Dr. Rodrigo M. Vianna honored with the Andreas G. Tzakis Chair in Transplant Surgery

In a ceremony that brought together some of the most influential names in transplant surgery, Rodrigo M. Vianna, M.D., Ph.D., was honored with the Andreas G. Tzakis Chair in Transplant Surgery. Vianna, an accomplished transplant surgeon, researcher, and educator, received the chair recently during a ceremony at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute.

“I am humbled to be chosen as the second holder of this chair,” said Vianna, the director of transplant services at the Miami Transplant Institute (MTI). “The Miami Transplant

From left, Rodrigo M. Vianna, M.D., Ph.D., and Andreas G. Tzakis, M.D., Ph.D., are presented with their chairs by Omaida C.Velazquez, M.D., Laurence B. Gardner, M.D., MACP, and Carlos Migoya.
Institute is an excellent example of what is possible when you have the best and brightest minds working together in a multidisciplinary setting. I believe our success is a direct result of that.”

MTI is a unique affiliation between Jackson Health System and the University of Miami Health System. In the spirit of collaboration, leadership from UHealth, Jackson, and the University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine attended the ceremony, as well as Vianna’s family, friends and colleagues.

One colleague, in particular, was the chair’s namesake and first holder, Andreas G. Tzakis, M.D., Ph.D., the world-renowned surgeon and research scientist in liver and intestinal transplantation who was the founding director of MTI.

Tzakis created a groundbreaking intestinal and multivisceral transplant program in 1994, in addition to developing some of the world’s most innovative surgical techniques in his field.

In gratitude for his knowledge and care, more than 150 donors and grateful patients helped establish the Andreas G. Tzakis Chair in Transplant Surgery in 1999.

He also trained hundreds of physicians who are currently among the world’s leading transplant physicians, including Vianna.

“It is most appropriate that Dr. Vianna, one of my most successful trainees, is my successor in this chair,” said Tzakis, who was at UM from 1994 to 2012 and is currently the transplant program director of the Transplant Center at
Cleveland Clinic Florida.

Over its 47-year history, the Miami Transplant Institute has become one of the largest and most comprehensive programs in the nation. In 2016, surgeons performed more than 570 transplants, a record number for the institute. It remains the only center in South Florida that provides every kind of solid-organ transplant and is consistently breaking new barriers in areas like multi-organ transplant and paired donations.

“Since his arrival in 2013, Rodrigo has built MTI into a global leader and a true translational institute,” said Carlos Migoya, president and CEO of Jackson Health System. “He is relentlessly passionate above every aspect of his work at MTI – a brilliant surgeon, a world-renowned expert, a champion for quality, and an ambassador to our community.”

Front row, from left, Rafael Vianna, Rodrigo M. Vianna, M.D., Ph.D., and Andreas G. Tzakis, M.D., Ph.D. Back row, from left, Lucas Vianna, Gabriel Vianna, Elio Vianna, Laurence B. Gardner, M.D., MACP, Omaida C. Velazquez,
M.D., Carlos Migoya, Patricia Tzakis and Adriana Vianna.

In addition to his role as the director of MTI, Vianna is also chief of liver and gastrointestinal transplantation and professor of clinical surgery in the DeWitt Daughtry Family Department of Surgery at the Miller School.

“Dr. Vianna has helped make the liver transplant program at the Miami Transplant Institute one of the best in Florida, with some of the nation’s highest patient survival rates,” said Omaida C. Velazquez, M.D., professor and chair of the DeWitt Daughtry Family Department of Surgery, the David Kimmelman Endowed Chair in Vascular Surgery, and surgeon-in-chief of UHealth and Jackson Health System. “He has pioneered surgical techniques that enable liver transplants to be performed in under four hours – half the average time at most centers.”

After completing his general and gastrointestinal surgery training in Brazil, Dr. Vianna was selected for two transplant fellowships at the Miller School, the first in transplant research and the second in clinical transplantation. He also earned his Ph.D. in gastrointestinal surgery at the University of São Paulo, Brazil, and has authored or co-authored 169 articles in international journals.

Dr. Vianna was inducted into Brazil’s National Academy of Medicine, one of the oldest and most exclusive medical academies in the world, and was granted the prestigious Livre-Docência designation by the Department of Surgery at the University of São Paulo, Brazil.
Laurence B. Gardner, M.D., MACP, the interim Dean of the Miller School of Medicine, welcomed Vianna’s extended family, including 20 relatives who traveled from Brazil for the occasion.

Gardner said named chairs hold tremendous value for medical schools.

“Chairs provide support, in perpetuity, for the recipient to pursue his or her academic career, to have protected time for research and teaching, as well as innovations in clinical medicine,” said Gardner. “It is the mark of the quality of the institution each time a named, endowed chair is added to the portfolio.”

Vianna thanked his wife, Adriana, sons Lucas, Gabriel and Rafael, and father, Elio, as well as the many colleagues and staff members who came to support him, which included Luiz Carneiro D’albuquerque, M.D., Ph.D., chief of transplant at University of São Paulo, the largest Department of Surgery in Latin America.

“The appointment of this chair is particularly important to me because it provides the opportunity to pursue vital research in the transplant arena, specifically in the area of regenerative medicine and tolerance,” Vianna said. “It will also help to ensure that the MTI remains a leading force in the field of transplantation and transplant-related research for years to come.”