

medicine minute

Tuesday, February 18, 2025

personnel updates

LEADERSHIP

Khera Succeeds Drazner as Clinical Chief of Cardiology



Amit Khera, M.D., a Professor in the Division of Cardiology, has succeeded **Mark Drazner, M.D., M.Sc.**, as Clinical Chief of Cardiology.

“Amit is an outstanding clinician, educator and researcher and one of the foremost national voices in cardiovascular prevention,” says **James de Lemos, M.D.**, Professor and Chief of Cardiology. “Like Mark, Amit embodies the selfless culture of our division and has been a touchstone for virtually all of us in the division. Amit will bring his own vision and new initiatives to this key leadership position.”

Dr. Khera has led the Preventive Cardiology Program since joining the UT Southwestern faculty in 2004.

Dr. Khera holds the Dallas Heart Ball Chair in Hypertension and Heart Disease.

LEADERSHIP

Brittany Weber to Direct Cardio-Rheumatology Program



Brittany Weber, M.D., Ph.D., an Assistant Professor of Medicine and Director of the Cardio-Rheumatology Clinic at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH), has accepted an appointment as Director of UT Southwestern's new Cardio-Rheumatology/Cardio-Dermatology Program.

Originally from Oklahoma, Dr. Weber holds a bachelor's degree in biomedical science-zoology from the University of Oklahoma. She earned her medical degree from the Perelman School of Medicine and her doctoral degree in immunology from the University of Pennsylvania. She completed internal medicine residency training at BWH, followed by service as

Chief Resident at the VA Boston Health Care System. She obtained advanced training through a fellowship program in cardiology at BWH, where she served as Chief Fellow, and a fellowship program in cardiovascular imaging.

“Dr. Weber is a physician-scientist who leverages advanced cardiovascular imaging, biomarkers, and immunology to investigate the relationships between systemic inflammation and cardiovascular disease, with a focus on the coronary microcirculation and novel metrics of atherosclerotic plaque imaging,” says **James de Lemos, M.D.**, Professor and Chief of Cardiology. “Importantly, she has developed clinical expertise in rheumatologic and inflammatory dermatologic diseases that makes her a key leader in the

creation of the cardio-rheumatology/cardio-dermatology subspecialty and one of very few such specialists in the country.”

A recipient of the 2025 American College of Cardiology Douglas P. Zipes Distinguished Young Scientist Award, Dr. Weber is involved in ongoing clinical trials testing novel anti-inflammatory approaches to cardiovascular disease.

research roundup

PUBLICATIONS

Study Reveals Barriers in Development of Investigator-Initiated Trials



David Gerber, M.D., a Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology and Co-Director of the Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center’s Experimental Therapeutics Program, and colleagues recently published [a study in *Clinical Cancer Research*](#) of the process of developing investigator-initiated trials (IITs), an essential aspect of clinical investigation that pharmaceutical sponsors may overlook.

In the retrospective study of IIT concepts submitted to the Academic Thoracic Oncology Medical Investigators Consortium (ATOMIC) from 2014 to 2024, the authors found that 88 percent of the 68 concepts received consortium

approval within a median of 30 days, with junior faculty having higher approval rates than full professors. However, only 25 percent of these approved concepts were subsequently approved by pharmaceutical sponsors, with a median decision time of 61 days. Concepts with shorter projected durations had higher approval rates. The overall median time from initial submission to trial activation for sponsor-approved IITs was 18 months.

The study highlights the lengthy and challenging process of activating IITs and underscores the need to address barriers and facilitators in their development due to their importance in tackling practical, real-world questions.

“To my knowledge, this is the first study of the process of developing IITs in any field,” Dr. Gerber says. “Since IITs are such an important part of drug development and academic careers, it’s worth further attention.”

Dr. Gerber holds the David Bruton, Jr. Professorship in Clinical Cancer Research.

education and training

PROGRAM COMPLIANCE

ACGME Recognizes Training Programs for Second Consecutive Year

For the second consecutive year, the Accrediting Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) has found the Internal Medicine Residency and 17 subspecialty fellowship programs to be in “substantial compliance” with ACGME requirements.

“This outcome is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our Department in supporting residency and fellowship training,” says **Salahuddin “Dino” Kazi, M.D.**, a Professor in the Division of Rheumatic Diseases, Vice Chair of Education, and Director of the Internal Medicine Residency. “I am also deeply grateful to GME for their invaluable support and guidance throughout this process.”

The ACGME Common Program Requirements establish essential standards for creating a clinical learning environment that fosters the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for patient care.

Additionally, the requirements ensure that residents and fellows interact with patients under the supervision of qualified faculty, providing valuable context and meaning to their experiences.

LEADERSHIP

Okoruwa, Thyssen Named Chief Fellows for GI Program



Second-year Fellows **Ehiamen Okoruwa, M.D.**, and **Emil Thyssen, M.D.**, have been elected Chief Fellows of the Gastroenterology Fellowship program, the largest such training program in the nation. They will succeed third-year Fellow **Bryan Golubski, M.D.**, at the completion of his term.

Originally from Lagos, Nigeria, Dr. Okoruwa holds a bachelor's degree in biology and public health from Washington University in St. Louis and a master's degree in physiology from Tulane University, where she also completed medical school. She obtained internal medicine residency training at UT Southwestern, where she participated in the Medical

Education track.

A St. Louis native, Dr. Thyssen holds a bachelor's degree in neuroscience from the University of Miami. He received his medical degree from the University of Missouri and completed internal medicine residency training at UT Southwestern, where he also served as Chief Resident.



Internal Medicine News Portal
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need to know

QUALITY, SAFETY & OUTCOMES EDUCATION

Quality Improvement Course Offered



The office of Quality, Safety & Outcomes Education is offering a course about the basics of quality improvement. The Performance Excellence and Quality Management (PExQM) course provides healthcare professionals and staff with the skills and knowledge they need to lead quality improvement (QI) projects and change initiatives.

The course emphasizes using a systematic process to assess the current process/state; determine the root causes of problems; and explore, test, and deploy solutions to make sustainable improvements. Participants are required to work on a QI project during the course. Presentations of their

completed project/poster will be scheduled approximately six months after the beginning of the course. Attendance for all classes and project completion including presentation/poster are required for completion. Continuing Medical Education (CME) or Nursing Education Credit will be awarded.

The four-session course begins on **Tuesday, March 4, in E3.302 D.**

Application deadline is Friday, Feb. 21. To apply, click [here](#). Questions? Contact [Jon Hopkins](#) or [Mary Baldwin](#).

RESIDENT SUPPORT

Mentoring Program for International Medical Grads Kicks Off Feb. 26

To support International Medical Graduates (IMGs) as they transition to the U.S. healthcare system, **Frans Serpa, M.D.**, a PGY-1 Resident and an IMG from Ecuador, has developed **IMG Connect**, a mentoring program designed to connect IMG residents with faculty mentors to share experiences, receive personalized guidance, and participate in networking opportunities and wellness activities.

To launch the program, a special event will be held at the Faculty Club on **Wednesday, Feb. 26**. All Internal Medicine faculty are invited to attend, particularly those who are themselves IMGs.

To RSVP for the event, click [here](#). To complete a brief mentorship survey, click [here](#).

in case you missed it

MEDBLOG

Ayuba Advises on Donating Blood Despite Cardiovascular Disease



In the U.S., there is continuous demand for blood donations. While donations often increase following a disaster, patients with cancer, severe bleeding disorders, and those undergoing surgery frequently need regular infusions.

But only 3 percent of eligible blood donors in the U.S. donate blood each year.

“Many patients in our cardiovascular clinics ask whether they can donate blood to help mitigate this need,” says **Gloria Ayuba, D.O.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Cardiology and Director of Structural Imaging. “The answer is:

it depends.”

In her most [recent blog post](#), Dr Ayuba describes the types of blood donations and discusses how even people with heart conditions can safely donate blood.

News and Digital Media Featuring Internal Medicine Colleagues

- [When is the Right Time for TAVR? Understanding Your Heart Valve Options](#) (via *MedBlog*, with **Anthony Bavry, M.D.**)
- [A Match Made at UT Southwestern: Alumni Couples Share Their Love Stories](#) (via *CenterTimes Plus*, with **David Balis, M.D.** and **Tammy McGregor, M.D.**)
- [Prominent Epidemiologist Appointed Chair at O'Donnell School of Public Health](#) (via *CenterTimes Plus*, with **Jiang He, M.D., M.S., Ph.D.**)

this week

SYMPOSIUMS

NORC to Present Symposium on Feb. 20



The Nutrition & Obesity Research Center (NORC) will present a symposium on **Thursday, Feb. 20, in D1.602**. The event will feature a keynote address by **Diego Perez-Tilvo, Ph.D.**, a Research Associate Professor of Pharmacology, Physiology & Neurobiology at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. His topic: "Role of G-Protein Signaling in AGRP Neurons in the Control of Glucose Homeostasis."

Additional presentations will be made by visiting scholars from NORC's INSPIRE program and recent Pilot & Feasibility Grant awardees.

For more information, including a complete list of presenters and topics, visit the [NORC website](#).

INTERNAL MEDICINE GRAND ROUNDS

Harvard's Martin Pollak to Lecture on Genetic Kidney Disease



Martin Pollak, M.D., a Professor of Medicine and Chief of Nephrology at Harvard Medical School, will present the [Internal Medicine Grand Rounds](#) lecture on **Friday, Feb. 21, at 8 a.m. in D1.502**. His topic: "APOL1-Associated Kidney Disease."

Dr. Pollak attended medical school at the New York University School of Medicine. He received internal medicine residency training at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center and completed a nephrology fellowship at Brigham and Women's Hospital. His clinical interests include general nephrology and inherited kidney disease.

[Dr. Pollak's laboratory](#) studies the molecular and genetic basis of kidney disease in humans. His group uses genetic methods to identify and study the mechanisms of kidney disease genes. His laboratory is experienced in human genetic methods, as well as cell-based studies of podocyte biology and the development and analysis of animal models of kidney disease. Dr. Pollak has a particular interest in the biological mechanisms of APOL1, ACTN4, and INF2-mediated disease.

INTERNAL MEDICINE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Lakhia to Discuss Cholesterol's Role in Kidney Disease on Feb. 21



Ronak Lakhia, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Nephrology, will present the [Internal Medicine Research Conference](#) on **Friday, Feb. 21, at noon in D1.502**. Her topic: "Role of Intracellular Cholesterol in Autosomal Dominant Polycystic Kidney Disease."

Dr. Lakhia holds a bachelor's degree in molecular biochemistry and biophysics from the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. She earned her medical degree at UT Southwestern and completed internal medicine residency training at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. She then received advanced training in nephrology through a combined clinical and

research fellowship program at UT Southwestern, where she served as chief fellow for two years.

Dr. Lakhia joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2018.

Her research focuses on understanding the pathogenesis of polycystic kidney disease and identifying potential treatments for this genetic disorder. Her clinical focus is on polycystic kidney disease (PKD).

Noteworthy Lectures & Conferences

- **Wednesday, Feb. 19, Noon:** [Geriatrics Grand Rounds](#) with **Dr. Anupama Gangavati** (Geriatric Medicine) – “To CBD or Not to CBD in Older Adults: The Tale of the Cannabinoids”
- **Thursday, Feb. 20, Noon:** [Renal Grand Rounds](#) with **Dr. Martin Pollak** (Harvard Medical School) – “Lessons from Mouse Models of FSGS”
- **Thursday, Feb. 20, Noon:** [Moss Heart Center Seminar Series](#) with **Dr. Jennifer Davis** (University of Washington) – “Unlocking the Secrets of Cardiac Fibroblast Biology: Their Role in Tissue Homeostasis and Disease”
- **Thursday, Feb. 20, Noon:** [Neurocritical Care Lecture Series](#) with **Drs. Anna Bashmakov** (Neurology) and **Spencer Carter** (Cardiology) – “Cardioembolic Stroke and Atrial Fibrillation”
- **Friday, Feb. 21, Noon:** [Health Disparities Research Lecture Series](#) with **Dr. Lorna McNeill** (MD Anderson Cancer Centre) – “Equitable Solutions for Improving Cancer Health Equity – A Role for Community Engagement”
- **Friday, Feb. 21, 1 p.m.:** [Endocrine Grand Rounds](#) with **Dr. Amanda Casey** (Molecular Biology) – “FicD AMPylation and DeAMPylation of BiP Regulates Pancreatic Homeostasis”

reminders

CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION

Annual CME Conference Scheduled for May 3



The annual Update in Internal Medicine CME Conference is scheduled for **Saturday, May 3, from 7:45 a.m. to 3 p.m., in the T. Boone Pickens Auditorium**. The course, under the direction of **Brad Cutrell, M.D.**, and **Vlad Zaha, M.D., Ph.D.**, will offer practical advice on issues identified as frequent items for consultation and second opinions, as well as advances in applying new scientific techniques and technologies in translational medicine.

The one-day live event will again be offered as a hybrid learning experience, with synchronous in-person and online presentations in addition to pre-recorded on-demand content.

The presentations will be available for up to one year after the conference, totaling 15 units of CME credit and the opportunity to apply for MOC within the timing requirements of the ABIM rules.

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, Feb. 25, 2025**.
Share feedback and news items with us at IMNews@UTSouthwestern.edu

