NCI renews Simmons Cancer Center’s comprehensive designation

The National Cancer Institute has renewed the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center’s comprehensive designation, reaffirming its place among the country’s elite cancer institutes.

There are 71 NCI-designated cancer centers in the U.S. Fifty-one of them are designated as Comprehensive Cancer Centers. This designation recognizes the centers’ leadership in fighting cancer and includes them in a nationwide infrastructure that advances cancer discovery and patient care by integrating laboratory, clinical, and population-based research, as well as community outreach, education, and training.

Renewal of the NCI comprehensive designation came soon after the Simmons Cancer Center was ranked in the top 25 among hundreds of cancer centers in the nation by U.S. News & World Report.

The Simmons Cancer Center added a 71,000-square-foot Radiation Oncology expansion that opened this summer and will open a new nine-story, 300,000-square-foot Outpatient Care Tower in 2022.

From Staff Reports

The Simmons Cancer Center’s new nine-story, 300,000-square-foot Outpatient Care Tower will open in 2022.

Tu, Tagliabracci selected as HHMI Investigators

Benjamin Tu, Ph.D.
Vincent Tagliabracci, Ph.D.

are members of UT Southwestern’s Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center.

“We are delighted that Drs. Tagliabracci and Tu have been selected for this high honor on the basis of both their past work and especially their promise for important discoveries in the future,” said Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., President of UT Southwestern.

“Dr. Tagliabracci has uncovered an unexpected and novel family of pseudokinases that alter protein form and function in a way that’s categorically distinct from canonical

Please see HHMI on page 2

UT Southwestern urses celebrate earning renewed Magnet recognition, nursing’s highest honor

John Warner, M.D., celebrates with Susan Hernandez, D.N.P., after learning UT Southwestern had once again earned nursing’s highest honor, Magnet designation.

By Carol Marie Cropper

UT Southwestern’s nurses were once again honored for excellence Sept. 15 as the Medical Center earned re-designation as a Magnet organization from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). Fewer than 9% of U.S. hospitals have earned Magnet designation, according to the ANCC’s Commission on Magnet. It is considered the ANCC’s highest honor, given to health care organizations that design nursing goals to improve patient outcomes. Although UT Southwestern first achieved Magnet status in 2010, programs must regularly be reevaluated every four years.

UTSW’s appraisal, delayed by the pandemic, was in July. Nurses and UTSW leaders across the campus watched and listened via Zoom videoconference that Wednesday morning as the hoped-for call arrived with the Chair of the ANCC’s Commission on Magnet, Jeanette Ives Erickson, D.N.P., RN, NEA-BC, FAAN.

“The Commission has reviewed all of your submitted documentation and the findings from your site visit,” Dr. Erickson said on the call broadcast to listeners. “...It’s my absolute honor to tell you and your colleagues that we are officially notifying you that the Commission on Magnet has unanimously voted to credential UT Southwestern Medical Center as a Magnet organization.”

UTSW’s Associate Chief Nursing Officer for Nursing Excellence, Victoria England, D.N.P., RN, NE-BC, immediately called for a celebration.

Please see MAGNET on page 5

Peterson aims to transform UTSW into a clinical research powerhouse

Benjamin Peterson, M.D., M.P.H.

A n extensive national search was conducted by UT Southwestern leadership for the right candidate to become its inaugural Vice Provost and Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Research, ultimately recruiting a prolific researcher who had run a major clinical research institute at Duke University.

Eric Peterson, M.D., M.P.H., joined the University last fall, charged with building UT Southwestern’s clinical research program — which aims to translate lab findings into the clinic and test potentially lifesaving drugs and treatments in patients — into a powerhouse equal to its long-respected basic science program. His position was created to stimulate and

Please see CLINICAL RESEARCH on page 8

Scientists reveal how vitamin A enters immune cells in the gut

I mmunologists and geneticists at UT Southwestern have discovered how vitamin A enters immune cells in the intestines — findings that could offer insight to treat digestive diseases and perhaps help improve the efficacy of some vaccines.

“Now that we know more about this important aspect of immune function, we may eventually be able to manipulate how vitamin A is delivered to the immune system for disease treatment or prevention,” said Lotu Hooper, Ph.D., Chair of Immunology, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, and

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November 2021

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Spong named Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology

By Carol Marie Cooper

Catherine Spong, M.D., has been named Chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, where she has served as Vice Chair since 2016. Dr. Spong is a leader in maternal-fetal medicine, a field in which she has led research to better understand fetal development, created an evidence base for expert in maternal-fetal medicine, a field in which she has led research to better understand fetal development, created an evidence base for fetal development, and advocated for including pregnant and lactating women in clinical studies.

Before joining UT Southwestern, Dr. Spong served Department of Pediatrics at the University of Cincinnati's Department of Maternal-Fetal Medicine and co-Director of the Center for Maternal-Fetal Medicine and Health and Human Development (NICHD), a division of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), where she led 20 years of research funded by the NIH. She is a member of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society for Gynecologic Investigation.

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Acute care cardiologist joins UT Southwestern as Chief of Pediatric Cardiology

Nicolás Madsen, M.D., M.P.H., a specialist in acute care cardiology, has been named Chair of Pediatric Cardiology and co-Director of the Acute Care Cardiology Unit at UT Southwestern. Dr. Madsen, 39, is a native Texan who received his medical degree from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. He joins UT Southwestern from Sepulveda Basin Veterans Affairs Medical Center, where he served as Chief of Pediatric Cardiology.

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Town Hall highlights UTSW successes, advancements during pandemic

By Patrick Wascovich

In a virtual Town Hall held on Sept. 21, UT Southwestern President Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., shared an update on priorities and progress the institution has made over the past year in the midst of the ongoing pandemic. In his address, held online due to continuing COVID-19 protocols, Dr. Podolsky also highlighted UT Southwestern’s continued progress in upcoming growth opportunities, planned initiatives, and the institution’s identified strategic priorities for the next year.

“Great things have been accomplished throughout the past year by the dedicated people who come to UT Southwestern each day,” Dr. Podolsky said. “A foremost priority of FY22 will necessarily be to prepare for and respond to the various challenges that the pandemic includes, providing the health and well-being of each of you, along with the patients and families we serve.”

Dr. Podolsky outlined other priorities of the new fiscal year, including planning for a School of Public Health, recruiting leadership for several academic departments, expanding in equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts, enacting a plan to transform, enhance, and grow the institution’s investment in future campus growth; and promoting the well-being of faculty, staff, and learners.

The President discussed how UT Southwestern has successfully addressed the multifaceted challenges of COVID-19 in new ways, focused on improved patient outcomes and greater patient satisfaction. In addition to acknowledging UT Southwestern’s success in investing thousands of faculty, employees, and students to work and learn remotely, Dr. Podolsky also highlighted UT Southwestern’s return to exceptional in-person clinical care and expansion of telemedicine as an option when appropriate.

In 2021, record numbers of patients turned to UT Southwestern seeking help from our physicians, working along with our nursing colleagues and staff as well as our learners. Dr. Podolsky said. There was an increase of more than 10% – fully 4,400,000 patient visits – in the number of patients cared for in our University Hospital and clinics, as well as our partners outside the institution. Ensuring that care has continued to evolve, he added with his usual humility, is the number of patients’ visits provided in a virtual format.

Other significant achievements highlighted from the 2021 fiscal year included.

• William F. Clements Jr. University Hospital has been named to the World Report as the No. 1 Best Hospital in Dallas-Fort Worth for the fifth year in a row.
• Planning for the first psychiatry hospital in the Dallas-Fort Worth region, in partnership with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.
• Construction of UT Southwestern’s clinical presence in North Texas, including construction of a new regional medical center at the redeveloped RedBird Mall in southern Dallas.
• Redesignation of the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center as a Comprehensive Cancer Center by the National Cancer Institute.
• Establishment of the Dr. Glennis V. Beutler Chair in Immunology and Infectious Disease.
• Magnet redesignation by the American Nurses Credentialing Center.
• Continued growth of Southwestern’s Health Resources as a vital network that provides care for nearly 300,000 Medicare beneficiaries in North Texas – more than any other accountable care organization in the region.
• In Academic Affairs, Dr. Podolsky said the top priority for the new fiscal year will be to implement plans for a School of Public Health. UT Southwestern’s first new school in more than 50 years and the institution’s fourth overall, Dr. Podolsky also shared that he was eager to see UT Southwestern’s vision to advance the science of public health through research innovation, while preparing a robust public health workforce, to come for the life of the benefit of those who live in North Texas and beyond.
• Colette Sugg Skinner, Ph.D., Chair of Population and Data Sciences, has been named Interim Dean of the new school, which will enroll Master of Public Health students in the fall of 2021 and Ph.D. students in the fall of 2024.
• Podolsky also mentioned another important priority for the institution – one that will positively shape and impact the region: a joint project with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to plan and build DFWP’s first state-funded psychiatric hospital. UT Southwestern will oversee the construction of the new hospital and will operate it to provide much needed expanded access to this dimension of the continuum of mental health services, and prohibiting racial discrimination – and to sustaining a safe and secure environment for learning and working for all students, trainees, faculty, and staff.
• “We must lean in and assure that our commitment to these values and obligations permeates all aspects of what we do as an institution,” he said. “Promoting diversity is a moral imperative for our institution. In addition to being the right thing to do, it is a catalyst for innovation in fulfilling our mission, and it is essential for achieving UT Southwestern’s full potential as a leading academic medical center.”

To that end, UT Southwestern is launching a national search for a Chief Diversity Officer. This new executive will focus exclusively on diversity, inclusion, equity, and engagement, with responsibility for identifying barriers that limit opportunity for any historically underrepresented groups on campus and proposing actions to help ensure that each community member develops the cultural awareness and competency needed to advance the Medical Center’s mission.

Dr. Conaway holds the Cecil H. Graham Chair in Cellular and Molecular Biology.
• Dr. Deffeband holds the Joel B. Smith, M.D. Chair in Pediatrics, and is a Sowell Family Scholar in Medical Research.
• Dr. Hedin holds the Roy and Christine Sturigis Chair in Biomedical Research, and the Lloyd C. Rector, Jr., M.D. Professorship in Acid-Base Regulation.
• Dr. Skinner holds the Adolf and Edmond M. Hofmann Distinguished Chair in Medical Science.
• Dr. Phillips holds the Sam G. Winstead and S. Andrew Bell Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Research.
• Dr. Ross holds the Grier Gasen and E. Fogel Goff Distinguished Chair in Medical Research.
• Dr. Skinner holds the Parkland Community Medicine Professorship.
• Dr. Spong holds the Paul C. MacDonald Distinguished Chair in Obstetrics and Gynecology.
• Dr. Tagliabracci is a Michael L. Rosenberg Scholar in Medical Research.
• Dr. Jordan holds the Raymond and Ellen Willie Distinguished Chair in Cancer Research, in Honor of Lawrence and Raymond Wiley, M.D.

President Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
• Magnet redesignation by the American Nurses Credentialing Center.
• Continued growth of Southwestern’s Health Resources as a vital network that provides care for nearly 300,000 Medicare beneficiaries in North Texas – more than any other accountable care organization in the region.
• Election to the National Academy of Sciences of Margaret Phillips, Ph.D., Chair of Biochemistry and Professor of Pharmacology; and Donald Hilgeman, Ph.B., Professor of Physiology, Internal Medicine; and in the Charles and Jane Pak Center for Mineral Metabolism and Clinical Research
• Election to the National Academy of Medicine of Ralph Deffeband, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Pediatrics and Chief of the Division of Pediatric Genetics and Metabolism; whose primary appointment is Professor at the Children’s Medical Center Research Institute at UT Southwestern (CDRI).
• Selection by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) of Vincent Tagliabracci, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Molecular Biology, and Benjamin Tu, Ph.D., Professor of Biochemistry, as new investigators.
• The recruitment of Eric Peterson, M.D., M.F.H., to the newly created role of Vice Provost and Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Research, the recruitment of Joan Conaway, Ph.D. to the role of Vice Provost and Dean of Basic Research, and the appointment of Elliott Ross, Ph.D., to the new position of Associate Dean for Basic Research.
• Dr. Podolsky again emphasized that UT Southwestern is unequivocally committed to promoting diversity, providing equal opportunity, and...
By Christian Breenlee

A stress signal received by the heart from fat could help protect against cardiac damage induced by obesity, a UT Southwestern-led study suggests. The finding, published in Cell Metabolism, could help explain the “obesity paradox,” a phenomenon in which obese individuals have better short- and medium-term cardiovascular disease prognoses compared with those who are lean, but with ultimately worse long-term outcomes.

"The mechanism we have identified here could be one of many that protect the heart in obesity," said study leader Philipp E. Scherer, Ph.D., a UT Southwestern Professor of Internal Medicine and Cell Biology who has long studied fat metabolism.

Study co-leader Clare Crewe, Ph.D., former Assistant Instructor of Internal Medicine, explained that the metabolic stress of obesity gradually makes fat dysfunctional, causing its mitochondria—the cellular organelles that generate energy—to shrink and die. Eventually, this fat loses the ability to store lipids generated by excess calories in food, poising other organs through an effect called lipotoxicity. Some organs, including the heart, appear to mount a preemptive defense against low muscle-weight heparin was 27% less likely to need cardiovascular regulatory organ support, such as intubation, said Ambhise Pandey, M.D., Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine, who serves as site investigator and co-author of the study in The New England Journal of Medicine.

Moderate illness patients treated with therapeutic-dose anticoagulation with unfractionated or low molecular-weight heparin were 27% less likely to need cardiovascular regulatory organ support compared with those who were not treated with anticoagulants, according to the study.

Heparin is an anticoagulant, or blood thinner, that prevents the formation of blood clots. The injectable medication is typically used to treat and prevent blood clots.

To counteract this stress, heart cells produce a flood of antioxidant molecules. This protective backlash was so strong that when the scientists injected mice with extracellular vesicles filled with pieces of dying mitochondria. Some of these mitochondrial snippets traveled through the bloodstream to the heart, triggering an oxidative stress, a state in which cells generate harmful free radicals.

When these animals ate a high-fat diet and obese, their fat cells began sending out extracellular vesicles filled with small pieces of dying mitochondria. Some of these mitochondrial snippets traveled through the bloodstream to the heart, triggering an oxidative stress, a state in which cells generate harmful free radicals.

In patients hospitalized with moderate COVID-19, the study found those treated with therapeutic-dose heparin were 27% less likely to need respiratory support such as intubation.

"If we treat 1,000 patients who are hospitalized with COVID-19 with moderate illness, an additional 40 patients would have meaningful improvement in clinical status," Dr. Scherer said.

Participating platforms for the study, which defined moderately ill patients as those who did not need intensive care unit-level support, included Antithrombotic Therapy to Ameliorate Complications of COVID-19 (ACTIV-4a), a Multicenter, Adaptive, Randomized Controlled Platform Trial of the Safety and Efficacy of Anti-thrombotic Strategies in Hospitalized Adults with COVID-19 (ACTIV-4a); and Randomized, Embedded, Multifactorial Adaptive Platform Trial for Community-Acquired Pneumonia (REMAP-CAAP). Comparisons among the three platforms are provided in the supplementary appendix, available with the full text of the article at nejm.org.

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Evidence suggests that the obese paradox may be due to the heart’s innate ability to protect itself from damage by producing an antioxidant stress response. The ability to maintain this protective response could help explain the obesity paradox, in which obese individuals have lower death rates compared with those who are lean.

"If we can understand how the heart is able to protect itself from oxidative stress, we can learn how to improve heart health in obese and nonobese individuals alike," Dr. Scherer said.

But it is important to differentiate the obesity paradox from obesity-linked heart disease, Dr. Crewe said. "It is critical to differentiate between these two entities, as the obesity paradox does not lead to worse outcomes than those seen in nonobese individuals."

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"If we treat 1,000 patients who are hospitalized with COVID-19 with moderate illness, an additional 40 patients would have meaningful improvement in clinical status," Dr. Scherer said.
A study by UT Southwestern scientists indicates that the enzyme protein phospha-
tase receptor domain 2 (AP-2) may be a major player in the development of preclampsia, a dangerous pregnancy complica-
tion characterized by the development of high blood pressure and protein in the urine. The finding, published in Circulation Research, could lead to new treatments for preclampsia other than premature delivery, which is often the only option.

Preclampsia is a notoriously common cause of premature birth, which can be life-threatening for babies and lead to lifelong consequences. Through identifying AP-2's role in this condi-
tion, research into new ways to develop treatments for preclampsia that are far better for both mothers and babies,” said study leader Philip W. Shaul, M.D., Professor and Vice Chair for Research in the Department of Pediatrics and Director of the 2 (AP-2) research group at UT Southwestern.

Dr. Shaul co-led the study with Chiheko Mteko, Ph.D., Professor of Pediatrics and Cell Biology.

“By Christen Brownlee

Dr. Shaul answered emphatically that "I really am not as anxious as these days at a lot of places in this country," he said. Dr. Peterson added that he also likes that the institution is not mired down in bureaucracy. "You can get things done here. Change can happen here," he said.

UT Southwestern's research got a boost through research and professional development. With the funding announcement, Dr. Erickson cited four areas of UT Southwestern excellence, referred to as Exemplars:

• The nursing staff's mobilization in response to COVID-19, setting up four community sites and providing 80,000 tests over two months and more than 4,000 vaccinations during the pandemic of the hospital:

Creation of a culture and organizational support network that encourages patient and family involvement of patients and their families

• Support for research and evidence-based practices by nurses

• Nurse involvement in leadership and activities to find ways to improve patient care and safety

Such efforts are part of a plan for excellence, with APS, finding that the placenta, too, had increased trophoblast production of proteins involved in preclampsia.

When the researchers gave the pregnant mice a drug inhibiting PAA, the rodents were protected from preclampsia – and the treatment had no apparent harmful effects on the mice or their gestating gals.

Hoping to translate these findings to humans, the scientists examined placentas from women with APS, finding that the placenta, too, had increased PAA activity. However, compared with placentas from normal pregnancies, those from preeclamptic patients without APS also had increased PAA activity, suggesting that this mechanism could be operative in a variety of forms of preclampsia. With further research, Dr. Shaul said, treatments targeting PFA2 or its related machinery in the trophoblast may even be viable treatments for preclampsia in pregnant women.

"I am thrilled by this recogni-
tion of the outstanding work that our nursing colleagues have been doing at UT Southwestern carry out day in and day out," Dr. Podolsky said.

"We want to increase our capacity of nurses in leadership and activities by nurses and nursing leaders over the next few years," Dr. Peterson said. "My goal is to make it as easy as it can be for nurses to do high-quality research at UT Southwestern.

"I think we deserve a great big cheer. Everybody unmute," she said, followed by a chorus of "Yes, Magnet is a nursing desig-
nation in the United States," she said.

"We're really proud of," he said. "But we don't do this by ourselves.

Dr. Peterson completed medical school at the University of Pennsylvania, earned a fellowship in cardiology at the Brigham and Women's Hospital, and a Master of Public Health degree at the Harvard School of Public Health. He did a fellowship in cardiovascular disease at Duke University Medical Center. He has gone on to author or co-author more than 1,400 peer-reviewed papers.
Gene for sex hormone synthesis could play key role in eczema

By Christine Brownlee

A study led by UT Southwestern dermatologists suggests that a common inflammatory skin condition may stem from poorly regulated sex hormones. The finding, published in PNAS, could offer an unexpected new target to fight eczema.

"We often think of eczema as a dry-skin condition and treat mild cases with moisturizers," said corresponding author Tamia Harris-Tryon, M.D., Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Dermatology and Immunology. "Here, we're showing that eczema may stem from poorly regulated oils and lipids to moisturize itself."
Ross appointed Associate Dean for Basic Research

By Jan Jarvis

Elliott M. Ross, Ph.D., a faculty member in the Department of Pharmacology for 40 years, has been promoted to Associate Dean for Basic Research. In this new role, Dr. Ross will oversee research support cores and the Scientific Integrity program, which guarantees that research is carried out with the highest standards of scientific rigor and ethical standards. He will also provide guidance and coordination of business functions that directly impact research activities.

“My goal in this new position is to provide administrative support and encouragement for outstanding basic science research at UT Southwestern,” Dr. Ross said.

While he will spend most of his time on administrative activities, he will continue to perform duties in research and education, reporting to Joan Conaway, Ph.D., Vice Provost and Dean of Basic Research.

Dr. Ross is an accomplished scientist with much experience and a deep knowledge of UT Southwestern. I am grateful to have the opportunity to partner with him to maintain and enhance UT Southwestern’s position at the forefront of biomedical research,” said Dr. Conaway, also Professor of Molecular Biology.

Dr. Ross’ research focuses on how cells use signaling proteins to integrate and amplify information from hormones, neurotransmitters, and drugs that mimic these molecules. He conducts quantitative biochemical and biophysical studies of how G proteins – key nodes in cellular signaling circuits – convey information from diverse receptors to an array of intracellular regulatory networks. He designed and executed the research that resulted in the discovery of the first known G protein.

His recent research has examined how signal timing and signal intensity are independently regulated and how information is faithfully integrated at multiple receptors, G proteins, and associated proteins.

Among his long history of contributions at UTSW, Dr. Ross led the Pharmacology Graduate Program and founded the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program, which he directed for 10 years.

Dr. Ross also served on the UTSW Promotions and Tenure Committee for 15 years and currently chairs the Prom/Tenure Review Committee. In 2016, he became the Research Integrity Officer and Assistant Dean of Scientific Integrity. Since 1999, he has chaired the institution-supported Core Laboratories Oversight Committee and directed the Biochemical Kinetics Core. Additionally, he is Associate Director for Shared Resources of the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Dr. Conaway holds the Cecil H. Green Distinguished Chair in Cellular and Molecular Biology. Dr. Ross holds the Greer Garson and E.E. Fogelson Distinguished Chair in Medical Research.

UT Southwestern enhances environmentally conscious initiatives

By Jan Jarvis

UT Southwestern’s efforts to reduce its carbon footprint can be seen in the variety of campus sustainability measures, including energy and water conservation programs and solid waste reduction initiatives, along with the expanded use of native plants, a lush tree canopy, and monarch butterfly-friendly landscaping.

“When you look at the big picture, it’s a green island surrounded by concrete,” said Juan Guerra Jr., Vice President of Facilities Management.

A closer look reveals even more ways in which UT Southwestern endeavors to be environmentally focused, said Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., President of UT Southwestern.

“Our Campus Sustainability Committee actively monitors and initiates a variety of sustainability measures, including energy and water conservation and solid waste reduction initiatives,” Dr. Podolsky shared in a recent campus briefing. “In Facilities Management, we have many processes and programs aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We also have robust recycling and reuse programs to reduce our solid waste stream.”

UT Southwestern actively looks for opportunities to conserve energy, Mr. Guerra said.

“Over the past 10 years, energy consumption has been reduced about 12% per square foot,” he said.

Boilers are tested monthly to ensure all emissions are within federal and state regulatory guidelines. In addition, old steam boilers were recently replaced at the North and South Thermal Energy Plants with higher efficiency units that have low greenhouse gas emissions potential.

“We do everything we can to minimize air emissions,” Mr. Guerra said.

UT Southwestern also applies LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) green building standards when designing and constructing all new facilities.

Recycling also plays a role in reducing the carbon footprint. In fiscal year 2020, UT Southwestern recycled an estimated 750 tons of mixed recycling, which equates to an 11% reduction in waste from 2016 to 2020.

The Blue Bin Recycling Program has grown over the years to accommodate mixed recycling for paper, cardboard, envelopes, newspapers, magazines, file folders, plastic materials, cartons, and aluminum cans. Efforts to recycle plastic foam products are underway.

In hospital and clinical areas, the hospital’s “Green Team” focuses on areas to improve the overall sustainability impact, said Donald McLoughlin, Associate Vice President of Hospital Clinical Operations. The team focuses annually to improve overall sustainability impact and align with the overarching UT Southwestern Sustainability Steering Committee.

“We implemented a program at William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital in which we no longer place sheets on an empty bed until a patient is admitted,” Mr. McLoughlin said. This led to a reduction of 496,046 pounds of linen used annually at weather and require less watering. To maintain soil moisture and reduce disposal of landscaping trash, all mulch is made from recycled plant materials. Also, an arborist manages the landscaping to protect the trees during extreme weather, Mr. Guerra said. These efforts have earned UT Southwestern recognition as a 2020 Tree Campus Healthcare Facility from the Arbor Day Foundation.

In addition, monarch butterfly-friendly plants have been added to the landscaping to support the butterflies and provide migration waysstations.

To further reduce the carbon footprint, carpooling and use of mass transit are highly encouraged on campus, and subsidized DART passes are available.

“Collectively, we can make a huge difference by all the little things we do when we’re on campus, from turning off lights in empty rooms to reporting leaking faucets or using the stairs instead of elevators,” Mr. Guerra said.

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.

Old steam boilers were recently replaced at the North and South Thermal Energy Plants with higher efficiency units that have low greenhouse gas emissions potential.
An extensive renovation project on the ninth floor of the James W. Aston Ambulatory Care Center is optimizing clinical research space for faculty, staff, and study participants.

The 14-month project involves refreshing and redesigning research space, work areas, and the patient lobby on the ninth floor into the new 12,684-square-foot Aston U-9 Clinical Research Unit.

The first phase began in October 2020 and was completed in June, enabling the relocation of the Clinical Research Unit (CRU) and the Neuroscience Translational Research Center (NTRC) to the ninth floor of the Aston Center in July. The second phase – expected to be completed in December – will open 38 new exam, procedure, and consult rooms dedicated to clinical research.

The expanded research facility will support the Dallas Heart Study as well as clinical studies from the Departments of Internal Medicine, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Urology, Surgery, and others.

The improvements optimize clinical research facilities for faculty and staff as well as make the research experience more comfortable for participants, said John D. Beaver, M.P.A., M.Ed., CCPI, Assistant Director of Clinical Research Operations in the Office of Clinical Research. For example, state-of-the-art medical equipment and a new specimen prep room will help ensure positive results for UT Southwestern community members conducting clinical research. In addition, dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) imaging services – which are used to measure bone density – will also be available to clinical researchers.

"The UT Southwestern research community is committed to providing innovative solutions through the everyday practice of clinical trials," Mr. Beaver added. "The new Aston U-9 Clinical Research Unit provides a positive environment for our patients, Principal Investigators, and study teams to conduct clinical research to advance tomorrow’s medicine today."

— Rachel Stowe Master

Aston renovation enhances space for clinical research

On Sept. 11, UT Southwestern members of the UT Southwestern community gathered virtually for the American Heart Association’s Dallas Heart Walk.

UT Southwestern had 720 registered walkers participate in the 2021 American Heart Association's Dallas Heart Walk. UT Southwestern’s 53 teams raised $21,054 to help train thousands in lifesaving CPR and fund groundbreaking brain and heart research. This year, participants were encouraged to walk 1 to 3 miles in the comfort of their homes or anywhere in their community to avoid large gatherings during the pandemic.

To up the ante, more than 100 employees also took up the UT Southwestern Steps Challenge on the same day, collectively walking 1,579,888 steps – an average of about 15,000 steps per person.

Thelma Morgan, a Medical Transcriptionist for Clinical Laboratory Services pictured directly below, took home a three-peat victory after racking up an astonishing 133,673 steps in 24 hours, her new personal best. Others who finished at the top of UT Southwestern’s Steps Challenge leaderboard with more than 45,000 steps were: Alvaro Noriega Ramirez, Clinical Laboratory Assistant in Transfusion Services; Jaymol Mathew, Registered Nurse II at William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital; and May Dela Cruz, B.S.M.T., H(ASCP), Quality Assurance Coordinator for Clinical Laboratory Services.

In the 2020 Steps Challenge, Ms. Morgan amassed 105,745 steps and, in the Heart Month Step Challenge seven months before that, she walked 85,637 steps in a single day. Each year she has paced with more fervor, driven by her motivation and love for her late father, who passed away from a heart attack five years ago.

"I could hear his voice telling me, ‘You can do this,’ throughout the challenge," she said.

Bringing the UT Southwestern community together for a cause

Heart Walk, Steps Challenge events on same day raise awareness of cardiovascular disease impact

By Courtney Borchert

Members of the UT Southwestern community gathered virtually for the second year in a row to show their commitment to raising awareness in the fight against cardiovascular disease.

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