

medicine minute

July 8, 2025

kudos



Williams Named Inaugural Pi-Sunyer Award Recipient

Kevin Williams, Ph.D., an Associate Professor in the Center for Hypothalamic Research, has been named the inaugural recipient of the Obesity Society's Xavier Pi-Sunyer Award. The award honors Dr. Pi-Sunyer, a founding member of the Obesity Society and a pioneer in obesity research and care, and recognizes a mid-career investigator who is making significant contributions to obesity research.

Dr. Williams holds a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Texas at Dallas and a doctoral degree in neuroscience from Tulane University in New Orleans, where he conducted research on the acute activity in autonomic nuclei regulating energy expenditure and glucose metabolism. He then received postdoctoral fellowship training at UT Southwestern, under the guidance of **Joel Elmquist, D.V.M., Ph.D.**, Professor and Vice Chair of Internal Medicine Research.

Dr. Williams focuses his research on the role of neurotransmitters and intracellular molecules in the brain that are essential for regulating feeding behavior, body weight, glucose levels, and cardiovascular function. ■

[Click here to learn more about the work of the Williams Lab.](#)



Levine Contributes to AHA Guidance on Exercise for Long COVID Recovery

Benjamin Levine, M.D., a Professor in the Division of Cardiology and Director of the Institute for Exercise and Environmental Medicine at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas, served as vice chair of the writing group that recently published, “Exercise Intolerance and Response to Training in Patients with Postacute Sequelae of SARS-CoV2 (Long COVID),” [a scientific statement](#) for the American Heart Association (AHA).

According to the AHA, long COVID is a serious condition that can affect up to one in four people who have had COVID-19. Many people, including athletes, experience symptoms such as extreme tiredness, dizziness, trouble breathing, and brain fog. The statement highlights that a major cause is cardiovascular deconditioning – when the heart and body become weaker from being less active during illness and quarantine. This can lead to a smaller heart, lower blood flow, and a fast heartbeat even with light activity.

“An exercise prescription specifically tailored to the patient with cardiovascular deconditioning may be an effective method of improving symptom severity,” the authors say. They recommend a shared decision-making approach, especially for athletes, to safely reintroduce physical activity and guide return-to-play decisions. ■

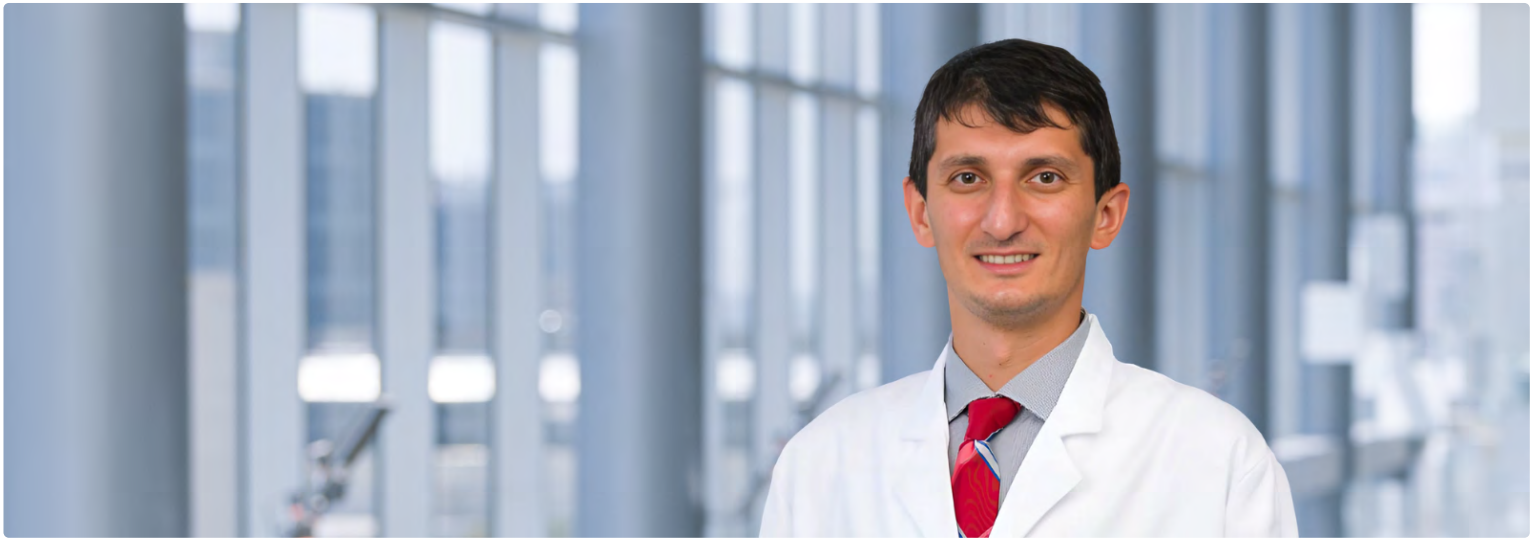
Dr. Levine holds the Distinguished Professorship in Exercise Sciences at UT Southwestern and the S. Finley Ewing Chair for Wellness and the Harry S. Moss Heart Chair for Cardiovascular Research at Texas Health Presbyterian Dallas.



Olaniran Named American Society of Nephrology Fellow

Kabir Olaniran, M.D., M.P.H., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Nephrology, has been inducted as a Fellow of the American Society of Nephrology, a professional organization with nearly 22,000 members from 141 countries. The honor recognizes exceptional professional achievements, scholarly contributions, and dedication to the field.

Originally from Nigeria, Dr. Olaniran earned his medical degree at the University of Lagos in Nigeria. He completed internal medicine residency training at Lincoln Medical Center in New York, where he also served as Chief Resident. He then obtained advanced training through a fellowship in nephrology at Harvard Medical School. He also holds a master’s degree in clinical effectiveness from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. ■



Bat Selected for ASH Ambassador Program's Oversight Subcommittee

Taha Bat, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology and leader of the Bone Marrow Failure trainee interest group, has been selected to serve on the Oversight Subcommittee for the American Society of Hematology (ASH) Ambassador program. Ambassadors are encouraged to raise awareness of hematology as a career, connect trainees with hematologists and provide networking opportunities, and foster a sense of community through student interest groups, with the goal of promoting long-term engagement and growth in the field of hematology.

Dr. Bat created the Bone Marrow Failure interest group in 2023.

Originally from Istanbul, Turkey, Dr. Bat earned his medical degree at Hacettepe University and completed residency training in internal medicine at Northeast Ohio Medical University in Rootstown, Ohio. He then received advanced training through fellowships in bone marrow syndromes at the Cleveland Clinic and hematology and oncology at the University at Buffalo/Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in New York.

Dr. Bat joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2020. ■

announcements



Shah Named Parkland Health's Chief Medical Information Officer

Nainesh Shah, M.D., a Clinical Associate Professor in the Division of Hospital Medicine, has been appointed Chief Health Information Officer for Parkland Health.

"Dr. Shah brings nearly a decade of dedicated service to Parkland," says **Brett Moran, M.D.**, an Adjunct Professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine and Chief Health Officer at Parkland Health. "Throughout his tenure, he has demonstrated exceptional ability to integrate clinical expertise with informatics innovation, working...to deploy technology solutions that meaningfully enhance patient care."

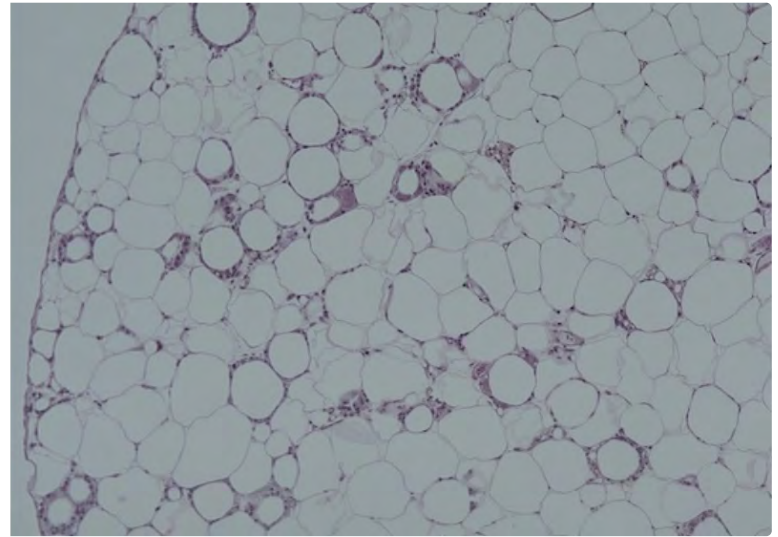
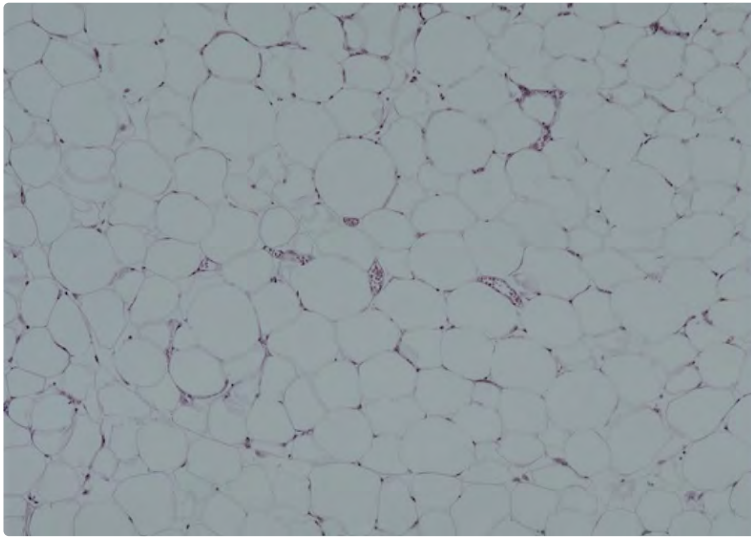
Dr. Shah's recent accomplishments include successfully implementing secure chat functionality, the Pieces AI working summary and optimized drug alert systems that deliver fewer but more targeted medication and allergy notifications. He currently chairs both the EHR Enterprise User Group committee and the P&T Drug Alerts subcommittee.

Originally from Garland, Dr. Shah holds a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering from Washington University in St. Louis. He earned his medical degree at the UT Health Science Center in San Antonio and completed internal medicine residency training at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, where he served as Chief Resident.

In his new role, Dr. Shah will lead Parkland's Clinical Informatics and Virtual Care teams, advancing the institution's strategic vision for digital health and patient-centered care. ■

Internal Medicine News Portal

in case you missed it



At left, healthy and functional fat tissue exposed to elevated levels of the hormone FGF21. At right, tissue without extra FGF21 shows inflammation and cell death.

Scherer, Colleagues Show Hormone Boosts Longevity and Metabolic Health

A new study led by **Philipp Scherer, Ph.D.**, a Professor and Director of the Touchstone Center for Diabetes Research, shows that increasing levels of the hormone FGF21 in fat cells can significantly extend lifespan and improve metabolic health even in mice that are fed a high-fat diet. The research, [published in *Cell Metabolism*](#), builds on earlier discoveries by scientists at UT Southwestern, who found that FGF21 boosts insulin sensitivity and may even aid recovery from alcohol overuse.

Unlike earlier models that altered liver cells from birth, this study activated FGF21 production in adult fat cells, resulting in mice living up to 3.3 years, while also avoiding obesity and fatty liver disease, and maintaining better blood sugar, cholesterol, and immune profiles than unaltered littermates that lived an average of 1.8 years. ■

*Other Internal Medicine researchers who contributed to this study are Associate Professors **Ruth Gordillo, Ph.D.**, and **Teppei Fujikawa, Ph.D.**; Instructor **Qian Lin, Ph.D.**; former graduate student **Bianca Field, M.D., Ph.D.**; and graduate student researcher **Megan Virostek, M.S.***

Dr. Scherer holds the Gifford O. Touchstone, Jr. and Randolph G. Touchstone Distinguished Chair in Diabetes Research and the Touchstone/West Distinguished Chair in Diabetes Research.

News and Digital Media Featuring Internal Medicine Colleagues

- [FDA Approves its Requested Updated Warning Labels for COVID-19 Vaccines](#) (via *Helio*, with Krutika Kuppal, M.D.)

Faculty Encouraged to Apply for Health Equity Scholars Program

The Office for Institutional Opportunity is now accepting applications for the 2025–2027 Health Equity Scholars Program, funded by UT Southwestern and Parkland Health.

This two-year program is designed to recruit, develop, and retain clinical faculty dedicated to advancing health equity through research and community engagement. Selected scholars will receive financial support, including 20% salary funding for education and outreach projects, professional mentorship, and leadership development through UT Southwestern's LEAD program. Participants will also gain tools and experience to promote health and wellness in the community.

Applications are due by **Thursday, July 31, 2025**, and must include a letter of support from the applicant's department chair. The program begins on **Monday, Oct. 1, 2025**, and supports UT Southwestern's mission to provide excellent, equitable care and improve community health. Faculty are encouraged to share this opportunity and nominate eligible colleagues. ■

[Click here for more information.](#)

Faculty and Staff Play a Key Role in Ensuring Digital Accessibility

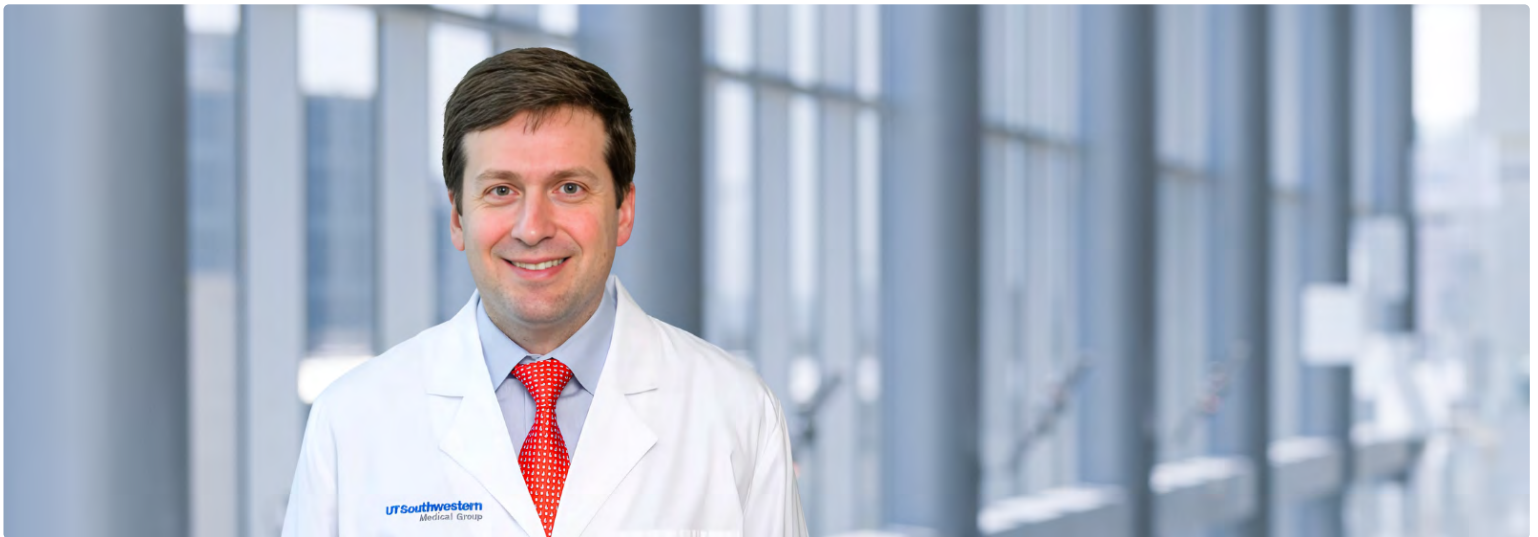
UT Southwestern's commitment to inclusive education includes ensuring people with disabilities have equal access to electronic information technology resources. Compliance with digital accessibility requirements is a shared responsibility among faculty, staff, and administrators.

Accessible content supports students with diverse needs, enhances professional credibility, and ensures materials are adaptable for future use. Faculty are urged to proactively design accessible content by using proper heading styles, alternative texts on images, readable fonts, and high-contrast visuals to meet accessibility standards and promote equitable learning environments.

To support this initiative, the Department's communications team is available to assist with Word documents, PDFs, and PowerPoint presentations to ensure that we not only meet our legal obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act but also foster inclusive education.

For guidance or help in making your materials accessible, [visit our Digital Accessibility site on MEDpoint.](#) ■

this week



Maalouf to Discuss Kidney Stone Disease on July 11

Naim Maalouf, M.D., a Professor in the Division of Endocrinology and Associate Director of the Pak Center for Mineral Metabolism and Clinical Research, will present the [Internal Medicine Grand Rounds](#) lecture on **Friday, July 11, at 8 a.m. in D1.502**. His topic: "Kidney Stone Disease in 2025: Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Bluetooth."

Dr. Maalouf holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the American University of Beirut, where he also earned his medical degree. He completed internal medicine residency training at Emory University in Atlanta, followed by advanced training through an endocrinology and metabolism fellowship at UT Southwestern.

Dr. Maalouf's research spans the pathophysiology, prevention, and treatment of kidney stone disease, with a focus on calcium phosphate, calcium oxalate, and uric acid stones. He investigates novel therapies such as hydroxycitrate, the metabolic and dietary contributors to stone formation – including protein intake, obesity, and weight loss – and the

development of advanced methods to monitor stone progression. His work also includes optimizing fluid therapy and stent management in both adults and children with nephrolithiasis. Beyond kidney stones, Dr. Maalouf explores broader metabolic and systemic health issues, including the effects of reversing hyperuricemia on metabolic syndrome, the role of renal lipotoxicity in uric acid stone formation, vitamin D's relationship with type 2 diabetes, the determinants of bone health in HIV-infected individuals and people with cystic fibrosis, and complications of primary hyperparathyroidism, reflecting a comprehensive interest in mineral metabolism and endocrine-related disorders.

Dr. Maalouf joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2004. ■



Parikh, Scherer to Discuss Inner Workings of the NIH on July 11

Samir M. Parikh, M.D., a Professor and Chief of the Division of Nephrology, and Philipp Scherer, Ph.D., a Professor and Director of the Touchstone Center for Diabetes Research, will present the [Internal Medicine Research Conference Career Development](#) conference on Friday, July 11, at noon in D1.502. Their topic: "The Working of the NIH: A View from the Study Section and Institute Council."

Dr. Parikh holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Harvard University and a medical degree from Vanderbilt University. He completed residency and fellowship training in nephrology at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) in Boston. Prior to joining UT Southwestern in 2021, he served as Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Associate Vice Chair for Research in the Department of Medicine at BIDMC.

Dr. Parikh currently serves as Chairperson of the Pathobiology of Kidney Disease study section at the NIH.

Originally from Switzerland, Dr. Scherer holds a bachelor's degree in molecular biology and a doctorate in biochemistry from the Biocenter at the University of Basel. He completed his postdoctoral training as a Research Fellow at the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research in the laboratory of Harvey Lodish, Ph.D.

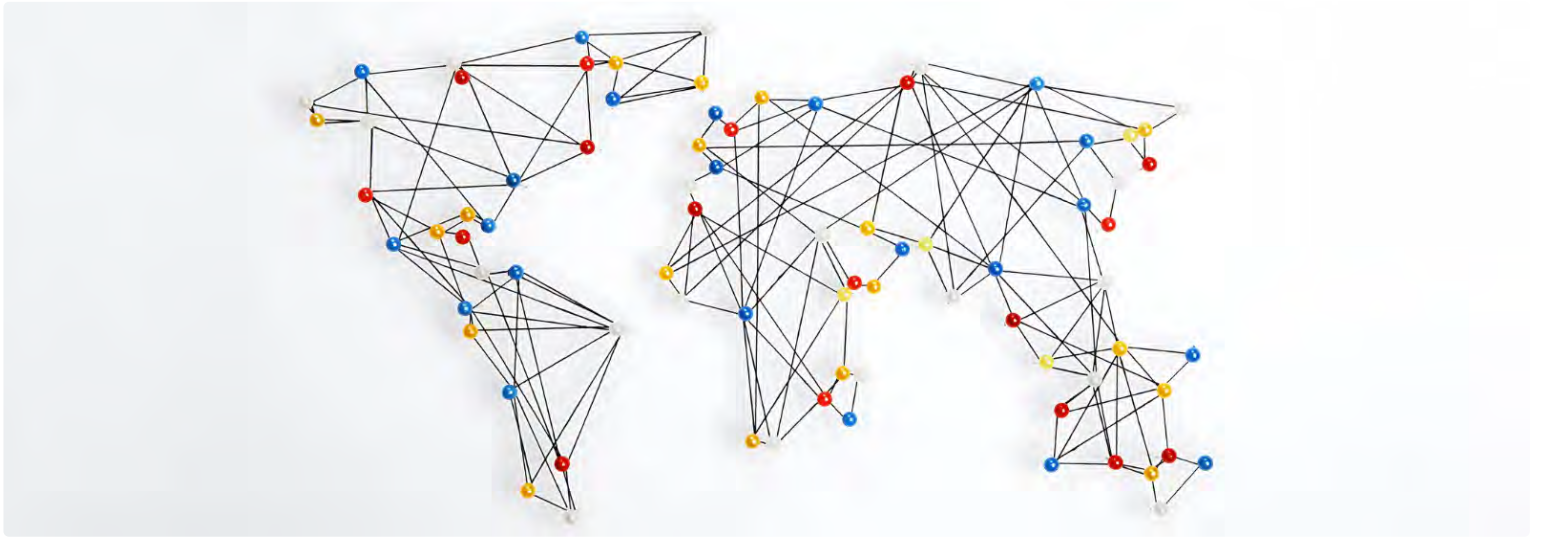
Prior to joining the UT Southwestern faculty in 2007, he served as a faculty member at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where he became a professor in 2006.

Dr. Scherer's research focuses on adipose cells and their normal functions and roles in disease. His 1995 discovery that adipocytes produce the hormone adiponectin transformed the view of the cells, which had been regarded as simple storage sites for excess triglycerides. They are now seen as highly responsive to extracellular stimuli, playing a central role in overall energy homeostasis and essential for certain aspects of the immune system. ■

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.

Dr. Scherer holds the Gifford O. Touchstone, Jr. and Randolph G. Touchstone Distinguished Chair in Diabetes Research; Touchstone/West Distinguished Chair in Diabetes Research.

save the date



Discussion on Multisite Clinical Trials Set for Aug. 13

The CTSA Program will host a discussion about “Developing and Executing High-Quality Multisite Clinical Trials” on **Wednesday, Aug. 13, at 1 p.m.** The virtual event will feature several faculty members, including **Drew Bird, M.D.**, Professor and Interim Chief of the Division of Allergy & Immunology; **Justin Grodin, M.D., M.P.H.**, Associate Professor in the Division of Cardiology and Medical Director of Internal Medicine's Clinical Trials Office; **David Karp, M.D., Ph.D.**, Professor and Division Chief of Rheumatic Diseases; and **Robert Toto, M.D.**, Professor in the Division of Nephrology.

Topics include:

- Improving quality and efficiency of multisite trials
- Increasing collaboration and communication among multisite research investigators
- Developing standardized procedures and best practices
- Increasing success rates of multisite clinical trials
- Amassing a larger pool of investigators capable of managing multisite trials

[Register Here](#)

Look for the next *Medicine Minute* on **Tuesday, July 15, 2025.**
Share feedback and news items with us at IMNews@UTSouthwestern.edu

Copyright 2025 UT Southwestern Medical Center. All rights reserved.

Medicine Minute is a publication of the Department of Internal Medicine at UT Southwestern Medical Center.