

## FELLOWSHIP DESCRIPTION FOR APPLICANTS

Division of Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery  
<http://obgyn.unm.edu/academic-divisions/urogynecology/index.html>  
University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center Department of OB-GYN

Director: Gena Dunivan, MD

Associate Director: Cara Ninivaggio, MD

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Division of Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery

Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology

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The Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery (FPMRS) fellowship at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center (UNMHSC) is primarily located at the University of New Mexico Hospital (UNMH) in Albuquerque, New Mexico and has been accredited through the ABOG from 2008 to present, and through the ACGME as of 2013. The Division is an integral part of the department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. There is strong collaboration between the FPMRS division and subspecialty physicians in Colorectal Surgery, Urology and Gastroenterology. Fellows are exposed to a wide variety of clinical experiences in a collegial atmosphere. The UNMHSC medical school and residency programs are fully accredited by the ACGME, and the hospital serves as the only tertiary facility for the entire state of New Mexico. The OB-GYN Department at UNMHSC provides funding, administrative, and legal support for all fellowship activities including participation in the fellowship match, maintenance of ACGME accreditation, and participation in the Clinical and Translational Research scholar's program. The University of New Mexico FPMRS fellowship provides three years of well-rounded clinical and research training. Our primary goal is to train and equip future academic leaders in FPMRS.

### **Mission Statement and Vision:**

The mission of The University of New Mexico School of Medicine is to advance the health of all New Mexicans by educating and increasing the diversity of health professionals, leaders and scientists; providing outstanding and compassionate medical care; advocating for all New Mexicans; and pursuing new knowledge and excellence of practice. The mission of the University of New Mexico's Division of FPMRS fellowship align closely with that of the University of New Mexico's above stated mission. Our mission is to provide a welcoming and safe environment to all who seek care. FPMRS physicians are experts in the surgical anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology of the pelvic floor. The FPMRS Division, a diverse group of individuals, provides the highest standard of care in the prevention and treatment of pelvic floor disorders (PFDs). We

do this in the safest, most effective and compassionate way in order to improve the quality of life for our patients and for our community by empowering women to partner in their care. Our vision is to be recognized as the premier center for pelvic floor disorders through our quality care, nationally recognized research programs, and highly sought after educational opportunities. Our mission is provide and produce excellent training for our fellows to develop into expert clinicians that are well prepared to provide full scope, compassionate and individualized urogynecologic care to a diverse patient population. Our mission is to help foster a training environment that promotes and develops future leaders in our field.

#### **Overview:**

The fellowship is funded by the UNMHSC with the majority of the clinical activity centered at UNM Hospital and Sandoval Regional Medical Center (SRMC) under the direction of five fellowship trained subspecialists in FPMRS: Drs. Peter Jeppson, Yuko Komesu, Gena Dunivan, Cara Ninivaggio, and Kate Meriwether. We care for patients at two locations: UNM and SRMC. The program is enriched by its close association with subspecialists in Urology and Colorectal Surgery. The fellows are fully supported educationally and administratively, in their research endeavors, with free access to biostatisticians and dedicated research time. Fellow's patient care responsibilities are divided equally between ambulatory clinic care and surgery.

#### **Faculty:**

**Peter Jeppson, MD, FACOG, FACS**, Division Chief, Associate Professor. Dr. Jeppson graduated medical school from Saint Louis University. He completed his residency at Case Western MetroHealth/Cleveland Clinic, his FPMRS fellowship at Brown University, and joined the UNM faculty in 2013. He has a keen interest in education, and started our rotation in Africa to gain fistula experience for our fellows. Research interests include medical education, wellness and clinical outcomes.

**Yuko Komesu, MD, FACOG**, Professor. Dr. Komesu graduated from University of Michigan Medical School where she also completed her OB-GYN residency. She was in private practice a number of years, and then completed her FPMRS fellowship at University of New Mexico. Since completing her fellowship, Dr. Komesu has been recognized nationally for her epidemiologic research into the incidence and remission of incontinence and has secured extramural funding to continue this research. She has an RO1 from NCAMS to investigate mind body connections in urgency urinary incontinence. She currently serves as the Vice Chair of Research for the Ob/Gyn department.

**Gena Dunivan, MD, FACOG, FACS**, Fellowship Program Director, Associate Professor. Dr. Dunivan graduated medical school from UNM, completed her residency at the University of California, San Diego and her FPMRS fellowship at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She is well recognized for her work in qualitative methodologies research and patient centered outcomes. Dr. Dunivan has assumed multiple leadership roles within the institution and currently serves as Associate Chair of Graduate Medical Education.

**Cara Ninivaggio, MD, FACOG**, Associate Fellowship Program Director, Assistant Professor. Dr. Ninivaggio graduated from Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook University, where she also completed her residency and a 1 year fellowship in Minimally-Invasive Gynecologic Surgery. She then completed her FPMRS fellowship at UNM. She is the Quality and Safety Officer for the Ob/Gyn department and has an interest in minimally invasive surgery, surgical education, and surgical outcomes research.

**Kate Meriwether, MD, FACOG**, Assistant Professor, graduated from Michigan State University College of Human Medicine. She then went to Washington MedStar in DC for residency, and completed her FPMRS Fellowship at UNM. After working at the University of Louisville, Dr. Meriwether returned to UNM in October, 2019. She is an expert in robotic surgery, is in charge of fellowship research, and she chairs multiple national research committees.

**Rohini McKee, MD**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Surgery. Dr. McKee supervises the fellows on their colorectal rotation. She was recently promoted to the Chair of Quality and Safety for the entire healthcare system. She has a special interest in quality and safety outcomes and functional bowel disorders.

**Sarah Popek MD, FACS**, Assistant Professor in the Division of Colorectal Surgery, Department of Surgery. Dr. Popek specializes in laparoscopic and open surgery for benign and malignant colorectal disease. Her clinical interests include colon and rectal cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, anorectal disease, and pelvic floor disorders.

**Frances Alba, MD**, Assistant Professor in the Division of Urology, Department of Surgery. Dr. Alba operates with the FPMRS fellows once per week on the SRMC rotation, provides didactics, and teaches our fellows outpatient urology in her busy clinics.

**Julie Riley, MD, FACS**, Assistant Professor in the Division of Urology, Department of Surgery. Dr. Riley operates with the FPMRS fellows once per week at UNMH and often does complicated cases involving urologic cancer. She is a clinical educator and also provides didactics. She is the Director of Endourology and Stone Disease with expertise in urolithiasis and complex ureteral repair as well as renal transplantation.

**Rebecca Hall, PhD**, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Dr. Hall serves as the clinical director of the fellow clinical ultrasound program in the Division of FPMRS. She is an internationally recognized expert in ultrasonography and recipient of numerous teaching awards. She specializes in ultrasonography of pelvic floor disorders including urethral diverticula, rectovaginal fistula, disorders of the anal sphincter complex, and visualizing mesh in both 2D and 3D ultrasound techniques.

### **Research:**

We have a strong commitment to research in the Division of FPMRS. We follow ABOG rules and provide 12 months of research in one month blocks over the course of the fellowship. While on research, the fellow can only participate in 4 hours of clinical duties per week. Despite this,

fellows are still given research time while on other rotations, typically one day a week. This time is reserved for fellows to develop and pursue research interests. In addition, in their last year, fellows are able to start a Master's in Clinical Research or complete a Certificate in Clinical Research, a degree program designed for clinicians. For more information regarding this program please refer to the MSCR's website <http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/bsgp/mscrabout.shtm>. In accordance with guidelines from the ABOG and ABU, all fellows develop a thesis project which they defend in their third year of fellowship.

### **Education:**

While the ACGME does not require formal biostatistics or epidemiology training, Fellows are relieved from clinical duties to participate in UNM's Clinical and Translational Research CTIPS course, as well as the Excellence course. Specific courses can be tailored to fit the needs of individual fellows with the approval of the Fellowship Director.

Additional educational activities include:

1. Didactic weekly seminars: involves all FPMRS fellows and faculty for didactics centered on achieving the current educational objectives recommended by the ABOG/ABU Fellow Guide to Learning, which include expertise in surgical anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology of the pelvic floor, statistics, study design and study conduct. Current literature is reviewed during a scheduled bi-monthly journal club. Present textbooks include "Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery" and "Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery." The fellows are also provided with a list of landmark articles and the most pertinent FPMRS peer-reviewed literature.
2. Division FPMRS meetings weekly for case presentations and discussion of patient management.
3. UNMH OB/GYN grand rounds every Friday morning.
4. Regular research meetings with research mentor.
5. Departmental Morbidity and Mortality meetings monthly, which is run by Dr. Ninivaggio.
6. Clinical and Translational Research Center Investigators Program, which is optional.

### **Clinical Experience and Volume:**

The FPMRS fellows, while on service at UNMH, operate two to three days per week. Over 300 major gynecologic procedures are performed yearly by the FPMRS service at UNMH, including vaginal, laparoscopic, robotic and abdominal procedures. Clinics are exclusively devoted to the care of women with pelvic floor disorders; less than 5% of the clinical volume is general gynecology. While fellows are at UNM, besides operating, they are also involved in clinic and have protected time for administrative duties and research. The UNMH Division of FPMRS

benefits from a state-wide referral system, exposing fellows to wide-ranging clinical problems. Over 50% of the referrals to the service are for women who have failed therapy elsewhere. The FPMRS offices have a fully equipped Urodynamics lab and fellows have the opportunity to work with Physical Therapists as well as midwives who specialize in pessary fitting within the Division. Finally, all fellows gain expertise in the use of ultrasound to image the pelvic floor under the tutelage of Dr. Hall.

While on the SRMC clinical rotation, the fellows operate up to three days per week with both FPMRS and Urology faculty. On the off-service rotations with the Colorectal Surgeons and with the Urology surgeons, fellows work one-on-one in the OR and clinic with the attending physicians. Again, besides operating, the fellows are also involved in clinic and have protected time for administrative duties and research.

**Administrative and Educational Support:**

The FPMRS fellows benefit from the administrative support given by the Division. Attendance at the annual American Urogynecologic Society (AUGS) Scientific Meeting and Society of Gynecologic Surgeons (SGS) is encouraged and financial support is provided by the department. Attendance at additional meetings is negotiated with the Division Director.

**Call:**

Fellows do not take any call for general OB/Gyn. Fellows are on-call to cover only the FPMRS service. Call is split between the three fellows with a faculty member also assigned to call.