

Steven C. Stain, MD

Neil Lempert Professor and Chair
Department of Surgery, Albany Medical College

JNMA is featuring a series on African Americans holding endowed chairs in American medical schools in recognition of the outstanding accomplishments of these very special people. These chairs are usually funded from generous benefactors and may include grateful patients or parents of patients (children), executives from the business world and industry, foundations, anonymous donors and even faculty members. The common denominator amongst these philanthropists is to recognize the institution for the opportunities afforded them in some way as a way of "giving back" to insure that the school can continue to recruit the most talented individuals to the institution.

The Dr. Neil Lempert Professorship in Surgery serves as a tribute to the professional legacy of Neil Lempert, MD, who in 1969 became the capital region's first transplant surgeon and led the team that performed the first kidney transplant in northeastern New York at Albany Medical Center. Lempert served as director of transplantation until 1992 and, in 1997, the Lempert professorship was established to honor his legacy as an exceptional medical leader. In his retirement, he continues to work closely with Albany Medical Center.

At the time of his retirement as director of the transplant program at Albany Medical Center in 1992, the Organ Procurement Organization of Albany Medical College wrote:

Neil Lempert, MD, has been part of one of the most exciting chapters in medicine at Albany Medical Center—organ transplantation. Dr. Lempert initiated the organ transplant program at the Medical Center in 1967, and performed the first transplant two years later. Under his leadership, the program has thrived. Since then, nearly 1,000 kidneys have been transplanted at Albany Medical Center.

"Work with transplant patients provides gratification and satisfaction," said Lempert. "We see patients whose existence surrounds their dialysis treatment. We have patients who frequently are so sick they are hardly able to walk. After surgery, they can resume normal life." During the early years of the program, Lempert had to be on call 24 hours a day, ready to perform surgery whenever a kidney became available. "We still have a lack of suitable organs," he said. "We need better use of available organs, better prevention and treatment of rejection."

Lempert received his MD at Albany Medical College and served as research fellow in surgery at Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown from 1963–1964. There, his mentor was David Blumenstock, MD, chief of surgery, who was pioneering a program in transplantation. After a tour of duty in the army, Lempert returned to Albany Medical Center in 1967. He has been active in professional organizations, serving on the board of directors of the Kidney Foundation of Northeastern New York, the American College of Surgeons, the American Society of Transplant Surgeons, the United Network for Organ Sharing and the State of New York Commission on Quality of Care of the Mentally Disabled.

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Steven C. Stain grew up in Fresno, CA, and received his undergraduate and MD degree from University of California at Irvine. He completed his residency training in surgery at Los Angeles County + University of Southern California Medical Center in 1988 and subsequently joined the faculty at University of Southern California as a clinical instructor while completing a fellowship in surgical critical care. He continued his surgical training in hepatobiliary surgery under Leslie H. Blumgart at the University of Berne, Switzerland, returning to the USC faculty in 1991. Stain completed a health services research fellowship in conjunction with the American Association of Medical Colleges. While at USC, he rose to the rank of tenured associate professor and focused his clinical and research efforts in diseases of the liver and pancreas. He served as the program director of the general surgery residency at Huntington Memorial Hospital (1996–2000).

In 2000, Stain was appointed as professor and chair of the department of surgery at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, TN, and received a secondary appointment as professor of surgery at Vanderbilt University, for which he coordinated the Vanderbilt surgery resident activity as chief of surgery at Nashville General Hospital. He was an active participant in the development of the Meharry Vanderbilt Alliance, serving as the coprincipal investigator in their \$7.5 million NCI-funded U54 Cancer Partnership Grant, in which he directed the cancer clinical trials program and coordinated the epidemiology core. He has received funding as a principal investigator for a Veterans Administration historically black college/university grant to study liver–lung interactions during acute pancreatitis and from the National Cancer Institute for an R25 grant entitled Student Research: Stimulus for Academic Careers.

In 2005, Stain was recruited to Albany Medical College, where he serves as the Neil Lempert professor and chair of the department of surgery. He is the author of 81 peer-reviewed publications and eight book chapters. His current research efforts are in oncology, health disparities and surgical training. Stain was appointed a director of the American Board of Surgery (2002–present) and is currently vice chair elect. He has served leadership roles in numerous organizations, including the Society of American Gastrointestinal Surgery (board of governors 1996–2006), Western Surgical Association (program committee chair 2001–2002, executive committee 2002–present), Southern Medical Association (chair 2002–2003), Surgical Section of the National Medical Association (chair 2006–2007) and Society of Black Academic Surgeons (treasurer, 1998–2004, president 2007–2008).



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