and community impact.

Dermatology has always been a field of medicine that captured Dr. Agbai's attention.

"As a young teenager, the main draw to dermatology surrounded the perception I had of the psychological impact of skin disease, how visible it is and the social implications," Dr. Agbai reflected.

This enthusiasm for addressing not just physical symptoms but also the emotional well-being of patients has shaped her approach to medicine. In 2015, after joining UC Davis as a faculty member, Dr. Agbai founded both the hair loss clinic and the multicultural dermatology specialty, which she continues to lead as director. During her 13 years at UC Davis, she has witnessed significant changes in dermatology, particularly regarding inclusivity and cultural sensitivity.

"I've noticed the increase in awareness and appreciation for multicultural dermatology, including sensitivity to different skin types, hair types and practices related to different cultures," Dr. Agbai shared. She attributes these advancements to education and public awareness campaigns led by organizations such as the Skin of Color Society (SOCS).

Her ultimate goal is to see multicultural dermatology seamlessly integrated into general dermatology.

Dr. Agbai's work continues to have a profound impact on patients of color, particularly Black patients, who often feel unseen or unheard in dermatology. Providing culturally competent care allows these patients to feel recognized, respected and included in their care.

"For many, it has been challenging to find someone who validated their concerns," Dr. Agbai notes. "Many patients of color at our clinic have shared that they felt heard and understood for the very first time."

This sentiment resonates deeply with her, as it highlights the importance of empathy and understanding in patient care.



Dr. Oma Agbai (right) serves as director of Multicultural Dermatology and Hair Disorders at UC Davis Health. Her clinical interests include pigmentary disorders, disorders of the hair and conditions unique to ethnic skin types.

One of her patients, Madeline Murray, a UC Davis School of Medicine graduate and aspiring pediatrician, is a testament to Dr. Agbai's impact. At 19, Murray lost nearly all her hair due to alopecia areata and alopecia totalis. Under Dr. Agbai's care, Murray's hair returned within months.

Unexpectedly, the experience prepared her for an even greater challenge — chemotherapy-induced hair loss following a Hodgkin's lymphoma diagnosis.



"It was an interesting preparation," Madeline Murray says. "I'd already dealt with being bald and trying to manage that emotionally. It helped me be more empathetic with my patients now."

Murray has been in remission for five years, and her story underscores the lasting emotional and physical impact of compassionate care.

Dr. Agbai's achievements extend beyond patient care to mentorship and scholarship.

Collaborating with her mentor, Dr. Susan Taylor, President of the American Academy of Dermatology, Dr. Agbai co-authored one of the most-cited dermatology articles on photoprotection and people of color. She values the community of mentees she has built and finds fulfillment in watching them thrive.

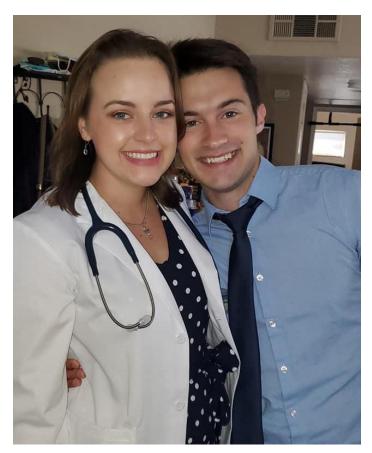
"Seeing them benefit from this extremely supportive, collaborative group that can hopefully inspire them to pay it forward has been one of the things I'm most proud of," Dr. Agbai said.

Balancing a demanding career and family life as a mother of three, Dr. Agbai relies on internal intuition to guide her priorities.

"You're navigating between surviving and thriving, and it's important to create space for your inner wisdom to grow stronger and guide you forward," Dr. Agbai advised. She emphasizes the importance of pursuing passion projects and granting oneself grace to avoid burnout.



Murray celebrates completing her chemotherapy treatments after being diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma.



Murray (left) graduated from the UC Davis School of Medicine in May 2025 and aspires to be a compassionate pediatrician.

Your Support Makes Progress Possible

With federal funding becoming increasingly uncertain, private support is more critical than ever to sustain our work and accelerate progress. Your gift today can make an immediate difference in advancing our mission and supporting those who depend on us. To learn more or discuss giving opportunities, please contact Reese Scherber at 916-291-5775 or tmscherber@health.ucdavis.edu.

Research Spotlight continued from page 1

After completing his undergraduate studies at UCLA, Dr. Maverakis went on to Harvard Medical School, where he graduated summa cum laude in 2003, becoming one of only 15 students in the institution's 242-year history to achieve this distinction. His career has been marked by numerous other accolades, including the NIH Director's New Innovator Award, election to the California Academy of Sciences, membership in the American Society for Clinical Investigation (ASCI) and election to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). He has also received early career awards from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. However, the honor most dear to his heart is receiving the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers from President Obama in 2012, an experience that brought him to the White House for a memorable recognition ceremony.

Looking ahead, Dr. Maverakis is especially excited about advancing clinical care for patients with rare diseases, including discovering new drug targets for diseases that currently have no U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved therapies. He is also committed to pioneering new approaches for clinical trials and ushering in precision medicine to the field of dermatology.

To achieve these ambitious goals, Dr. Maverakis and his team have introduced leading-edge technologies to the UC Davis Medical Center, including a Xenium Spatial Sequencer, capable of visualizing tissue at single-molecule resolution. "These technologies have the potential to revolutionize medicine, especially dermatology," Dr. Maverakis says.

Outside of his professional commitments, Dr. Maverakis enjoys hiking through Northern California's stunning landscapes, spending time with his daughter, finding balance in nature and continuing to appreciate the simple pleasures of life.



Dr. Emanual Maverakis gives a special lecture for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

UC Davis Dermatology Physicians Named 2025 "Top Doctors"

Congratulations to the following UC

Davis Health Department of Dermatology
physicians for being voted among

Sactown Magazine's 2025 Top Doctors:

- · Oma Agbai · Smita Awasthi
- Alain Brassard
 Daniel Eisen
- Maxwell Fung Victor Huang Jayne Joo
- Emanual Maverakis Marc Silverstein
- Danielle Tartar Peggy Wu

This recognition reflects their outstanding patient care, clinical expertise and commitment to excellence across the Sacramento region. Their dedication to advancing dermatologic medicine — through innovative research, exceptional education of future clinicians, and compassionate, high-quality care — exemplifies the department's mission to improve skin health for our community and beyond.



ALUMNI SOCIETY

Dear UC Davis Dermatology Alumni and Friends,

As the new co-chairs for the Dermatology Alumni Society, we wanted to take a moment to introduce ourselves and share our excitement about our latest roles. We sincerely appreciate our education at UC Davis and want to continue to help our beloved program. Together, we can make even more significant contributions to the success of UC Davis Dermatology.

We also want to take a moment to thank our past President, **Danielle Tartar, M.D., Ph.D.** (Class of 2017), and our alumni council for their interest in building our Alumni Society into an engaged and impactful organization. We want to highlight **Artur Henke, M.D.** (Class of 2004), **Baran Ho, M.D.** (Class of 2017), **Larissa Larsen, M.D.** (Class of 2014), and **Teri McGillis, M.D.** (Class of 1988) for their involvement. Through the leadership of, we can create a foundation that can strengthen our alumni connections and support our department's goals. We will also be sending out an email to see if any others would like to join us in our work to advance the mission of UC Davis Dermatology. We are committed to supporting our residents, fostering mentorship opportunities and equipping our department with the tools to provide leading-edge care.

Looking ahead, we encourage you to attend our alumni reception, which will take place at the American Academy of Dermatology Association's conference on **Saturday, March 28, from 5:30-7:30 p.m., in Denver, Colorado**. We will send more details as they become available, but we wanted to encourage you to save the date and attend to reconnect with peers.

Finally, we'd also like to introduce you to **Reese Scherber**, who will be a key point of contact for alumni engagement. Reese will ensure that your voices are heard and your involvement in our initiatives is meaningful. Whether you are interested in mentoring, attending events or contributing to our fundraising efforts, she'll help connect you to opportunities that align with your passions. For more information, please reach out to Reese at 916-291-5775 or tmscherber@health.ucdavis.edu and she will help connect you.

Together, we can ensure that UC Davis Dermatology remains a leader in education, research and patient care for many years to come.

With gratitude,



Farzam Gorouhi, M.D. Class of 2018



Faranak Kamangar, M.D. Class of 2016

ALUMNI CORNER

Dr. Artur Henke Leading with Precision, Passion and Purpose in Dermatology



"I FOUND IT FASCINATING HOW MUCH VARIETY THERE IS. YOU'RE NOT JUST DOING ONE THING." For Dr. Artur

Henke, the decision to pursue medicine was rooted in a desire to make a meaningful impact on people's lives. But it was dermatology that especially caught his interest.

"You've got medical, surgery and cosmetics," Dr. Henke said of the wide spectrum in his specialty. "The ability to actually see the problem and often fix it is really rewarding. Plus you get to follow patients over time, so you build those relationships."

His journey brought him to UC Davis for residency, a decision he said resonated with his values and felt like the right fit.

"It's a place that really emphasizes balance between clinical training and a strong sense of community," Dr. Henke explained. "People genuinely want to see each other succeed. It's also very forward thinking."

During his time in residency, Dr. Henke served as Chief Resident, an experience he describes as incredibly rewarding and one of the most challenging roles he's had. From mentoring peers to managing program logistics and shaping the curriculum, the role deepened his leadership skills and reinforced his commitment to teamwork.

"It taught me a lot about leadership and problem-solving. I learned how important it is to communicate clearly and consistently," Dr. Henke said. "Those are skills I still use every day." After residency, he joined Kaiser Permanente, and today, he leads Placer Dermatology and Skin Care Center, where he provides general, surgical and cosmetic dermatology care.

"I always had this dream of opening my own practice," Dr. Henke said. "It's been a journey, but I'm so proud of the team we've built and the way we care for our patients."

Dr. Henke is often surprised at how much he is still learning post-residency, and credits his success to a foundation of strong mentorship during training and his time at UC Davis.

"Running your own practice is a whole different kind of education. From managing staff to dealing with insurance to keeping up with the latest treatments," Dr. Henke said. "It's humbling but in a good way."

Dr. Henke described his mentors at UC Davis as phenomenal. "They were people who didn't just teach medicine, but modeled what it means to be a compassionate, ethical, well-rounded physician," he said.

He's also quick to recall the best professional advice he's ever received: "You're not just treating skin. You're treating the person who's living in it," a lesson from one of his residency mentors that continues to guide his approach and the kind of doctor he wants to be.

Now that Dr. Henke is in a leadership role, he hopes to pay that guidance forward, whether it's mentoring pre-med and pre-physician assistant students, helping patients through complex treatments or staying up to date on the latest innovations. It's also what keeps him energized and inspired.

"Seeing patients regain their confidence through improved

skin health is incredibly fulfilling," Dr. Henke said. "I'm also motivated by the ever-evolving nature of dermatology, with new treatments and technologies keeping the field exciting."

With the future of dermatology being shaped by innovations in biologics, telehealth and artificial intelligence, Dr. Henke is optimistic about the path forward. He said if he could instantly gain expertise in any area, it would be in regenerative medicine and the potential it holds for skin rejuvenation and wound healing.

As an active member of the Dermatology Alumni Society steering committee, Dr. Henke is committed to giving back to the department that shaped him, through his time, guidance and support to future generations of residents.

"An alumni society fosters networking, mentorship and collaboration. I am hoping to create opportunities for

professional development and establish a platform for sharing innovative ideas." Dr. Henke said.

Asked to reflect on his proudest accomplishments, he points to establishing a comprehensive dermatologic surgery center within his practice and mentoring students who have gone on to pursue careers in health care.

For those just beginning their careers in dermatology, Dr. Henke offers this piece of advice:

"Stay curious, build strong relationships with mentors and peers, and always put the patient first. That's the heart of great dermatologic care," he says.

And if he could offer his younger self a piece of advice?

"Trust the process. Embrace challenges. Growth doesn't always follow a straight line, but it's always worth it."



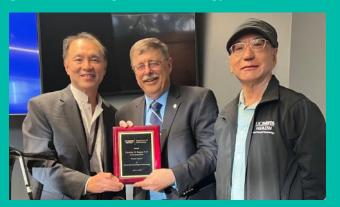
Julian Henke (Emory M4), Amanda Henke (Emory PA2), Tristin Henke, Isabelle Henke and Artur Henke (Dermatologist and founder of Placer Dermatology & Skin Care Center) enjoy time together as a family.

UC Davis Dermatology Hosts 3rd Annual An Yen Lectureship

On July 22, 2025, the UC Davis Department of Dermatology hosted the 3rd Annual An Yen Lectureship at the Cannery Place in Sacramento. The featured speaker, Timothy G. Berger, M.D., Professor of Dermatology at UCSF Health, delivered an engaging presentation on pruritus, exploring the mechanisms and management of chronic itch.

Dr. Berger's research centers on complex medical dermatology, including the pathophysiology of chronic pruritus, inflammatory skin disorders and evidence-based approaches to treatment. His work has helped shape the current understanding of itch pathways and informed new therapeutic strategies, offering valuable insights for clinicians and researchers alike.

The annual An Yen Lectureship honors excellence in dermatologic education and brings together regional specialists to exchange ideas and foster collaboration. Established through the generosity of An Yen, M.D., a former UC Davis faculty member now in private practice, the lectureship reflects his dedication to advancing general and surgical dermatology.



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Department of Dermatology

UC Davis Health Department of Dermatology 3301 C St., Suites 1300-1400 Sacramento, CA 95816 916-551-2600

health.ucdavis.edu/dermatology