

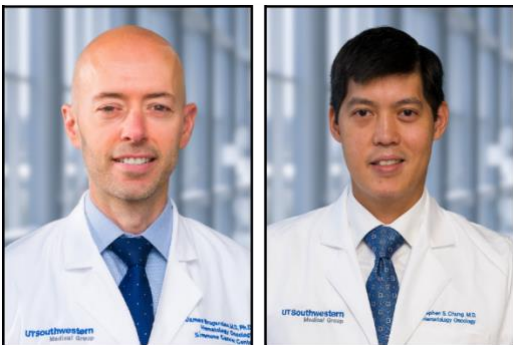
medicine minute

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

research roundup

FUNDING

Brugarolas, Chung Receives CPRIT Grants



The Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) has awarded research grants totaling more than \$2 million to **James Brugarolas, M.D., Ph.D.**, a Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology and founding Director of the Kidney Cancer Program, and **Stephen Chung, M.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology.

Dr. Brugarolas' award of nearly \$1.2 million will fund his work of "Dissecting TFE3 Mediated tRCC Tumorigenesis."

Kidney cancer is notably prevalent in Texas, with translocation renal cell carcinoma (tRCC) being a particularly challenging subtype that affects children and adolescents and lacks effective therapy. Due to its rarity, however, tRCC is understudied, and progress was hindered by the absence of suitable animal models. Building upon their [recently published](#) mouse model reproducing the human disease, they will perform mechanistic studies *in vivo* leveraging the UTSW transgenic mouse core led by Dr. Hammer in collaboration with Dr. Ben Sabari and they will also evaluate a potential drug therapy. His project could provide key insights into tRCC and pave the way for new therapies.

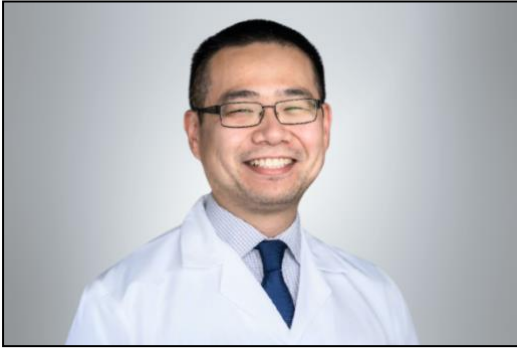
Dr. Chung's award of nearly \$900,000 will support "Studying Hematopoietic Stem Cells to Predict and Understand Mechanisms of Post-transplant Relapse in the Myelodysplastic Syndromes."

Myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS) are cancers of the bone marrow that lead to low blood counts and an increased risk of leukemia. MDS originates from mutated blood-forming stem cells known as MDS stem cells. Current treatments can improve blood counts but do not eliminate MDS stem cells, making bone marrow transplants the only cure. However, 40 percent of patients experience a relapse after transplant, highlighting the need for effective relapse prevention.

Dr. Chung's project will test a DNA sequencing technique to identify patients who are likely to experience a relapse before it occurs. He will also test whether detecting proteins that are unique to MDS stem cells can monitor relapses from a simple blood test. Finally, he will examine the molecular features of MDS stem cells post-transplant to determine whether they persist randomly or by evading the immune system.

PHYSICIAN-SCIENTIST RECRUITMENT

Zou Awarded \$2M to Support Cancer Research at UTSW



Tao Zou, M.D., Ph.D., an Instructor of Medicine at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, has accepted a position as Assistant Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology and a member of the Experimental Therapeutics Research Program in the Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center.

To support his recruitment and the development of his independent research program at UT Southwestern, Dr. Zou has received a \$2 million CPRIT Scholar award from the Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas.

Originally from China, Dr. Zou holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Emory University in Atlanta. He earned his medical degree at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, where he also received his doctoral degree in immunology. He completed internal medicine residency training at Massachusetts General Hospital and medical oncology fellowship training at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Dr. Zou's research interests include the immune mechanisms of self/non-self recognition in the context of cancer, specifically the repurposing of antiviral mechanisms of pathogen sensing to destroy cancer cells.

CLINICAL TRIALS

Clinicians Sought to Participate in Home BP Visual Estimation Survey

Wanpen Vongpatanasin, M.D., a Professor in the Division of Cardiology and Program Director of the Hypertension Fellowship Program, is seeking clinician participants for the **E.Y.E.-BALL** study (**E**stimating **Y**ield of **E**yeballed **B**lood **P**ressure **A**verages), an investigation into the accuracy of estimating home blood pressure (BP) readings from visual estimation.

"Out-of-office BP monitoring is considered to be the gold standard in assessing BP for diagnosis and management of hypertension," Dr. Vongpatanasin says. "This study will help us understand how well we perform when home BP readings are sent to MyChart or shared by patients during clinic visits."

The study will be conducted in survey format. Respondents will have 20-40 seconds to respond to sets of simulated home BP readings. After estimating each set of readings, respondents will be asked if they believe the BP is high or normal.

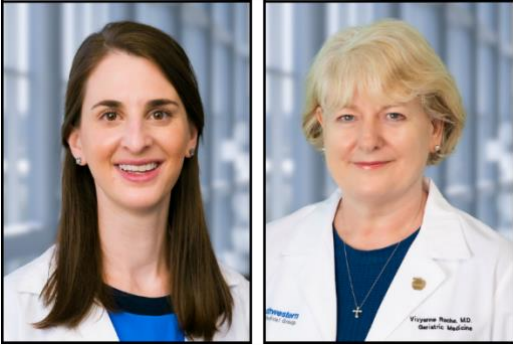
"Participation will not affect performance evaluation, career advancement, or other employment-related decisions made by peers or supervisors," Dr. Vongpatanasin says. "Participants may withdraw at any time without penalty."

To learn more and to start the survey, which is designed to take less than 10 minutes, click [here](#).

kudos

MEDICAL SCHOOL

Bavli, Roche to Have Prominent Roles in Graduation Ceremonies



Natalie Bavli, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology, and **Vivienne Roche, M.D.**, Professor Emeritus and Distinguished Teaching Professor, have been selected to serve prominent roles during commencement ceremonies in May.

Dr. Roche will speak during the Hooding Ceremony on Thursday, May 15 in the Tom and Lula Gooch Auditorium; Dr. Bavli will serve as Commencement Marshal for the graduation ceremony on Friday, May 16, at the Morton H. Myerson Symphony Center.

“I am deeply moved by this honor,” Dr. Bavli says. “I am thrilled to be part of such a special milestone for the Class of 2025, which holds a special place in my heart—it was the first I had the privilege of teaching in the Hematopoietic System course and watching them grow into outstanding physicians over the past four years has been an absolute joy.”

RECOGNITION

Arora, Bhushan to Join Paulk in Medical Honor Society

Rashmi Arora, M.D., an Associate Professor in the Division of Rheumatic Diseases, and **Sujata Bhushan, M.D.**, a Clinical Professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine, have been elected to the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) honor society in recognition of “excellence in scholarship, high professionalism, leadership, and gifted teaching.”

Originally from India, Dr. Arora received her medical degree from SMS Medical College and completed internal medicine residency training at Michigan State University in East Lansing and Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. She then stayed at Louisiana State University to complete advanced training through a fellowship in rheumatology.

Dr. Arora joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2010. Her primary practice is at the Dallas VA Medical Center.

Also from India, Dr. Bhushan received her medical degree from Gandhi Medical College in Bhopal and completed postdoctoral training in Anesthesiology from Gandhi Medical College and in Internal Medicine at Norwalk Hospital in Norwalk, Connecticut.

Dr. Bhushan joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2002. Her primary practice is also at the Dallas VA Medical Center.

Together with **Elizabeth Paulk, M.D.** (previously announced), Drs. Arora and Bhushan will be recognized during the AOA banquet on **Thursday, March 20**, in the A.W. Harris Faculty Club.

personnel updates

TRANSITIONS

Nikirk to Become Executive Director of Finance for Children’s Health



Department Administrator **Nathan Nikirk, M.S., CPA**, has accepted the position of Executive Director of Finance for Children's Health, the seventh-largest pediatrics hospital in the nation.

In his new role, Mr. Nikirk will be responsible for developing and executing financial strategies designed to drive the achievement of financial goals while increasing operating performance for the private, nonprofit health system.

UT Southwestern has been the academic partner of Children's Health for nearly half of its 110-year history. In October 2024,

Children's Health and UT Southwestern broke ground on a \$5 billion pediatric health campus to replace the existing Children's Medical Center Dallas. The new campus will encompass more than 4.7 million square feet of construction, including a new pediatric hospital as its centerpiece. The hospital, comprising two 12-story towers and one eight-story tower, along with the broader care site, will significantly expand inpatient, surgical, and ambulatory capacity to meet the needs of one of the fastest-growing and largest metropolitan areas in the country.

Mr. Nikirk holds a master's degree in accounting from the University of Texas at Arlington, a master's degree in health care administration from Trinity University in San Antonio, and a bachelor's degree in biomedical science from Texas A&M University in College Station. He is also a Certified Public Accountant. Before becoming the Department Administrator in 2022, he served five years as Department Administrator for the Department of Pediatrics and 15 years in progressive administrative roles at Children's Health.

FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Sweta to Manage Department's Financial Affairs



Kumari Sweta, B.Com., CPA, CA, has accepted the position of Manager of Financial Affairs, after serving nearly two years as Senior Financial Analyst.

In her new role, Ms. Sweta will be responsible for the financial operations supporting the clinical mission of the Department, including its financial planning and analysis, budgeting, and administration of its compensation plan.

Ms. Sweta is also a Chartered Accountant (India) and holds a bachelor's degree in accounting and finance from the University of Calcutta's Goenka College of Commerce &

Business Administration. Prior to joining UT Southwestern, she gained financial planning, budgeting, and analysis experience at a multilateral development bank in Shanghai, China, and at a telecom service provider in Mumbai, India.

education and training

EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK IN MEDICAL EDUCATION

Series Launches with the 'Ask-Tell-Ask' Model

Feedback is an essential and required component of medical education, providing learners with the insights needed to refine skills and enhance patient care. To help attending physicians provide effective feedback in medical education, the Department's Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) team has launched a series of articles in *Medicine Matters* with tips and resources based on best practices.

One effective model for delivering feedback is the [Ask-Tell-Ask](#) approach developed by **Judith C. French, Ph.D.**, and colleagues, which fosters a collaborative environment where the learner actively engages in the feedback process.

To learn more about the Ask-Tell-Ask approach, as well as other helpful ways to provide effective feedback, visit the UME office.

For more information, contact [Reeni Abraham, M.D.](#), or [Sarah Collins Kamsickas, Ph.D., M.B.A.](#) To learn more about the first three steps in the Ask-Tell-Ask model, click [here](#).

in memoriam

Peter Loeb, Former Resident and Faculty Member



Peter Loeb, M.D., a gastroenterologist who served on the UT Southwestern faculty, died on Friday, Feb. 28, at his home in Dallas. He was 85.

Originally from Sweetwater, Texas, he held a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin and a medical degree from UT Southwestern, where he also completed internal medicine residency training. During the Vietnam War, he was selected as a Clinical Associate at the National Institutes of Health, where he was a commissioned officer. He then obtained advanced training through a fellowship in gastroenterology at the University of California San Francisco.

Dr. Loeb joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 1974 and served as Chief of Gastroenterology at the Dallas VA Medical Center until 1977. In 1979, he became Director of Gastroenterology at Presbyterian Hospital of Dallas and, in 1998, Chief of Gastroenterology.

Dr. Loeb continued teaching as a volunteer faculty member at UT Southwestern until 2014, receiving the Gastroenterology Fellowship teaching award (now known as the Bilhartz Award) in 1986, 1988, and 1998.

To read Dr. Loeb's obituary, click [here](#).

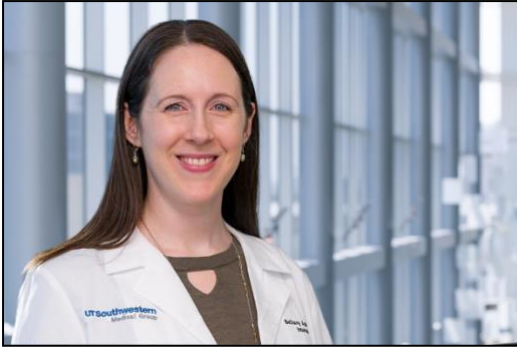


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in case you missed it

MEDBLOG

Agusala Recommends High-Protein Alternatives to Eggs



Eggs have long been a staple protein source in the American diet due to their versatility and affordability. However, recent price hikes, driven by the H5N1 avian influenza outbreak, have made eggs more expensive and less available. This has led to a search for alternative protein sources.

“Thankfully, high-protein diets and protein-enriched foods seem to be everywhere we turn,” says **Bethany Agusala, M.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine. “It’s a nutrition trend with a refreshingly positive vibe.”

Unlike carbohydrates and fats, protein is encouraged in our diets. Many products now highlight their protein content, but it’s important to understand how to incorporate a balanced “protein package” into your diet.

“Protein carries oxygen through our bloodstream, gives us energy, builds muscle, and keeps all of our cells healthy,” she says. “As protein is digested, it breaks down into 20 different amino acids that our bodies require for specific jobs within our vital organs and life-sustaining systems.”

To learn more about Dr. Agusala’s recommendations for those who are focused on protein intake, check [her latest MedBlog post](#).

News and Digital Media Featuring Internal Medicine Colleagues

- [In Memoriam: John Fordtran, M.D., Former Chief of Gastroenterology and Renowned Expert in his Field](#) (via *CenterTimes Plus*, with **Ezra Burstein, M.D., Ph.D.**)
- [Omg, Did PubMed go Dark? Blackout Stokes Fears About Database’s Future](#) (via *Nature*, with **Krutika Kuppalli, M.D.**)

this week

INTERNAL MEDICINE GRAND ROUNDS

Utah’s Mark Supiano to Discuss Blood Pressure and Aging on March 14



Mark Supiano, M.D., a Professor of Internal Medicine in the Division of Geriatrics at the University of Utah, will present the [Internal Medicine Grand Rounds](#) lecture on **Friday, March 14, at 8 a.m. in D1.502**. His topic: “Optimal Blood Pressure Targets with Age: From SHEP to ESPRIT.”

Dr. Supiano received his undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin – Madison, where he also earned his medical degree. He completed internal medicine residency training at the University of Michigan, where he also obtained fellowship training in geriatric medicine.

After serving on the University of Michigan faculty, he joined the Utah School of Medicine faculty in 2005 as Chief of the Division of Geriatrics in the School of Medicine and Director of the VA Salt Lake City Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center, a position he held until 2014.

His clinical interests include providing comprehensive geriatric assessment consultations with a particular interest in high blood pressure (hypertension) and disorders of blood pressure regulation (orthostatic or postural hypertension).

His research program has focused on characterizing sympathetic nervous system function in aging humans. Recent clinical studies have focused on the regulation of sympathetic nervous system function in older humans with hypertension and heart failure, two extremely prevalent cardiovascular diseases in the elderly.

INTERNAL MEDICINE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Parikh to Speak About Kidney Resilience on March 14



Samir M. Parikh, M.D., Professor and Chief of the Division of Nephrology, will present the [Internal Medicine Research Conference](#) on **Friday, March 14, at noon in D1.502**. His topic: “NAD+, Mitochondria, and Metabolic Frailty in the Kidney.”

The [Parikh laboratory](#)'s research into metabolic mechanisms of kidney resilience has been recognized with the 2018 Sir William Osler Award from the Interurban Clinical Club and the 2019 Donald Seldin Award from the American Society of Nephrology and the American Heart Association.

Dr. Parikh holds the Robert Tucker Hayes Distinguished Chair in Nephrology in honor of Dr. Floyd C. Rector, Jr., and the Ruth W. and Milton P. Levy, Sr. Chair in Molecular Nephrology.

Noteworthy Lectures & Conferences

- **Wednesday, March 12, Noon:** [Nephrology Works in Progress](#) with **Alexandria Fusco** (“MYC Activity in Kidney Stroma Regulates Ferroptosis”)
- **Friday, March 14, 2 p.m.:** [Pancreatic Cancer Program Meeting](#) with **Dr. Daolin Tang** (Surgery) – “Targeting Mitophagy for Pancreatic Cancer Therapy”

save the date

CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION

Heart Failure Symposium Set for May 10



The Heart Failure Symposium is scheduled for **Saturday, May 10, from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.** in the Clements University Hospital Education and Conference Center.

Under the direction of **Maryjane Farr, M.D., M.Sc.**, Professor and Section Chief of Heart Failure, Mechanical Circulatory Support, and Heart Transplantation, and **Justin Grodin, M.D., M.P.H.**, Associate Professor and Medical Director of the Internal Medicine Clinical Trials Unit, the one-day event will offer state-of-the-art lectures and panel discussions on guideline-directed medical therapy, exercise testing, pulmonary hypertension in patients with heart failure,

cardiogenic shock temporary and durable mechanical support device therapy, heart and multi-organ transplantation, cardiac amyloidosis, sarcoidosis, myocarditis, and adult congenital heart disease.

Attendees who successfully complete the course will receive 5 units of CME credit.

Dr. Farr holds the Jackie and Charles Solomon Distinguished Chair in Clinical Excellence.

To learn more or to register for the event, click [here](#).



Internal Medicine Events Calendar

Click to view additional events

Look for the next *Medicine Minute* on **Tuesday, March 18, 2025**.
Share feedback and news items with us at IMNews@UTSouthwestern.edu

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