Tulane professor is the first American editor-in-chief of ‘Gray’s Anatomy’

April 03, 2026 9:00 AM Molly McCrory
mmccrory@tulane.edu

R. Shane Tubbs, anatomical research director in Tulane’s Clinical Neuroscience Research Center and surgical anatomy director in the School of Medicine, served as the first American editor-in-chief of the international edition of “Gray’s Anatomy." (Photo by Kenny Lass)

A Tulane University professor served as the first American editor-in-chief of the international edition of “Gray’s Anatomy,” one of the most widely used medical textbooks in the world.

For the 43rd edition of the 168-year-old textbook, which was published in 2025, R. Shane Tubbs, anatomical research director in Tulane’s Clinical Neuroscience

Research Center and surgical anatomy director in the School of Medicine, served as co-editor-in-chief, a post that had, until now, been held exclusively by British editors.

“I have approached this role with deep respect for the book’s history and traditions, while ensuring it continues to meet the highest modern scientific and clinical standards,” he said.

This is not Tubbs’s first work on “Gray’s Anatomy.” He was a section editor for the 41st and 42nd editions before joining Susan Standring, emeritus professor of anatomy at King’s College London, as co-editor-in-chief for the 43rd edition.

“This appointment reflects the strength and international impact of contemporary clinical anatomical research at Tulane,” Tubbs said.

Tubbs’s own research in his clinical anatomy lab informs his role as editor.

“My work and that of colleagues globally frequently challenge or refine traditional anatomical descriptions,” he said.

Every new discovery about an anatomical variation made by Tubbs or other anatomists can be incorporated into the new edition of the text.

While Henry Gray, author of the first edition and namesake of the text, dissected cadavers to write about anatomy in the book, Tubbs and his colleagues have the benefit of MRI machines, CT scanners and other imaging techniques.

“Human anatomy is not static,” he said. “Our understanding continues to evolve as new technologies, such as advanced medical imaging, endoscopy, and minimally invasive surgical techniques, reveal anatomical relationships that were previously inaccessible or poorly understood.”

Tubbs uses “Gray’s Anatomy” in his own teaching as a professor of neurosurgery and structural and cellular biology in the School of Medicine.

Alongside its use in teaching anatomy to medical students, the textbook is a vital resource for practicing physicians, who consult it for the most up-to-date guidance on how to apply anatomical knowledge to patient care.

“The text becomes indispensable during clinical training and surgical practice, where precise anatomical knowledge directly informs decision-making and patient outcomes,” said Tubbs.

Tubbs is as busy as ever, even now that the 43rd edition has been published. He is already working on the 44th while continuing the research and publication work he is doing for his own lab.

“Completing an edition of ‘Gray’s Anatomy’ does not create free time, unfortunately,” he said with a smile. “It simply redirects effort.”