

CENTER TIMES

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CAMPUS EDITION

UTSW Geneticist Cohen elected to National Academy of Sciences

By Christen Brownlee

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) has elected UT Southwestern scientist Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D., into its membership, one of the highest honors for American scientists.

Dr. Cohen, Professor of Internal Medicine in the Center for Human Nutrition and the Eugene McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development, was elected by his peers in recognition of distinguished and continuing achievements in original research. His research centers on identifying genes that play major roles in the metabolism of cholesterol and triglycerides and elucidating the biological roles of their protein products.

"The election of Dr. Cohen to the prestigious National Academy of Sciences recognizes the pioneering contributions that he has made in elucidating the genetic basis of chronic conditions including heart disease, liver disease,

and obesity," said Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., President of UT Southwestern. "As a member of the Academy, he will advance its mission of providing independent, objective advice to the nation on matters related to science and technology."

Dr. Cohen was among 120 new U.S. and 30 nonvoting foreign members announced on May 3. UTSW now has 26 members of the NAS, more than any institution in Texas and the most at any time in UT Southwestern's nearly 80-year history.

"This latest election is a testament to the caliber and expanse of science taking place at UT Southwestern and will serve as an inspiration to new generations of trainees and scientists that will continue the long tradition of discovery that we embody here," said W. P. Andrew Lee, M.D., Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost, and Dean of UT Southwestern Medical School.

Please see NAS on page 19



Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D.

UT Southwestern Medical School ranked among nation's best in research, primary care



By Patrick Wascovich

UT Southwestern is ranked among the top 25 for research and in the top 20 for primary care among 192 medical schools nationwide, according to *U.S. News & World Report's* 2023 Best Graduate Schools rankings.

UT Southwestern Medical School ranked 16th for primary care and 25th for research. Only six institutions in the country rated above

UTSW in both categories. Among biomedical specialties, UT Southwestern Medical School ranked 25th nationally in biology.

"These latest rankings, as well as other recent recognitions, continue to illustrate the dynamic education UT Southwestern offers to train our medical students and residents to become physicians who provide exceptional care as well as research scientists who are well equipped to make discoveries that lead to better treatments," said W. P. Andrew Lee, M.D.,

Please see RANKING on page 2

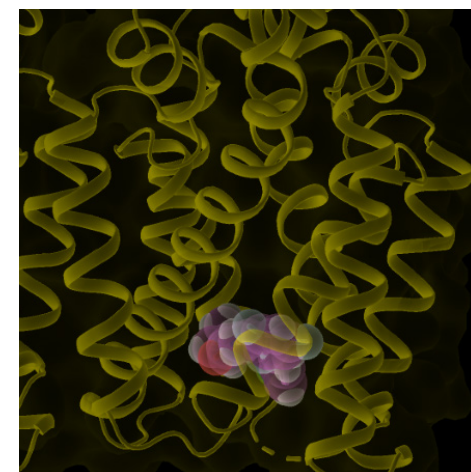
Cryo-EM imaging of protein reveals new binding pocket

By Christen Brownlee

Imaging at near-atomic resolution of a key immune protein commonly known as STING has revealed a previously unrecognized binding site that appears to be pivotal for launching immune attacks, UT Southwestern scientists report. The findings, published in *Nature*, could lead to new ways of manipulating STING to prompt stronger immune responses or stem its action in autoimmune diseases.

"For the first time, this work provides a precise picture of the activated state of STING, critical for understanding its role in both normal immunity as well as autoimmune diseases," said study author Xuewu Zhang, Ph.D., Professor of Pharmacology and Biophysics.

Please see STING on page 2



The synthetic drug-like compound (magenta spheres at the bottom) targets a hidden pocket in STING.

Grant supports UTSW push to make genomic data more accessible

By Margaret Rockwood

Researchers in the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center are developing an innovative interface to make the wealth of genomics data from next-generation sequencing both visible and actionable in real time.

Making that happen is a \$300,000 grant

from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, funded by Eli Lilly and Co., to support the design and implementation of integrated decision tools and an associated workflow to enable users to strategically search tests and relevant diagnoses. The Simmons Cancer Center is one of 31 member institutions of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN).

Please see GRANT on page 20



Recognizing service and longevity

In a special section that begins on page 3, we honor UT Southwestern colleagues celebrating milestone years of service, including this year's new members of the Quarter Century Club.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PAGE

NEWS MAKER

20

ADVANCES IN OBSTETRICS RESEARCH

20

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NEW CHAIR IN RADIATION ONCOLOGY

Robert Timmerman, M.D., a pioneer in advanced radiotherapy, is appointed to lead the Department.

Page 2

SUPPORTING EMERGENCY MEDICINE

The A. Compton Broders III, M.D. Chair in Emergency Medicine honors the former UTSW faculty member.

Page 18

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

A former postdoc has received the Brown-Goldstein Award for Excellence in Postdoctoral Research.

Page 19

An innovator at the helm: Chair of Radiation Oncology plans big changes

By Carol Marie Cropper

UT Southwestern's new Department of Radiation Oncology Chair, Robert Timmerman, M.D., is best known for his groundbreaking work in developing a treatment called stereotactic ablative radiotherapy (SABR) that delivers high, very precise doses of radiation to kill cancer. The study he published in *JAMA* in 2010 showed such dramatic results in treating lung cancer that it quickly changed the standard of care.

Now, Dr. Timmerman, who became the Department's Chair in March after serving six months as Interim Chair, has plans for revolutionizing cancer care again. As part of an overall effort to adapt treatment to the patient rather than rely on established standards, UT Southwestern has already begun using a new strategy called personalized ultrafractionated stereotactic adaptive radiotherapy, or PULSAR.

Dr. Timmerman joined UT Southwestern and the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center in 2004 as Professor and Vice Chair for Clinical Affairs in Radiation Oncology, plus Director of the Annette Simmons Stereotactic Treatment Center. He later became Clinical Director and Director of Clinical Research in the Department, adding an appointment in Neurological Surgery in 2008.

He had previously worked as an Associate Professor of Radiation Oncology at the Indiana University School of Medicine. Dr. Timmerman holds a Bachelor of Science in nuclear engineering from Iowa State University and a master's in reactor physics from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He received his medical degree from the University of South Dakota and completed a residency in radiation oncology at the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Dr. Timmerman shared with *Center Times* his ambitious goals for Radiation Oncology, one of the University's largest departments.

What are your goals for the Department?

Big changes are planned. After Professor Emeritus Hak Choy, M.D., stepped down as Chair of Radiation Oncology last year, faculty and staff collaborated on a new strategic plan that aims to treat each patient with an appropriately unique therapy. This personalization is a big departure from drawn-out conventional radiotherapy, even from our previous emphasis on short-course SABR. While conventional radiotherapy and SABR are different in many ways,



Robert Timmerman, M.D., is an innovator in the radiation oncology field known for developing a treatment called SABR or SBRT that delivers high, very precise doses of radiation to combat cancer.

they both are class solutions, in which patients of a certain type all get the same therapy. This prior paradigm might be called "one size fits all." It is likely that some patients are overtreated, with no added benefit, while others are undertreated. We are moving toward a personalized, unique therapy for each patient.

How will you achieve this?

Much is in place, but more is required. We have installed a number of new "adaptive" treatment machines that can perform sophisticated imaging just before a treatment, as the patient waits on the treatment table. This allows us to recognize any changes in the patient and their cancer. Sophisticated computer software can then use this information to create a plan adapted to the imaging in minutes. UT Southwestern acquired the world's second RefleXion PET-LINAC machine last summer, along with two Elekta Unity MR-LINACs. We are the only center in the world with two.

Yet these machines alone are not enough. We need to study the individual patient's biology, including the treated tumor's reaction

to prior therapies, to determine if the treatment is performing adequately. Tumors constantly evolve, and that evolution creates opportunities for cancer to elude the ongoing therapy. No single strategy will work. We must have a treatment to uniquely fit the particular patient's situation, whether it's going well or poorly.

How does your shift to PULSAR factor into this strategy?

We started moving to PULSAR-style treatment about two years ago. With PULSAR, you put in purposeful pauses between treatments. You don't want to reach a point where you wish you had given more or less treatment, but you've used all your ammo – treated to patient tolerance – before you've figured out whether you're on the right course.

This style of treatment may also have the advantage of increasing the chances that the patient's body will launch an immune response to the irradiated and destroyed cancer cells – something adjacent healthy cells might not be strong enough to do if stressed from frequent radiation treatments. SABR by itself, while likely "vaccinating" the patient against their own

cancer, rarely independently leads to an effective immune challenge to the cancer. However, using radiation plus other immune therapy modulators, like checkpoint-inhibiting drugs, shows tremendous promise to more elegantly fight cancer, even when strongly established.

Tell me about new research using artificial intelligence, or AI, to tailor treatments to individual patients.

For the next several years, we'll be collecting large volumes of patient-specific features as the patient and tumor react to therapy. We will also, of course, be following these patients' outcomes. The plan is to then use AI computer technology to store, mine, and analyze patient-specific information – genetics, patient tolerance to imaging, what their tumor looked like, blood tests, and cancer cell and tumor markers. Eventually, through AI, we will start to recognize patterns that will help us personalize treatment for individual patients.

You developed SABR, sometimes called SBRT, which delivers higher levels of more focused radiation to treat cancers. How did you get started on this?

I was originally trained to carry out the more drawn-out conventional radiotherapy that had been standard for nearly 100 years. In my personal view, the field was in a rut and needed to be reinvented. I, along with a few others around the world, introduced the SABR paradigm, which exploited a number of technologies to direct radiation toward a tumor and away from normal, uninvolved tissues. Importantly, we used this technology to give very short courses of intense, highly focused radiation.

This radiation, unlike the previous type, was ablative – meaning highly potent – and caused dramatic tumor eradication. But because of the technological sparing, it was well tolerated. Such ablative radiation had been tried prior to the availability of the advanced technology, though it was very toxic at the time. But as opportunities and resources change, even old ideas can be reexamined and work much better. SABR was such an example.

Dr. Timmerman holds the Effie Marie Cain Distinguished Chair in Cancer Therapy Research.

Ranking Continued from page 1

Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost, and Dean, UT Southwestern Medical School.

Primary care rankings are based on several components including peer assessment, ratings by residency directors, selectivity, undergraduate GPA and MCAT scores, percentage of graduates entering primary care residencies, and faculty/student ratios. Research rankings weighed many of the same components while also factoring in federal research grants and contracts. This year, more than 97% of UTSW medical students matched to residency programs – above the national average of 94%.

U.S. News ranks UT Southwestern among the top 25 hospitals nationally in eight specialties in its annual Best Hospitals report. UT Southwestern also ranks as the No. 1 hospital in Dallas-Fort Worth – the nation's fourth-largest metro area – with the top-ranked programs for cardiology and heart surgery, and neurology and neurosurgery in Texas.

UT Southwestern is ranked on the World's Best Hospitals 2022 list by *Newsweek* and was rated No. 1 among global health care institutions in the 2021 Nature Index for its published research.

Dr. Lee holds the Atticus James Gill, M.D. Chair in Medical Science.

STING Continued from page 1

Dr. Zhang co-lead the study with Xiaochen Bai, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biophysics and Cell Biology, and their current or former postdoctoral fellows Defen Lu, Ph.D., and Guijun Shang, Ph.D. Drs. Zhang and Bai are members of the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center.

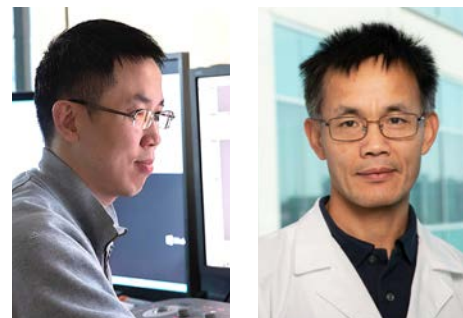
STING, short for "stimulator of interferon genes," is a central part of the innate immune system that serves as the body's first line of defense against viruses, bacteria, and cancers. After a sensor known as cGAS detects foreign DNA in cells, it generates a messenger molecule known as cyclic GMP-AMP (cGAMP) that activates STING. In turn, STING launches several signaling pathways that spur the production of inflammatory molecules and chemical signals that prompt cells to clean out debris to eliminate invaders.

In collaboration with Zhijian "James" Chen, Ph.D., a Professor of Molecular Biology and in the Center for the Genetics of Host Defense, the Zhang and Bai labs previously reported the first images of STING taken with cryogenic electron microscopy (cryo-EM), a technique that freezes proteins in place to accurately assess their structure, in UTSW's Cryo-Electron Microscopy Facility.

Dr. Chen discovered the enzyme cGAS and showed that it triggers a cascade of immune reactions. Subsequent studies found that cGAS also recognizes tumor DNA and is important for anti-tumor immunity. Dr. Chen, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator and member of the National Academy of Sciences, won the 2019 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences for his 2012

discovery of cGAS.

Although the most current work elucidated some of the fundamental mechanisms that control STING activity, exactly how this protein switches into an active form has been unclear. To answer this question, the researchers



Xiaochen Bai, Ph.D.

Xuewu Zhang, Ph.D.

mixed purified STING protein with cGAMP and used cryo-EM to image the resulting product. However, the researchers saw few activated STING molecules, and those that were present were unstable.

Hoping to increase the amount of activated STING available to image, the scientists added an investigational drug known as compound 53 (C53) that is currently being tested as a STING activator for anti-cancer therapy. C53 was assumed to bind to the same site as cGAMP on STING.

The combination of cGAMP and C53 produced significantly more activated STING molecules. But when the researchers searched for C53 on the cryo-EM images, they found it in

a completely different location than cGAMP – at the opposite end of the molecule.

"This newly discovered binding site for STING activation came as a complete surprise," Dr. Bai explained. "We call it a 'cryptic pocket' because it appears to form in response to the presence of C53. No evidence of this site exists when C53 is absent."

The fact that STING seems to need both cGAMP and C53 to become strongly and stably activated suggests that an unknown molecule akin to C53 may exist in cells to fill the same role, Dr. Zhang said. Future research will focus on searching for this molecule and better understanding its function.

Someday, the researchers added, drugs that attach to or block this newly discovered binding site could be used to strengthen or dampen immunity to respectively fight infectious or autoimmune diseases.

This work was funded in part by grants from the National Institutes of Health, The Welch Foundation, and the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas. UTSW postdoctoral fellows Jie Li, Ph.D., and Yong Lu, Ph.D., also contributed to this study.

Dr. Bai is a Virginia Murchison Linthicum Scholar in Medical Research.

Dr. Chen holds the George L. MacGregor Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science.

Dr. Zhang is a Virginia Murchison Linthicum Scholar in Medical Research.

CENTERTIMES

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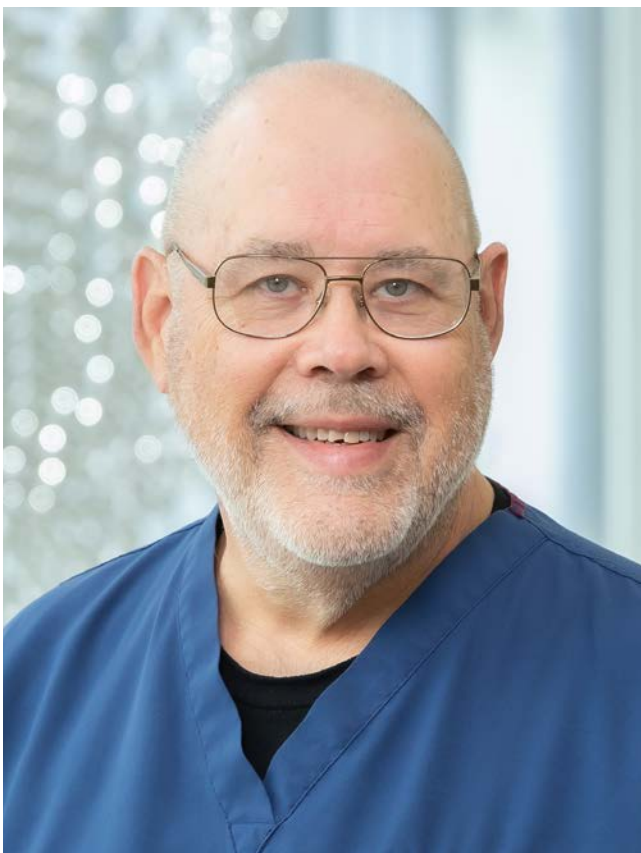
CENTER TIMES

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION 2022

Long-term employees play an invaluable role in the life of UT Southwestern Medical Center. Their faithful, dedicated service has helped the institution become what it is today. In this special section of *Center Times*, we showcase some of these employees and their varied interests.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., President of UT Southwestern Medical Center, will host a June 7 luncheon to honor employees with 45, 40, 35, and 30 years of service and to welcome new members of the Quarter Century Club.

A superhero in the hospital for more than four decades



Gary Gaulden

Medical Technologist
William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital, Core Lab

By Carol Marie Cropper

Medical Technologist Gary Gaulden tries to convince you that nothing spectacular has happened in his 45 years of work at UT Southwestern, first at St. Paul Medical Center and now at William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital. But don't let his humility fool you – his actions once saved a hospital visitor's life.

St. Paul, the facility later replaced by Clements University Hospital, became the setting for the drama that Mr. Gaulden describes as "the most satisfying thing that ever happened to me."

He and a lab co-worker were having lunch in the former hospital's cafeteria when they noticed an elderly woman choking nearby. "She reminded me of my mother," Mr. Gaulden says. As she kept coughing and struggled to breathe, it became obvious she was in danger. "You could tell that whatever it was she was choking on was getting farther down in her throat, restricting her airways," he says.

Although Mr. Gaulden wasn't a doctor, he had volunteered as an adult leader for his son's Boy Scout troop, so he knew how to perform the Heimlich maneuver. "I hadn't used it before then, and I haven't used it since," he says, but he sprang into action, and it worked. "The instant relief that was on her face was priceless."

The woman thanked him, even though to this day he does not know her name. "After she got clear of what she

had in her throat, she went back to eating – and so did we," he says.

That moment, still frozen in his memory, has stayed with him through the years, along with his dedication to medical service. "Seeing your kids graduate high school and college – that's one level of satisfaction," he says. "But helping another human being is just a different level."

Mr. Gaulden has spent his entire career at UT Southwestern. He says he took the job because it was in his field and he liked the people he worked with in the lab.

He started part time at St. Paul on Feb. 14, 1976, testing enzyme levels in patients' blood while finishing his medical technology training there. After graduating that July with a Bachelor of Science from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, Mr. Gaulden joined St. Paul's Hematology lab full time.

Mr. Gaulden, who likes to garden, hunt, fish, and carve small wooden animals to give to his four grandchildren, says he hasn't decided on a retirement date yet. He says he hopes to continue working at least another couple of years.

What keeps him here? When he was offered a job after graduation, he could not think of a better place to work than St. Paul or UT Southwestern.

"But basically it's the people I work with – that's the honest reason I stayed on. They're a good bunch of people who work in Hematology and the Core Lab."



One hundred longtime employees honored for enduring legacy of UT Southwestern service

By Carol Marie Cropper

One hundred UT Southwestern employees will be honored at an event hosted by President Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., in recognition of exceptional career longevity and loyalty as part of a campus-wide Employee Recognition Week celebration in June.

The June 7 luncheon will recognize employees for their contributions over the years to the institution's growth and success.

In all, 100 employees are invited to this year's event to commemorate 25, 30, 35, 40, and 45 years of UT System service. More than half of the honorees – 52 to be exact – are joining the Quarter Century

Club this year, meaning they have achieved 25 years of service.

The keynote speaker is Susan Hernandez, D.N.P., M.B.A., RN, Associate Vice President and Health System Chief Nurse Executive, who is responsible for oversight of nursing practice in the UTSW Health System, setting goals for nursing, and managing budgets and staffing. She is also over physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, speech therapy, and a number of other patient care service lines.

Dr. Hernandez came to UT Southwestern in 2014 as Associate Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer, from the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt University. She holds a Bachelor of Science in nursing from Jackson-

ville University in Florida, a Master of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix, and a Doctor of Nursing Practice from Vanderbilt.

One of her proudest moments at UTSW, she said, was when UT Southwestern earned Magnet designation from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) in 2016 – and then achieved Magnet redesignation five years later during the pandemic. It's a recognition received by fewer than 9% of U.S. hospitals, according to the ANCC's Commission on Magnet, and considered its highest honor. Magnet designation is awarded to health care organizations that develop and execute nursing goals to improve patient outcomes.

Please see **SPEAKER** on page 4



Susan Hernandez, D.N.P., M.B.A., RN



Making people laugh and scheduling radiology procedures are her specialties



Brenda Johnson

Radiation Imaging Services Scheduler
Cardiovascular Interventional Radiology

By Cathy Frisinger

Inside Brenda Johnson beats the heart of a comedian – or at least the passion of someone who is partial to an occasional prank and loves to make people laugh.

Each day, Ms. Johnson shows up at work with amusing stories to share, warm-hearted chuckles that she sprinkles liberally throughout her conversations, and a daily “mom” joke. On a recent Wednesday morning it was this: How much does a new roof cost? Answer: Nothing. It’s on the house.

Ms. Johnson’s career with UT Southwestern began in 1981 when, armed with just-completed nursing-assistant training, she went looking for work. UT Southwestern didn’t have any nurse aide positions, so she applied for a job in housekeeping, thinking she’d get a foot in the door. That strategy worked, and a few years later she was able to transfer to a position doing electrocardiograms (EKGs).

She has remained with the UT Southwestern Division of Cardiology ever since, though she switched years ago to a position as a scheduler for cardiovascular and interventional radiology procedures. “When I transferred to my present position, I had to interview with John Warner, M.D., and Brian Baldwin, M.D., who was the head of Cardiology at the time. I don’t know if they knew how nervous I was.” Today, Dr. Warner is Executive Vice President for Health System Affairs and Health System CEO.

Except for that rare nervous occasion, most of the time Ms. Johnson is a relaxed, fun-loving person. That’s especially true when she’s roller-skating. She began disco skating in the ‘70s, going regularly with a group of seven or eight friends to

a rink at the Cotton Bowl. Skating was her passion for years, and she fondly recalls skating with her cadre of friends in an MLK parade one year. She still gets out for an occasional turn around a skating rink with her daughter, Myka.

Another fond memory from her early days is winning a hula hoop contest at a UT Southwestern fair. “I won a big stuffed bear for swiveling my hips,” Ms. Johnson says.

These days, her hobbies are less physical. She’s a big reader, is partial to scifi and mysteries, and owns up to having watched the television series “Luther” three times.

Ms. Johnson grew up in Dallas, a middle daughter with a gaggle of sisters. Today she lives in Arlington with her younger sister. Because she’s an extrovert, the pandemic put a damper on her usual social interactions. She is therefore glad that her job has continued to take place at William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital, where co-workers are nearby to mingle with.

Ms. Johnson brings just as much warmth to her interactions with patients. “I think it’s really important if you work in a hospital to love people,” she says.

She takes pride in her conversations with the patients she is scheduling, knowing that many of them are anxious about their impending procedures. “I love it when I can get them laughing,” she says.

Dr. Warner holds the Jim and Norma Smith Distinguished Chair for Interventional Cardiology, and the Nancy and Jeremy Halbreich, Susan and Theodore Strauss Professorship in Cardiology.



Maria Manzo

EKG Technician
Clinic Noninvasive Cardiology
William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital



Aziza Young

Nursing Manager
5 Green Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital

Speaker Continued from page 3

The quality of the nursing team’s work and accomplishments during the pandemic are achievements that she cherishes.

“What we offered our UTSW family and the community through testing, care, and vaccination was incredible,” Dr. Hernandez said. “It was obvious that our efforts made a positive impact.”

While patient experience scores at some health care institutions fell during the pandemic, “ours continued to soar,” she said. “The clinical staff kept a positive attitude in front of patients even when they were having a very difficult time.”

Although Nashville had been home and the only place Dr. Hernandez had ever worked, her decision to move to Dallas with her husband, a native Texan, was easy.

“After the first visit to UTSW, I wanted the job,” she said. “The staff and leaders were engaging, articulate, and clearly talented. The executive leaders had a vision for the organization that was consistent, and I could tell at every level there was alignment to do the right thing for patients and staff.”

Dr. Podolsky holds the Philip O’Bryan Montgomery, Jr., M.D. Distinguished Presidential Chair in Academic Administration, and the Doris and Bryan Wildenthal Distinguished Chair in Medical Science.

Quarter Century Club:

Facts and figures

1996 The year the program was established to honor employees with 25 or more years of UT System service.

347 Total number of members in the Quarter Century Club – about 2.5% of UTSW’s 13,700 nonfaculty employees.

48 Number of years of service of the current employee – Bernadine Wafford – with the longest tenure. She is a Unit Secretary for William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital, 5 Green NICU.

32 Number of Quarter Century Club members in the Department with the most such members, which is Information Resources.





Mary Baldwin

Manager, Quality Improvement Programs
Office of Quality, Safety, and Outcomes Education

Early teaching experience helped her find a niche at UT Southwestern

By Cathy Frisinger

Mary Baldwin has held a variety of professional positions in her 35 years at UT Southwestern, but one thing has been a constant: “I have always felt energized by the wonderful reputation of UT Southwestern locally, nationally, and internationally. It’s a real honor to work for this institution.”

Her career did not begin in the medical field, however, but in elementary and collegiate education. She grew up in North Carolina, earning a bachelor’s degree in education at Appalachian State University. She then taught junior high school for five years before returning to teach at Appalachian State.

In 1980, Ms. Baldwin changed course, earning a master’s degree in health education and two years later moved to North Texas for a job with the regional health department in Arlington.

She joined UT Southwestern in 1986 as Director for Program Planning and Development at the James W. Aston Ambulatory Care Center. “We developed many new programs. I worked with marketing and the medical illustration programs. Mohs surgery was just beginning. It was an exciting time,” she says.

Highlights of her career include putting together the first faculty directory, negotiating managed-care contracts, reviewing hospital contracts, and especially being a member of the team that witnessed the construction and opening of William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital in 2014.

When she’s not working, Ms. Baldwin enjoys going to estate sales – she admits to having a near-addiction to them for a time – and she’s passionate about home design.

Travel is another interest. She loves and has been to the East Coast island of Nantucket many times. But her most memorable travel experience is a 2002 trip to Switzerland. “We were in Grindelwald and it snowed. It was fabulous,” Ms. Baldwin says.

A dachshund named Daisy also brings joy to her life.

At work, she treasures having collaborated with hundreds of bright, dedicated professionals through the years.

“It’s been a privilege to work with thousands of doctors, students, nurses, and pharmacists from UT Southwestern as well as individuals from other campuses and even other countries,” she says.



Sandra Durr

Administrative Manager
Department of Radiation Oncology

As a people person, she thrives on listening, solving problems

By Jan Jarvis

When co-workers need a sympathetic ear, Radiation Oncology Administrative Manager Sandra Durr is always ready to listen.

“I believe I take the time to listen to anyone who needs help, advice, or just a kind ear to let someone ‘vent’ whenever they need to,” she says. “I have a sign right inside my office door that says ‘The Doctor Is In,’ and I really mean it! And I don’t even ask for the 5-cent fee!”

For 35 years, Mrs. Durr has been listening to others at UT Southwestern and acting as a go-to person whenever her co-workers need support.

Not surprisingly, she considers helping supervisors and employees solve problems as the most rewarding part of her job.

“The variety of work keeps me coming back every day and seeing the growth and success of my colleagues in their careers over the years,” she says. “I’ve often said that ‘juggling five flaming basketballs’ is a wonderful challenge!”

A people person, Mrs. Durr stays busy working as a writer and departmental historian among her many duties. Her other responsibilities include assisting with hiring; coordinating performance appraisals; serving as a liaison to recruiters; performing employee relations functions; and helping with supervisor training, policy interpretation, and multiple other needs to support the 450-member Department of Radiation Oncology.

Her dedication to helping others extends beyond the workplace to assisting anyone in need. In fact, Mrs. Durr is a frequent participant in the Susan G. Komen 3-Day walks and has raised more than \$30,000 for breast cancer research.

When she retires in August, Mrs. Durr plans to travel, do yardwork outside her home that sits on 5 acres, and enjoy more time with her husband, Steve.

Still, saying goodbye to UT Southwestern will be difficult.

“I will be taking away a ton of great memories,” she says. “I am incredibly grateful for all the support I have received over the years.”



Victoria Esser, Ph.D.

Senior Research Scientist
Department of Biophysics

For career achievements, add cloning a membrane protein to the list

By Lauren Phillips

Victoria Esser, Ph.D., finds that her work brings an opportunity to learn something new every day – “not only about science, but also about life.”

She joined UT Southwestern as a postdoctoral fellow in Molecular Genetics in 1986, later moving to Internal Medicine and eventually to her current role in Biophysics. Working in different labs has enabled her to grow as a scientist, she says.

Her current research in the lab of Jose Rizo-Rey, Ph.D., Professor of Biophysics, Biochemistry, and Pharmacology, focuses on “understanding how neurons communicate in real time,” exploring the tightly controlled series of interactions that trigger their signals.

Co-workers appreciate Dr. Esser’s ability to bring people together and foster an environment of collaboration. In turn, she says she’s energized by observing her colleagues’ hard work throughout the day. She credits her success to perseverance: “I don’t give up when things don’t work.”

Dr. Esser’s career highlights include cloning carnitine palmitoyltransferase 1A (CPT1A), a membrane protein that connects carnitine to long-chain fatty acids so they can enter mitochondria and be used to produce energy. CPT1A is associated with Type 2 diabetes and insulin resistance.

Away from the lab, Dr. Esser enjoys spending time with her dogs, both “foster failures”: Clyde, a Lab mix; and Havoc, an aptly named German shepherd. She brought home her first dog, Tiger, in 2003.

In 1989, she connected with La Casa de España, an organization focused on sharing the culture of Spain in Dallas-Fort Worth. For the last three years, Dr. Esser has served as the group’s President, and has been a longtime member of its board of directors.

Dr. Esser cherishes the enriching interactions she’s had at UTSW with people from all over the world. “I would never have dreamed of meeting so many intelligent and fascinating people,” she says.



Dr. Rizo-Rey holds the Virginia Lazenby O’Hara Chair in Biochemistry.



Kyle Kerr

Manager, Pharmacy Operations
William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital Pharmacy

Journey from the farm to high-tech pharmacy operations

By Jan Jarvis

From his first days working as a pharmacist at the former St. Paul University Hospital in Dallas, Kyle Kerr began looking for ways to implement technological advances to improve patient safety. And now after 35 years at UT Southwestern, Mr. Kerr has enjoyed opportunities to do just that.

“When I started at St. Paul, we didn’t have Pyxis (automated medication dispensing cabinets), we didn’t have inventory management software (carousels), and we didn’t have the sterile compounding software,” he says. “All of these developments were designed to improve patient safety.”

Indeed, the high-tech world of pharmacy that Mr. Kerr embraced turned out to be dramatically different from that of the southwest Oklahoma farm where he was raised as a child.

“I grew up working cattle, plowing the field, and driving a combine during harvest,” Mr. Kerr says, amazed at times to grasp the transformation from country boy to urban medical professional.

As Manager of Pharmacy Operations today, Mr. Kerr says he has been fortunate to contribute to the implementation of many technical advances, especially in inventory management, sterile compounding, and drug distribution. His interest in innovation – either technical or operational – keeps him looking forward. But it’s his memory of the past that has come in handy on the job.

“As such a longtime employee, I have the historical memory of why we did something or why we didn’t do it, and I have been noted to often say, ‘In 1902 ...,’” Mr. Kerr says.

Known for being a good listener, Mr. Kerr says his secret to really hearing what co-workers say is understanding how important it is to get feedback before implementing a change.

Since he started working at UT Southwestern in 1986 as a Clinical Staff Pharmacist, Mr. Kerr says he has enjoyed the collegial staff and leaders who have supported him.

One of his greatest assets, he says, is an ability to stay cool, calm, and collected in any situation.

In retirement, he has a short list of things he wants to do: “I’m looking forward to reading, playing the piano, and traveling,” he says.

James Philip

Parking Enforcement Officer
Parking Services

A multilingual customer service enthusiast – and Elvis sound-alike

By Melody Townsel

Since landing his first job at UT Southwestern as a courier in 1987, James Philip’s stock in trade has been making people on campus happy.

“The most fulfilling aspect of my job is helping others,” he asserts, “and putting smiles on people’s faces.”

Mr. Philip recalls one incident in particular when a driver had a flat tire on one of the parking lots. He aired up the tire and discovered it still had a nail, so he recommended that she follow him to a local auto shop.

“I didn’t understand the impact I had made until she sent a letter of thanks to my department,” he says. “It made me realize that little acts of kindness don’t go unnoticed.”

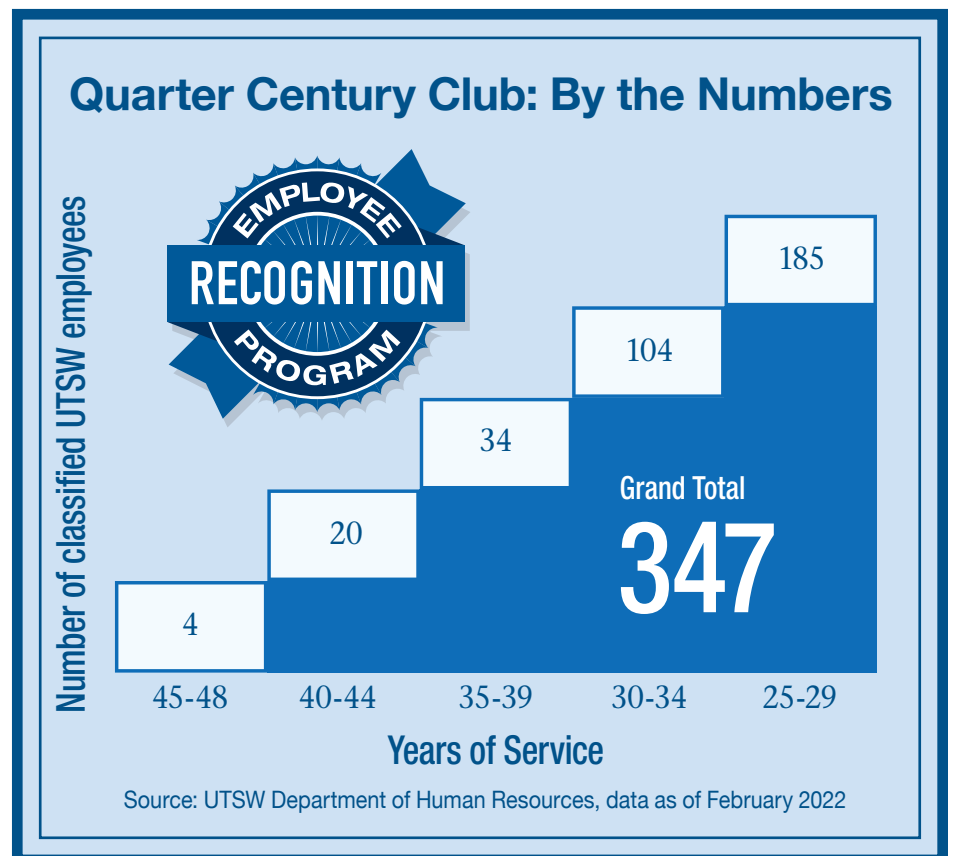
That dedication to customer service is no surprise to his co-workers, who are quick to point out Mr. Philip’s commitment and the joy that he finds in talking to people. “I think my extroverted personality allows me to engage with people about any kind of matters,” says Mr. Philip, a Parking Enforcement Officer who prides himself on helping those in need.

That said, his greatest source of joy is his family. “I have a beautiful wife and two children – one son and one daughter – who make me proud every day,” says Mr. Philip. “It energizes me to know that I can provide for my family through this job, and that I learn something new every day.”

While he wishes he were an expert at playing pool, Mr. Philip is nevertheless just as happy with his skills as a singer and keyboard aficionado. A polyglot who in addition to English speaks fluent Malayalam, Telugu, and Hindi, his ultimate claim to fame is his voice.

“When I sing ‘Can’t Help Falling in Love,’ some people say I sound like Elvis Presley,” he says with a chuckle in his voice.

Laughter also colors his strongest memory of 35 years at UTSW. “I was on South Campus once, walking through the bird sanctuary,” he relates with a smile. “Then, a landscaper jumped out of the bushes and said ‘gotcha!’”





John Shelton

Operations Manager
Histo Pathology Core



Sue Wetherbee

Business Analyst
Information Resources/Client Services

This race car enthusiast finds microscopy just as riveting and challenging

By Jan Jarvis

As Operations Manager for the Histo Pathology Core laboratory, John Shelton has spent much of the past 35 years peering into a microscope. Far from tedious, it's an aspect of his job he finds extremely rewarding.

"I enjoy microscopy immensely, having been given my first microscope for my ninth birthday, ordered from the Sears and Roebuck catalog," he says.

In 1986, Mr. Shelton joined UT Southwestern, armed with a degree in plant and laboratory sciences. He applied his microscopy skills to clinical pathology in the Division of Comparative Medicine and in 1992 co-founded the Histo Pathology Core laboratory, which serves the University by preparing and evaluating tissue from research animals.

At any one time, up to 300 projects are underway in the lab. Mr. Shelton is responsible for all technical and business functions of the lab.

"I have been blessed to work on myriad projects and have contributed as an author on more than 150 publications," he says.

After more than three decades at UT Southwestern, looking into a microscope and sharing the experience with others who are equally as enthusiastic continues to be his greatest passion.

"Looking back on the past 35 years, I am rewarded by the memories of people I have interfaced with through the Histo Core ... those whom I have helped, trained, and sent on their way to corners of the globe," he says. "I am rewarded to know that the histology service that my Core offers is unparalleled, and I am proud to have had a hand in building it to that stature."

Away from work, Mr. Shelton enjoys racing vintage cars such as his 1965 AC Cobra replica. He also owns a 2012 Corvette Grand Sport. "The adrenaline I experienced the first time I tracked my car was addicting," he says.

Since 2009, he has participated in events at Texas Motor Speedway, Eagles Canyon Raceway, MotorSport Ranch Cresson, Harris Hill Raceway, and Hallett Motor Racing Circuit. He also organized track events at Harris Hill from 2010 through 2013, raising approximately \$50,000 for the charities of Operation Comfort Automotivation and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Computer acting up? She has a trick

By Cathy Frisinger

When she is dealing with a computerphobe, Sue Wetherbee has been known to advise the client to "give that computer a slap."

"Did it hit back?" she'll ask. "Well, there you go. Nothing to be afraid of."

Ms. Wetherbee has been smoothing the way between information systems and UT Southwestern computer users with a combination of humor, knowledge, and patience for 35 years.

In 1986, Ms. Wetherbee took a chance, moving from Corpus Christi, Texas, where she had lived most of her life, to Dallas in search of job opportunities. She initially stayed with her brother, whose girlfriend at the time knew of a receptionist's opening in the IR Department at UT Southwestern. Although her brother and the woman stopped dating, the job was a perfect employment match for Ms. Wetherbee. Even better, her brother's ex turned into her best friend, and the job became her life's work.

Her favorite thing about her job is being able to show a client a pathway that can cut work time.

When Ms. Wetherbee was a software trainer, she was proud of her ability to work with everyone in the room, engaging both those with little knowledge and those with high levels of computer skills.

The IR Department has changed names four or five times since 1986, but whatever the name, it has always been home for Ms. Wetherbee. She has risen up in the ranks through the years and stayed with the Department for so long because of the variety.

"No two days are the same. Every day there is something to learn from my co-workers to pass on to clients," she says.

During her more than three decades here, Ms. Wetherbee has been a part of several launches, including being one of the first individuals to staff the UT Southwestern help desk when it began. Recently, she was part of the Command Center for the newly launched myTime timekeeping system.

When she's not at work, Ms. Wetherbee enjoys gardening and camping. Her son and grandson live just a mile from her home, and one of the joys in her life is fishing with her grandson, Marshall.

Ms. Wetherbee was born in Paris – France, not Texas – and, with retirement beginning to swim into her thoughts, she is starting to muse about getting back there some day.



Daphne D. Adams

Administrative Associate
Auxiliary Enterprises

First UTSW job: Administrative Assistant in Printing Services.

Best part about my job: Being the resource contact for my department.

What energizes me at work: Appreciation. Anytime you feel appreciated, whether on the job or in your personal life, it makes you feel that what you're doing is being valued and not taken for granted.

How co-workers describe me: Passionate and resourceful.

Best UTSW memory: Attending the departmental Christmas parties that were held at the Faculty Club and serving on the Employee Advisory Council.

Recipe for success: I take pride in my work and like to ensure my department members have what they need to be productive in their daily tasks. Also, with the knowledge I have, my team and campus contacts know they can reach out to me for assistance.

Hobby: Spending time with my family who means the world to me, traveling with my wonderful husband, spoiling my 2-year-old grandbaby, shopping, and planning functions.

I'm really good at: Event planning.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Counseling. People come to me for advice or when they just need to vent – and those who come to me feel comfortable speaking with me. I always say that I should put a “Lucy Jar” on my desk.

Surprising fact: I enjoy listening to country music, and I get nervous speaking in front of a large group of people.



Shawn Cohenour

Director
Contracts Management



“Sometimes, no one will be around to support your good work, but on the other side, there is always a patient who appreciates the timely care and medication they receive. Pharmacy has a great role in patient care.”

– Sheela Das, Pharmacy Technician

Jeffery Akens

Cook
Nutrition Services
William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital



Mary Chibundu

Accountant II
Medical Group, Finance

First UTSW job: Cashier/Accounting Clerk.

Best part about my job: The fact that you never know it all; there are always new things to learn even after more than 20 years of experience working as a malpractice coordinator for UT Southwestern and the UT System.

What energizes me at work: The joy of helping others find solutions to some challenging questions they may have.

How co-workers describe me: Dependable, calm, patient, and pleasant to work with.

Best UTSW memory: My best memory is serving as a window cashier at the B Tower building, cashing checks and meeting other employees, especially esteemed physicians like Charles Sprague, M.D. One day, he came to cash a check. I was overwhelmed after hearing so much about him that I stared for a while. He asked me if there was a problem with his check and realized I was lost by looking at him and had to apologize. I said I was just happy to finally meet him in person.

Recipe for success: Patience, listening, and treating others the way I would like to be treated.

I'm really good at: Compassion.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Predicting the mortality of loved ones and finding cures to ailments that affect them. Losing my 39-year-old son has left a big hole in my heart, and I wish I'd had the power to cure him of his kidney disease to keep him alive.



Sheela Das

Pharmacy Technician
William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital Pharmacy

First UTSW job: Pharmacy Technician.

Best part about my job: My job mainly involves sterile compounding of intravenous solutions in the pharmacy.

What energizes me at work: Self-motivation. Sometimes, no one will be around to support your good work, but on the other side, there is always a patient who appreciates the timely care and medication they receive. Pharmacy has a great role in patient care.

How co-workers describe me: Knowledgeable, expert at my work, respectful toward co-workers, with a good attitude toward patient care.

Recipe for success: Hold on to your stand when others push you down.

Best UTSW memory: I was able to be around some great people at my department from different ethnicities and learned a lot in our journey from the former St. Paul University Hospital to UTSW. Many are retired and now it is just a sweet and unforgettable memory.

Hobbies: I like to cook whenever I get the opportunity. My husband and kids enjoy homemade tasty food!





Elizabeth Edwards

Department Administrator – Clinical
Department of Dermatology

First UTSW job: Staff Services Specialist in Pathology.

Best part about my job: That it's complicated, service-focused, challenging, frustrating, rewarding, and offers opportunities to bring ideas to life and encourage new young leaders. I love the mix of these things that my job provides.

What energizes me at work: Fresh ideas and challenges. I love to learn and try new things.

How co-workers describe me: Caring and, probably, opinionated.

Recipe for success: Having a keen sense of responsibility.

Best UTSW memory: When Y2K had everyone in the world worried that computers would fail to boot up on Jan. 1, 2000. For months, the country and the University prepared for this event, and I was designated as the person to come in on New Year's Day to check all the computers in the Department. The world, the nation, and UTSW all breathed a sigh of relief; the computers were fine.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Playing a musical instrument like the guitar, mandolin, or piano. Music feeds the soul.

I'm really good at: Finger snaps. I do them all the time.

Hobbies: My husband and I love to find things at estate sales, restore or repurpose them, and then resell them. In some small way, I think I'm helping the Earth by saving something from the landfill.

Surprising fact: I've actually gotten into the water with a full-grown shark just so I could get my picture taken. I don't know if that makes me brave or stupid.

Claim to fame: I once won a chili cook-off.



Greg Emmerling

Enterprise Resource Planning Specialist
Academic and Administrative Information Resources

First UTSW job: Computer Programmer I.

Best part about my job: Working with my co-workers and feeling a sense of accomplishment when I resolve the system issues my users have.

What energizes me at work: Solving problems. It helps that I believe in the mission of UT Southwestern.

How co-workers describe me: A team player willing to help where needed.

Recipe for success: I'm a good listener, and I work on a problem until I find a solution.

Best UTSW memory: Once when we had a company picnic to celebrate completing a project, we rented a volleyball net with poles at the Bryan Williams, M.D. Student Center. No one told us that the poles would be attached to huge cement blocks. I got a pretty good workout that day.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Maybe fishing. I can't catch a fish to save my life.

I'm really good at: I think I'm a good driver, even if my wife disagrees!

Surprising fact: My grandfather performed for both the circus and Ripley's Believe It or Not! (He could turn his head around 180 degrees.)



Keith Ferrier

Operating Room Surgical Attendant
Outpatient Surgical Center



Alice Johnson

Assistant Nurse Manager
7 Green, William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital

First UTSW job: Registered Nurse.

Best part about my job: Interacting with patients and their loved ones when they're in a vulnerable state, helping them experience the best stay – and I love mentoring young nurses, helping them meet their career goals.

What energizes me at work: Seeing the joy and happiness of my patients and their families when they go home with a new kidney or liver transplant.

How co-workers describe me: Pleasant and empathetic – the go-to person for any job-related questions.

Recipe for success: I stay calm during chaotic times.

Best UTSW memory: The time my manager, staff members, and I went bowling after work. We had a blast!

I wish I were an instant expert at: Painting natural outdoor scenery, because I love natural beauty.

I'm really good at: Listening to my staff's concerns and patient complaints and getting them solved.

Hobbies: Gardening and traveling to new places.



Pamela Jones

Department Administrator
Department of Neuroscience

First UTSW job: Accountant in the Department of Pediatrics.

Best part about my job: Working with a terrific group of faculty and staff who are dedicated to making our Department great. Everyone has a team mentality.

How co-workers describe me: Flexible and accessible.

Recipe for success: I start each workday with a goal to always do the best job that I can. I also make sure that I am available to meet with or listen to others, which I believe is important in establishing relationships with those you work with.

Best UTSW memory: When I applied to UT Southwestern in 1991, Human Resources was located in the B Building, second floor. All open positions were in a binder, and you actually completed a paper application for the positions you were interested in!

I'm really good at: Listening to others.

Hobbies: Sewing, reading, and doing crossword puzzles.

Surprising fact: I'm a huge football fan, especially college football!



“What energizes me at work is seeing the joy and happiness of my patients and their families when they go home with a new kidney or liver transplant.”

– Alice Johnson, Assistant Nurse Manager



Veronica Lopez

Telemetry Technician
Central Monitoring Unit

First UTSW job: Housekeeper.

Best part about my job: Keeping my patients safe and being a team player.

What energizes me at work: Assisting co-workers and other staff to resolve issues. It makes me feel confident.

How co-workers describe me: Patient, very nice, and always willing to help others.

Recipe for success: My determination to succeed. I like to do my job to the best of my ability.

Best UTSW memories: Receiving the Meritorious Service Award in March 2021.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Becoming a better lead tech, encouraging others to learn and follow.

I'm really good at: Precepting incoming staff in our department.

Hobbies: I like spending quality time with my kids and grandkids.

Surprising fact: I like to go out and have fun, like dancing.



Cheryl Thomas

Registered Nurse II
Cardiovascular Interventional Radiology

First UTSW job: Staff Nurse in Medical Surgical ICU at the former St. Paul University Hospital.

Best part about my job: Working in all the departments: Cardiology, Electrophysiology, Heart Catheterization, and Non-Invasive Cardiology.

How co-workers describe me: An entertainer. I love to sing, but I can't hold a note.

Recipe for success: I'm approachable. My co-workers say I'll talk to anybody.

Best UTSW memory: When the Cath Lab was being remodeled, some procedures were done in a mobile lab trailer. We transported patients there using wheelchairs or stretchers through the Professional Office Building (POB). Looking at patients' expressions as we traveled through the POB on carpeted floors was quite amusing.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Fitness training.

Hobbies: Gardening and traveling.

Surprising fact: I was in the Navy Nurse Corps.

Claim to fame: I was instrumental in getting nurses on the units to perform the bubble studies for echocardiograms.



Paul Stodolka

Manager
Biomedical Engineering

First UTSW job: Biomed Tech II.

Best part about my job: Working with staff in almost every building on campus, on both the clinical and research sides.

What energizes me at work: That's easy: our fellow staff.

How co-workers describe me: Goody's Headache Powder. I make their headaches go away.

Recipe for success: Staying calm when clinical staff think the problem is too big.

Best UTSW memory: When we were bringing William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital on line, standing in the lab and listening to the vendor explain how he had repaired all plumbing leaks. The main water supply line broke, and we both looked like we had taken showers with our clothes on.

I wish I were an instant expert at: How to very, very neatly scrape off the old popcorn ceiling in my home. It would make my wife of 42 years smile a lot.

I'm really good at: Solving clinical staff problems.

Hobbies: Hanging out with family, helping two grandchildren and a son-in-law with home projects, even though I'm not very good at it.

Surprising fact: As Christmas approaches, I spend time watching Hallmark movies.



Brent Townsend

Director Front-End Medical/Surgical Billing
Medical Group Revenue Cycle

First UTSW job: Clinical Department Representative.

Best part about my job: Being given the daily opportunity to be a servant leader to my team and others.

How co-workers describe me: A web browser. They tell me they can always come to me and get the answers they need to perform their jobs.

I'm really good at: Working with my hands. I've always enjoyed repairing, maintaining, or building things myself.

Best UTSW memory: The surgical and clinical care provided to my mother-in-law saved and extended her life. Our family will be forever grateful.

I wish I were an instant expert at: The art of barbecuing. Barbecue is my family's favorite meal; we're always searching for the best barbecue and rating it.

Hobbies: My hobby is hunting. My passion is being in the outdoors.

Surprising fact: When I was an infant, my aunt Anne – not being formally trained – resuscitated me using CPR. Just days before, she had either read an article or watched a TV program on performing CPR.

Claim to fame: Growing up in West Texas and having the opportunity to work at a world-renowned medical center.

Final note: I owe a lot of my professional growth to my current AVP and many other managers who were willing to mentor me along the way!



John K. Varghese

MRI Technologist
Imaging Services

First UTSW job: MRI Technologist.

Best part about my job: My co-workers.

What energizes me at work: Paying my kids' college tuition.

How co-workers describe me: Dependable and easy to get along with.

Recipe for success: Hard work.

I'm really good at: Taking care of my patients and my family.

I wish I were an instant expert at: The stock market. I like investing in the stock market and following different stocks.

Surprising fact: I have twin daughters who are physicians, and my son is in college now.

Hobbies: International travel.



"The surgical and clinical care provided to my mother-in-law saved and extended her life. Our family will be forever grateful."

– Brent Townsend, Director Front-End Medical/Surgical Billing



Walter Andrews

Supervisor, Technical Support
Information Resources

First UTSW job: Parking Enforcement Officer.

Best part about my job: Meeting and helping others, and knowing that I am making a difference.

What energizes me at work: Knowing I can make an impact in the lives of our clients, as well as those of the patients they serve.

How co-workers describe me: Hardworking and dedicated. Those who work with me know how much I care about our clients and about doing my job well.

Recipe for success: Listening. I always listen to our clients and pay attention to the details so they can be carried out. That way, I can deliver service that doesn't just meet their expectations, but exceeds them.

Funny UTSW memory: Participating in a departmental holiday video and my co-workers and I forgetting our lines.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Being an auto mechanic. I love cars.

Hobbies: Talking on citizens band and single-sideband radio.

Surprising fact: I am a geek and I love history.

Claim to fame: Being responsive to clients and going the extra mile.

Final note: I've enjoyed the smiling faces, the diversity, and the campus growth I've seen over the course of my career at UT Southwestern.



“UT Southwestern is ripe with opportunities for growth. You just have to seek them out, apply yourself, and be open to branching out in various directions. If you find your passion, the years will fly by.”

– Cheryl Baldia, CPC, Revenue Cycle Manager

Tracee Belzle Dean

Senior Program Coordinator
Community Prevention and Intervention Unit

First UTSW job: Program Manager over a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded HIV prevention training center.

Best part about my job: Supporting my team to ensure that they can do their best work.

What energizes me at work: Supporting the foundation that allows us to be successful and grow.

How co-workers describe me: Reliable, because I've been here the longest.

Recipe for success: I pride myself on being accountable – to my Director, to leadership, and to my team. This puts me in a better position to lead by example.

Unusual UTSW memory: The time a colleague and I were detained by drug enforcement agents at Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport near Springfield, Illinois. Why? We had “too many suitcases.”

I'm really good at: Making a mean chili dog – hold the relish, of course.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Writing the evaluation sections of grant proposals. This would allow the Unit to be more competitive for funding.

Passions: Farming and family.

Surprising fact: I am a sheep farmer.

Claim to fame: I never need a microphone to be heard when I'm presenting at conferences or loud meetings.

Jason Bailey

University Police Captain
University Police



Cheryl Baldia, CPC

Revenue Cycle Manager
Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Management

First UTSW job: Clinical Support Staff member at the Allied Health Physical Therapy Clinic.

Best part about my job: The people I work with, from team members and administrative support to the faculty, advanced practice providers, and trainees. All of them are caring individuals who strive to do their best daily.

What energizes me at work: Interactions with others. I love sharing knowledge about my job and helping others learn and grow.

How co-workers describe me: Approachable, compassionate, and supportive. Someone who works to understand that life presents challenges, and to respond by supporting and encouraging others to keep working toward those goals.

I'm really good at: Being lucky. I win a lot of raffle drawings and prizes. I'm still waiting to hit that big lottery jackpot though!

Hobbies: I love to spend time outside in nature – whether it's on the lake, at the beach, or just sitting on the patio soaking up sunshine.

Final note: UT Southwestern is ripe with opportunities for growth. You just have to seek them out, apply yourself, and be open to branching out in various directions. If you find your passion, the years will fly by.



Luther Brown

Business Analyst/Architect Lead
Information Resources Health Technical Services





Sharbraun Chatman

Materials Operations Coordinator
Materials Management Operations

First UTSW job: Gas Cylinder Technician.

Best part about my job: The chance to develop and grow, interacting with people, and having weekends off, as well as watching how UT Southwestern has progressed over the past several years.

How co-workers describe me: A hard worker and consistent.

Recipe for success: An outgoing personality and attention to detail.

Unusual UTSW memory: At an employee engagement event, a co-worker and I played spades against my manager and supervisor – and beat them convincingly.

I'm really good at: Listening to people's problems and sharing my advice.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Chemistry. That would allow me to help find cures or solutions for future diseases and viruses like COVID-19.

Hobby: Restoring cars.

Surprising fact: That I can cook.

Claim to fame: I've received Blue and Silver PACT recognition for the level of service I've provided, and I'm just a few cards away from Gold status.



Constance R. Crow, LVN

Clinic Nurse
Spine Clinic

First UTSW job: Medical Office Assistant, Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery.

Best part about my job: Assisting with patient education and helping connect the missing pieces between provider and patient.

How co-workers describe me: Compassionate and dedicated; loving and nurturing; passionate.

Recipe for success: Tenacity. I enjoy a project or assignment with deadlines – and seeing out the process or accomplishing the task.

Funny UTSW memory: I once tried to take a patient's blood pressure using an arm that turned out to be an extremely realistic prosthetic. I should've known something was up when his wife kept shaking her head. It was my first time seeing a prosthetic with this level of detail and functional use, and the patient was very proud of it.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Being a nurse instructor or educator for new nurses.

Hobbies: Travel – anything by a beach and water will get me excited. The same goes for most genres of music, especially if it's on vinyl. Other passions are reading, crocheting, and my newest love: being a grandmother affectionately called "Sugar."

Surprising fact: Before I decided to become a nurse, I wanted to either own and operate a day care center or to be a schoolteacher.



William Culbertson

Senior Financial Analyst
Department Administration
Department of Molecular Biology



Cindi Donahue

Manager, Information Resources
Health System Information Resources (HSIR)
Revenue Cycle and Business Systems

First UTSW job: Working in managed care collections for Medical Service, Research, and Development Plan.

Best parts about my job: My role supporting Epic applications allows me to use what I've learned in other billing-related departments, so I can bridge the gap between Information Resources technology and operational needs.

What energizes me at work: Providing support to the HSIR Epic Revenue Cycle team. It's a great feeling of accomplishment and pride when I'm able to deliver that to them and our customers.

How co-workers describe me: Fun, personable, a people person, easy to work with, willing to help, relatable, honest, transparent, and authentic.

Recipe for success: I'm a person with integrity who can make anything enjoyable – even meetings. Also, in managing staff for 17 years, I am very loyal and supportive to my team.

Best UTSW memory: Getting to work at the same place with my mom, Joyce Lawson. When I started, my cubicle was within earshot of her office, and she was not a quiet talker – so I'm sure the whole office got an earful of our personal business.

Passion: I'm a die-hard Kansas City Chiefs fan and travel to a home game every year.

Final note: I was commuting from Corsicana, Texas, when I started in 1996, and nobody had heard of where I worked. But now, *everyone* knows UT Southwestern, and I'm very proud to have worked here for 25 years.



Annette Forbes

Registered Nurse
8 Blue/Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU)

Best part about my job: Every day it's something different. I like working with others and enjoy multitasking.

What energizes me at work: The energy of the unit. Working in a medical environment can be crazy at times.

How co-workers describe me: Funny and fair. I treat everyone equally, and I'm very honest.

Recipe for success: I'm very easygoing. I work hard and always try to stay positive.

Best UTSW memory: The room numbers in our unit have been changed and, after three years, I still go to the wrong rooms.

I'm really good at: Giving advice.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Communicating with all types of families, especially challenging ones.

Hobbies: Brunches, shopping, and bowling.

Surprising facts: I was born in Jamaica. One year, I took a Greyhound bus from Toronto to Florida.

Claim to fame: Working in the ICU for 15 years.

Final note: I'm a very good friend.



Elizabeth Foster

Health Unit Coordinator
Post-Anesthesia Care Unit
William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital

First UTSW job: Patient Care Technician.

Best part about my job: Serving people.

What energizes me at work: I like to think of myself as self-motivated, although some of my co-workers have become family to me.

How co-workers describe me: Sweet but firm.

Recipe for success: Being a people person, and understanding that everyone has good days and bad days.

Best UTSW memory: The family member of a patient asked to take my picture after I kept her grandmother calm.

I'm really good at: Listening.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Problem-solving.

Passion: My family.

Surprising fact: My favorite sport is baseball.





Margarita Garcia

Leave Administration Representative
Human Resources

First UTSW job: Benefits Specialist.

Best part about my job: Helping employees understand all of the leave options available to them.

What energizes me at work: I'm motivated by knowing something I did helped relieve someone's stress.

How co-workers describe me: Compassionate and comical. The former because it's so important to help others every day, and the latter because being able to laugh at some situations helps maintain some sense of sanity.

Recipe for success: Adaptability. Life is full of constant change, so you have to be able to change as well.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Cooking. I've been trying a lot of new recipes lately, so I find myself inspired.

Surprising fact: I've gone skydiving before, and I would love to do it again.



William Blair Halbert

Senior Information Resources Manager
Infrastructure Services

First UTSW job: Network Analyst.

Best part about my job: It's never boring – ever.

What energizes me at work: Besides good coffee? Getting a few minutes to talk to my staff or other personnel about nonwork things. I've been here long enough that it's a community.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Either playing music or writing; probably writing. I enjoy fiction so much that I would enjoy studying history or places and weaving that into a story, as my favorite authors do.

Surprising fact: I've finished the Hotter'N Hell Hundred bicycle ride in Wichita Falls, Texas, 10 times.

Passions: Barbecue and cycling, though those are more pursuits.

Claim to fame: Scuba diving on a vertical reef of the Atlantic ridge. I only went down 180 feet, but it was actually over 2,000 feet deep.



Jennifer Gares, M.S.N., APRN, ACNP-BC

Acute Care Nurse Practitioner
Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery

First UTSW job: Telemetry nurse at the former St. Paul University Hospital.

Best part about my job: Working with such an amazing team, and seeing the impact we have on our patients every day.

How co-workers describe me: Dedicated, caring, genuine, and dependable. Someone who truly cares about patients and their well-being.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Cooking meals for large groups. Now that takes a lot of talent!

Passion: Spending time making memories with friends and family.

Final note: My years of service have gone by quickly! I've had the pleasure of meeting so many people throughout my career at UT Southwestern. I've made a number of lifelong friends here, and I can't wait to make even more.



Laura Henry

Program Coordinator
Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine
Department of Internal Medicine

First UTSW job: Customer Service Representative in Shipping and Receiving.

Best part about my job: Solving problems and helping others.

What energizes me at work: Helping people, as well as learning new systems and procedures and then sharing that knowledge.

How co-workers describe me: Professional, knowledgeable, dependable, and helpful.

Recipe for success: The ability to adapt to and overcome adverse situations.

Best UTSW memory: The year we had the Neuroscience holiday party at the zoo. It had lots of dancing, laughter, and fun with a great group of faculty, postdocs, students, and staff.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Veterinary medicine. It would allow me to help a local rescue group.

I'm really good at: Listening and providing encouragement. I believe the smallest act of kindness can make a difference.

Hobbies: Supporting animal rescues, gardening, reading, watching movies, and knitting scarves and hats.

Surprising fact: I enjoy silly jokes and puns, and I love to dance. I am a member of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Fleet Reserve Association.



Rosie Garza, RMA

Administrative Assistant
Women's Resource Center
William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital

First UTSW job: Receptionist at the Mobile Mammography Unit at the former St. Paul University Hospital.

Best part about my job: I feel valued by my manager for the work I do and respected by my peers.

What energizes me at work: The positive interactions I have with my peers and patients.

How co-workers describe me: Always happy and cheerful throughout the day and the party planner for our unit.

Recipe for success: Self-discipline: forcing myself to keep at it and never letting distraction overtake me.

Best UTSW memory: Receiving a Diana and Richard C. Strauss Service Excellence Award in 2007 and having co-workers and family there to celebrate this special event.

I'm really good at: Baking. I enjoy making cakes for my family and friends.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Meditation. Nothing beats a clear mind.

Hobbies: Spending time at family cookouts, singing, and dancing.

Surprising fact: I have four grandchildren.

Final note: I intend to stay with UT Southwestern until I retire, God willing.



Louis Henry

Clinical Data Specialist
Infectious Diseases
Community Prevention and Intervention Unit
Department of Internal Medicine





William Jefferson

Senior Information Research Manager
Information Resources Health
Centralized Telecommunications Services (CTCS)



Daphne Lewis

Revenue Integrity Educator III
Medical Group Revenue Cycle

First UTSW job: Claims Analyst.

What energizes me at work: The chance to learn something new daily.

How co-workers describe me: Talkative and funny.

Recipe for success: Curiosity never actually killed the cat. I want to know what's going on, and I want to help.

Best UTSW memory: The baby shower that colleagues in Neurosurgery gave me. This was nine years after my last child, so I needed everything! My co-workers were the best.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Spelling.

Hobby: Bowling. I grew up a military brat, so I've bowled in alleys from Adana, Turkey, to Wichita Falls, Texas.

Surprising fact: I love history. In my next life, I'd like to be a college professor teaching American history.

Claim to fame: I met Rick James at a Superfest concert in 1986.

Final note: I've worked in six positions across four departments at UT Southwestern. When I started, I could see downtown from my office on the 13th floor of the Paul M. Bass Administrative and Clinical Center. More recently, I got to watch the new Parkland Memorial Hospital campus take shape. It has been a wonderful and fulfilling journey, and I know the best is yet to come.



Kristin Martin-Cook, M.S.

Clinical Practice Manager
Department of Psychiatry

First UTSW job: Research Assistant.

Best part about my job: Working together as part of a team to help patients get the care they need. Although I miss working with patients directly, I appreciate being involved with the operation of the Psychiatry Service that offers compassionate care to so many.

What energizes me at work: Pulling the team together to find solutions to problems that impact patients and clinicians.

How co-workers describe me: Committed, passionate, and persevering.

Recipe for success: Resilience – being able to stare down a difficult situation or challenge, learn from it, and work to find solutions to overcome it.

I'm really good at: Problem-solving.

Passion: Spending time with my sons, doing just about anything, is how I most like to spend my time.

Final note: I've been involved in all three UT Southwestern missions: I attended graduate school here, worked in research for more than half of my career, and am now involved in patient care. I am so thankful for the time I've spent here, and for the many experiences and people who have made a huge impact on my life, both professionally and personally.



Taryn Mayes, M.S.

Program Manager
Center for Depression Research and Clinical Care
Department of Psychiatry

First UTSW job: Research Assistant.

Best part about my job: The opportunity to work with many incredible people, including two brilliant and dedicated investigators, Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics Graham Emslie, M.D., and Professor of Psychiatry Madhukar Trivedi, M.D. They sometimes drive me crazy, but they've both had faith in me and let me tag along on this wonderful adventure!

What energizes me at work: Fresh ideas! I love it when someone comes to me to suggest ways we can improve something.

How co-workers describe me: Passionate, purposeful, and an advocate for my team.

Recipe for success: Loyalty and dedication to patients, co-workers, faculty, and UT Southwestern. We all have the same goal of making people's lives better, and that's an exciting, important endeavor.

I'm really good at: Writing research grants and manuscripts. I started out coordinating clinical trials but quickly discovered my co-workers were much better at that than I was. However, they didn't like analyzing data or writing – and voila, my career took shape.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Living in Costa Rica. That would make it much easier to acclimate when I retire there!

Hobbies: Traveling with my family and doing jigsaw puzzles.



Dr. Emslie holds the Charles E. and Sarah M. Seay Chair in Child Psychiatry.

Dr. Trivedi holds the Betty Jo Hay Distinguished Chair in Mental Health, and the Julie K. Hersh Chair for Depression Research and Clinical Care.

Yvonne Gloria-McCutchen

Oncology Clinical Data Specialist
Clinical Research Office, Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center

First job at UTSW: Administrative Assistant, Department of Physiology.

Best part about my job: The contact I have with patients.

What energizes me at work: Knowing I can help my co-workers. I really enjoy that aspect of the job.

How co-workers describe me: Warm, chatty, and funny.

Recipe for success: Being straightforward – what you see is what you get.

Best UTSW memory: In 2013, when I received a call from my manager to interview for my current position, and was ultimately hired.

I'm really good at: Getting the job done.

Hobbies: Taking walks and birdwatching.

Surprising fact: I don't like attention.

"I've been involved in all three UT Southwestern missions: I attended graduate school here, worked in research for more than half of my career, and am now involved in patient care. I am so thankful for the time I've spent here, and for the many experiences and people who have made a huge impact on my life, both professionally and personally."

– Kristin Martin-Cook, M.S., Clinical Practice Manager



Vealisha “Lisa” Miller

Compliance Analyst III
Office of Institutional Compliance

First UTSW job: Administrative Assistant to Warren Weinberg, M.D., a pediatric neurologist renowned for his work in childhood depression, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and learning disabilities.

Best part about my job: The collaboration: Everyone shares the same vision and is dedicated to the mission.

What energizes me at work: My cup of coffee.

How co-workers describe me: Dependable and straightforward.

Recipe for success: Loyalty and dedication; also, building lasting relationships along the way.

Funny UTSW memory: I’m frightened of cats, and one morning, I walked into my office to find a big picture of one posted on my file cabinet. I turned around to hear my manager outside whispering, “Here, kitty, kitty.”

I’m really good at: Managing finances.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Technology – the struggle is real.

Claim to fame: “Nana” and spoiling my two grandsons, Devin and Deon.

Surprising fact: I am very much a homebody, and I love small-town country living.



Carmencita Laset Ordu

Logistics Manager
Laboratory Courier Services

First UTSW job: Administrative Assistant in the Prosthetics and Orthotics Department of what is now the School of Health Professions – loved working with the students!

Best part about my job: Our team coming together to serve a common good (having to learn that at times you agree to disagree); and so proud of them for rising to the occasion as we had to grow quickly and stand strong during the COVID-19 pandemic as we transported patient specimen volumes, testing above what we ever expected. The work relationships that have formed into friendships over the years are priceless. (Getting teary-eyed.)

How co-workers describe me: Committed, caring, gracious, and reliable; invested in bringing out the best in others.

Recipe for success: My strong belief and faith in God, which has equipped me to endure various challenges, learn lessons, and gain wisdom.

Best UTSW memories: Probably the seven or eight years we operated as Veripath Labs off campus at Harry Hines Boulevard and Research Row. We had some of the most memorable employee engagement functions there: barbecues in the parking lot, outdoor sack races, and even a talent show.

I’m really good at: Listening and encouraging.

Passions: Ministry work, including educating and mentoring youths. International travel; planning an upcoming trip to Greece and hopefully even more extensive travel with my beau.

Surprising fact: I’m a murder mystery enthusiast.

Claim to fame: I’m so proud of the children we’ve raised, all of whom have college degrees. The oldest, our son, is an attorney; the first daughter is an education program consultant; and the youngest daughter is a fashion merchandising stylist. They’re passionate about their career choices and are loving, caring believers in Christ who know that through Him, all things are possible. They’re truly a blessing to me.



Shirley Mitchell

Accountant III
Division of Endocrinology
Department of Internal Medicine

Best part about my job: I love the accounting work, but I like the people I work with the best.

What energizes me at work: The people. In the group I work with, we have a great relationship – it’s like an extended family.

How co-workers describe me: Always willing to help out.

Recipe for success: I always try to be kind and helpful to everyone. I don’t always succeed, but I do try.

I’m really good at: Baking and making candy.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Crocheting. I’m a novice, but I wish I could just sit down and whip out an afghan in no time.

Claim to fame: I was in the 1985 Super Bowl halftime show, “World of Children’s Dreams.” I’ll never forget that experience.

Hobbies: I like to do arts and crafts, and my husband and I enjoy watching our grandkids’ sports events.

Final note: I have enjoyed my time at UT Southwestern and all of the individuals I have worked with. I treasure the lifelong friends I’ve made here.



Tianna Petersen, M.S.

Manager of Clinical Research
Division of Infectious Diseases and Geographic Medicine
Department of Internal Medicine

First UTSW job: Clinical Technologist II.

Best part of my job: The people I’ve met over the years and still stay in touch with.

What energizes me at work: Interacting with co-workers. I feel like this is my second home.

How co-workers describe me: Always willing to help, hard-working, dedicated, energetic, and knowledgeable with a positive attitude.

Recipe for success: Dedication and the drive to achieve.

I’m really good at: Organization and remembering numbers for anything.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Cooking. I don’t like to cook, and whenever I do, the food comes out very bland.

Passions: Crocheting, working out, and reading. I enjoy volunteering at the East Lake Pet Orphanage’s cat shelter, and I have three cats of my own.

Surprising fact: I was part of a team studying the effects of microgravity on the brains and nervous systems of astronauts in 1998. The STS-90 mission crew included two former UTSW faculty members: Jay C. Buckley Jr., M.D., and James A. Pawelczyk, Ph.D.

Final note: I’ve spent 21 of my 25 years here with Infectious Diseases, starting as a Clinical Research Coordinator for studies with HIV-positive patients. Since then, I’ve worked on hepatitis B, hepatitis C, influenza, and now COVID-19 trials.



Isaac Nelson

Materials Management Liaison
Supply Chain

Best part about my job: Making people smile.

What energizes me at work: Seeing the faces of nurses when I fix a problem in supplies.

How co-workers describe me: Dedicated, because I do my best at whatever I am doing.

Recipe for success: A great attitude, because your attitude determines altitude.

I’m really good at: Weather – I know a lot in regards to severe weather.

Best UTSW memory: Finding out I was hired.

Hobbies: Cooking and traveling.

Surprising fact: I am a great cook.



Will Rutherford

Radiologic Technologist II
Imaging Services

First UTSW job: Radiologic Technologist at the former St. Paul University Hospital.

Best part about my job: My co-workers and the patients.

How co-workers describe me: Hardworking and always here.

Recipe for success: Patience is the most important trait – not only in interacting with patients, but in ensuring they can be involved when we perform a procedure.

Claim to fame: I met Pope John Paul II during his visit to San Antonio in 1997.

Hobbies: My wife and I love immersing ourselves in Renaissance fairs. In fact, we’re longtime Friends of the Faire (season pass holders) at the one close to home, the Scarborough Renaissance Festival in Waxahachie, Texas.



Linda Sam

Senior Administrative Assistant
Support Services Administration



Lesly Sherman, RDMS

Sonographer
Fertility and Advanced Reproductive Medicine Clinic
Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology

First UTSW job: Sonographer, Maternal-Fetal Medicine.

Best part about my job: I like having the opportunity to teach and to share knowledge in my new position.

How co-workers describe me: Hardworking and fun.

Unusual UTSW memory: Dancing at the Faculty Club with co-workers during a Christmas party.

I'm really good at: Riding and training thoroughbred horses; cooking.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Welding, so I could create sculptures.

Surprising fact: I was a rodeo queen.



Tina L. Sigler

Coding Specialist III
Health Information Management
Coding and Clinical Documentation Integrity

Best part of my job: I like the support from my Oncology team and leadership. I also like discussing coding topics and searching out the answers with the help of management and co-workers. Coding is not all black and white; sometimes research is the answer.

How co-workers describe me: The one I asked said driven and funny, and I'm good with that!

Recipe for success: Tenacity and perseverance. I'm the kind of person who pulls myself up by my bootstraps. If it needs to be done, then it just needs to be done.

Surprising fact: I love to travel, usually with friends. I've been to Italy twice, as well as to Bulgaria, Romania, France, Monaco, and Mexico. It's about time for another trip!

I'm really good at: Loving my grandkids, and I just keep getting better at it!

Passions: I love to watch the Investigation Discovery channel, as well as movies that have twists. My faith is also a big part of my life.

Final note: I have enjoyed all my years of service with the UT System. I have gained knowledge, friends, and a secure future for myself.



Doreen Simonsen

Regulatory Specialist
Department of Urology

First UTSW job: Grants and Contract Specialist.

Best part about my job: No two studies are the same, so no two days are ever the same. And every time I work on a study, I learn something about urology.

What energizes me at work: Seeing a study opened to enrollment where patients can get treated for their condition in ways that may not be available otherwise.

How co-workers describe me: Focused and determined.

Recipe for success: I strive to do a good job.

Best UTSW memory: When I started, National Institutes of Health grants were done on paper, and we had to send in 25 copies. There were several occasions when a group of us were still here at 2 a.m. combining packets and mailing them via FedEx same-day delivery.

I'm really good at: Solving problems.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Playing a musical instrument.

Hobbies: I love to do crafty things. I will try nearly anything DIY. Power tools can be fun to work with!

Surprising fact: I have run one marathon, more than a dozen half-marathons, and I am currently training to complete a half Ironman triathlon in the fall.



Wanda Simpson

Administrative Coordinator
Center for the Genetics of Host Defense

First UTSW job: Administrative Assistant, Department of Molecular Biology.

Claim to fame: Being voted to the inaugural Employee Advisory Council. Keeping calm in stressful situations with a positive attitude.

Best part of my job: Helping others and working with a great group of people.

Recipe for success: Being hardworking, trustworthy, and approachable.

What energizes me at work: Working to meet a deadline and putting a smile on someone's face.

How co-workers describe me: Reliable and a team player with a cheerful spirit.

Best UTSW memory: Meeting Chuck Norris while he was filming "Walker, Texas Ranger" in the Simmons Biomedical Research Building. My mom was a huge fan, and he was happy to take a photo with me.

Surprising fact: I played the clarinet for 12 years.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Cooking and troubleshooting computer issues.



Calvin Smith

Building Services Coordinator
Facilities Management

First UTSW job: Plumber II.

Best part of my job: Knowing that what I do helps ensure the safety of our employees and patients.

What energizes me at work: Our team – and knowing that my job is a part of UT Southwestern's future, mission, and goals.

How co-workers describe me: A hard worker, a team player, and dependable.

Recipe for success: Taking pride in my work and doing my very best. Going that extra mile to help anyone I can.

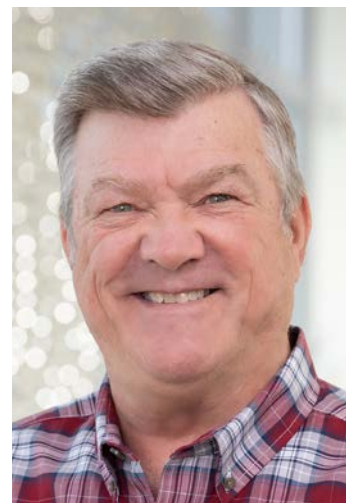
Best UTSW memory: Department events with my co-workers. We used to get together and have fish fries.

I'm really good at: Problem-solving and being able to think outside the box. My family believes I can do just about anything, even when I know the task isn't possible.

Hobbies: Watching my three grandchildren, Preston, 15, Hudson, 6, and Bailey, 5, grow and enjoy life. That, and living on the lake; I love to fish, hunt, and work in my woodshop.

Surprising fact: I like to go to Canton's First Monday Trade Days and antique shops.

Final note: COVID-19 brought a lot of stress and increased responsibilities as we worked to ensure employees and patients felt safe at our facilities. Our team worked together to make that safe place.





Linda Smith

Accountant II
Facilities Finance, General Services Department

First UTSW job: Senior Administrative Assistant in Cell Biology.

Best part of my job: As an Accountant II in Facilities Management, I get to see firsthand the future of UT Southwestern and its vision for expansion.

What energizes me at work: My team and knowing that I am part of a bigger picture at UTSW and its mission to continue to provide excellent care to our patients. The last two years have been a challenge for everyone, but our team has constantly provided support and encouragement to each other.

How co-workers describe me: Friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable. I have become the go-to person for assistance with requisitions.

Recipe for success: I always try to do everything I can to help not only my co-workers, but others on campus as well.

Best UTSW memory: Participating in the annual Halloween parade for the day care at UTSW and the annual holiday decorating contest.

I'm really good at: Problem-solving. I love to dive into a situation and unravel the issue. I'm unable to walk away from a problem without having a solution.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Gardening and playing the piano.

Passion: Spending time with my family, especially my three grandchildren, Preston, 15, Hudson, 6, and Bailey, 5.

Surprising fact: Although I'm a native Texan, I don't like sweet tea.

Final note: I take great pride in celebrating 25 years with the UT System. Working at both UT Arlington and UT Southwestern has brought me great pleasure. I have worked with some amazing individuals and learned a great deal about the research and medical fields.



Kendra Taylor

Diagnostic Scheduling Supervisor
Patient Financial Services

First UTSW job: File Clerk.

Best part of my job: My love for employee training and professional development would be considered one of my strongest attributes. My desire for training is driven by the team's eagerness to learn and their adaptability to the various workflows encountered within the Radiology divisions.

What energizes me at work: My continued excitement about new projects and change management.

How co-workers describe me: Selfless, and always concerned about the well-being of others, which brings joy to my heart.

Recipe for success: My willingness to learn and help others.

I'm really good at: Brainstorming and problem-solving.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Public speaking. I'd love to share my story with others to help encourage them to achieve great things.

Hobbies: Traveling, especially taking cruises.

Surprising fact: I love to cook.

Final note: I've had the pleasure of meeting so many great people here at UT Southwestern who have helped me grow within our organization, and I'm so thankful for the opportunity. Now, I'm able to share this knowledge with my current staff.



Steve Stippec

Research Scientist
Department of Pharmacology

First UTSW job: Research Technician II.

What energizes me at work: I love solving problems and helping people. My work here lets me do both.

How co-workers describe me: Calm and relaxed.

Recipe for success: I'm always willing to take on new projects and help others in the lab.

Unusual UTSW memory: Early on, I was tasked with purifying native protein phosphatase 2 from 22 pounds of fresh cow heart tissue. I was terrified I would fail. It took a month of planning and prep, followed by four 16-hour days of work. It gave me the confidence to learn and try new techniques.

Passions: Writing and recording songs. It could be considered experimental music: I make something new by combining established methods with those I create. If it works, I celebrate; if it fails, I troubleshoot and try again. In some ways, it's a lot like research.

Surprising facts: I'm a foster parent and avid wakesurfer.

Final note: Before I came to UT Southwestern, I worked at a clinical lab, calling doctors' offices to report abnormal test results. This job has allowed me to do so many things I never would have been able to do if Melanie Cobb, Ph.D., had not hired me and given me the chance to escape that cubicle in 1996.



Sharmain Taylor

Research Technician II
Hamon Center for Therapeutic Oncology Research

First UTSW job: Building Attendant.

Best part about my job: I feel comfortable where I work.

What energizes me at work: Listening to music and walking around the campus every day.

How co-workers describe me: Friendly and extroverted.

Recipe for success: Being a hard worker, people person, and good multitasker.

Best UTSW memory: Assisting an older patient who could barely walk and was lost in the building. I found him a chair with wheels and got him where he needed to go.

I'm really good at: Making and selling tamales.

Claim to fame: I've met Sammy Hagar and sang on stage with AC/DC.

Hobbies: Riding my bike and taking walks.



Brenda Timmons, Ph.D., M.B.A.

Department Administrator
Hamon Center for Therapeutic Oncology Research

First UTSW job: Postdoctoral fellow in Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Best thing about my job: When I can make someone's day better and/or their job easier. I like to help our Center's faculty and lab staff concentrate on their science by making sure they don't have to worry about administrative issues.

Claim to fame: I can make really good carrot cake. (The people in my Center are nodding right now as they read this.)

Surprising fact: I have a Ph.D. in microbiology and spent decades as a scientist before moving into administration.

What energizes me at work: Being around others who have a strong work ethic and great sense of humor.

Passion: I love to cook. I'm also a sports nut. Most of my teams have given me a lot of grief the past decade or two, but I'm still a fanatic.

Recipe for success: Tenacity. I have had a long, crazy road to get to where I am now. Many times I wanted to give up and go somewhere else. My tenacity kept me moving forward until I could finally catch a break.



Anny Su

Accounting Supervisor
Department of Ophthalmology

First UTSW job: Accountant II.

Best part about my job: The variety of tasks and people I work with. There's always a new puzzle to solve every day.

How co-workers describe me: Conscientious, dependable, reliable. A go-to person when there are operations-related questions to be answered or problems to be resolved.

Best UTSW memory: There are far too many to count! I've worked with so many wonderful and different people over the years of my UT Southwestern career.

Surprising facts: I am an artist, and I play the piano – and sometimes, the accordion – and I enjoy music composition.

Hobbies: Art, music, and hiking in the mountains.



Dr. Cobb, Professor of Pharmacology, holds the Jane and Bill Browning, Jr. Chair in Medical Science.



Danielle Upton

Clinical Department Administrator
Department of Plastic Surgery

First UTSW job: Budget Analyst in the Budget Department.

Best part about my job: I like the people I work with, both in my Department and throughout UTSW. They help me find my passion in what I do every day, and I am thankful for each person I'm able to interact with on a daily basis.

How co-workers describe me: Bubbly, focused, compassionate, innovative, illustrative, fair, and fun.

What energizes me at work: The people; they fuel my creativity.

I'm really good at: I am a good cook and good at crafts.

Recipe for success: A calm demeanor and a willingness to listen.

Hobbies and passions: My husband, Joe, and daughter, Elizabeth. Singing with the praise team and choir at Hunters Glen Baptist Church, needlework, crocheting, bookbinding, quilting, jewelry making, and cooking.

Final note: UT Southwestern has truly been a wonderful place for me to grow and work. I am grateful for these 25 years and look forward to the future here.



Felisha Williams, CCS, CPC

Coding Specialist II
Health Information Management Coding
and Clinical Documentation Integrity

First UTSW job: PRN Coding Specialist II.

Best part about my job: Being part of a great team, the "Surgical High-Risers." We collaborate well and work together to ensure all outpatient medical coding is compliant and the team's goals are met.

What energizes me at work: Encountering tough challenges and not just getting through them, but also conquering them.

How co-workers describe me: Happy and easygoing.

Recipe for success: Integrity and surrounding myself with co-workers and friends who share the same qualities and values.

I'm really good at: Treating everyone the way I want to be treated.

I wish I were an instant expert at: Landscaping. I love watching my roses grow.

Passion: Doing volunteer work at my church, walking, shopping, and planning parties and get-togethers.

Surprising fact: I serve as President of the Usher Board at my church.

Claim to fame: A willingness to help others whenever I can.



Yolanda Washington

Lab Technician
Department of Pathology

Recipe for success: I am a passionate person. I always like to let people know they can become whatever they desire in the world and be the greatest at it.

Passions: I am an author, designer, speaker, and community leader.

Surprising fact: That I am a motivational speaker for youth and college students.

"I like the people I work with, both in my Department and throughout UTSW. They help me find my passion in what I do every day."

– Danielle Upton, Clinical Department Administrator

Emergency Medicine pioneer Broders honored with endowed chair

By Andrew Marton

For 40 years, the name Compton Broders, M.D., has loomed large at UT Southwestern. Many consider him the founding father of the institution's Emergency Medicine program. But it's his lesser-known, behind-the-scenes achievements that have often had the biggest impact on those lucky enough to witness them.

Take his actions during Dallas' 2014 outbreak of Ebola. As patients avoided Dallas emergency departments out of concern for possible infection, hospital administrators were forced to reduce physician staffing. Through his independent firm, Emergency Medicine Consultants, Dr. Broders made sure the affected doctors were paid.

"He took it upon himself to see that emergency clinicians wouldn't lose their jobs or have to worry about short-term bills," said Irene Chavira, who worked with Dr. Broders and is Director of Recruiting for TeamHealth, a national physician staffing firm. She has known Dr. Broders for more than 30 years and described her former boss as "one of the most generous people I've ever had the privilege of working with."

Dr. Broders, a former Clinical Professor of Emergency Medicine at UT Southwestern, and his reputation have become inextricably linked



Compton Broders, M.D.

with one of Texas' most successful emergency medicine programs. Now retired, he's received another tribute. More than 80 friends and colleagues have donated nearly \$600,000 to establish the A. Compton Broders III, M.D. Chair in Emergency Medicine. The funds will be invested as an endowment held in perpetuity, and the Chair's proceeds will benefit faculty members

who will hold the endowment and support educational, clinical, and research endeavors in the spirit of Dr. Broder's legacy and the mission of the Department of Emergency Medicine for many years to come.

A long road

Fresh out of Duke University School of Medicine in 1974, Dr. Broders arrived in Dallas to pursue an internal medicine residency at

Parkland Memorial Hospital. After completing the program, he joined UT Southwestern's faculty in 1980, also serving as a community emergency medicine physician at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas.

Looking back, he remembered the early days of emergency medicine. Then, California schools trained about 200 emergency physicians a year. Texas trained eight. "To get a program going at UT Southwestern was a long road," he said.

UT Southwestern launched its Emergency Medicine Residency Program in 1996 at Parkland, the Medical Center's primary teaching facility. The first dozen residents completed training in 2000. This year, 26 trainees have been accepted to the program, considered one of the largest in the country.

An example of generosity

In mentoring residents, Dr. Broders taught by example. For Larissa Velez, M.D., his greatest lessons were about humility.

"Any day in the emergency room, you can be thrown a real curveball," said Dr. Velez, who is Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education, Vice Chair for Education in the Department of Emergency Medicine, and Professor of Emergency Medicine. "Dr. Broders often admitted that even the most experienced emergency

room physicians could be presented with something that would humble them."

She recalled how he always made sure residents had what they needed, often covering conference travel costs or buying medical texts.

"I would call him telling him that we wanted this or that, but we didn't have the money," said Dr. Velez, also a Distinguished Teaching Professor. "And his immediate response was, 'How much do we need?'"

An endowed chair underscores how far emergency medicine training and patient care progressed during Dr. Broders' tenure.

"Dr. Broders is the mentor who all of us want to be," said Kurt Kleinschmidt, M.D., Professor of Emergency Medicine. "And that impact spreads everywhere, as graduates from our training program assume leadership positions across the state and country."

Donations to the A. Compton Broders III, M.D. Chair in Emergency Medicine may be made by contacting the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at 214-648-2344 or visiting engage.utsouthwestern.edu.

Dr. Velez holds the Michael P. Wainscott, M.D. Professorship in Emergency Medicine.

Former postdoctoral immunologist receives Brown-Goldstein Award

By Christen Brownlee

Virtually all life on Earth follows cycles tied to sunrise and sunset that allow organisms to anticipate and prepare for environmental changes. Disrupting these circadian rhythms can have serious health consequences; for example, chronic sleep disruption is related to intestinal infection in humans. But why this occurs has been unclear.

Work over the last five years led by John Brooks II, Ph.D., a former postdoctoral fellow in the lab of Lora Hooper, Ph.D., suggests that the answer at least partly lies in a unique collaboration between the human innate immune system and the gut microbiome. This research recently earned Dr. Brooks the Brown-Goldstein Award for Excellence in Postdoctoral Research, given by the UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences to honor the contributions of Nobel Laureates Michael Brown, M.D., and Joseph Goldstein, M.D., to training future scientists.

Accompanied by a \$4,000 prize and an opportunity to present a University Lecture, the award represents the highest recognition the Graduate School bestows on postdoctoral trainees.

"I am extremely proud of John for receiving this well-deserved recognition," said Dr. Hooper. "John is an absolutely stellar scientist – creative, persistent, and completely fearless. He has opened up a fascinating new window on how the microbiome and the circadian clock come together to regulate immunity. I was lucky to recruit him as a postdoc to my lab, and I'm sure he will do great things as a faculty member at Princeton University."

Dr. Brooks, today an Assistant Professor of Molecular Biology at

Princeton, got his start in microbial research as an undergrad at the University of Michigan. He always had a strong interest in science. With science camps and fairs a family affair, his parents encouraged him to apply to the University of Michigan's Health Sciences Scholars Program, a pre-professional learning community that introduces freshmen to key issues and the breadth of careers in the health care field by bringing together students and faculty from a broad range of backgrounds.

Originally intending to pursue medical school, Dr. Brooks began working in the University of Michigan lab of Janine Maddock, Ph.D., to gain some research experience. There, he not only made contributions to understanding how bacteria localize specific proteins within their cells, but also discovered a love of research that overtook his original desire to study medicine.

After earning a Bachelor of Science degree, Dr. Brooks began graduate school at Northwestern University. Working in the lab of Mark Mandel, Ph.D., he used the bacterial genetics techniques he'd learned at the University of Michigan to study the relationship between the Hawaiian bobtail squid and *Vibrio fischeri*, a bioluminescent bacterium that uniquely colonizes the squid's light-producing organ within hours of hatching despite competition from thousands of other bacterial species in its environment.

Following five years in the Mandel lab, Dr. Brooks searched for a postdoctoral mentor who could help him combine his knowledge of bacterial genetics with a growing curiosity about how resident microbes affect their hosts. He found the perfect match in Dr. Hooper, Chair of Immunology, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) Investigator, and a Professor of Microbiology



John Brooks II, Ph.D.

with an additional appointment in the Center for the Genetics of Host Defense.

"Lora provided the space and guidance necessary for me to grow and become successful," he said. "She had this incredible ability to pair my skill sets with an interesting question, so I could really soar."

After encouraging Dr. Brooks to apply for the HHMI's Hanna H. Gray Fellows Program, which he received the year after he started working in Dr. Hooper's lab, the pair sought to understand the role of gut microbes in innate immunity. Working in mouse models, the researchers suspected that antibacterial immunity might change

in the intestines on a circadian cycle. To investigate, the researchers looked for rhythms in the genetic activation of natural antimicrobial agents produced in the gut of mice to fight foodborne illness.

They found that an antimicrobial molecule in the intestines called REG3G cycled from being more abundant at night – when mice are awake and active – to less abundant during the day – when they're asleep. Further study tied this cycling to segmented filamentous bacteria – microbes typically present in the intestines of rodents and primates – that have an ability to attach to the intestinal lining and change their

hosts' gene activity. When these bacteria latched onto intestinal cells, REG3G production ramped up.

This cycling had significant consequences for the ability of mice to fight off infection. When the researchers infected mice with disease-causing bacteria, the animals had higher bacterial numbers and rates of death when exposed at sunset vs. sunrise. Mice unable to make antimicrobial proteins, including REG3G, had similarly high rates of bacterial burden and death regardless of when they were infected.

If research shows this phenomenon also occurs in humans, Dr. Brooks said, scientists may eventually be able to capitalize on it by either timing the administration of synthetic antibiotics for intestinal infections and oral vaccines, or by finding new ways to avoid intestinal infections altogether. At Princeton, Dr. Brooks continues to study how microbes impact innate immunity in the gut.

"Understanding the interactions between our resident bacteria and host immunity," he said, "could have untold consequences for human health."

Dr. Brown, a Regental Professor, holds The W.A. (Monty) Moncrief Distinguished Chair in Cholesterol and Arteriosclerosis Research, and the Paul J. Thomas Chair in Medicine.

Dr. Goldstein, a Regental Professor, holds the Julie and Louis A. Beecherl, Jr. Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Research, and the Paul J. Thomas Chair in Medicine.

Dr. Hooper holds the Jonathan W. Uhr, M.D. Distinguished Chair in Immunology and is a Nancy Cain and Jeffrey A. Marcus Scholar in Medical Research, in Honor of Dr. Bill S. Vowell.

NAS Continued from page 1

Dr. Cohen joined UT Southwestern as a postdoctoral fellow in 1989 and worked first with Scott Grundy, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Internal Medicine in the Center for Human Nutrition, where his research focused on lipid metabolism in humans. Realizing that he needed training in genetics to accomplish his goals, he also trained with Helen Hobbs, M.D., Director of the Eugene McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development, who has long focused on defining the genetic determinants of plasma lipid levels and cardiovascular risk.

In 2000, Dr. Cohen and Dr. Hobbs combined forces and joined with the late Ronald Victor, M.D., to design the Dallas Heart Study, a longitudinal, multiethnic, population-based study of more than 3,500 Dallas County residents. They set out to discover new genetic factors that contribute to variations in the levels of cholesterol in the blood, especially LDL cholesterol, often referred to as "bad cholesterol." High levels of LDL cholesterol in the blood increase the risk of a heart attack. They asked if individuals who had low cholesterol levels their entire lives due to a genetic difference would be protected from heart disease.

At the time they initiated their studies, it was generally regarded that common diseases are caused by genetic differences that are frequent. The way to identify such genetic differences is to test thousands of common sequence variations



Helen Hobbs, M.D., and Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D., have run a joint laboratory on campus for several years. The two were part of a team to design the Dallas Heart Study, which led to discovery of genetic factors related to blood cholesterol variations. Their research also identified the first genetic risk factor for fatty liver disease.

using a strategy called genomewide association studies (GWAS). Drs. Cohen and Hobbs took a different approach. They reasoned that identifying uncommon sequence differences that were likely to have large effects would be more informative.

In the Dallas Heart Study, they found that mutations in a gene called *PCSK9* were associated with marked reductions in plasma levels of LDL cholesterol. Moreover, individuals with these mutations were protected from heart disease. These findings formed the basis for the rapid development of a new class of cholesterol-lowering agents that target *PCSK9*. They used a similar approach to identify other genes that alter plasma levels of cholesterol and triglycerides, leading to the development of a second lipid-lowering therapy.

In addition, the Hobbs-Cohen lab identified the first genetic risk factor for fatty liver disease – both nonalcoholic and alcoholic. This increasingly common disorder will soon overtake hepatitis C as the No.1 indication for liver transplantation.

Dr. Cohen grew up in South Africa and earned his Ph.D. in physiology at the University of Cape Town. In 2015, Dr. Cohen was recognized with the Barbara Bowman Distinguished Texas Geneticist Award, and in 2016, he and Dr. Hobbs received the Passano Award, given for exemplary research that leads to real-world applications.

Dr. Cohen holds the C. Vincent Prothro Distinguished Chair in Human Nutrition Research.

Dr. Hobbs holds the [1995] Dallas Heart Ball Chair in Cardiology Research; the Philip O'Bryan Montgomery, Jr., M.D. Distinguished Chair in Developmental Biology; and the Eugene McDermott Distinguished Chair for the Study of Human Growth and Development.

Dr. Lee holds the Atticus James Gill, M.D. Chair in Medical Science.

Dr. Podolsky holds the Philip O'Bryan Montgomery, Jr., M.D. Distinguished Presidential Chair in Academic Administration, and the Doris and Bryan Wildenthal Distinguished Chair in Medical Science.

UTSW now has 26 members of the National Academy of Sciences, more than any institution in Texas and the most at any time in UT Southwestern's nearly 80-year history.

More online: Read the full story in the newsroom at utsouthwestern.edu/newsroom.

New pain management approach reduced opioid use after C-sections

Shift to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications from patient-controlled medication pumps also boosted breastfeeding rates



A UTSW study showed that providing women recovering from C-sections nonopioid drugs successfully managed their pain, boosted breastfeeding rates, and decreased opioid use by 75%.

By Sarah Williams

For years, women recovering from cesarean section deliveries have been given devices that let them, with a button, control the flow of opioid painkillers into their IV lines. But as researchers and policymakers push to curb the use of opioids, clinicians are developing new strategies for treating pain after C-sections.

A study by UT Southwestern obstetrician-gynecologists, published in the *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*, shows how one approach, which primarily uses nonopioid drugs, successfully managed women's pain while

boosting breastfeeding rates and decreasing the use of opioids by more than 75%.

"There's been a big push to decrease opioid use across all surgical fields. Unlike other surgical patients, women who have just had a cesarean delivery need to be able to care for their infant right away. So it's especially important that we're minimizing the use of opioids in these patients," said lead author Elaine Duryea, M.D., Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UTSW and Medical Director of the Maternal-Fetal Medicine Clinic at Parkland Health.

Opioids include the prescription pain relievers oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, methadone, and fentanyl, as well as the illegal drug



Elaine Duryea, M.D.

heroin. The rate of opioid misuse and overdose is at an all-time high, and research has previously found that more than 1 in 300 women who are given opioids for the first time after a cesarean delivery become persistent users of the drugs.

In July 2020, the pain management strategy for cesarean deliveries at Parkland Memorial Hospital changed. Previously, all women who had C-sections were given a morphine patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) device for 12 hours after delivery, allowing them to release morphine into their IV line as needed. After the transition, women were instead administered nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) on a schedule. They were given IV oxycodone or hydrocodone only as needed, based on their pain rating.

"We're increasingly realizing that we shouldn't just always go immediately to the strong opioids for every patient," said Dr. Duryea.

To assess the new approach, Dr. Duryea and

her colleagues studied 778 women who delivered babies by C-section at Parkland in 2020, either before or after the transition. In the 48 hours after cesarean delivery, women who used the PCA required a median of 128 morphine milligram equivalents – a measure of overall opioid use – while women who followed the scheduled nonopioid strategy required only a median of 28 morphine milligram equivalents, about five times less. In addition, breastfeeding rates among mothers who planned to breastfeed were slightly higher after the transition; only 9% used formula compared to 12% before the switch.

Women in the morphine PCA group reported slightly lower pain scores in the 12 hours after delivery, but there was no difference in pain at 24 hours post-delivery. At 48 hours post-delivery, women in the nonopioid group had less pain than the PCA group.

"Patients shouldn't go into a C-section, or any other surgery, with the expectation that they'll be completely free of pain, but they should expect their pain to be manageable," Dr. Duryea cautioned.

The data were encouraging enough that Dr. Duryea and her colleagues are not only sticking with the new pain management system at Parkland but are implementing other ways to minimize opioid use including customizing the number of painkillers sent home with patients to individual needs, rather than giving all new mothers 30 opioid pills at discharge.

"Considering we do more than 12,000 deliveries a year here, that's a lot of pills that can end up out in the community and aren't all needed," said Dr. Duryea.

NEWS

MAKER

Khan takes reins as AAAAI President

David Khan, M.D., Professor of Internal Medicine and Pediatrics, has been elected President of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI), the leading membership organization of more than 7,000 allergists/immunologists in the U.S., Canada, and 72 other countries.

"It's a great honor to be elected to



David Khan, M.D.

the largest professional association of allergists/immunologists in the U.S.," Dr. Khan said.

Dr. Khan has three priorities: work on reducing the burden of prior authorizations for patients, AAAAI members, and their staff; develop a regional educational program on the importance of the allergy/immunology specialty that also encourages underrepresented minority residents to enter the discipline; and establish a research grant focused on drug allergy.

After earning his medical degree from the University of Illinois, Dr. Khan served an internal medicine residency at the Good Samaritan Medical Center in Phoenix and completed fellowship training in allergy and immunology at the Mayo Clinic. A past President of the Texas

Allergy, Asthma and Immunology Society, he spent 15 years as a member of the Joint Task Force on Practice Parameters for Allergy and Immunology. He also has served as Associate Editor for *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice*. His research interests include drug allergy, refractory chronic urticaria, and mood disorders in asthma.

With a passion for education, Dr. Khan has served as Program Director of UT Southwestern's Allergy and Immunology fellowship program for the past 24 years – helping to train an entire generation of allergy/immunology specialists.

"Dr. Khan has distinguished

himself over the years as an exceptional clinician, educator, and investigator," said Rebecca S. Gruchalla, M.D., Ph.D., Chief of the Division of Pediatric Allergy and Immunology and Professor of Internal Medicine and Pediatrics. "I am very pleased, but not surprised, that Dr. Khan was elected to serve as President of our premier subspecialty organization, the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology."

Dr. Gruchalla holds the William A. Sellars, M.D., and Joyce M. Sellars Distinguished Chair in Allergy and Immunology.

Grant Continued from page 1

Next-generation sequencing (NGS) has opened the door to personalized cancer treatments by identifying genetic mutations in tumors that offer pathways for drug therapies – but this data is not always easily accessible to physicians within the flow of a patient's health records.

"Harnessing technology to integrate genomic data into the flow of patient data will allow clinicians to provide the best treatments to more cancer patients on an individualized basis," said Carlos L. Arteaga, M.D., Director of the Simmons Cancer Center and Associate Dean of Oncology Programs.

"We run NGS on lung cancer patients almost universally nowadays, checking maybe 300 to 600 genes for somatic mutations," added Waddah Arafat, M.D., Medical Director of Cancer Clinical Informatics at the Simmons Cancer Center, Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine, and a member of the NCCN's Electronic Health Records (EHR) committee. "These are genes that cause cancer or are significant for the control of cancer growth, spread, and, sometimes, resistance to standard treatment. Yet, genomic test results come back in a way that often is delayed relative to the treatment plan, and not available at point-of-care. Solving this problem



A grant from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network will support UTSW's use of next-generation sequencing technology to advance cancer patient care.

became our mission."

Lung cancer specialist David Gerber, M.D., Associate Director of Clinical Research and Professor of Internal Medicine and Population and Data Sciences, said the current complexity of ordering, viewing, and acting on genomics testing can be so overwhelming that some physicians skip it altogether.

"Precision medicine based on molecular profiling of tumors has probably had the greatest positive impact on all the types of cancer," Dr. Gerber said. "We've identified about

10 different genomic subsets of lung cancer that have their own available targeted therapies. But if you don't order the test, you're not going to know what drugs to prescribe."

UT Southwestern was an early adopter of Epic's genomics module (Tempus), an interface that enables the user to receive NGS data directly from the laboratory conducting the test. The goal now is to create a seamless interface with NGS laboratories in order for test results to integrate to the chart as discrete data – presented in the way that results appear from a blood panel. Physician alerts are sent



Waddah Arafat, M.D.

selectively at "nodes" in the decision tree of care to prevent alert fatigue.

"Whenever we change from one line of treatment to another, whenever we are loading a new treatment plan in medical records, that should trigger an alert to the physician, reminding them that a genomic test might be clinically relevant," said cardiologist Mujeeb Basit, M.D., Associate Chief Medical Informatics Officer and Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine.

While the new interface and decision tools target the module's application to non-small cell lung cancer, the UTSW research team said they will serve as a template for other cancers as well.

Since the test results present as discrete data elements, they can also be used to answer quality and research questions. The team envisions running weekly reports to



Carlos L. Arteaga, M.D.

capture biomarker data that would identify patients eligible for clinical trials at the Simmons Cancer Center and beyond.

The Simmons Cancer Center, the only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center in North Texas, includes five research and 12 clinical care programs with a focus on fostering groundbreaking cancer discovery and translational research that can improve patient treatment, address cancer health disparities, and prevent cancer worldwide.

Dr. Arteaga holds The Lisa K. Simmons Distinguished Chair in Comprehensive Oncology.

Dr. Gerber holds the David Bruton, Jr. Professorship in Clinical Cancer Research.