

Division Introduction

Under the direction of Interim Division Director Tracey B. Wright, M.D., the Division of Pediatric Rheumatology at UT Southwestern Medical Center serves as a major resource for pediatric rheumatology in North Texas. In the United States there are approximately 300 board-certified pediatric rheumatologists, and four of those are at UT Southwestern. The Division receives referrals from all other children’s hospitals in the Dallas – Fort Worth Metroplex, as well as more distant areas.

The Division operates the largest and longest established multispecialty clinic for children with rheumatic diseases in the region. In the Rheumatology clinics at Scottish Rite Hospital for Children Dallas, Scottish Rite for Children Frisco, and Children’s Medical Center Dallas, diseases managed include juvenile idiopathic arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, juvenile dermatomyositis, and scleroderma. Faculty also have an interest in the diagnosis and management of a variety of rarer rheumatic diseases, including systemic vasculitis and auto-inflammatory conditions.

The Division is actively involved in both translational and clinical research endeavors directed toward improving pathophysiologic understanding, treatment options, and outcomes in a variety of pediatric rheumatologic disorders.

Pediatric Rheumatology has a significant commitment to medical education, offering a rheumatology elective for pediatric residents and fourth-year medical students. The fellowship training program is one of the only 36 ACGME-accredited programs for pediatric rheumatology; it has continuously trained fellows from all over the world for more than 30 years.



Tracey B. Wright, M.D.
Associate Professor
Interim Division Chief

Faculty

Currently the Division is comprised of 4 faculty members who provide care to patients with rheumatic disease, including inpatient, outpatient, and infusion services.

Honors / Awards

Professor Emeritus

- Marilyn Punaro

Best Doctors/Pediatric Specialists in Dallas, *D Magazine*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julie Fuller • Lorien Nassi • Marilyn Punaro | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katie Stewart • Tracey Wright |
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Texas Super Doctors, Texas Monthly

- Julie Fuller, Super Doctor
- Marilyn Punaro, Super Doctor
- Katie Stewart, Rising Star

Marilynn Punaro

- Best Doctors in America

Tracey Wright

- Rheumatology Research Foundation Pediatric Visiting Professorship

Invited Lectures

Lorien Nassi

- Arthritis Foundation, Dallas, TX, March 2019
 - *“Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis: Medication and Management Update”*
- National Juvenile Arthritis Foundation, Houston, TX, July 2019
 - *“Emotional Well-being and Self-care”*
 - *“Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis Sibling Panel”*



Pediatric Rheumatology Faculty
L-R: Katie Stewart, Tracey Wright, Julie Fuller, Lorien Nassi

Julie Fuller

- Cure JM Dallas-Fort Worth Chapter Symposium, Dallas, TX, September 2019
 - *“Up and Coming Treatments for Juvenile Dermatomyositis and Alternative Therapies”*

Tracey Wright

- American College of Rheumatology Program Directors’ Conference, Chicago, IL, March 2019
 - *“How to Teach Pediatrics to Adult Fellows in Training”*

Education and Training

The Division of Pediatric Rheumatology has a significant commitment to medical education and is actively involved in the teaching of fourth-year medical students and pediatric residents, in addition to its fully-accredited Pediatric Rheumatology Fellowship Program. Trainees in other departments also spend time in the rheumatology clinics.

Medical Students

Third-year medical students rotate through the arthritis clinic during their pediatric rotation, and an elective is available for second and fourth-year students. Tracey Wright, M.D., preceptor for this elective, and the other pediatric rheumatology faculty teach students to:

- Develop a working differential diagnosis of arthritis in childhood
- Learn a complete joint examination and the physical evaluation of rheumatologic patients
- Examine and discuss patients from all major collagen vascular disease categories: juvenile arthritis, juvenile dermatomyositis, scleroderma, and systemic lupus erythematosus

Residents

The Division provides the major instruction to pediatric residents in the evaluation of the musculoskeletal system and the assessment of the rheumatic diseases. Division faculty provide direct teaching for pediatric residents in the regular departmental clinical conferences, as well as part of the inpatient consultation service. Didactic teaching for the pediatric residents includes, but is not limited to:

- Differential diagnosis of arthritis in childhood
- Juvenile idiopathic arthritis
- Systemic lupus erythematosus
- Juvenile dermatomyositis
- Evaluation of musculoskeletal pain in children

A rheumatology elective is available for pediatric residents. Dr. Wright is the Course Director for elective; the objectives of this elective are to:

- Develop a working differential diagnosis of arthritis in childhood
- Learn a complete joint examination and the physical evaluation of rheumatologic patients
- Examine and discuss patients from all major collagen vascular disease categories: juvenile arthritis, juvenile dermatomyositis, scleroderma, and systemic lupus erythematosus

The residents see outpatients in the clinics under the supervision of the division faculty. Residents are encouraged to attend clinical conferences which offer didactic teaching for the fellows.

Fellows

The Division of Pediatric Rheumatology at UT Southwestern has one of only 36 ACGME-accredited fellowship training programs in pediatric rheumatology in the United States.

Fellows develop competence in the diagnosis and management of rheumatic diseases in children and gain a background in laboratory techniques of basic immunology and molecular biology as well as experience and education in application of the scientific method to clinical and laboratory research.

The large and varied patient population available at Children's Medical Center Dallas and Scottish Rite Hospital for Children (SRHC) is extensive. The Rheumatology Clinic at SRHC is one of the longest established pediatric rheumatology clinics in the country and is the major regional referral center for North Texas.



Pediatric Rheumatology Fellows
L-R., Nicole Bitencourt, Elizabeth Sloan,
Maryem Al Manaa, and Vy Do

As required by the American Board of Pediatrics, all trainees spend a portion of their time involved in research. The Division collaborates with basic and translational scientists at SRH and UTSW. Lab activities include journal club, work in progress and seminars with invited speakers. Research projects are tailored to the interests and capabilities of the individual trainees. Ongoing clinical trials and the opportunity to do clinical research are also available.

The three-year Pediatric fellowship training program aims to provide individuals with sufficient background to pursue a career of independent research, teaching and managing patients with a wide variety of pediatric rheumatic diseases.

Tracey Wright, M.D., is the Program Director for the Pediatric Rheumatology Fellowship Training Program. All other pediatric rheumatology faculty are actively involved in training the pediatric rheumatology fellows.



**Drs. Tracey Wright and MaiLan Nguyen
at Fellow Research Day**

Research Activities

The Division is actively involved in both translational and clinical research endeavors directed toward improving pathophysiologic understanding, treatment options and outcomes in a variety of pediatric rheumatology disorders. A large and varied patient population has provided the ability to conduct studies in several areas, and faculty have been involved in clinical research projects involving clinical trials of new therapies, as well as multi-center studies in pathogenesis and epidemiology of childhood rheumatic diseases. All division faculty are members of the Childhood Arthritis and Rheumatology Research Alliance (CARRA), which is dedicated to collaborative multicenter research on the cause and treatment of childhood rheumatic disease.

- **Dr. Julie Fuller** is actively involved in a multi-center collaborative study with the NIH to study the natural history of calcinosis in Juvenile Dermatomyositis.
- **Dr. Lorien Nassi** is involved in a quality improvement project to identify patients with rheumatic disease on teratogenic medications who are at risk for pregnancy
- **Dr. Katie Stewart** is the Site Principal Investigator for CARRA Registry, a multi-site observational registry whose goal is to understand the long-term outcomes and long- and short-term safety and effectiveness of the medications used to treat pediatric rheumatic disease. She has specific interest in Juvenile Scleroderma and is participating in a multi-site study through CARRA to identify immunophenotype subsets in Juvenile Scleroderma.
- **Dr. Tracey Wright** is the Principal Investigator for the Clinical and Sample Core of the NIAMS 1P50AR070594-01 Center for Lupus Excellence, an integrated, cooperative center based at UT Southwestern Medical Center, Drukier Institute for Children's Health at Weill Cornell Medicine, and the Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine. The goal of the CLR is to advance the knowledge of pathways and mechanisms that contribute to the development and amplification of human SLE, and to develop assays and tools to 1) monitor these dysfunctional pathways and 2) stratify patients towards personalized therapies.

Clinical Activities

The Division offers expert evaluation, counseling, and treatment of rheumatic diseases found in children, which include the many forms of child arthritis, such as juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Faculty also manage children with lupus, juvenile dermatomyositis, morphea/scleroderma, vas-culitis, and a number of other conditions.

Clinical services are offered at Children's Medical Center Dallas, Scottish Rite Hospital for Children Frisco, and at Scottish Rite Hospital for Children Dallas. The Rheumatology Clinic at Scottish Rite Hospital for Children Dallas is one of the longest-established pediatric rheumatology clinics in the country and the major referral center for North Texas.

Between the three hospitals, Division faculty see more than 5,400 outpatient visits per year in eighteen clinics per week. In 2019, there are more than 1300 new patient visits. Trainees see and manage multiple patients of each major connective tissue disease and are exposed to rarer disorders.

Services provided by UT Southwestern pediatric rheumatology physicians include:

- Evaluation and treatment of children with suspected rheumatic diseases
- Physical and occupational therapy evaluations and recommendations
- Coordination of team care, including ophthalmology, dental, and dietary counseling
- Education about specific rheumatic conditions
- Psychosocial support

Patient Statistics

Scottish Rite Hospital Dallas	2018	2019
Outpatient Visits	2,787	2,946
New Outpatient Visits	366	532
Infusions	469	735

Scottish Rite Hospital Frisco	2019
Outpatient Visits	1463
New Outpatient Visits	459
Infusions	152

Children's Medical Center Dallas	2018	2019
Outpatient Visits	1,651	1,022
New Outpatient Visits	427	378
Infusions	306	258

Grant Support

Katie Stewart

Grantor: Duke University

Title of Project: Observational Study of Pediatric Rheumatic Diseases: The CARRA Registry

Role: Principal Investigator

Dates: 08/2015 – 07/2020

Tracey Wright

Grantor: American College of Rheumatology

Title of Project: Wright Fellows Agreement with American College of Rheumatology

Role: Principal Investigator

Dates: 11/2018 – 12/2019

Grantor: Rheumatology Research Foundation

Title of Project: Mentored Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistant Award for Workforce Expansion

Role: Principal Investigator

Dates: 05/2019 – 04/2020

Grantor: Weill Cornell Medical College

Title of Project: Center for Lupus Research

Role: Principal Investigator

Dates: 09/2017 – 02/2022

Grantor: Duke Clinical Research Institute

Title of Project: A Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled, Multicenter, Phase 3 Efficacy and Safety Study of 2 Dose Levels of Subcutaneous of Anakinra in Patients with Still's Disease

Role: Principal Investigator

Dates: 01/2018 – 01/2023

Peer-Reviewed Publications

1. Caielli S, Veiga DT, Balasubramanian P, Athale S, Domic B, et al, **Wright T, Punaro M, Nassi L, Stewart K, Fuller J**, et al. [A CD4+ T cell population expanded in lupus blood provides B cell help through interleukin-10 and succinate.](#) *Nat Med.* 2019 Jan;25(1):75-81. PMID: 30478422.
2. Pineda Bernal L, **Bitencourt N**, Batra K, Solow EB. [Successful use of rituximab in granulomatosis with polyangiitis with aortic inflammation.](#) *Clin Exp Rheumatol.* 2019 Mar-Apr;37 Suppl 117(2):144-147. PMID: 30299239
3. Li SC, Fuhlbrigge RC, Laxer RM, Pope E, Ibarra MF, **Stewart K**, et al, **Punaro M**, et al.; CARRA Registry Investigators. [Developing comparative effectiveness studies for a rare, understudied pediatric disease: lessons learned from the CARRA juvenile localized scleroderma consensus treatment plan pilot study.](#) *Pediatr Rheumatol Online J.* 2019 Jul 15;17(1):43. PMID: 31307476
4. Doaty S, **Bitencourt N**, Harvey W, Kolasinski S, Solow EB. [Advocacy 101: Engaging Rheumatology Fellows in Health Policy and Advocacy.](#) *Arthritis Care Res (Hoboken).* 2019 Aug;71(8):1141-1145. PMID: 30192111
5. Akamine K, **Punaro M**. [Biologics for childhood systemic vasculitis.](#) *Pediatr Nephrol.* 2019 Nov;34(11):2295-2309. PMID: 30203375

Book Chapters

Rees L, Bockenbauer D, Webb N, **Punaro M**. (2019). *Paediatric Nephrology* (3rd ed) Oxford Specialist Handbooks in Paediatrics. Oxford University Press.