



# MURIEL STEELE SOCIETY

## DECEMBER 2021 EVENTS AND UPDATES

Dear Muriel Steele Society Members,

We hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving with loved ones courtesy of Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J! Recognizing that we share opportunities that might apply to the greater surgical community at UCSF, we have now expanded our monthly newsletter distribution to include the entire Department of Surgery.

In addition to expanding our newsletter to the entire Department of Surgery, we would like to **formally welcome our trans and nonbinary colleagues to the Muriel Steele Society**. Thank you to **Dr. Sanziana Roman** for leading the efforts to prepare our official statement welcoming our colleagues to the MSS:

*The Muriel Steele Society is dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion of colleagues, trainees, and learners at UCSF and beyond, who identify as women, transgender, and nonbinary in surgical fields. Our overarching goal is to advocate for a culture of belonging - free of bias and discrimination - that is focused on expanding the advancement of all genders and the broader LGBTQ+ community in surgery.*

The Muriel Steele Society **Medical Student Committee** co-hosted a **Surgical Mentorship Meet-and-Greet** with the **Surgery Interest Group** this week. Special thanks to medical student **Erin Isaza** for her work as MSS student lead for this outstanding event.



We have some exciting events coming up later this month:

- The Muriel Steele Society **Medical Student Committee** will be hosting a **Medical Student Potluck and Suturing Social** on **Tuesday December 7th** from **7-9pm** at the home of Anya Greenberg and Cameron Niven. This will be a fantastic opportunity for medical students from all years to meet and connect with fellow medical students interested in surgery -- and to practice basic suturing and knot tying skills! Student leads for the event are **Anya Greenberg, Natalie Kucirek, and Cameron Niven.**

- This year's **MSS Virtual Holiday Party** will be held on **Tuesday, December 21st** from **7-8 PM**. Please join us via [Zoom](#) for an informal event. Have your holiday decor in the background, and partners, roommates, children, pets, and more are welcome to attend. We will be sharing favorite family traditions and recipes from this time of year.

We are so excited to share a brand new spotlight featuring **Dr. Kathryn Chu**, a general and colorectal surgeon and alumni of the UCSF School of Medicine and UCSF general surgery residency. She is the director of Global Surgery at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. Dr. Chu was interviewed by medical student **Phoebe Miller**. To read our prior **MSS Spotlights**, the interviews are uploaded [here](#) on the MSS website.

We are also pleased to share slides (attached) presented by Diane Ngo and Carolyn Smith Hughes at our last MSS Council Meeting - Faces of Ability II: Mental Health Resilience. We encourage you all to check out the [Faces of Ability II website](#) - this is a campaign aiming to increase mental health resilience in the UCSF community.

See below for this month's "**From MSS Members**" section. If you have anything you would like to feature (articles, advice, work photos/achievements, family/personal photos/achievements, etc) in this new section of our newsletters, please send an email to [themurielsteelesociety@ucsf.edu](mailto:themurielsteelesociety@ucsf.edu).

Thanks for reading!

Your **MSS Communications Committee**

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### **Muriel Steele Society Spotlight Series**

Dr. Kathryn Chu

Interview by Phoebe Miller

**Phoebe Miller, MS4:** What is one thing that you wish you had known during your training?

**Dr. Kathryn Chu:** I wish I had known that it's OK to follow what you think is the best path, even if it's not the traditional path that's offered. When I was doing my general surgery training, I was interested in what's now called "global health" or "global surgery", but back then, there wasn't a name for it. At the time, the traditional direction was to work for two years in a lab, either basic

science or translational. A few residents were exploring health services research looking at disparities, but mostly in the US. So the thought of, you know, wanting to use those research years to pursue something different - I wanted to go to London and pursue a specific master's in public health in developing countries - wasn't really on anyone's radar. Things have really changed a lot and that conversation now seems obsolete because I know that UCSF is very encouraging of people going into global surgery. But I guess the message is don't be afraid of going against the grain. I would say that if what you're thinking of isn't traditional, just go with your gut and do it. There will always be a path for you.

**Phoebe:** How did you find yourself interested in global surgery?

**Dr. Chu:** I loved other cultures and living in different places before I became interested in surgery. As an undergraduate, I studied in Italy and worked in Switzerland with an obstetrician and we did a project on the chorioamnion of the placenta. One day, he asked me to translate for a pregnant woman who had recently immigrated from China. Her unborn baby had a cardiac defect and he needed a translator to explain to her the diagnosis and what her options were. I realized medicine was really interesting because a person's beliefs and culture will influence their medical decisions. I actually became really interested in the idea that one could marry the humanistic and medical experience. I also realized that medicine was a skill I could use in other countries. In medical school, I took a year off between 3rd and 4th year and went to work at a mission hospital in Lesotho and Kenya. What I saw at these hospitals was that the surgeons were extremely useful. There were a lot of surgical conditions such as tropical infections, injury from road traffic accidents, congenital defects, and acute abdominal emergencies. I decided I would become a surgeon, and use my skills to work in lower-resourced settings. I completed a Masters of Public Health in Developing Countries at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the rest is history. There I met all kinds of leaders in global health, including several from Doctors Without Borders. My career moved into humanitarian surgery.

**Phoebe:** Do you have a favorite drink?

**Dr. Chu:** There is a drink here (South Africa) called amarula. It's a liquor made out of amarula nuts and people always like to tell the stories that when the amarula fruit becomes ripe and it ferments, the elephants go crazy for it. I think it's pretty tasty too for humans. We used to live out in Kruger Park. My husband was running a research site there and it's true when those amarula fruit become ripe, the elephants come in and they break down every barbed fence to get to the amarula and dig up roots and you know pull up your whole garden and your sewage lines just to get to the amarula. It's quite a nice drink too.



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**From MSS Members**

Happy Thanksgiving from the ZSFG Trauma Team!



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The Muriel Steele Society is an inclusive community dedicated to inspiring, supporting, and promoting women surgeons so they can thrive at all stages of their careers. We will be hosting events throughout the year to foster a strong community of allies and to achieve the goal of continued excellence at UCSF.

The Muriel Steele Society is dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion of colleagues, trainees, and learners at UCSF and beyond, who identify as women, transgender, and nonbinary in surgical fields. Our overarching goal is to advocate for a culture of belonging - free of bias and discrimination - that is focused on expanding the advancement of all genders and the broader LGBTQ+ community in surgery.

All women surgeons or medical students interested in surgery are included in the society but we recognize that some women may have been inadvertently left out of these emails. Please forward to anyone who you think might like to be included in the MSS. If you are interested in membership, please email us at [themurielsteelesociety@ucsf.edu](mailto:themurielsteelesociety@ucsf.edu).

For more information about the Muriel Steele Society, please visit our [website](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#).

See what's coming up next on the [Muriel Steele Society's calendar of events](#).

Have an opportunity or event that you'd like to share with the MSS membership? Email us at [themurielsteelesociety@ucsf.edu](mailto:themurielsteelesociety@ucsf.edu).

Want to become more involved with the Muriel Steele Society? We especially welcome women in other surgical departments to join our Executive Council! Email co-chairs Mika Varma ([mika.varma@ucsf.edu](mailto:mika.varma@ucsf.edu)) or Lucy Kornblith ([Lucy.Kornblith@ucsf.edu](mailto:Lucy.Kornblith@ucsf.edu)) for more information.