



Dr. Robert Yates

This month we interviewed Robert Yates, Clinical Assistant Professor in the Division of General Surgery. Dr. Yates practices at the UW Medicine Surgical Services and Hernia Center at Northwest Hospital and the Center for Esophageal and Gastric Surgery at University of Washington Medical Center. He has advanced fellowship training in minimally invasive (laparoscopic and endoscopic) surgery. His clinical interests include

the management of all types of abdominal wall hernias and hernia-related issues (recurrent hernias, mesh infection, chronic pain related to hernia surgery) as well as surgical management of diseases of the gastrointestinal tract with a particular focus on disorders of the esophagus and stomach.

### Synopsis: What was the last book you read?

**Yates:** *Beautiful Ruins* by Jess Walter. It was really well written and had really good character development. Usually though I prefer non-fiction. A story is so much more interesting to me knowing it actually happened. I also just finished reading *In Search of Complications*, which is an autobiography by Eugene de Savitsch, who was a Russian immigrant who came to the US and became a distinguished surgeon in the early 20th century. I've read quite a few of these types of autobiographies from surgeons in the 1700's through the early 1900's and they're just really fascinating.

### Synopsis: What is the next book you're planning to read?

**Yates:** I just started reading *Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher*, a biography of Edward Curtis, the well-known photographer who documented the cultural heritage of North American Indians in the early 20th century. He started his work as a photographer here in Seattle, so it is entertaining to read about what the city was like at that time in history. It's also an amazing example of personal drive and ambition, taking on a seemingly impossible project, and succeeding.

### Synopsis: Any favorite TV shows?

**Yates:** I have to agree with your last interviewee, Sherene Shallhub, about *The Walking Dead*. It's not something I'd normally like, but the combination of suspense, action, and character development makes it very good. ESPN 30 for 30 documentaries are also high on the list – great reporting on interesting sports personalities and events. Mostly I enjoy comedies though. Aziz Ansari's stand-up is really good. *The Office*, *Scrubs*, and *Frasier* are older but still favorites.

### Synopsis: Do you have a favorite restaurant?

**Yates:** We have a couple of friends who have a goal to go to 20 restaurants a year in Seattle, which I thought was a really cool idea, so my girlfriend (Jenna) and I have been doing that. Last year we went to 34 new restaurants, which was a lot more than we anticipated, but Seattle has such great restaurants, it became a bit addicting! A few of our favorites have been Serafina, Lecosho, Salare, The Whale Wins, and The Walrus and the Carpenter.

### Synopsis: What would you be if not a surgeon?

**Yates:** I could probably be a physician in any number of fields...

**Synopsis: OK, if not a physician?** I'd still like to be in healthcare, so maybe a dentist? I am just really passionate about medicine. There is such a big need for quality healthcare and I like that I can develop one-on-one relationships with patients and apply my knowledge to help people who are dealing with difficult problems.

### Synopsis: What do you do in your leisure time?

**Yates:** I enjoy anything outdoors—hiking, biking, backpacking, skiing. That's one of the things that brought me here to Seattle; there are just so many things you can do outside that are close by. This past year I've backpacked quite a bit, snow shod in Rainier, lots of hiking, and I did a triathlon.

### Synopsis: What is an interesting fact about you that many people don't know?

**Yates:** I started ice skating before I could walk (seriously, ask my parents). Of course this led to me to playing hockey growing up. I loved the sport as a kid and was recruited to play at several schools in college. Although I decided not to play collegiate athletics, I do still play hockey on a men's league team here in Seattle. It's great competition, a lot of fun, and great exercise.



Rob with Jenna at the Reach The Beach Century (100 mile) Ride – Portland to Pacific City, OR – for the American Lung Association fundraising ride.

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### Synopsis: Do you have a favorite childhood memory?

**Yates:** Yes, that's easy. When I was young I had an aunt and uncle who have a farm in a really rural area outside of Montreal and my brother and I used to visit them every summer for a month or so. It was wonderful—we got to explore and play outside and it was totally safe and we just got to be kids. I love animals and I think that's where I developed my love of animals, on the farm.



Rob and Jenna in an informal curling tournament that included creating a team name (Chimney Sweeps) and coordinating outfits. Despite none of the team members having prior curling experience, they came in 2nd place and had a great time.

### Synopsis: Do you have a personal goal for the coming year?

**Yates:** One of my big personal goals is to do a half marathon trail run. I've completed a number of organized road-races, but never a trail run. A friend of mine from college and I have our eyes set on one in Moab, Utah in November. Jenna and I did the Rock and Roll Seattle Half Marathon in June – it was a good warm up for the trail run.

### Synopsis: What is your favorite social media medium?

**Yates:** Instagram. I'm a visual person, so Instagram lends itself to that aspect of my personality. I like everything on there from clever memes to amazing nature photography to an account dedicated to a 450 lb pet pig named Esther, owned by a guy who turned vegan after adopting her. Similar to other social media sources, I'm amazed with all the variety.

Dr. Yates can be reached at [rby2@uw.edu](mailto:rby2@uw.edu).

## Department of Surgery In the Media

**Harborview uses 'Pokémon Go' in patient recovery**  
*The Seattle Times, July 2016*

**Why your robotic surgeon will have a human overlord looking over its shoulder**  
*GeekWire, April 2016*

**Seattle Magazine's Top Doctors 2016**

**Dr. Gabriel Aldea**  
**New Clinical Practice Guidelines Recommend Use of Arteries Rather than Veins in Heart Bypass Surgery**  
*The Society of Thoracic Surgeons, December 2015*

**Dr. Giana Davidson**  
**Modernae Woman: General Surgeon Giana Davidson**  
*Modernae.com, April 2016*

**Dr. Elisha Brownson, Harborview trauma and burn critical-care AY 2015–16 fellow**  
**E-cigs are exploding in vapers' mouths, leaving gruesome injuries**  
*The Seattle Times, February 2016*

**Video Shows E-Cigarette Explosion That Put Man in Hospital**  
*NBC News, February 2016*

**Dr. Heather Evans**  
**Infection? Web app piloted as post-op communication channel**  
*UW Health Sciences NewsBeat, January 2016*

**Drs. David Flum and Giana Davidson**  
**Antibiotics instead of appendectomy? UW study may be 'game changer'**  
*The Seattle Times, March 2016*

**Dr. Nicole Gibran**  
**Twisp firefighter discusses injuries, future hopes**  
*UW Health Sciences NewsBeat, November 2015*

**Dr. Richard Hopper**  
**Seattle surgeon's innovation lets 'one tough cookie' of a girl breathe normally**  
*The Seattle Times, June 2016*

**Dr. Danielle C. Lavallee**  
**How Patients' Reports On Their Health Can Help Doctors Do A Better Job**  
*NPR, April 2016*

**Dr. D. Michael McMullan**  
**Born With Three Heart Defects, Bowen is Now Thriving As He Approaches His Third Birthday**  
*Seattle Children's Hospital—On the Pulse, February 2016*

**Dr. Carlos Pellegrini**  
**Transformation of Care at UW Medicine**  
*UW Medicine, March 2016*

**Dr. Tam Pham**  
**Burns 203: Care of Your Mepilex Ag Donor Site at Home**  
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