



San Diego
Spine Foundation
Established in 2006

AUGUST 1-2, 2025

Park Hyatt Aviara Resort | Carlsbad, CA

BRIDGING THE | GAP

CO-CHAIRS



Greg Mundis Jr., MD
Scripps Clinic
San Diego Spine
Foundation



Regis Haid Jr., MD
Atlanta Brain and
Spine Care

LEARN. PLAY. GIVE.

Supported by: **BROADWATER**_{LLC}

A course for spine surgeons and corporate leaders

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for taking a moment to learn about this year's **Bridging the Gap** meeting (BTG), and to consider attending. BTG is refreshingly different from any meeting in our field, with numerous attendees telling us the meeting is enjoyable, profoundly worthwhile, and even life-changing.

While most meetings focus on research, technology, and techniques, BTG emphasizes the skills that will most *significantly benefit us* at work and in our personal lives. In 2024, we focused on the personal care of the surgeon, while this year we're excited to focus on **Leadership**.

Learning how to be an excellent leader is critical for the OR, but it's also key for us in finding greater success and enjoyment in our profession, our families, and ourselves. The program outline on page 5 highlights the topics with which we'll engage.

BTG is open to more than just spine surgeons. You're welcome to bring your spouse or partner to the sessions, which will also be attended by other health care professionals and industry executives. Our goal is to create an environment where we all learn and grow together.

You'll have noticed on the front page that the goal of BTG is: **Learn. Play. Give.** We aim to provide a space in which knowledge is acquired and put into action while we have fun together and are challenged to give back to those around us.

We hope you feel inspired to join BTG on this journey!



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Target Audience

This course is designed for surgeons and medical professionals in the spine surgery field, as well as personnel from spine companies.

This course is not CME accredited.



The San Diego Spine Foundation (SDSF) was established by Behrooz A. Akbarnia, M.D. in 2004 to support spine-related research and education. The SDSF's mission statement is to advance the treatment (or care of patients with) spinal disorders by empowering surgeons through innovative research, education, and professional development opportunities.

Visit sandiegospinefoundation.org for more information.

For more information on Bridging the Gap, visit bridgingthegap-sd.com

Key Dates

Grant Applications
April 30

Housing Deadline
July 1

Early Registration Deadline
July 1



Faculty and Speakers

Emeritus Chair



Behrooz Akbarnia, MD
Founder and
Board Chairman
San Diego Spine
Foundation
San Diego, CA

Co-Chairs



Greg Mundis Jr., MD
Scripps Clinic
San Diego
Spine Foundation
San Diego, CA



Regis Haid Jr., MD
Atlanta Brain and
Spine Care
Atlanta, GA

Program Directors



Robert Eastlack, MD
Scripps Clinic
San Diego Spine
Foundation
San Diego, CA



Michael Kelly, MD
Rady Children's
UCSD
San Diego, CA



Burt Yaszay, MD
Seattle Children's
Hospital
Seattle, WA

Invited Speakers*

Todd Albert, MD
Hospital for
Special Surgery
New York, NY

Laurel Blakemore, MD
Pediatric Specialists
of Virginia
Fairfax, VA

Rex Marco, MD
UT Health Houston
Houston, TX

Ed Naggjar, PhD, BCC
Human Performance
Consulting
Panama City, FL

Amber Price, MD
Animas Surgical Hospital
Durango, CO

Raj Sethi, MD
Virginia Mason
Franciscan Health
Seattle, WA

Invited Guest Faculty

R. Todd Allen, MD
UC San Diego Health
San Diego, CA

Ali Bagheri, MD
Scripps Clinic
Torrey Pines
La Jolla, CA

Darrel Brodke, MD
University
Orthopaedic Center
Salt Lake City, UT

James Bruffey, MD
Scripps Clinic
San Diego, CA

Brandon Carlson, MD
University of Kansas
Medical Center
Overland Park, KS

Alex Khalessi, MD
UCSD
San Diego, CA

Eric Klineberg, MD
UTHealth Houston
Houston, TX

Hani Malone, MD
Scripps Clinic
San Diego, CA

Peter Newton, MD
Rady's Children's Hospital
San Diego, CA

Alpesh Patel, MD
Northwestern University
Chicago, IL

Frank Phillips, MD
Rush University
Medical Center
Chicago, IL

Amber Price, MD
Spine Colorado
Durango, CO

W. Zac Ray, MD
WashU Medicine
St. Louis, MO

Anthony Rinella, MD
Duly Health and Care
Lockport, IL

Stephen Stephan, MD
Scripps Clinic
San Diego, CA

Jay Turner, MD
Barrow
Neurological Institute
Phoenix, AZ

V. Salil Upasani, MD
Rady Children's Hospital
San Diego, CA

** Speakers and faculty
subject to change*

Schedule Overview

Thursday, July 31

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm	Faculty Dinner
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Friday, August 1

7:00 am – 7:30 am	Registration and Breakfast in Exhibit Hall
7:30 am – 12:00 pm	Course Sessions
10:00 am – 10:30 am	Networking Break in Exhibit Hall
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Boxed Lunch with Exhibitors
1:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Golf Tournament
6:00 pm – 7:30 pm	Après Golf Networking

Saturday, August 2

7:00 am – 7:30 am	Breakfast in Exhibit Hall
7:30 am – 12:00 pm	Course Sessions
9:35 am – 9:55 am	Networking Break in Exhibit Hall
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Buffet Lunch with Exhibitors
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Pickleball Tournament

*Program times subject to change.



Marinus de Kleuver, MD (BTG 2024 Visiting Professor):

I think it's hugely impactful that we talk about other aspects than just being the medical professional, who's a technician. We're all human and we are all in a very complex environment, stressful environment, and it's underestimated how much impact this has on everybody's life. The topics resonate with all of us, especially in the surgical community where it appears that, people are all invulnerable. And here we have people talking about all their stresses in their life in a very open way. Beautiful environment to have these discussions and I find it quite empowering.

Reference: <https://vimeo.com/1009054720/abea04f923>

Program Topics

Program Topics Include:

Leading Ourselves

- **Life ain't easy when you're a surgeon:** Attainable ways to build a better me
- **My life's too fast and stressful:** The power and wisdom of slowing down to be faster
- **We all mess up:** Navigating failure without losing myself

Leading When the Going Gets (Really) Tough

- **The pressure cooker of being a surgeon:** How to lead in the midst of our professional challenges
- **When disaster strikes:** How to survive and grow (and even lead) when your world blows up
- Setting my family up for "just in case"



Leading Others

- **Leading the majority when you're in the minority**—Tips and insights from the frontlines
- **Lone Ranger or Team Builder?** How I learned to build successful teams, and the mistakes I made along the way
- **The power of team:** How to create a culture that results in safety and reproducibility
- **What is my role in my family?** Learning how to lead at home to give you tremendous job satisfaction

Leading Organizations

- **Life at the top:** Lessons learned from leading Fortune 500 companies
- **Healthcare chaos:** How and why surgeons must lead in the ever-changing world of healthcare
- **Not-for-profits:** The challenges and rewards of leading non-profits

Leading Well

- **Leading like the best of the best:** Leadership lessons learned from the great leaders of our past and present
- **The "how" of leadership:** Practical application to my daily life, and habits that promote growth in leadership

Social Events



Golf

Tee Up for a Day of Fun!

The **4th Annual BTG Golf Tournament** is a fantastic opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors, connect with colleagues, and show off your golfing skills—or just have fun trying!

Whether you're an experienced golfer or just looking to have fun, all skill levels are welcome!

Date: Friday, August 1st
Time: 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm
Location: Aviara Golf Club
Fee: \$400 per person /
\$1500 for a foursome
*(includes green fees, driving
range fees and reception)*



Bonus! Join us for the Après Golf Networking immediately following the Tournament.



Pickleball

Show off your skills, connect with fellow pickleball lovers, and dive into friendly competition at this fun-packed event! Whether you're a pro or a beginner, there's something for everyone. Get ready for thrilling games, awesome prizes, and a fantastic time with amazing people!

Date: Saturday, August 2nd
Time: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Location: Aviara Racquet Club
Fee: \$75 per player /
\$150 for a duo



Registration deadline for Golf and Pickleball is June 25.

Register for Golf/Pickleball

Hotel Accommodations

Park Hyatt Aviara

Tucked away on 200 lush, private acres, The Park Hyatt Aviara, is an exquisite 5-star resort overlooking the southern California coast featuring renowned dining, Miraval Spa, golf & more.



Room Rate

Standard King Room—\$420* per night

*(*plus a \$30 daily resort fee and applicable taxes)*

[Click to Book](#)

Deadline

Be sure to book your room by **Tuesday, July 1st** to receive the discounted rate as mentioned above. After this date, the rates may increase and will be subject to availability.

Registration

Scientific Program Registration Fees

Surgeons: \$495

Fellows/Residents/Allied Health: \$195

Non-Exhibiting Corporate Attendees: \$2,500

Spouse/Guest Fee: \$75

Registration fees include access to all sessions, breakfast, breaks and lunch.

A late fee of \$50 will be charged for registrations received after July 1st.

[Click to Register](#)

Cancellation & Refunds

To cancel your registration, please send an email to Rebecca Given at Rgiven@broad-water.com. Full refunds will be granted, less \$50 administrative fee, if cancelled prior to July 1, 2025. No refunds will be granted after July 1, 2025.

In the unlikely event the course is cancelled, your registration will be fully refunded. All other costs incurred by the registration, such as airlines and hotel are the responsibility of the registrant.

Questions?

Rebecca Given | BroadWater, LLC

Email: rgiven@broad-water.com

Tel: 630-681-1040 ext. 312

Grants Available for Early Career Surgeons

If you are a resident, fellow or in the first 3 years of practice, you are invited to apply for a grant.

Grant recipients are required to:

- Attend a company-sponsored dinner on Friday.
- Participate in all sessions.
- Visit exhibits during the event.

Grant Benefits:

- Complimentary registration to the event.
- A grant award of **\$250**, which will be distributed at the **conclusion** of the meeting.

To apply, submit your application **here** by May 2nd. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by May 30th.