

ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

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

August 7, 2025

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to announce that UT Southwestern is launching the Sequencing Populations to Accelerate Research and Care (SPARC) program – a wide-ranging initiative to create an institutional biobank and perform whole-exome sequencing (WES) on up to 150,000 patients seen within our health system.

In collaboration with our biotechnology partner, Regeneron Inc., this initiative will generate an exceptionally rich data resource of linked genetic and clinical information that can be used to support a variety of important research projects and to promote novel population health screening and applied precision medicine at scale. Similar to the Dallas Heart Study, SPARC will facilitate the alignment of clinical and sequencing data and make it possible to identify new genetic drivers of disease and response to therapies. SPARC will also accelerate use of genetic data to improve screening for important genetic risk factors and help advance application of these data back into practice to improve the care of patients and their families.

All patients seen within UT Southwestern or Children's Health will be eligible to participate in SPARC. Enrollment will be straightforward, conducted via both online and in-person recruitment. Enrollees will provide a small blood sample often drawn as part of routine clinical care. In return, participants can receive information on their genetic ancestry, screening for important pathogenetic risk markers, and even genetic risk scores for specific diseases. Genetic counseling will also be available for those who desire it. In future years, we hope to expand SPARC to our other affiliated health system partners.

I would like to thank Eric Peterson, M.D., M.P.H., Vice Provost for Clinical Research, who has played a pivotal role in putting together a project of this magnitude. SPARC will be housed in the Eugene McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development under the leadership of Ralph DeBerardinis, M.D., Ph.D.

UT Southwestern has a proven record of engaging in research focused on unmet needs and translating discoveries into improved patient care. Through SPARC, we will chart a new era for population health and precision medicine.



Sincerely,

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

W. P. Andrew Lee, M.D.
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Dean, UT Southwestern Medical School

