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The Cahalan Effect

While Salt Lake City welcomed the world to the 2002 Winter Olympics, the department welcomed Michael Cahalan, MD, as its second chair. Just as Cahalan's work with transoesophageal echocardiography (TEE) had transformed cardiac surgery, his character and leadership style would soon transform the department.



The decade would bring financial stability and a much-needed move to hire and mentor more women. The department's work in ultrasound-guided regional anesthesia, along with numerous new and commercially successful innovations, brought even more recognition.

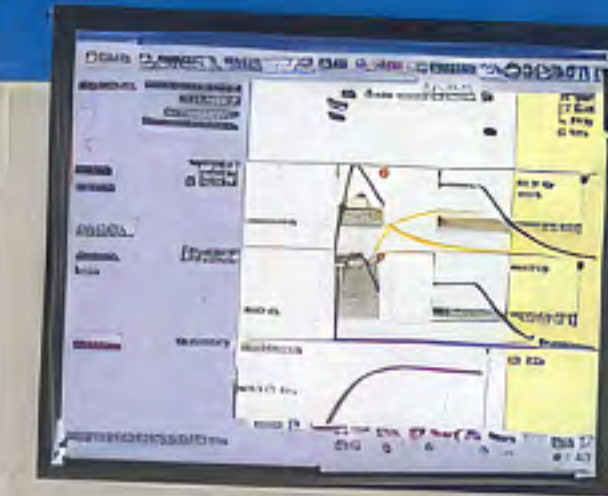


In 2001, Michael Cahalan, MD, (second from left) succeeded K.C. Wong, MD, PhD, (second from right) as chair. They're joined by administrative assistants Vicky Larsen (left) and Joan Stevens (right).

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Milestones & Innovations

2000
Navigator Drug Display
system licensed



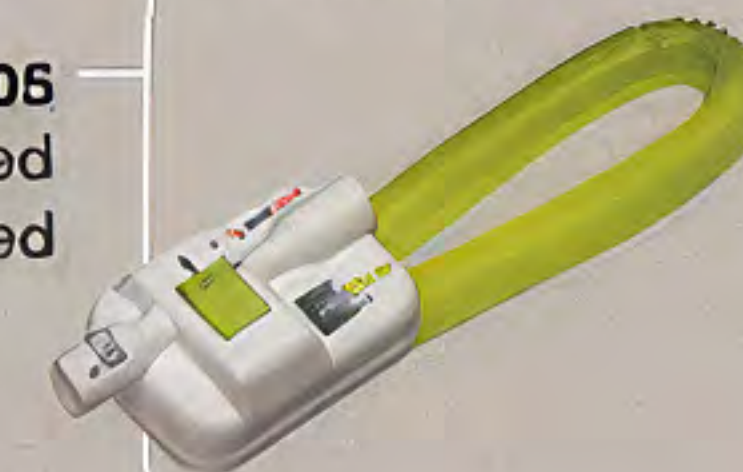
2001
Michael Cahalan named chair
Pain Research Center opened



2002
Pain Management Center
moved to Arapøen Drive

2003
QED 100 licensed

2005
ANEclear (FDA-approved
QED 100) licensed



2007
Pain clinics opened at
VA Medical Center and
Huntsman Cancer Institute

2010
Vapor Clean licensed



DEPARTMENT CHAIR | 2001 - 2015

Michael Cahalan, MD

According to his wife Marianne, Cahalan wasn't really interested in becoming chair and only considered it as a favor to K.C. Wong. Yet, after visiting the department, his thinking changed. He accepted the position, and on July 1, 2001, Cahalan became the department's second chair.

Cahalan's character—kind, caring, and concerned about each person—would resonate throughout the department, even amid unprecedented growth. "He practiced patient-centered care before that was a buzzword, and his legacy is seen in the commitment to professionalism, research, and education to advance the exceptional patient experience he cemented in the department," said Smitha Warriar, MD, associate professor in the department.

His philosophy for the workplace involved three basic tasks: strive for excellence, find appropriate work-life balance, and treat each other like family. He'd begin every yearly review with "How is your health?" and "How is your family?"

Cahalan was the consummate diplomat. He had a skill for handling difficult situations with a calm and even-keeled demeanor, displaying kindness and civility. Christine Haber, his executive assistant, recalls never hearing him raise his voice—ever. His wife, Marianne, agrees. She was a cardiac surgery scrub nurse and worked with him for 42 years in the OR. "Mike started every staff meeting with something positive and ended every meeting with something positive. In between, he gave them the 'velvet harpoon', gracefully dealing with the most challenging issues."

Mike also brought much-needed financial order to the department. When he was offered the position, the department was in the red, recalled Marianne. "So, before we moved to Utah, he went to Harvard Business School for a short course to hone his business skills. He came back and really turned the department's finances around. He got it in the black, and it has been that way since."

In addition to being calm and kind, Cahalan was very funny. "My most vivid memory of Dr. Cahalan is my first time in the simulator as a CA-1," recalled Sara Whittingham, MD, a resident at the U in 2009 and former adjunct assistant professor in the department. "He was playing a clueless surgeon, covered in fake blood, making suction sounds, and teaching us the importance of communicating with the surgeon about blood loss and how the patient is doing."



There's an Echo in Here

The Cahalan Duo

Michael and Marianne Cahalan commuted together, worked together, took call together, and even retired together. "The hospital would call us at night saying, 'We've got this emergency heart surgery. Don't forget to bring Mike,'" Marianne remembered. So, it seemed very fitting that when part of the department's endowment was set aside to establish a chair in his name, Mike requested it be called the Michael and Marianne Cahalan Presidential Chair.



Cahalan and his wife, Marianne, spent many hours in the OR together.

While at the University of California, San Francisco, Cahalan recognized the importance of transesophageal echocardiography (TEE). It was an emerging technology that uses ultrasound to provide better images of the heart, giving anesthesiologists a more effective way to monitor patients during cardiac surgery. Cahalan did a sabbatical to study TEE at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, then returned to UCSF and became a champion and pioneer in the interoperative use of it.



Cahalan brought that expertise to Utah, and with Daniel Vezina, MD, MSc, elevated the department's use of TEE. Cahalan is credited with establishing Utah as a worldwide leader in the technique and for establishing TEE as a standard of care everywhere. "If you polled anesthesiologists around the world, they would all agree about Mike Cahalan's contribution to this life-saving technique," Egon said.

"No one does cardiac anesthesia anymore without TEE in the room," added Marianne Cahalan, who spent her career in cardiac ORs.

In 2009, the department hosted the first Perioperative Echocardiography Review Course in Park City, attracting 100 attendees from all over the world. Cahalan also led the creation of a dedicated fellowship in echocardiography at the University of Utah, as well as the Perioperative Echocardiography Section. Today, the section has dozens of fellowship-trained anesthesiology echocardiographers who do more than 1,000 echocardiograms every year.

Current echocardiography director Josh Zimmerman, MD, offers a hugely popular online perioperative echocardiography lecture series staffed by the department's experts. Students can log in anytime, from anywhere. He also does a daily posting of an echo clip that has thousands of followers.

In addition, the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center Echocardiography Lab, under Vezina's direction, is the only place in the country where anesthesiology directs the echo lab and cardiopulmonary exercise testing (CPET) program. The University of Utah is also one of the few departments with a 24/7/365 rescue echo service.