

JOSEPH ROBERT LEE MD FACS

Profile

I am an academic clinical surgeon with extensive experience in patient care, graduate medical education, and translational research. My clinical practice primarily involves the management of patients with complex liver, pancreas, and biliary disorders (benign and malignant). For 19 years I have collaborated with my colleagues in medical oncology, gastroenterology, and radiology in the multidisciplinary management of complex hepato-pancreato-biliary and oncology patients. From 2014 to 2021, I was the director of an ACGME accredited residency training program in general surgery. During this time as residency director, I developed and implemented educational curricula and residency training policies while certifying my general surgery residents for board eligibility and mentoring medical students seeking general surgery residency training positions. I am a co-investigator in a DOD funded translational research project — one involving a new potential immunotherapy for hepatocellular carcinoma. We are currently applying for an FDA New Drug Investigation project approval to begin human clinical trials. I am seeking a non-clinical role to apply my extensive medical knowledge, teaching and mentoring skills, my clinical patient management skills, and my academic research experience to the benefit of patient care, the management of their individual healthcare needs, and to gain experience and knowledge in the administration of healthcare benefits.

Employment

Associate Professor of Surgery, East Tennessee State University College of Medicine; Johnson City, TN — 2012-Present

Clinical surgery practice in hepato-pancreato-biliary diseases. Successfully performed over 100 pancreaticoduodenectomies, and over 300 laparoscopic microwave ablations of hepatic tumors.

Director, General Surgery Residency Training Program; Johnson City, TN — 2014-2021
Successfully directed an ACGME accredited residency training program in general surgery. Faculty Member of the Year Award, 2018. Perfect ACGME reviews of the program under my leadership for three consecutive years. Elected to serve as an American Board of Surgery Certification Examiner in November 2016. Founding member of the Diversity Task Force of the Association of Program Directors in Surgeon May 2017.

Kidney and Pancreas Transplant Surgeon, Mountain States Health Alliance; Johnson City, TN — 2006-2011

Hospital employed abdominal transplant surgeon. Director of the living donor kidney transplant program. Successfully performed over 100 kidney transplants, 15 pancreas transplants, over 50 laparoscopic living donor nephrectomies, and over 100 liver and kidney organ procurement surgeries.

Consultant/Advisor Experience

Key Opinion Leader (KOL), Ethicon US LLC; Cincinnati, OH — 2022-present Advised the Echelon Surgical Stapler development team at Ethicon US LLC regarding use of the Echelon 3000 Stapler for hepatic and pancreatic surgeries. I continue to provide advising services and clinical feedback to Ethicon as newer Echelon Stapler technology is implemented.

Regional Advisory Panel, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee; Johnson City, TN — 2015-2018

Served as a member of a regional advisory panel for BCBS of TN in for pharmaceutical options for BCBS members.

Operating Room Subcommittee of Johnson City Medical Center, Johnson City, TN — 2010–2012

Advised operating room supervisors and hospital administration of operating room logistics, scheduling, and block time assignments.

Education

Temple University School of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA — M.D., 1998

Harvard College, Cambridge MA — A.B. in Biochemical Sciences, 1994

Post Graduate Medical Education/Training

Clinical Fellow in Abdominal Organ Transplantation and Hepato-PancreatoBiliary Surgery, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA — 2004-2006 Performed 45 liver transplantation surgeries, 85 kidney transplant surgeries, 10 pancreas transplant surgeries, 75 multi-organ procurement surgeries, and 45 laparoscopic living donor nephrectomy surgeries.

Resident in General Surgery, Drexel University College of Medicine; Philadelphia, PA 2001-2004

Resident in General Surgery, Albert Einstein Medical Center; Philadelphia, PA 1998-2001

Licensure and Certification

Physician License #000041161 Tennessee Board of Medical Examiners; 2006 to present

Physician License #A85947 California Board of Medical Examiners; 2004-present

Certificate #062262 American Board of Surgery; Certification 2005 to present

Memberships

Member, Americas Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association; 2010 to present

Fellow, American College of Surgeons; 2010 to present

Member, American Society of Transplantation Surgeons; 2004 to 2020

Member, Association of Program Directors in Surgery; 2012 to 2021

Skills

Surgical skills — laparoscopic ultrasound, targeting liver and pancreas tumors for biopsy and treatment, complex surgical work and patient management; currently completing training for Intuitive DaVinci robotic abdominal surgery

Communication — the ability to translate and interpret scientific data for early learners, patients, and non-medical colleagues

Scientific — the ability to drill down into granular data while also viewing the overall goals

Writing — extensive experience in protocol and institutional policy development, scientific abstract and paper writing

Teaching — 18 years' experience in didactic lectures for medical students, residents, fellows, as well as intraoperative clinical and operative technical teaching and evaluation of learners

Coding/Billing/Documentation — extensive experience in ICD-10, CPT coding and clinical documentation for billing

Collaboration — extensive experience in multidisciplinary patient care, academic teaching with physicians of other specialties (oncologists, gastroenterologists, cardiologists)

Quality — extensive experience and participation in surgical morbidity and mortality, NSQIP, implementation of operating room quality policies

Research

Co-Investigator, East Tennessee State University College of Medicine, ' Johnson City, TN; 2019-present W81XW81XWH-19-1-0811 (CA180296) Project Title: "Met-targeting Chimeric Antigen Receptor (MetCAR) T Cell Therapy in Hepatocellular Carcinoma." Primary Investigator: Dr. Qian Xie, MD PhD

Collaborator, East Tennessee State University College of Medicine, Johnson City, TN; 2022-present Project Title: "Engineered exosomes carrying synthetic gRNA/Cas9 targeting HBV-infected cells." Primary Investigator: Dr. Zhi Q. Yao, MD PhD

Co-Investigator, ETSU College of Medicine, Johnson City, TN; 2009-2010 Laboratory of Dr. Jon Jones, MD. Studying machine perfusion preservation of porcine donor liver allografts.

Undergraduate research assistant, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA; 1992-1994. Applied techniques of molecular biology, biochemistry, and protein chemistry towards researching coagulation protein binding domains. Completed two projects, both published in abstracts for the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis and the American Society of Hematologists. Designed and characterized an anti-coagulation protein for heart disease treatment as an undergraduate honors thesis and for publication. Named the recipient of the 1993 American Society of Hematologists Summer Research Fellowship.

Publications

Zaskey MA, Lee JR "Managing Duodenal Ischemia in Bouveret Syndrome: A Case of Complex Gastrointestinal Reconstruction" American College of Surgeons Case Reviews in Surgery 2025 5(4): 81-85

Qin A, Qin Y, Lee J, Musket A, Ying M, Krenciute G, Marincola FM, Yao ZQ, Musich PR, and Xie Q. "Tyrosine kinase signaling-independent MET-targeting with CAR-T cells" J of Translational Medicine 2023 21:682

Lee J. Editor in Chief. Surgery-General: Specialty Intensive Review, 2000 Questions and Explanations. ASIN: B0150PM2SC; STATPearls Publishing. 2015 to 2020

Lee J. Editor in Chief. Surgery Advanced Med Student: Specialty Review and Self-Assessment. ASIN: B01N3K91UU; STATPearls Publishing. 2015 to 2020

Nawabi A, Rath S, Nissen N, Forscher C, Colquhoun S, Lee JR, Geller S, Wong A, Jung A, and Klein AS. "Primary Hepatic Osteosarcoma" J of Gastrointestinal Surg. 2009 Aug; 13(8): 1550-1553

Nissen NN, Grewal N, Lee J, Nawabi A, Korman J. "Completely laparoscopic nonanatomic hepatic resection using saline-cooled cautery and hydrodissection." Am Surg. 2007 Oct; 73(10): 987-990

Magner D, Ouellette JR, Lee JR, Colquhoun S, Lo S, Nissen NN. "Pancreaticoduodenectomy after neoadjuvant therapy in a Jehovah's Witness with locally advanced pancreatic cancer: case report and approach to avoid transfusion." Am Surg. 2006 May;72(5):435-7.

Cruz MA, Yuan H, Lee JR, Wise RJ, and Handin RI. "Interaction of the von Willebrand Factor (vWF) with collagen: localization of the primary collagen binding site by analysis of recombinant vWF-A domain polypeptides." Journal of Biological Chemistry 270(18): 10822-10827; May 5, 1995

Abstracts/Poster Presentations

Americas Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association Annual Meeting "Squamous Cell Carcinoma of the Gallbladder: A Case Report and Review of Current Literature" March 20-23 2025. Owen ST, Lee J

Southeastern Surgical Congress Annual Meeting "Rare Occurrence of Simultaneous Double-Primary Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma and Neuroendocrine Tumor." February 15-18 2025. Orschel C, DeSousa L, and Lee J

Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer "Targeting MET with Chimeric Antigen Receptor T cells in Hepatocellular Carcinoma" November 9-14, 2020. Qin Y, Qin A, Musket A, Musich PR, Lee J, Yao ZQ, Krenciute G, Xie Q

Southeastern Surgical Congress "Case Report: Angiosarcoma in a Renal Transplant Patient" February 12, 2018 (Annual Meeting). Lasher K, Bardoner J, McKenzie T, Crisostomo C, Lee J

Southeastern Surgical Congress "Case Report: Leiomyosarcoma of the Ureter" February 12, 2018 (Annual Meeting). Lasher K, Cannon E, Lee J

International Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association "Incidence and outcomes of gallbladder cancer treatment in a rural patient population" April 20-23, 2016 (Annual Meeting). Ramos T, Hall DR, McDonald DR, Moss C, Browder IW, and Lee J

Southeastern Surgical Congress "Diagnosis, treatment, and management of a 70 year old with VIPoma." February 21, 2016 (Annual Meeting). Guinn A, Ramos T, Pourmorteza M, Litchfield J, Arze E, Young M, and Lee J

Southeastern Surgical Congress "Management of an unusual complication post-pancreaticoduodenectomy." February 21, 2016 (Annual Meeting). Patel N, Ramseyer M, and Lee J

Southeastern Surgical Congress "Absent portal vein and superior mesenteric vein with pericholecystic varices: unusual case of symptomatic cholelithiasis" February 23, 2015 (Annual Meeting). Bardoner J, Robichaud F and Lee J

Southeastern Surgical Congress "Multiple Splanchnic Artery Aneurysms in a Single Adult Male Patient: Case Report and Literature Review" February 23, 2014 (Annual Meeting). Vinsant J and Lee J

Southeastern Surgical Congress "Pancreaticoduodenal Artery Aneurysm with Arteriportal Fistula: An Unusual Case" February 11, 2013 (Annual Meeting). Bassante M and Lee J

United States & Canadian Academy of Pathology "Alport-Like Changes in Allograft Glomerular Basement Membranes: A Peculiar Manifestation Occurring in a Setting of Pediatric Donor-Adult Recipient Renal Transplantation" 2012 Annual Meeting. Mishra MM, Crisostomo CMC, Lee JR, Liapis H, and Youngberg GA

American Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary Association "Gallbladder Carcinoma: Experience at a Non-Urban Referral Center" March 2011 Annual Meeting. Ryan DR, Jones JW, and Lee JR

International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis "Characterization of recombinant vWF A1 and A3 domain proteins demonstrates that the binding sites for collagen and platelet glycoprotein IB/IX are located in separate domains." Cruz, Lee, Wise, and Handin 1993

American Society of Hematology Annual Meeting "Optimal binding of vWF to collagen requires incorporation of the vWF-A3 domain into full-length vWF." Cruz, Lee, Wise, and Handin. 1993

[Awards](#)

Faculty of the year, ETSUCOM Residency Program in General Surgery, 2018