



## EDUCATING FUTURE ORTHOPAEDIC LEADERS AT SPRI

### CLINICAL FELLOWSHIPS

In February of this year, *Arthroscopy, Sports, Medicine and Rehabilitation* reported that **Steadman Philippon Research Institute (SPRI) is the top orthopaedic sports medicine fellowship program in the U.S.**, as reported by fellowship applicants. For decades, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)-accredited Sports Medicine Fellowship at SPRI has exemplified the institute's mission in educating tomorrow's orthopaedic sports medicine leaders.

This year, SPRI is hosting eight fellows in the Sports Medicine Fellowship, alongside one Foot & Ankle Fellow and one Hip Preservation & Reconstruction Fellow. These ten clinical fellows receive training and mentorship from attending surgeons from The Steadman Clinic and scientists at SPRI. During their year in Vail, fellows are taught innovative orthopaedic techniques and treatments, learn how to care for patients and participate in cutting-edge research in SPRI's labs.

### INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS

In addition to the clinical fellowships at SPRI, International Research Scholars are welcomed to Vail each year to participate in research. These scholars are medical doctors in their home countries, and commit to staying one-to-two years to complete an immersive research program in SPRI's labs, under the mentorship of scientists and surgeons from The Steadman Clinic. Scholars are an instrumental part of SPRI's research program, contributing to high-impact publications and often receiving major awards.

**Did you know SPRI has an education endowment? In 2018, Oscar Tang and the Tang Family made a generous donation to SPRI's education programs, launching the first endowment in SPRI's history.** The endowment ensures that SPRI's elite education programs will continue to be supported—each year, the endowment supports two named fellows. To learn more about the Tang Family Education Endowment, contact **SPRI VP of Development Lee Jones at [ljones@sprivail.org](mailto:ljones@sprivail.org).**



# SPRI FELLOWSHIP ALUMNI RETURN TO THE STEADMAN CLINIC

Alumni from SPRI's clinical fellowships receive a high level of education and training, positioning them for success wherever they practice after they leave Vail. For several of The Steadman Clinic's physicians, that can mean a return to The Steadman Clinic and SPRI. **Currently, eight of The Steadman Clinic's physicians—33% of the team—are alumni of SPRI's fellowships including two physicians who have joined the practice in the past year: Dr. Sonny Gill, who rejoined the team in November 2022, and Dr. Jonathon Backus, who joined The Steadman Clinic in September 2023.** These physicians join Drs. Randy Viola, Peter Millett, Tommy Haytmanek, Jon Godin, Jared Lee and Joe Ruzbarsky as fellowship alumni who have returned to practice at The Steadman Clinic.

## DR. SONNY GILL ENJOYS A HOMECOMING IN VAIL



For Spine Surgeon Dr. Sonny Gill, the Colorado mountains have always felt like home. His year as a SPRI Sports Medicine Fellow followed a spine fellowship at Emory University, and he spent two years working for The Steadman Clinic in Summit County before relocating to the Carolinas and building a practice

there. "Coming back this time was a homecoming," Dr. Gill shared. "The clinic is my creed. From the patients, partners, research foundation—all of those facets are what I see as central to my approach to my spine career. It's really great to be back."

Dr. Gill returned to The Steadman Clinic in November 2022. He specializes in spine and neck care, including minimally invasive and motion-preserving procedures. Dr. Gill shares that the dual fellowships—first in spine, then in sports medicine—has had a significant impact on his approach to treating patients. "Sports Medicine helped me become a minimally invasive surgeon. From soft tissue, PT protocols, treatment design, incision standpoints—all the way down to the spine anatomy. I understood that everything is connected. Not only was the intricacy of the spine intriguing to me, but also, how do we keep a body in motion? It's that mission of keeping people active. It's my focus in life, like a calling."

When reflecting about his experience as a sports medicine fellow, Dr. Gill not only shared the importance of the technical learning, but also the treatment of patients. "We learned that patients come first, and how to do that. We witnessed it firsthand. The care Dr. Steadman provided his patients was amazing to watch and it's what I wanted to embody too."



Dr. Gill, clinical fellows and Dr. Marc Philippon with the late Dr. J. Richard Steadman and visiting clinician-scientist, the late Dr. Freddie Fu of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center



Dr. Gill performs surgery as a full-time spine surgeon at The Steadman Clinic

SPRI’s clinical fellowships put a significant emphasis on research and the practice of evidence-based medicine. For Dr. Gill, this part of the fellowship program was essential. “In fellowship, I kept my research focus, and the program made me think about elevating care—you can’t just see patients in clinic and not evaluate outcomes. You need to make changes, advance medicine. As surgeons, we can’t do that without participating in research.”

Since joining SPRI, Dr. Gill has several research projects underway, investigating advanced technology, biologics—even the impact of the golf swing on the spine. For future fellows, Dr. Gill shared, “one of the main things that a future clinician/scientist should consider is finding something that interests you in research. The answers seem like a black box that may be difficult to dive into, but that’s what you should try to answer. For me, I wanted to investigate if there were new solutions for the spine, and to make that a new reality. It was all about elevating spine care.”

Alongside Steadman spine surgeon Dr. Michael Gallizzi, Dr. Gill is launching a new clinical fellowship at SPRI, focused on Spine Surgery. When asked what he was looking forward to as a faculty member for spine fellows, Dr. Gill shared, “One of the main things for us is giving back. We stand on the shoulders of giants, and if we don’t teach, who will carry it on? It’s our responsibility to teach the next generation.”

**“WE LEARNED THAT PATIENTS COME FIRST, AND HOW TO DO THAT. WE WITNESSED IT FIRSTHAND. THE CARE DR. STEADMAN PROVIDED HIS PATIENTS WAS AMAZING TO WATCH AND IT’S WHAT I WANTED TO EMBODY TOO.”**

**THE SPRI SPINE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM IS CURRENTLY ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR THE 2025 CLASS.**



Dr. Backus and members of his fellowship class at the 2016 SPRI Hail and Farewell Ceremony

## DR. JONATHON BACKUS EXPANDS FOOT AND ANKLE PROGRAM AT THE STEADMAN CLINIC



In September 2023, The Steadman Clinic welcomed back Dr. Jonathon Backus, a graduate of the 2016 Foot & Ankle Fellowship Class. Dr. Backus joins Dr. Tommy Haytmanek, another fellowship alumni, and Dr. Waqqar Khan-Farooqi in the expansion of The Steadman Clinic's Foot and Ankle Service.

Like Dr. Haytmanek, Dr. Backus trained under Dr. Thomas Clanton during fellowship. Now retired, Dr. Clanton was one of the most sought-after foot and ankle specialists in the country,

and remains one of the most respected and renowned for his expertise, patient care and mentorship. “Dr. Clanton was easily one of the best, if not *the* best mentor I’ve ever had,” said Dr. Backus. “Of course he taught me the nuances of foot and ankle surgery, but the greatest things he taught me were really on the periphery of medicine—that year was a master class in talking to people, making them feel comfortable and reassuring them.”

Mentorship and patient care are emblematic of SPRI's clinical fellowships, and these are often one of the most-cited takeaways for graduating fellows when they begin their careers. As Dr. Backus joins the SPRI Foot and Ankle Fellowship Program as a faculty member, it's one of the things he wants to share with his fellows: “I'm looking forward to teaching surgeons how to care for their patients. Dr. Clanton taught me, ‘you need to treat patients like they are family. If you treat them like family, no matter what happens, they'll always be happy. They'll always feel cared for.’”

Prior to returning to The Steadman Clinic, Dr. Backus worked at Washington University in St. Louis, where he had previously completed his orthopaedic surgery residency. At Wash. U, Dr. Backus ran a busy practice and learned a lot—not only in his surgical practice, but also in mentorship. He taught medical

## “I UNDERSTAND NOW, FROM A FACULTY STANDPOINT, THEY BECOME YOUR FRIENDS. IT’S ONE YEAR, BUT THERE’S A LIFELONG CONNECTION.”

students, residents and fellows. “I really grew to love it,” he shared, “especially the fellows. I understand now, from the faculty standpoint, they become your friends. It’s one year, but there’s a lifelong connection.”

As a foot and ankle surgeon, Dr. Backus enjoys both the focused, specialized care of the specialty and the broad range of techniques and treatments. “It’s one of the last generalist fields. I liked the fact that I can do arthroplasty, arthroscopy, fracture work, deformity. I appreciate the breadth of the field. At Wash U., we did over 100 CPT codes [separate procedures] a year; that’s a lot more than most specialties. And it’s a relatively young field. There are a lot of questions that haven’t been answered, and I really wanted to put my mark there.”

Like Dr. Gill, Dr. Backus is enthusiastic about teaching fellows at SPRI and educating future leaders in his specialty. To future SPRI fellows, he shared some advice: “Spend time in the lab. Meet the researchers. Do the research. Take call; learn from call. It’s hard when it’s the middle of the night, but that’s when a lot of learning happens. It’s a short year, and you have to take advantage of every minute you have.” He added, “Vail’s a special place. Make sure to have some fun and get outside.”

After several years away, Dr. Backus is happy to return to The Steadman Clinic and SPRI. “I’m really grateful to come back here. I’m excited to raise my family in the Valley and become a part of the community. I hope to help expand the foot and ankle service, its research and its mission, and I hope to spend a very long time here.”



Dr. Clanton and Dr. Backus enjoyed a fellows ski day at Beaver Creek Resort

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT  
SPRI’S CLINICAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM, PLEASE VISIT  
[WWW.SPRIvail.ORG/DEPARTMENTS/EDUCATION](http://WWW.SPRIvail.ORG/DEPARTMENTS/EDUCATION)**

# Welcome, 2023–2024 Clinical Fellows

## TANG-ENDOWED SPORTS MEDICINE FELLOWS

These fellows are generously supported by the Tang Family Education Endowment



### AJAY KANAKAMEDALA, MD

**Undergraduate:** Washington University in St. Louis  
**Medical School:** University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine  
**Residency:** NYU Langone Orthopaedic Hospital



### DANIEL KOPOLOVICH, MD

**Undergraduate:** Princeton University  
**Medical School:** Thomas Jefferson Medical College  
**Residency:** San Antonio Military Medical Center

## DR. J. RICHARD STEADMAN LEGACY FELLOW

This fellow is supported by philanthropic donations in honor of the late Dr. J. Richard Steadman



### MARK CINQUE, MD

**Undergraduate:** University of California, Berkeley  
**Medical School:** Georgetown University School of Medicine  
**Residency:** Stanford University Medical Center

## SPORTS MEDICINE FELLOWS



### IAN BACKLUND, MD

**Undergraduate:** Coastal Carolina University  
**Medical School:** University of South Carolina  
**Residency:** University of Virginia



### MICHAEL B. STUART, MD

**Undergraduate:** Colorado College  
**Medical School:** University of Minnesota  
**Residency:** Mayo Clinic



### BRAD KRUCKEBERG, MD

**Undergraduate:** Gustavus Adolphus College  
**Medical School:** University of Minnesota  
**Residency:** Mayo Clinic



### EMILY WHICKER, MD

**Undergraduate:** Williams College  
**Medical School:** Emory Medical School  
**Residency:** University of Pittsburgh Medical Center



### MIKE RIZZO, MD

**Undergraduate:** Harvard University  
**Medical School:** Washington University in St. Louis  
**Residency:** Jackson University/University of Miami

# Fellows and International Scholars

## FOOT & ANKLE FELLOW



### EMRE EREN, MD

**Undergraduate:** Ohio State University  
**Medical School:** University of Toledo  
**Residency:** Summa Health System

## HIP PRESERVATION & RECONSTRUCTION FELLOW



### ALI NOORZAD, MD

**Undergraduate:** George Mason University  
**Medical School:** Northeast Ohio Medical University  
**Residency:** Cedars-Sinai Medical Center  
**Fellowship:** Steadman Philippon Research Institute Sports Medicine Fellowship

## INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS



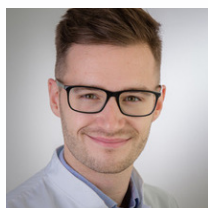
### MARCO ADRIANI, MD

*Italy*  
**Medical School:** University of Tor Vergata  
**Residency:** University of Brescia  
**Visiting Fellowship:** University of Brandenburg (Germany)



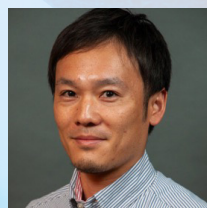
### SHINTARO MUKOHARA, MD

*Japan*  
**Medical School:** Hiroshima University School of Medicine  
**Residency:** Kobe University Hospital



### MAXIMILIAN HINZ, MD

*Germany*  
**Medical School:** Medical University of Innsbruck, Austria  
**Residency:** Technical University of Munich  
**Visiting Fellowships:** South Africa, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Taiwan, China, Brazil, USA, Switzerland, Germany, India, Thailand, Austria



### HARUKI NISHIMURA, MD, PHD

*Japan*  
**Undergraduate:** University of Occupational and Environmental Health  
**Medical School:** University of Occupational and Environmental Health, Japan School of Medicine  
**Residency:** University of Occupational and Environmental Health, Fukuoka Shin-Mizumaki Hospital



The 2023–2024 Fellowship Class with several physicians and faculty members from The Steadman Clinic

# 2023–2024 Clinical Fellowship Faculty

## MARC J. PHILIPPON, MD

Chairman, Steadman Philippon Research Institute  
Co-Director, Sports Medicine Fellowship  
Co-Director, Hip Preservation & Reconstruction Fellowship

## MATTHEW T. PROVENCHER, MD, MBA

Co-Director, Sports Medicine Fellowship

## JOEL M. MATTA, MD

Co-Director, Hip Preservation &  
Reconstruction Fellowship

## C. THOMAS HAYTMANEK, JR, MD

Director, Foot & Ankle Fellowship

## TOM R. HACKETT, MD

Faculty, Sports Medicine Fellowship

## PETER J. MILLETT, MD, MSC

Faculty, Sports Medicine Fellowship

## ARMANDO F. VIDAL, MD

Faculty, Sports Medicine Fellowship

## LESLIE B. VIDAL, MD

Faculty, Sports Medicine Fellowship

## JONATHAN A. GODIN, MBA, MD

Faculty, Sports Medicine Fellowship

## JONATHON BACKUS, MD

Faculty, Foot & Ankle Fellowship

## LIZ PYKE

Fellowship Program Coordinator

SPRI's education programs are made possible thanks to friends of SPRI. To learn more about how you can support a SPRI fellow and the research that they're doing at SPRI, contact **SPRI VP of Development Lee Jones at [ljones@sprivail.org](mailto:ljones@sprivail.org)**.