

medicine minute

June 24, 2025

kudos



Babb to Receive 2026 TACSM Honor Award

Tony Babb, Ph.D., a Professor in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine and Cardiopulmonary Lab Director at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas, has been chosen to receive the 2026 Texas chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine (TACSM) Honor Award at an annual conference in Waco in February.

Dr. Babb will be recognized for his “many contributions to the field of exercise and sports science.”

“Dr. Babb is widely acknowledged as one of the world’s experts in pulmonary physiology and the limits to human performance, both for patients and highly active people,” says **Benjamin Levine, M.D.**, a Professor in the Division of Cardiology and Director of the Institute for Exercise and Environmental Science (IEEM) at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas. “This award is very deserving and highlights his contributions not just in Texas, but in the broad field of pulmonary exercise physiology. We are very fortunate to have Dr. Babb leading our cardiopulmonary exercise lab, where he not only performs cutting-edge research but also teaches the pulmonary fellows how to perform and interpret exercise tests, ensuring the highest quality of patient testing.”

Dr. Babb becomes the fifth UT Southwestern faculty member to have received this award in the 35-year history of the TACSM.

“I’m very honored to be acknowledged for a lifelong commitment to the science of exercise pulmonary physiology,” Dr. Babb says.

A charter member of the IEEM, Dr. Babb joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 1992. His research interests include exercise science, cardiopulmonary physiology, and the effects of obesity on the respiratory system in children and adults. In 2023, he received the ACSM Citation Award. ■

Dr. Babb holds the Effie and Wofford Cain Chair in Cardiopulmonary Research at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas.

Dr. Levine holds the Distinguished Professorship in Exercise Sciences at UT Southwestern and the S. Finley Ewing Chair for Wellness and the Harry S. Moss Heart Chair for Cardiovascular Research at Texas Health Presbyterian Dallas.

To learn more about the Pulmonary Physiology Lab at the Institute for Exercise and Environmental Medicine, click [here](#).



Wingfield Participates in National Academies Consensus Study on Hearing Health

Hearing loss is the most common sensory disorder in the U.S., affecting nearly 20 percent of Americans, yet standard clinical tests often miss real-world hearing challenges. To address this gap, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine formed a committee in 2023 to define meaningful outcomes for adult hearing interventions.

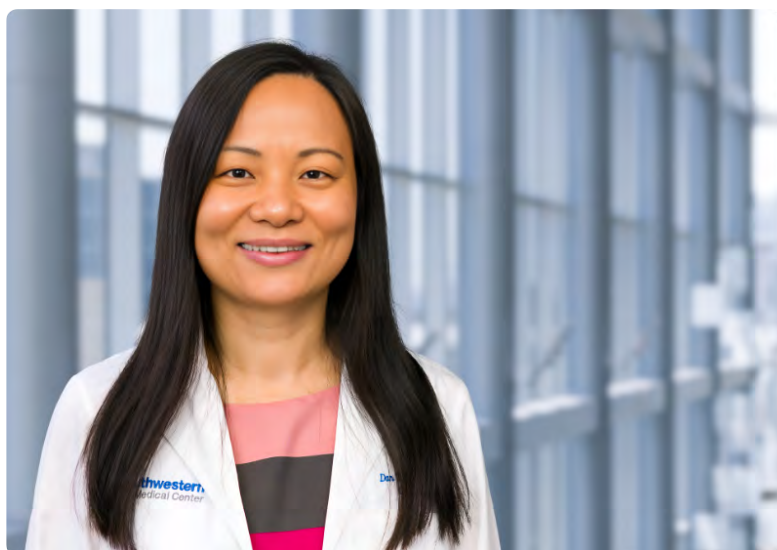
Sarah Wingfield, M.D., an Associate Professor in the Division of Geriatric Medicine, served as a reviewer for the committee's newly published report, "Measuring Meaningful Outcomes for Adult Hearing Interventions."

"There's a lack of standardized measures in hearing research," Dr. Wingfield says. "Audibility alone doesn't capture real-world issues like speech comprehension, fatigue, or social isolation. The report makes clear that better tools are needed to assess the full impact of interventions."

"Dr. Wingfield's willingness to volunteer her time, effort, and expertise to this project is evidence of her growing national reputation," says **Craig Rubin, M.D.**, Professor and Division Chief of Geriatric Medicine. ■

Dr. Rubin, a Distinguished Teaching Professor, is holder of the Margaret and Trammell Crow Distinguished Chair in Alzheimer's and Geriatric Research; the Seymour Eisenberg Distinguished Professorship in Geriatric Medicine; Sinor/Pritchard (Katy Sinor and Kay Pritchard) Professorship in Medical Education Honoring Donald W. Seldin, M.D.; and the Walsdorf Professorship in Geriatrics Research.

research roundup

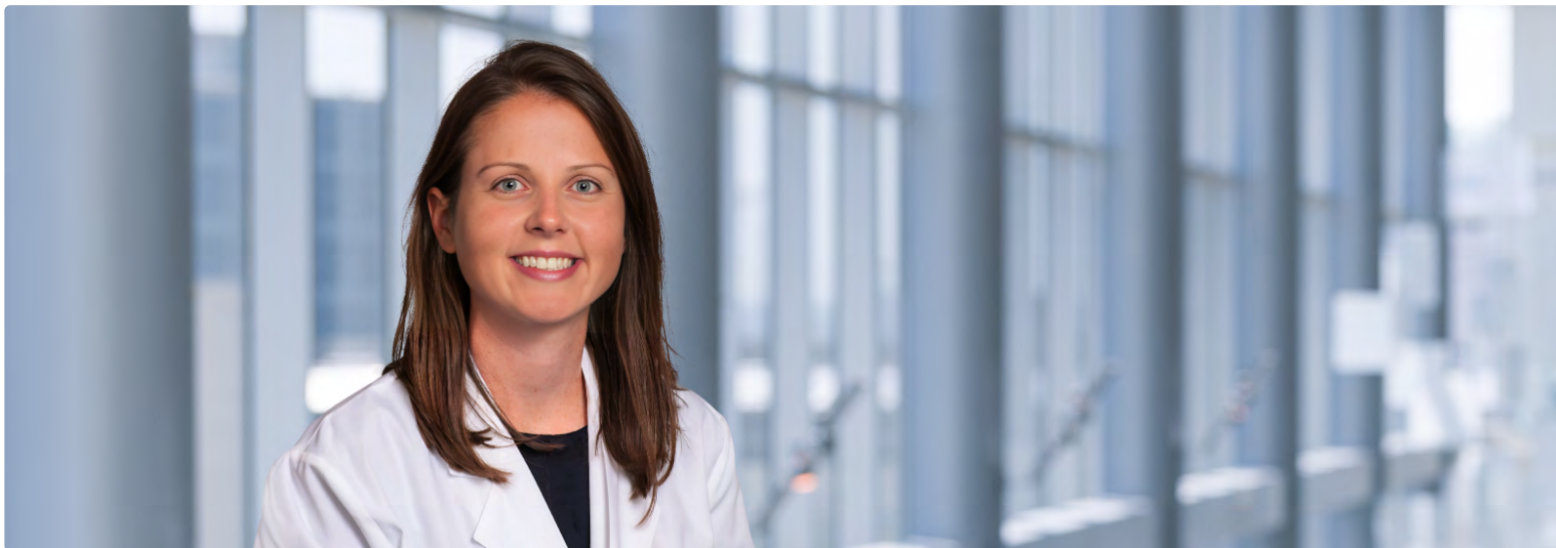


Tong, Muñoz Rodríguez Receive AHA Grants

Amanda Tong, M.D., Ph.D. (pictured at left), an Assistant Professor in the Division of Cardiology and a member of the Moss Heart Center, has received a three-year Transformational Project Award (TPA) from the American Heart Association (AHA). The award program supports highly innovative, high-impact projects that build on work in progress that could ultimately lead to important discoveries or major advancements that will accelerate the field of cardiovascular research.

Dr. Tong has received funding support her research targeting the “invisible” lymphatic system in heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF). The research holds the potential to identify novel mechanisms and therapeutic targets for HFpEF.

Claudia Muñoz Rodríguez, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in the Tong Lab, has received an AHA Research Supplement to Promote Diversity in Science Fellowship grant, a supplement to Dr. Tong’s previous TPA grant to support her investigation into the immune-cardiomyocyte crosstalk in cardiometabolic atrial fibrillation. Dr. Muñoz Rodríguez’s grant will enable her to study the Spp1+ macrophages in HFpEF pathogenesis. ■



Study Links Home Mold to Lung Disease Amid Climate Concerns

A new study led by **Traci Adams, M.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, has found compelling evidence linking mold growth in homes to hypersensitivity pneumonitis (HP), a serious inflammatory lung disease. Published in [PLOS One](#) the retrospective study is the largest of its kind and the first from North Texas to explore this connection.

For the study, the researchers analyzed data from 231 HP patients treated at UT Southwestern between 2011 and 2019. Mold exposure within the home was identified as the likely cause in 54 cases, with confirmation by pulmonologists trained in exposure assessment. Most mold growth stemmed from chronic or recurring water intrusion, often found in bathrooms, bedrooms, and air conditioning units.

The study highlights how climate change, extreme weather, and frequent flooding are creating conditions that promote mold growth in homes. Despite the severity of HP, home mold exposure remains underrecognized due to limited literature and inconsistent exposure documentation.

Notably, 85.7% of patients underwent invasive procedures to confirm their diagnosis. Among those who removed the mold exposure, 12.2% experienced significant lung function improvement, including patients with fibrotic HP.

Dr. Adams and colleagues urge clinicians to remain vigilant in identifying potential mold exposure in suspected HP cases, emphasizing that early detection and remediation can improve patient outcomes. ■

***Craig Glazer, M.D.**, a Professor in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, Interim Chief of Hospital Medicine at Clements University Hospital and Texas Health Frisco, and Associate Vice President and Chief Medical Officer of University Hospitals, was a co-author.*

education and training



Strasserking to Become Acute CCU Course Director at Parkland Health

Fiona Strasserking, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Cardiology, will become course director for the Cardiology Critical Care Unit at Parkland Health, a role held since 2016 by **Robert Morlend, M.D.**, an Associate Professor in the Division of Cardiology.

Medical students who take the course are responsible for the direct care of patients under the supervision of residents, fellows, and Cardiology faculty. In addition to gathering data and assessing patients, they assist in formulating and implementing patient care plans and also observe and participate in procedures as needed for their patients.

"We are deeply grateful to Dr. Morlend for his nearly decade-long leadership of one of our Internal Medicine Acting Internship courses and his invaluable role in standardizing grading across the selectives," says **Reeni Abraham, M.D.**, a Professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine and Associate Vice Chair for Undergraduate Medical Education (UME). "We now warmly welcome Dr. Strasserking, a beloved teacher and recipient of the 2022-2023 Internal Medicine UME Outstanding Faculty Teaching Award, whose passion for medical education will carry forward the strong legacy of this role."

Dr. Strasserking joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2022. She also serves as Program Coordinator for the International Heart Education Consortium, a collaboration with the University of Zambia School of Medicine that provides structured virtual training via monthly lectures, quarterly seminars, and a repository of resources.

She holds a bachelor's degree in health sciences from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. She earned her medical degree at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston's McGovern Medical School, and completed her residency in internal medicine at Washington University in St. Louis. She then gained advanced training through a fellowship in cardiovascular diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. During her fellowship, she was selected as a Fogarty Global Health Fellow through the National Institutes of Health. ■

Dr. Abraham holds the Nadine and Tom Craddick Professorship in Medical Education.



Dalton Receives Grant Funding for Residency Project

Heather Dalton, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Palliative Medicine Section of the Division of General Internal Medicine, has received one of five grants from the Southwestern Academy of Teachers (SWAT) to support her project, "Bridging the Gap: A Structured Approach to Value-Based Code Status Discussions for Incoming Internal

Medicine Residents.”

The Small Grants Program was established by SWAT to promote education research and innovation.

Dr. Dalton’s project, which will be co-led by second-year resident **Joshua Derbort, M.D.**, will focus on peer-facilitated teaching about value-based code status discussions using simulated role play with trained actors. ■



GI Fellows Honor Aday with Teaching Award

Ariel Aday, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Digestive and Liver Diseases and Program Director of the Gastroenterology (GI) Fellowship, received the Lyman E. Bilhartz Teaching Award from the GI fellows, the Division’s highest teaching honor, and the recent fellowship graduation event. The award was established in 1980 and was later named to honor Dr. Bilhartz, a former GI fellow and, later, UT Southwestern faculty member, who died from a brain tumor in 2004 at age 51.

Originally from Bristol, Virginia, Dr. Aday holds a bachelor’s degree in biology from the University of North Carolina and earned her medical degree at Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem. She completed internal medicine residency training at UT Southwestern, where she also served as Chief Resident, and then remained for her gastroenterology fellowship. She joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2019 and became the GI fellowship’s associate director in 2020. She became the program’s director in 2023.

With 28 fellows, UT Southwestern’s GI fellowship program is the largest in the nation.

Other awards presented during the graduation event included the Nancy Weiner Marcus Clinical and Basic Research Awards, presented to **Ashwini Arvind, M.D.** and **Simeng Wang, M.D. Ph.D.**, the Best Clinical Educator Talk Award, presented to **Ehiamen Okoruwa, M.D.**, and the Teamwork and Professionalism Award (TAP Award), presented to **Bryan Golubski, M.D.** The TAP Award was renamed the Bryan Golubski Teamwork and Professionalism Award in recognition of his exemplary role as Chief Fellow. ■

Internal Medicine News Portal

in case you missed it

News and Digital Media Featuring Internal Medicine Colleagues

- [Five Things to Know About Direct-To-Consumer Genetic Testing](#) (via *MedBlog*, with Kristi Tu, CGC)
- [Want to Eat Healthier? Add to Your Diet, Rather than Limit It](#) (via *Science News*, with Jaclyn Albin, M.D.)

- [From VEGF to HIF-2 Targeting Drugs: Dr. James Brugarolas' Journey to Transforming Kidney Cancer Treatment](#) (via *GU Oncology Now*, with James Brugarolas, M.D., Ph.D.)

need to know

Hospitals to Receive Faster Death Notifications Under New Texas Law

New legislation signed into law by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott over the weekend aims to streamline hospital recordkeeping by ensuring timely access to death data for patients who die outside of medical facilities.

“This legislation mandates that hospitals receive essential information – including full name, date of birth, and county of residence – shortly after a patient’s death,” explains **Brett Moran, M.D.**, an Adjunct Professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine and Chief Health Officer at Parkland Health. “This will help healthcare providers avoid sending bills or appointment reminders to deceased individuals, prevent unauthorized prescription refills, and reduce the risk of identity fraud.”

Additionally, having access to this information can help hospitals identify gaps in care, improve trauma response protocols, and ultimately contribute to better patient care and resource allocation.

When providing testimony to the Texas House about the legislation’s importance, Dr. Moran noted, “Many lawmakers were initially surprised to hear about the issue.” ■

this week



Afrough to Discuss Multiple Myeloma Therapies on June 27

Aimaz Afrough, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology, will present the [Internal Medicine Grand Rounds](#) lecture on **Friday, June 27, at 8 a.m. in D1.502**. Her topic: “T-Cell Based Therapies in Multiple Myeloma.”

Originally from Tehran, Iran, Dr. Afrough earned her medical degree at Tabriz University of Medical Sciences in Iran and completed a residency in internal medicine at St. Agnes Hospital in Baltimore. She then received advanced training through a hematology and oncology fellowship at Baylor College of Medicine and a stem cell transplantation and cellular therapy fellowship at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

Dr. Afrough joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2021.

Dr. Afrough’s clinical research is focused on improving the therapy and outcome of patients with plasma cell disorders. She is particularly interested in developing novel therapeutic approaches, including adoptive cell therapy to improve the safety and efficacy of therapies in patients with these disorders. ■



Elmquist to Present NIH Basics on June 27

Joel Elmquist, D.V.M., Ph.D., a Professor in the Center for Hypothalamic Research and Vice Chair of Research, will present the [Internal Medicine Research Conference Career Development](#) lecture on **Friday, June 27, at noon in D1.502**. His topic: "Basics of the NIH."

Originally from Iowa, Dr. Elmquist earned his doctorate in veterinary anatomy at Iowa State University. He then completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School/Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, later accepting a faculty position there in Medicine and Neurology.

He joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2006.

His research has been continually funded for three decades, including 17 NIH grants as principal investigator (PI) or co-PI. Dr. Elmquist focuses his research on the use of mouse genetics to understand how the brain controls energy balance and glucose homeostasis. He also serves on the editorial boards of several major scientific journals and has served on numerous NIH study sections.

As Director of the Center for Hypothalamic Research, Dr. Elmquist leads a multidisciplinary team of investigators to examine the mechanisms by which the hypothalamus regulates eating, body weight, blood glucose, and related metabolic processes.

As Vice Chair of Research, he supports and promotes high-quality, high-impact research activity among faculty and trainees, and develops strategies for recruitment, retention, and development of scientists and physician-scientists. He also works closely with the Assistant Director for Research to guide the Department's research administration, space allocation, grants management, and research infrastructure planning, renovation, and development. ■

Dr. Elmquist holds the Carl H. Westcott Distinguished Chair in Medical Research and the Maclin Family Distinguished Professorship in Medical Science, in Honor of Dr. Roy A. Brinkley.

Other Noteworthy Lectures & Conferences This Week

- **Wednesday, June 25, 8 a.m.:** [GI Grand Rounds](#) with Dr. Anna Silverman (Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai) – "Scalable Approaches to Evidence Generation in a Learning Health System: Advancing IBD Research Through Real-World Evidence"
- **Thursday, June 26, 11 a.m.:** [Data Science and Artificial Intelligence for Precision Health Initiative \(DAPI\) Seminar](#) with Dr. Kai Tan (University of Pennsylvania) – "Algorithms for Modeling Tumor Microenvironment from Spatial Omics Maps"

Look for the next *Medicine Minute* on **Tuesday, July 1, 2025**.

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