UT Southwestern welcomes first patients to new RedBird location in Dallas County

By Carol Marie Cropper

UT Southwestern Medical Center at RedBird opened its doors in late August to bring UTSW’s medical care to patients in southwestern Dallas County. The facility is the newest regional outpatient medical center operated by UTSW.

It is part of Reimagine RedBird, the comprehensive redevelopment at the site of the former RedBird Mall. Located just off U.S. Highway 67 south of downtown Dallas, it offers a more convenient location for those who live or work in the Oak Cliff, DeSoto, Duncanville, Cedar Hill, Lancaster, and surrounding areas who want access to UT Southwestern physicians and its technology without driving to the main campus, according to John Warner, M.D., Executive Vice President for Health System Affairs and CEO of the UT Southwestern Health System.

“Southern Dallas residents have had a shortage of health care treatment options nearby, and UT Southwestern is proud to help fill that void,” Dr. Warner said. “UT Southwestern is expanding our service area to this new region and offering patients there the highest level of care, which is always our goal for the patients we serve.”

In July, U.S. News & World Report ranked UT Southwestern the No. 1 hospital in Dallas-Fort Worth for the sixth consecutive year. Several of the specialties that will be available at RedBird – such as cardiology, cancer, and neurology – are ranked near the top nationally by U.S. News.

UTSWM sleep researcher’s two-continent investigations into the mysteries of sleep win Breakthrough Prize

Masashi Yanagisawa receives award for discovering the role of the protein orexin in narcolepsy

By Deborah Wormser

U T Southwestern sleep researcher Masashi Yanagisawa, M.D., Ph.D., has won the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences for his discovery of the cause of narcolepsy in work that has led to new treatments for this condition that results in dangerous daytime sleepiness.

Dr. Yanagisawa was honored along with Emmanuel Mignot, M.D., Ph.D., of Stanford University, who made the same discovery independently. The five $3 million Breakthrough Prizes announced for 2021 are the world’s most prestigious science awards. Dr. Yanagisawa is now a part-time Professor of Molecular Genetics at UTSW, where he worked as a full-time faculty member for nearly a quarter century and conducted the prize-winning work. He also is a

Children’s Health funds pediatric unit at state psychiatric hospital

From Staff Reports

Children’s Health, the leading pediatric health care system in North Texas, has donated funds to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to support the design and planning for a 390-bed inpatient unit for children and adolescents in the new state psychiatric hospital.

Last year, the Texas Legislature appropriated more than $282 million to plan and construct a state psychiatric hospital in North Texas. As part of the interagency agreement with the HHSC, UT Southwestern is responsible for planning, designing, building, and operating the new facility.

Shawna Nesbitt selected as inaugural Vice President and Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer

From Staff Reports

After an extensive national search, UT Southwestern has selected Shawna Nesbitt, M.D., a national advocate for inclusiveness, as its inaugural Vice President and Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer to lead strategic expansion and coordination of diversity and equity initiatives across the University.

In her newly created role, Dr. Nesbitt will lead existing diversity programs, work with the UTSW community to identify and remove

UTSW designated one of 12 Nutrition Obesity Research Centers in the United States

From Staff Reports

UT Southwestern has been selected as one of 12 NIH Nutrition Obesity Research Centers in the nation – and the first in Texas – to investigate the causes of and prevention and treatment options for obesity, a chronic disease affecting more than 40% of Americans with medical costs nearing $175 billion.

More than 150 UTSW scientists in fields ranging from metabolism to genetics will be part of the elite interdisciplinary research center funded by the National Institutes of Health. UT Southwestern will receive $6.15 million in grant funding over five years from the NIH National

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Please see BREAKTHROUGH on page 10

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NCl renews $11.5 million program of excellence award in kidney cancer

Study links gene mutation to learning deficits in “Clueless” mice

By Erica Boehm

A single mutation in a gene, Kcncl3, which encodes a potassium channel in neurons, causes learning deficits in mice, UT Southwestern researchers report in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

The novel mutation decreases the activity of the area of the brain important for learning and memory, and highlights a new potential role for potassium channels in learning and memory.

“Learning and memory are very complex brain functions,” said Dr. Joseph Takahashi, Ph.D., Chair of Neuroscience and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator. “We identified a rare nonobese mouse model of NAFLD caused by deficiency of the protein GM4951. This study lays the groundwork for the future development of approaches to activate the human GM4951 homolog to combat NAFLD,” said lead author Zhao Zhang, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Center and in the Division of Endocrinology in Internal Medicine. The findings appear in Nature Communications.

The Center is directed by Bruce Beutler, M.D., who received the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for discovering a family of receptors in the immune system that recognize infectious agents when they occur, triggering an inflammatory response. Dr. Beutler also developed the largest mouse mutagenesis program in the world, along with a forward genetic screen platform that allows researchers in the Center to screen for more than half of all genes in the mouse genome. Along with a means of instantly identifying mutants responsible for quantitative and qualitative phenotypes, the program allows for rapid discovery of many new components of the immune system.

Dr. Beutler also developed the role of GM4951 as a GTPase involved in lipid oxidation, said Dr. Zhang. The GM4951-deficient mice developed nonalcoholic fatty liver disease on a high-fat diet with no changes in body weight or glucose metabolism, the researchers noted.

“Geneticists identify new mechanism for nonalcoholic fatty liver disease

From Staff Reports

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) has renewed UT Southwestern’s Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center Kidney Cancer Program (KCP) Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE) award.

First awarded in 2006, the NCI-SPORE in Kidney Cancer is focused on translating discoveries at UT Southwestern into advances in patient care.

Kidney cancer is among the most common cancer and is particularly prevalent in Texas. Approximately 2% of men and 1% of women are diagnosed with kidney cancer in the U.S. during their lifetimes.

With the purpose of accelerating the translation of discoveries to the clinic, the NCI-SPORE fund programs approximately 50 projects of research excellence across cancer types. There are currently 28 SPOREs in cancer across the nation: one at UT Southwestern and the second at the Dana-Farber/ Harvard Cancer Center.

Led by James Brugarolas, M.D., Ph.D., Director of the UT Southwestern Kidney Cancer Program, and Payal Kapur, M.D., Group Leader of UT Southwestern Germinotumoral Pathology and KCP Co-Leader, the KCP SPORE encompasses a breadth of kidney cancer research and the second at the Dana-Farber/ Harvard Cancer Center.

In November, the NCI awarded UT Southwestern’s Kidney Cancer Program a five-year, $11.5 million grant. The grant is a renewal of previous federal funding of $11 million awarded to UT Southwestern from 2006-2011.

This program and its associated research make up Project 1 of the Kidney Cancer SPORE, which is focused on developing a potential future target for therapy.

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Project 1: Targeting HIF-2

Project 1, led by Dr. Brugarolas, builds upon the success of the SPORE award, which culminated in the development and eventual approval of belzutifan. Belzutifan is a first-in-class drug that inactivates HIF-2 (hypoxia-inducible factor 2-alpha), arguably the most important driver of kidney cancer. HIF-2 was discovered at UT Southwestern, where a vulnerable area – immunotherapy, targeted therapeutics in the development of an antibody-drug conjugate, the first-of-its-kind drug – was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2021, providing for the first time a medication for patients with familial kidney cancer.

Project 1 investigation is collaborative with Xiankai Sun, Ph.D., Director of the Cyclotron and Radiochemistry Program and the project Co-Leader.

Project 2: Defining Metabolic Dependencies

Also a continuation of the previous SPORE, Project 2 builds upon the Metabolism Lab, an innovative platform to characterize how kidney tumors develop, identify nutrient dependencies, and develop metabolitargeting drugs. The approach builds upon an unprecedented characterization of kidney cancer metabolism using labeled nutrients infused in patients, and the development of laboratory models, including possibly the latest patient tumor transplant program into mice. The project is led by Ralph DeBerardinis, M.D., Ph.D., KCP Co-Leader in Metabolism, in collaboration with Kevin Courtney, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor of Internal Medicine.

Project 3: Maximizing Anti-Tumor Activity

Project 3 builds upon Breakthrough Prize discoveries by Zhijian “James” Chen, Ph.D., Professor of Molecular Biology at the Institute of Molecular Biology at the University of California, San Diego, and the discovery of a new immunotherapy called IMSA101 now in clinical trials. Project 3 builds on the success of the previous SPORE project and will be combined with radiation and immunotherapy.

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

Geneticists identify new mechanism for nonalcoholic fatty liver disease

From Staff Reports

Using a genetic screening platform developed by a UT Southwestern Nobel Laureate, scientists with the Center for the Genetics of Host Defense have identified genetic mutations that contribute to nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), providing a potential future target for therapeutic interventions.

While diabetes and obesity are well-known risk factors for fatty liver disease, the researchers identified a new cause of the disease absent these risk factors for fatty liver disease, the researchers noted.

Among their findings, the researchers found that loss of GM4951 causes NAFLD without the development of obesity or diabetes. Dr. Beutler, a Regental Professor, holds the James Beutler also received the National Medal of Science, in Memory of Jerry B. Simmons Distinguished Chair in Radiology.

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More online: Read the full story in the newsroom at utsouthwestern.edu/newsroom.
Machine learning learning used to determine structure of protein complex

Research holds promise for development of drugs to slow antibiotic resistance

By Catherine Sara

With antibiotic-resistant bacteria on the rise, scientists have been searching for ways to shut down the Type IV secretion system (T4SS), a protein complex on the outer envelope of bacterial cells that helps them to exchange DNA with neighboring bacteria and resist antibiotics.

Now a collaboration between UT southwestern computational biologist Qian Cong, Ph.D., and molecular biologists at the University of London has elucidated the structure of the T4SS complex, providing a blueprint that could help researchers design drugs that slow development of antibiotic resistance. Their findings were published in Nature.

“For the first time, we determined the 3D structure of the entire T4SS complex,” said Dr. Cong. Assistant Professor of Biophysics and in the Eugene McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development.

The team in London was led by Gabriel Waksman, Ph.D., whose lab has been working for more than two decades to understand T4SS, especially how it forms a thin, hollow structure called a pilus, which connects to nearby bacteria to share genes. His team used cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM) – a process that freezes proteins and uses beams of electrons to obtain high-resolution microscopic images – to elucidate the structure of T4SS. This was no small feat, since the T4SS complex is larger than 99.6% of all those included in the widely published library of protein structures. Dr. Cong then applied her background in statistics and machine learning to analyze T4SS protein sequences from several bacteria to generate structural predictions, comparing them to the cryo-EM data. Her computational analysis supported the cryo-EM data and suggested a hypothesis about the function of T4SS. While it was already known that T4SS is involved in (plus assembly, she predicted how it occurs. With that hypothesis from in live bacteria.

“In addition to the contribution we have made toward the development of drugs to slow the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, this study showcases the power of modern computational methods to validate experimental results and suggest functional insights based on available experimental data,” said Dr. Cong.

Qian Cong, Ph.D.

The 3D structure of T4SS
In August, Jeremy Falke, M.B.A., a senior human resources executive with more than two decades of experience in human resources, financial, and business operations for companies in dozens of locations across the U.S., joined UT Southwestern as Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer.

Mr. Falke oversees human resources operations, talent acquisition, employee relations, organizational development and training, and payroll, reporting to Holly G. Crawford, M.B.A., Executive Vice President for Business Affairs. His responsibilities include oversight of all human resource programs, developing strategic initiatives, and enacting short- and long-range planning affecting staff across the institution.

He comes to UT Southwestern from Sondia Senior Living, a Dallas-based company that operates 75 facilities in 19 states. Prior to that, he worked at Tenet Healthcare for six years, rising from Senior Director of Strategic Operations, Analytics, and Reporting, to Vice President of Talent, Culture, and Performance Systems.

Mr. Falke also spent nearly a decade as the Chief Human Resources Officer at Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska.

He recently answered questions for Center Times about his goals at UT Southwestern and his philosophy on human resources practices.

**What is your philosophy and approach to human resources management?**

The human resources function is all about supporting the people of the organization. I believe that great HR service and support help people do great work. That’s how I think human resources makes the biggest impact, ensuring that as much as we can and as often as we can, we’re interacting and engaging to help the people of UT Southwestern do great work.

We want to approach everything with a desire to “collaborate radically” with our partners and provide them with great service. Sometimes HR can be seen as simply good at saying “no.” So I believe it’s really incumbent on us to always try hard to get to “yes” helping solve business situations or work that needs to be done through innovative ideas and true partnership.

Radical collaboration and such a mindset is a necessity to ensure we will always approach each task with a goal to find a solution within the policies, processes, or even laws relative to the situation. I believe this focused approach in always trying to find the best potential solution in each situation builds true partnership and ongoing trust with the leaders and our colleagues across the organization.

What trends and changes have you seen in HR?

In the short term, based on the current macro landscape, we will continue to battle for the top talent in ways never seen before. In the longer term, we will need to solve for the continued mass exodus of employees in the baby boomer generation. The impact of this largest generation in U.S. history reaching peak retirement age has only begun to be experienced — and thoughtful planning, reinvented work, and innovative approaches to productivity will play a big part in winning overall in the next five to 10 years.

We have employees who want different things today. Technology and the life we’re living have something to do with it. The employee has so many options and desires for true flexibility and custom-fit needs from their employer today.

I believe that both the pandemic and the emergence of the gig economy have grown a desire for individual flexibility in employees that is both challenging for the current workplace and also a huge opportunity for organizations that continue to actively listen to their employees and then innovate to find the space where both employee and employer are engaged, productive, and happy.

**What appealed to you about UT Southwestern?**

First, UT Southwestern is a world-renowned and highly distinguished organization, so to have the opportunity to serve here was immediately interesting to me. I truly enjoy working in an academic setting where so many diverse and brilliant minds come together, focused on such a powerful mission to serve others.

One of the things that I love the most about the academic environment is the fact that you have great diversity. You have people coming from all over the world, focused on a singular and really incredible mission — to teach and research and care for others. I love being a part of that.

UT Southwestern is an incredibly special place, and I’m very proud to say I’m now a part of that community.

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**Center Times**

**President's State of the Campus Address**

On Sept. 13, UT Southwestern President Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., held a State of the Campus virtual Town Hall to discuss priorities the institution faces over the next fiscal year and achievements in FY22.

View the recorded event (VPN required) at: utsouthwestern.edu/about-us/office-of-the-president/messages/

**Joel Elmquist, D.V.M., Ph.D.**

To facilitate interdisciplinary research and the exchange of ideas, the new Center has created four thematically related teams: Central Regulation of Energy Metabolism, Adipocyte Biology and Energy Metabolism, Obesity and Pheochromocytoma, and Hepatic Organ Disease, and Nutrition, Obesity, and Cancer.

A Pilot and Feasibility Program, directed by Joel Elmquist, D.V.M., Ph.D., and Associate Director of the new Center, and Joyce Bega, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Physiology and Internal Medicine, will support early-stage projects of four new investigators per year. An Enrichment Program, led by Jeffrey Zigman, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Internal Medicine and a Principal Investigator in the Center for Hypothalamic Research, will provide enhanced educational opportunities for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty interested in performing basic and translational research related to nutrition, obesity, and obesity-related diseases.

Four cores and a clinical element also have been established under the new Center: Animal Phenotyping/Metabolism Core; Lipid Mass Spectrometry Core; Quantitative Metabolomics and Imaging Core, and Genetics, Single Cell Sequencing and RNA Sequencing Core.

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**Dr. Elmquist holds the Maclin Family Distinguished Professorship in Medical Science, in Honor of Dr. Roy A. Brinkley, and the Carl H. Wentworth Distinguished Chair in Medical Research.**

**Dr. Horton holds the Center for Human Nutrition Director’s Endowed Chair, the Scott Grundy Director’s Chair, The Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Chair in Obesity & Diabetes Research, and the Distinguished University Chair in Human Nutrition.**

**Dr. Scherer holds the Gifford O. Touchstone, Jr. and Randolph G. Touchstone Distinguished Chair in Diabetes Research, and the Touchstone/West Distinguished Chair in Diabetes Research.**

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

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**JAY HORTON, M.D., will lead the new Nutrition Obesity Research Center.**
Liver disease specialist Bezerra named new Chair of Pediatrics

By Kristen Holland Shear

Jorge A. Bezerra, M.D., a nationally recognized leader in pediatric hepatology, has been named Chair of the Department of Pediatrics at UT Southwestern Medical Center Dallas. A pediatric gastroenterologist, Dr. Bezerra joined UT Southwestern on Oct. 1 from Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, where he most recently served as Professor of Pediatrics, Director of the Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition, and Medical Director of the Pediatric Liver Care Center. He also served as Director of the Cincinnati Digestive Health Center (CDHC) established by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) to advance digestive disease research at the University of Cincinnati.

Dr. Bezerra said he is greatly honored and humbled to join UT Southwestern and Children’s Health as its standard of care, he added. "This hospital will save lives, and this hospital is going to be noticed around the world. This is a moment that we have been working on for a long time."

"This team is committed to providing exceptional care for our patients and their families," said Dr. Kakkilaya. "We are excited to welcome Dr. Bezerra to UT Southwestern and to work together to advance the care of children with liver disease."
Warner receives American Heart Association’s top volunteer award
By Carol Marie Cropper

John Warner, M.D., Executive Vice President for Health System Affairs and Health System Chief Executive Officer, received the American Heart Association’s Gold Heart Award – its highest honor given to a volunteer – at the group’s National Volunteer Awards event in Dallas this summer.

Dr. Warner, a cardiologist and Professor of Internal Medicine, has served on the AHA’s national board since 2014 and as President in 2017-18. Over the years, he also worked as an AHA volunteer to advocate for a smoking ban in Dallas public places, joined with hospitals and emergency services employees to create a program to speed treatment of heart attack patients, and helped spearhead the “Don’t Die of Doubt” multimedia campaign to encourage those with heart attack symptoms to immediately call 911.

“John is a leader in every way and in the best of ways,” AHA CEO Nancy Brown said in a statement. “We are a better organization because of him.”

Dr. Warner said he was proud to receive the honor and found it especially meaningful because the other recipient of a Gold Heart Award that night was a team of three doctors involved in the “Get With The Guidelines” program, an evidence-based quality-improvement initiative created by AHA and the American Stroke Association to improve the care of patients with cardiac diseases and stroke.

Dr. Warner came to UT Southwestern in 2003 after graduating from Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and completing a fellowship in cardiovascular disease and interventional cardiology at Duke University School of Medicine. He also received an M.B.A. from University of Tennessee’s Physician Executive Program.

More online: Read the full story on CenterTimesPlus at utsouthwestern.edu/cxplus.

UT Southwestern staff, family, and friends form a sea of blue while getting their group picture taken before the American Heart Association’s Heart Walk.

Warner team wins grand prize in American Heart Association Data Challenge
By Margaret Rockwood

A team led by cardiologist Ambarish Pandey, M.D., was awarded the grand prize in the American Heart Association Heart Failure Data Challenge hosted by the American Heart Association, AHA and the Association of Black Cardiologists.

The six-month data challenge asked researchers to test the relationships between heart failure and health disparities, social determinants of health, and structural determinants of health.

Dr. Pandey’s team included UT Southwestern colleagues Shreyta Rao, M.D., M.P.H., and Sandeep Das, M.D., M.P.H., M.B.A. Their project, “Impact of Social and Neighborhood Factors on Outcomes among Patients With Heart Failure and High Blood Pressure” used data from the American Heart Association’s Get With The Guidelines – Heart Failure Registry to examine Black versus non-Black populations and geographic areas across the country.

“Black individuals have a disproportionately higher burden of heart failure and worse access to care outside of the hospital, and social determinants of health and treatment of cancers and has had an enormous impact on the quality of cancer care,” said Dr. Sweetenham, a Professor of Internal Medicine who is internationally recognized for his clinical research on lymphoma and stem cell transplantation. “It is the nation’s and the world’s foremost organization in establishing guidelines for investigation and treatment of cancers and has had an enormous impact on the quality of cancer care.”

Sweetenham elected Chair of cancer network organization
John Sweetenham, M.D., Associate Director for Clinical Affairs at the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center, has been elected Chair of the Board of Directors of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN).

John Sweetenham, M.D.

The NCCN is an alliance of 31 premier cancer centers in the U.S. devoted to patient care, research, and education, including those at Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and the Mayo Clinic, and its Board includes representatives from those institutions.

“I’m excited and highly honored to be elected Chair of the NCCN Board of Directors. NCCN’s mission is to improve and facilitate quality, effective, and accessible cancer care so all patients can live longer lives,” said Dr. Sweetenham.

He has also served the NCCN in numerous capacities, most recently as a member of the NCCN Advisory Committee on COVID-19 Vaccination and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis.

Deboe-Boyd wins ASBMB’s Avanti Award in Lipids
Russell Debose-Boyd, Ph.D., Professor of Molecular Genetics, has been recognized by the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) with the Avanti award in Lipids for his outstanding research contributions in the area of lipids.

“My receipt of this award is a testament to the talent and work ethic of former and current members of my laboratory. I am truly honored and humbled to be included among the group of eminent scientists who have previously received the Avanti Award in Lipids,” he said.

ASBMB is one of the largest molecular life science societies in the world. The Avanti Award in Lipids includes a plaque, $3,000, and expenses and transportation to present a lecture at the ASBMB Annual Meeting.

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

By Camille Bouwens

UT Southwestern staff, family, and friends stepped out for a cause at this year’s Heart Walk to honor loved ones who have passed from heart disease and stroke and to show their commitment to the American Heart Association’s (AHA) mission to fund research to fight these cardiovascular diseases.

Next to the federal government, the AHA has become the largest not-for-profit organization funding research on cardiovascular disease since founding in 1924. As the AHA’s flagship event to raise money for its lifesaving research, the Heart Walk attracts thousands of people to raise awareness.

UT Southwestern boasts one of the largest participation numbers among the organizations participating in Dallas’ walk – and this year was no exception. Over 2,200 people from UT Southwestern teams participated in the 2.4-mile walk, pledging more than $37,000 to support the AHA and its mission.

More than 100 individuals came together to celebrate survivors, learn how to improve our own heart health, and support the AHA to raise funds that ultimately save lives,” said Amit Khera, M.D., Professor of Internal Medicine and Director of the Preventive Cardiology Program at UT Southwestern.

“This is a series of grants and awards. These funds have benefited our faculty’s research as we continue to investigate how to improve cardiovascular health.

Before the walk, UT Southwestern employees and their friends and family were able to talk to UT Southwestern leaders, take pictures, grab event swag, and eat a last-minute snack to fuel them through the course. The walkers moved through a 1- or 3-mile walk through downtown Dallas, and cheered from volunteers and a live band greeted walkers at the finish line.

More online: View more photos from the event and a video on CenterTimesPlus at utsouthwestern.edu/cxplus.

Thousand from UTSW community turn out for Dallas Heart Walk

More online: Read the full story on CenterTimesPlus at utsouthwestern.edu/cxplus.

By Dr. Debose-Boyd holds the Beatrice and Miguel Elias Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science.
UT Southwestern has been named the first academic medical center in the nation to serve as a Bridge Site under the American Chemical Society (ACS) Bridge Program, which was created to increase the number of Black, Latino, and Indigenous students earning doctorates in chemistry. As a Bridge Site, UT Southwestern will receive funding, mentoring, and other support services from ACS to enable students from underrepresented minority groups to successfully complete their doctorate degrees in chemistry. The American Chemical Society is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1876 to advance the broader chemistry enterprise. It has more than 151,000 members in 140 countries.

Since the launch of the Bridge Program in 2018, 11 Bridge Sites have been established at academic institutions nationwide— but none at academic medical centers. UT Southwestern is now the 12th site.

UT Southwestern was also the only academic site named this year, which is a great honor, said Dr. Mendell, who works in the lab of Gaudenz Danuser, Ph.D., Chair of the Lyda Hill Department of Basic Research at UT Southwestern. “This is a unique opportunity for us to support postbaccalaureate students,” he said. “Our hope is that having a program like this will serve as a pipeline for research.

For students who might not have considered pursuing graduate school and/or did not have the opportunity to engage in research as undergraduates, this program offers a bridge to graduate education, said Arnaldo Diaz Vazquez, Ph.D., Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion in the Graduate School and Assistant Professor of Pharmacology. “This program presents an excellent opportunity for students to boost their skills in preparation to transition into a graduate program. Many students lack research experience due to having to work during their college years, manage family responsibilities, or due to a lack of awareness of careers in STEM, lack of role models, etc.,” Dr. Diaz Vazquez said. “This program enables participants to fully engage in research for the first time, reinforce their previous experience, or explore new areas of research.”

Historically, underrepresented minorities have faced numerous obstacles in pursuing a graduate-level education. This group makes up one-third of college students, yet only earns about 18% of the baccalaureate degrees, 14% of master’s degrees, and 11% of doctorates, according to the ACS.

The Bridge Project is modeled after the American Chemical Society Bridge Program, which matches graduate students with partner institutions that provide individualized mentoring and support, according to the ACS. In the big picture, having more researchers from diverse backgrounds benefit society by providing role models from underrepresented minorities, Dr. Diaz Vazquez said. Doctoral students not only go on to work at academic institutions where they continue to contribute to research, but they also often become industrial and government leaders, Dr. Tambar said. “They bring a diversity of ideas and perspectives to the workforce, which will ultimately translate into advancement of science,” Dr. Diaz Vazquez added.

Seeing more Ph.D.s in the workplace can inspire students of all ages and address persistent disparities by increasing the number of Black, Latino, and Indigenous students earning doctoral degrees in the chemistry enterprise, Dr. Tambar said. A more diverse population strengthens the economy, and as more graduates move into the workplace, UT Southwestern’s exposure to the country is increased, he added.

In August, two students were selected as the first Bridge Site participants at UT Southwestern. A $120,000 two-year grant will fund the program.

By Arnaldo Diaz Vazquez

Two UT Southwestern postdoctoral fellows—Gabriel Muhire Gihana, Ph.D., and Victor Lopez, Ph.D.—are among 25 early-career scientists in the U.S. selected as 2022 Hanna H. Gray Fellows.

Gabriel Muhire Gihana, Ph.D.

and Victor Lopez, Ph.D.

The fellowship program, run by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI), aims to increase diversity in the biomedical sciences by recruiting and retaining individuals from underrepresented groups and disadvantaged backgrounds. The fellows receive financial support for up to eight years and participate in professional development, mentorship, and networking with peers and leaders in the HHMI community.

“We are delighted that Dr. Lopez and Gihana have been selected as Hanna H. Gray Fellows,” said Joan Conaway, Ph.D., Vice Provost and Dean of Basic Research at UT Southwestern. “This prestigious award recognizes their outstanding accomplishments and potential as future leaders in the scientific community.”

Dr. Gihana, who works in the lab of Gaudenz Danuser, Ph.D., Chair of the Lyda Hill Department of Bioinformatics, studies the role of cell morphology in regulating the molecular signaling of RAS, a prevalent human oncogene. He seeks to understand how RAS-induced cell morphological changes contribute to RAS causing cancer. Because inhibition of this gene has proved very difficult, studying other cellular parameters that promote RAS-related cancers could lead to novel therapies.

“It is a great honor to receive the HHMI Hanna H. Gray Fellowship, and I am very grateful to HHMI and to all my mentors who have supported me to this point,” said Dr. Gihana. “The financial support from this fellowship, the exposure, and the participation in the HHMI community will underpin the success of my research, and I could not be happier as a postdoc.”

Dr. Lopez, who works in the labs of Vincent Tagliabracci, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Molecular Biology, and Joshua Mendell, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Molecular Biology, uses a combination of bioinformatics and biochemistry to identify and characterize new members of a family of proteins known as ATP-grasp that are responsible for many essential biological reactions. Characterizing their biochemical functions, Dr. Lopez said, will help scientists understand their roles in health and disease. Drs. Tagliabracci and Mendell are both HHMI Investigators.

“Being a Hanna Gray Fellow is an incredible opportunity, and I am both honored and humbled to receive such a prestigious award,” said Dr. Lopez. “I am grateful to HHMI, my mentors, colleagues, friends, and family who have motivated and encouraged me to pursue my scientific career.”

With the selection of Drs. Gihana and Lopez, UT Southwestern has had four scientists named as Hanna H. Gray Fellows since the program launched in 2017.

By Chris Brownlee.

More online: Read the full story in the multimedia at uutsouthwestern.edu/newsroom.
Advanced microscopy reveals how cholesterol crystalizes into a more dangerous form

By Deborah Wimmer

UTSW researchers may have solved the long-standing mystery of the genesis of crystallized cholesterol, a form considered more likely to clog the arteries in humans. Their study was published recently in the Journal of Cell Biology, points to a novel therapeutic target that could eventually lead to new ways to prevent or delay the development of cardiovascular diseases.

Using advanced microscopy, the researchers observed lipid droplets in cells undergoing phase transitions, transforming from disordered molecules to a lipid-crystalline state in response to glucose starvation.

Alcoholics, a buildup of fatty plaque in the artery walls, increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, and congestive heart failure. “Crystallized cholesterol deposits had been observed for decades, but how they formed in cells was poorly understood,” said Mike Henne, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Cell Biology and Biophysics. “Because yeast is a model organism for mammalian cells, the same crystallization process likely occurs in humans.”

He added that working to understand this change of state is an emerging field of study.

“Although scientists have observed cholesterol crystallizing in cells, the exact mechanism by which large amounts of cholesterol are added to a lipid droplet, our study is the first to our knowledge to thoroughly determine the trigger and mechanism for that change, and to do so in cells. Glucose starvation is the trigger, and the mechanism is the breakdown of triglyceride to free fatty acids in the cell, releasing backup energy source to be the mechanism driving crystallization,” Dr. Henne said.

Strikingly, the crystallization process appears to change the properties of proteins that rest on the surface of lipid droplets, very likely affecting the way these organelles interact and function within the cell — a finding that generates new questions for future studies, the researchers said.

Dr. Henne is a corresponding author of the study along with Daniela Nicastro, Ph.D., Professor of Cell Biology and an expert in the cryo-electron tomography (cryo-ET) technology that made it possible to view the cells in a life-like state.

Cryo-ET is a cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM) method that provides three-dimensional images of life-like preserved cells, featuring sub-structures and molecular structures at molecular resolution. Powerful computers then reconstruct the images, allowing investigators to preserve their native structures during imaging, and sample a flash-frozen and imaged at cryogenic temperatures (at about -196 degrees Celsius).

Dr. Nicastro, who was instrumental in setting up UT Southwestern’s cryo-ET center, is advancing a technique called cryo-FIB (cryo-focused ion beam milling) that was key in this study. “One challenge we faced was that budding yeast cells are 50 times thicker than what can be imaged directly by cryo-EM,” she said. “Therefore, after rapidly freezing the yeast cell, we had to ‘section’ them. We used a very finely focused beam of gallium ions to mill away material from the top and bottom of each cell, leaving behind a thin lamella, or section, that was suitable for imaging.”

Dr. Henne said next steps in the investigation include screening for drug candidates and investigating whether the same phenomenon happens in human cells.

Former UTSW graduate student Sean Rogers, Ph.D., a former Henne lab graduate student now at Washington University in St. Louis, and Long Gui, Ph.D., a Research Scientist in the Nicastro lab at the Sorbonne University of Paris, and the University of Fribourg in Switzerland also participated.

The study received support from the National Institutes of Health, The Welch Foundation, The Arthritis Foundation, The American Heart Association, the American Heart Association, and The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

Nicasio lab researcher and co-lead author Long Gui, Ph.D.

Parasight Medical Research Fund, the UTSW Southwestern Endowed Scholars Program in Medical Science, the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas, supporting UT-Southwestern’s Cryo-EM Microscopy Facility. The Swiss National Science Foundation, the Swiss National Supercomputing Center, and the French National Research Agency also provided support.

More information on this research, including the full list of authors, can be found in the study.

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Dr. Henne is a W.M. Baruth, Jr. Scholar in Biomedical Research.

Nesbitt Continued from page 1

barriers that limit opportunities for historically underrepresented groups on campus, and coordinate the broad scope of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts throughout UT Southwestern, including oversight of the Institutional Equity and Access, Faculty Diversity, Student Diversity, and Inclusion.

“The expansion of our DEI efforts is directly connected to the growth of UT Southwestern,” said Dr. Nesbitt, Professor of Internal Medicine in the Division of Cardiology and Medical Director of Parkland Health’s Hypertension Clinic, who began her role Oct. 1. “In leading a cohesive campuswide DEI strategy, I look forward to partnering with leaders across campus to build greater collaboration and sympathy that will ensure UTSW leverages its vast strengths and successes for the greatest impact with an emphasis on excellence, innovation, teamwork, and compassion.”

Building UT Southwestern’s foundation for diversity

For more than a decade, Dr. Nesbitt has spearheaded student diversity efforts at UT Southwestern as Associate Dean of Student Affairs in the Office of Student Diversity and Inclusion, while contributing to international initiatives, such as serving as post President and current Trustee of the International Society on Hypertension in Blacks and Chair of the Health Equity Committee of the American Heart Association’s SouthWest Affiliate. She has served as a community health advocate and facilitated a variety of boards and national studies and frequently speaks on the topics of hypertension, DEI, and health equity.

“Dr. Nesbitt’s decades of work in the areas of health inequity and hypertension, as well as the progress she helped the institution achieve in further diversifying our student population in her role as Associate Dean of Student Affairs, have prepared her for this important leadership position,” said Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., President of UT Southwestern. “I look forward to the progress she and her team will help UT Southwestern make as an institution committed to the values of diversity and inclusion, ensuring we are equitable as a workplace and in the ways we advance our mission.”

Dr. Nesbitt serves as a member of the President’s Council on Diversity & Inclusion, which Dr. Podolsky launched in 2016 to engage faculty, staff, and the student body through education and training to ensure that they develop the cultural awareness competency required to effectively serve the mission of UT Southwestern across research, clinical, education, and training activities.

“Dr. Podolsky came in with a strategic goal to enhance diversity and inclusion on the campus, and he’s been very vigilant about creating opportunity and support for doing that,” she said. “The results have been very strong.”

A resume of accomplishment

Under Dr. Nesbitt’s leadership, recruitment strategies to develop a more diverse student body were expanded across UT Southwestern Medical School, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, and School of Health Professions. She grew underrepresented minority student populations to historic levels, helping to create a pipeline of physician talent that more appropriately reflects the region’s diverse patient population. Most recently, UT Southwestern welcomed its most diverse class of medical students, including a historic majority of first-year female students.

Dr. Nesbitt developed UT Southwestern’s cultural competency curriculum to help medical students treat patients who come from different ethnic, economic, and geographic backgrounds, including an elective called Healthcare Disparities in Underserved Communities that helps physicians understand how to better diagnose and manage that diverse population of patients.

She has published scores of scholarly articles, authored and co-edited a number of book chapters, and delivered numerous lectures nationally and internationally. She is funded by the National Institutes of Health to study the relationship of oxidative stress and genetics in the development of hypertension. Her research interests include clinical trials and epidemiology of hypertension and cardiovascular risk, specializing in hypertension in African American individuals, insulin resistance, and hyperlipidemia. Dr. Nesbitt serves as the national coordinator for the TROPHY Study (Trial of Preventing Hypertension, Risk, and Outcomes), a four-year trial that includes over 71 sites and more than 900 patients.

Her outreach efforts in the community included extensive STEMM advocacy, working with organizations such as Jack and Jill of America Inc., whose outreach programs target African American children as young as age 2, and UT Southwestern initiatives such as the Health Professions Recruitment and Exposure Program (HREP), which focuses on high school students.

A member of the Gold Humanism Honor Society at UT Southwestern, Dr. Nesbitt has been recognized, among others, by the Dallas Chapter of The Links Inc. with a 2019 Women Who STEAM award, honoring her efforts to introduce young girls to science careers, was nominated for the AHAY’s 2016 Louis B. Russell Jr. Memorial Award, given for service addressing health care disparities and/or minority and underserved communities, and was named a 2014 Visionary in Diversity in Medicine by INSIGHT INTO Diversity magazine.

“UT Southwestern’s missions for research, care, and training are dependent upon and ultimately fueled by achieving and expanding the diversity of UTWY faculty, staff, and learners, uncovering and educating ourselves and the community about unconscious and conscious bias, and leveraging that knowledge to address disparities in order to deliver the best possible care to every patient and every community,” Dr. Nesbitt said.

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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.
Burroughs Wellcome Fund grants support innovative research

By Jan Yeates
Two UT Southwestern scientists have received prestigious grants from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund to support research innovation, academic discovery, and public service.

Josephine Thinwa, M.D., Ph.D., Instructor of Internal Medicine, received a Career Award for Medical Scientists, making her one of only 14 awardees nationwide this year. The award provides $500,000 over five years to support research on how human and microbial systems are affected by their environment.

Thinwa's long-held interest in viruses intensified when she worked in the UT lab of Beth Levine, M.D., an international leader in autophagy research and Professor of Internal Medicine and Microbiology who passed away in 2020. Under Dr. Levine’s mentorship, Thinwa developed a research plan to understand protective mechanisms in cells that fight viral infections.

"Her investigations address fundamental questions that link autophagy to the control of viral diseases," said Michael Shiloh, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor of Internal Medicine and Molecular Neuropharmacology in Honor of Harold B. Crasilneck, Ph.D., in a statement. "Her cutting-edge work has revealed novel viruses that use target viruses for destruction and that also protects infected cells from subsequent viral infections.

"Dr. Thinwa’s discoveries have the potential to lead to the development of new, urgently needed therapies against a wide array of viruses," Dr. Shiloh said.

Dr. Thinwa is hoping that her work could eventually lead to new drugs becoming available to treat the next viral outbreaks.

In 2015, Dr. Thinwa earned her combined M.D./Ph.D. degrees, with doctoral studies in microbiology from the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. She then completed her residency in internal medicine at UT Southwestern, followed by advanced training in infectious diseases as part of the Physican Scientist Training Program at UT Southwestern.

"I feel very privileged and humbled to receive this award in recognition of my scientific work and accomplishments," Dr. Thinwa said.

Two UT Southwestern researchers – one investigating how cancer cells acquire complex genomes and another exploring how photophosphorylation in plants can pave the way for laboratory-based meat products – are recipients of a prestigious career grant from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund.

Joshua Gruber, M.D., Ph.D., researches the development of animal products grown using energy from sunlight. "He continues his research on developing animal products that can grow using energy derived from sunlight.

UT Southwestern’s Haberecht Grants for Developmental Biology are mostly rare in normal cells, but cancer cells frequently do this erroneously during cell division, and inaccurate DNA double-strand break repair pathways. With the grant support, Dr. Ly and his team will investigate how chromosome segregation errors from one cell can affect an adjacent, neighboring cell.

"Dr. Ly’s unique research is worthy of recognition," said Diego J. Castellano, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Pathology and Obstetrics and Gynecology. "His proposal to study cell-autonomous consequences of cell division errors are in some ways an extension of his prior work – but also an off-the-wall and yet provocative idea – very much in the spirit of the Wellcome’s vision of promoting biomedical innovation.

Michael Reese, M.D., Ph.D., received a problem with it, when they do it is devastating," Dr. Ly said. "The parasite causes toxoplasmosis, a disease that can lead to blindness and seizures. The photosite is commonly transmitted through consumption of undercooked meat or contact with infected cat feces. The infection resolves on its own in healthy people, but someone with an immunocompromised system requires treatment with pyrimethamine.

"It really is the only drug that treats it," Dr. Ly said. "There are no alternatives.

The goal of Dr. Thinwa’s research is to understand proper mechanisms of autophagy in cancer cells.
Services currently available at RedBird include primary care, cardiology, and cancer care, with plans to add neurology and culinary medicine later this year.

Dr. Siddiqi, board-certified in both family medicine and gerontology, made news among the staff by the way he welcomed his first patient on opening day, Aug. 29.

Victoria Doby, RN, Clinic Practice Manager for RedBird, said Dr. Siddiqi’s patient was in the RedBird parking lot and wrote a note on the patient portal site to him: “I’m here, where are you?”

“Dr. Siddiqi went out in the parking lot site to him: “I’m here, where are you?”

Don Temple, who lives nearby, said, “It is just fantastic,” Mr. Temple, who lives nearby, added, “We don’t have to go across town to get medical care.”

Keith Vinson, Vice President of Operations for YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas, noted that while access is a major part of the project’s appeal, UT Southwestern spared no expense in making this the best medical care facility that people in the neighborhood can go to for their health care needs.

“The facility was built around what people in the community said they wanted, noted Ericka Walker Williams, M.D., the first physician hired for the RedBird facility. They came in and said, “We want to be a part of your family.”

By Jan Jarvis

Community-focused HealthFest celebrates RedBird opening

Southwestern Dallas County residents, business owners, and regional leaders gathered in September for the official dedication of UT Southwestern Medical Center at RedBird, the largest of UT Southwestern’s regional campuses and the first to bring academic medicine to the southern sector of Dallas. The Sept. 17 event, called HealthFest, served as a community-focused celebration and showcase of current and upcoming offerings.

Don Temple, who lives nearby and had been looking forward to the medical center opening, said the facility exceeded his expectations.

“It is just fantastic,” Mr. Temple said. “We had nothing and now it’s like we got the Taj Mahal.”

HealthFest visitors were greeted with music, cooking demos, food trucks offering free brunch, games, and ticket giveaways to Dallas Mavericks games. They walked away with umbrellas, T-shirts, and gift bags filled with a stress ball, water bottle, and brochures.

The estimated 2,000 visitors could gather information at the many booths, attend a health lecture, or tour the facilities. Most were impressed with the convenience of having medical care closer to their homes. “It means a lot for this to be in the community,” said Lula Moss, an area resident. “Now I won’t have to go across town to get medical care.”

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“UT Southwestern didn’t come here in a corporate way,” said Mr. Vinson, who served on the RedBird Community Forum group for the facility. “They came in and said, We want to be a part of your family.”

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“UT Southwestern didn’t come here in a corporate way,” said Mr. Vinson, who served on the RedBird Community Forum group for the facility. “They came in and said, We want to be a part of your family.”
“We believe that when employees feel as though they belong, it directly and positively impacts our ability to advance the tripartite mission of UT Southwestern – to educate, discover, and heal.”

Those words were shared by Renesia Colwell, Senior Diversity and Inclusion Specialist, as she welcomed Business Resource Group (BRG) members and officers, executive leaders, colleagues, and guests to the Office of Institutional Equity & Access’ Division of Diversity & Inclusion’s inaugural BRG Appreciation Reception and Keystone Award Ceremony.

The July 7 event showcased the contributions of BRG members who devote their time, energy, and talent to fostering belonging, inclusion, and wellness at UT Southwestern. Having launched four of the institution’s six BRGs in 2017—adding the Asian-Pacific Islander BRG in 2019 as the fifth and the Women in Allies BRG in 2020 as the sixth—UT Southwestern’s BRGs now have more than 2,500 members, have hosted 200-plus events, and continue to offer their members a positive and inclusive environment with opportunities for personal growth, career advancement, health, and wellness.

The event included a Keystone Award ceremony with honors presented to BRG members and one representative from UT Southwestern’s Talent Acquisition Department who showed outstanding commitment to the BRGs.

**BRG Keystone Award Winners**

- An African-American Employee BRG: Joshua “Josh” Franklin, an Immigration Specialist in the Office of International Affairs and Chair of the Professional Development Subcommittee for the BRG
- Asian-Pacific Islander BRG: Christin’ Durea, Senior Manager for Digital Marketing in the Office of Communications, Marketing, and Public Relations
- Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee in the BRG
- Filipino BRG: Dr. Jimmy Castillo, UT Southwestern’s first Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences recipient
- Hispanic-American BRG: Judith Ramos, Project Manager in Supply Chain and co-Chair of the BRG
- LGBTQ & Allies BRG: Jacob Hopgood, Project Specialist—Care Redesign in Quality and Operational Excellence and Communications Subcommittee Leader for the BRG

Dr. Yanagisawa discovered orexin in 1998 when he was a full-time UT Southwestern faculty member. In 1999, he showed that orexin causes narcolepsy, leading to new vistas in deep research and to a better understanding of the brain’s sleep/wake switching mechanisms.

More than a decade ago, recognizing that the fundamental mechanism of sleep homeostasis still remained a mystery, Dr. Yanagisawa had launched an ambitious two-continent, large-scale forward genetics program to screen for deep sleep abnormalities in mice, encouraged by discussions with UT Southwestern Neuroscience Chair Joseph Takahashi, Ph.D., also an HHMI Investigator and a specialist in the study of the body’s clocks and in forward genetics.

“My many discussions with Joe Takahashi were a major factor for me to launch the high-risk, high-impact project of deep-sleep genetics in mice. I am deeply grateful to Joe for the scientific discussions that continue to this day,” Dr. Yanagisawa said.

That ongoing project has led to the identification of several new genes considered of great importance in the regulation of sleep.

**Breakthrough Continued from page 1**

As an Associate Professor of Molecular Genetics and Internal Medicine at UT Southwestern, Dr. Goldstein worked alongside Dr. Masashi Yanagisawa, who discovered orexin in 1998. The discovery of sleep proteins geared toward the treatment of human diseases, particularly those associated with sleep disorders, has become a major focus of Dr. Goldstein’s research.

“From the very beginning, Dr. Goldstein showed a commitment to excellence at UT Southwestern. In addition, the institution’s faculty has received six Nobel Prizes and includes 24 members of the National Academy of Sciences, 38 members of the National Academy of Medicine, and 14 Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigators,” said Dr. Goldstein.

Dr. Goldstein, who runs a joint laboratory with Dr. Brown, is Chair of Molecular Genetics and Professor of Internal Medicine at UT Southwestern. Dr. Goldstein’s work has been recognized by the scientific community through numerous awards and honors, including membership in the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Institute of Medicine.

Dr. Brown and Dr. Goldstein both believe that the success of UT Southwestern’s Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences is due to the institution’s commitment to research excellence and its dedication to fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment.

“Dr. Brown and Dr. Goldstein are two of the most accomplished scientists at UT Southwestern. They bring together a unique combination of expertise and passion for their work,” said Dr. Goldstein.

Dr. Brown and Dr. Goldstein’s joint laboratory focuses on the identification of genes and proteins that are involved in the regulation of sleep and wakefulness. Their research has led to the discovery of several new genes that are important in the regulation of sleep, including those involved in the control of sleep/wake switching mechanisms.

Dr. Brown and Dr. Goldstein are currently working on a project to identify and characterize these new genes in order to better understand the mechanisms that govern sleep and wakefulness.

**Building a legacy of research excellence**

Dr. Yanagisawa’s Breakthrough Prize continues a legacy of research excellence at UT Southwestern. In addition, the institution’s faculty has received six Nobel Prizes and includes 24 members of the National Academy of Sciences, 38 members of the National Academy of Medicine, and 14 Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigators.
Bradley Lega, M.D.

The medical students and residents at UT Southwestern are among the best in the country,” Dr. Lega said. “It’s easy to teach people with so much motivation and talent. They make my job easy, and I’m sure many of them will go on to be exceptional teachers for futuretrainees.”

The nomination came from Depart-ment employees, emphasizing Dr. Lega’s passion for teaching in the operating room and ready availability to staff urgent cases on short notice, even on nights and weekends.

The largest state medical society in the nation, TMA represents nearly 56,000 physician and medical student members.

Dr. Lega honored with TMA mentoring award

The Texas Medical Association (TMA) Resident and Fellow Section recently honored Bradley Lega, M.D., Associate Professor of Neurological Surgery, Neurology, and Psychiatry, with the 2022 J.T. “Lamar” McNew, MD, Award for his service to physicians-in-training.

Named for Dr. McNew, a retired physician who served in the Brazos Valley region and taught at the Texas A&M Health Science Center, the award celebrates a TMA physician or佐 who has provided outstanding mentoring and service to residents and fellows.

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