

ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

THOUGHTS AND UPDATES FROM DR. W. P. ANDREW LEE

Sept. 16, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to announce the appointment of **Catherine Y. Spong, M.D.**, as Associate Dean of Clinical Research, effective Oct. 1, succeeding Heidi Jacobe, M.D. Dr. Spong will transition from her role as Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology to assume this broader institutional leadership position.

Over the course of her career, Dr. Spong has established herself as a leading clinical investigator with extensive experience in multicenter clinical trials, research leadership, and the translation of evidence into clinical practice – expertise that will help further enhance the breadth and depth of our clinical research enterprise.

Dr. Spong received her medical degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. After serving as Chief Resident in obstetrics and gynecology at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, she began her career at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) as a maternal-fetal medicine fellow, with clinical responsibilities at Georgetown University Medical Center.



During her 23-year career at NICHD, Dr. Spong served in numerous scientific and leadership roles, including Deputy Director, Acting Director, Associate Director for Extramural Research and Director of the Division of Extramural Research, and Chief of the Pregnancy and Perinatology Branch. For over a decade, she led the NICHD Maternal-Fetal Medicine Units Network, a 16-site national multicenter clinical trials network whose studies have helped define standards of obstetric care. Her work included developing and overseeing large clinical trials and managing the challenges of recruitment, enrollment, and retention across diverse clinical sites. She also led major research initiatives focusing on the human placenta, genomics of preterm birth, stillbirth, adverse pregnancy and neonatal outcomes, and fetal surgery.

Dr. Spong joined UT Southwestern in 2018 as Professor and Vice Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She served as Chief of the Department's Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine. In 2021, Dr. Spong was appointed Department Chair and holder of the Paul C. MacDonald Distinguished Chair in Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Under her leadership, the Department experienced substantial growth and achievement across its clinical, research, and educational missions. Department faculty provide clinical leadership for four hospitals across the Dallas-Fort Worth area that have achieved Level IV Maternal designation – the highest level of maternal care. The Department, along with the Cecil H. and Ida Green Center for Reproductive Biology Sciences, consistently rank among the top 10 nationally in National Institutes of Health funding. The UTSW Ob/Gyn Residency Program is ranked No. 7 nationally for clinical training by Doximity and achieved its strongest ACGME Resident Survey results in a decade.

In 2023, Dr. Spong was elected to the National Academy of Medicine in recognition of her contributions to the field of maternal-fetal medicine, her leadership in women's health research, and her dedication to advancing healthcare for mothers and babies.

I am pleased to announce that **Deborah Diercks, M.D.**, Chair and Professor of Emergency Medicine, will serve as Chair of the committee that will conduct a national search to identify Dr. Spong's successor. In the meantime, **Vanessa Rogers, M.D.**, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Vice Chair of Education and Faculty Development, will serve as Interim Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology, effective Oct. 1.

I am grateful for Dr. Spong's distinguished service as Chair and look forward to her expanded impact across campus. Working closely with Eric Peterson, M.D., M.P.H., Vice Provost and Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Research, Dr. Spong – with her compelling background and expertise – will elevate UT Southwestern Medical Center as a national hub for clinical research.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Spong on her new leadership role.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andy". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid.

W. P. Andrew Lee, M.D.

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