

UCLA DEPARTMENT OF UROLOGY

AUA Research Scholar Awards: 2019 - 2020

The AUA offers several mentored research training awards to outstanding young investigators in the field of urologic research. While it is highly unusual for two individuals from the same institution to receive the AUA Research Scholar Awards, UCLA Urology is proud to announce that post-doctoral fellows Drs. Sriram Eleswarapu and Joseph Shirk were two of only eight physician-scientists selected for a 2019-2020 AUA Research Scholar Award.

The AUA Research Scholar Program provides \$40,000 per year for one- and two-year mentored training for:

- Clinical and postdoctoral fellows who are no more than five years beyond completing a doctorate or residency
- Early career investigators who are in the first five years after beginning a faculty position

Dr. Sriram Eleswarapu, a current UCLA Urology fellow in the Andrology Program, has a research project, "Engineering Novel Biomimetic Hydrogels for Tunica Albuginea Regeneration in Peyronie's Disease and Penile Injury," that is focused on Peyronie's disease, which is the formation of scar tissue in the penis that leads to pain, penile curvature, and other deformities. Current treatments involve medications or procedures that destroy the scar tissue, but there is no "silver bullet" biologic treatment available that regenerates or restores normal tissue. Using bioengineering technologies, the goal of the project is to develop an injectable biologic material loaded with stem cells that can be used for the regeneration of normal penile tissue in men affected by Peyronie's disease. Dr. Eleswarapu is being mentored by Ali Khademhosseini, PhD, Professor of Bioengineering and Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at UCLA, Jesse Mills, MD, Associate Clinical Professor of UCLA Urology, and Jacob Rajfer, MD, Professor of UCLA Urology and Chief of Urology, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center.

Dr. Joseph Shirk, a current UCLA Urology fellow in the Urologic Oncology Program, has a research project entitled "3D, Virtual Reality Imaging for Robotic Prostatectomy." The purpose of the study is to assess the impact of virtual reality (VR) models of surgical anatomy on cancer surgeon performance. The project hypothesizes that surgeons who view prostate cancer patient's anatomy before surgically removing the prostate, as well as during surgery using the robotic surgery platform, will develop a better understanding of cancer-related anatomy and achieve better functional and oncological outcomes for patients. Dr. Shirk is being mentored by Dr. Christopher Saigal, Professor and Vice Chair of UCLA Urology.

[For more information regarding the 2019–2020 AUA Research Scholars >](#)