

medicine minute

August 26,

kudos



UTSW Recognized for Care of Patients with Rare Neuroendocrine Tumors

UT Southwestern has been designated a Clinical Center of Excellence by the Pheo Para Alliance for its care of patients with pheochromocytoma and paraganglioma—rare, often hereditary neuroendocrine tumors that produce excess adrenaline-like hormones. UTSW is the first designated center in North Texas and one of only 14 nationwide to receive this recognition.

Pheochromocytomas typically form in the adrenal glands, while paragangliomas develop outside them, often along nerve pathways in the head, neck, chest, or abdomen. Though usually benign, these tumors can be cancerous and spread to other parts of the body. Symptoms may include high blood pressure, headaches, sweating, and heart palpitations, which are often triggered by hormone surges.

"These tumors require expert, coordinated care to ensure timely and personalized treatment, avoid serious complications, and improve outcomes," says **Oksana Hamidi, D.O., M.S.C.S.**, an Associate Professor in the Division of Endocrinology, who co-leads the program with **Samantha Greenberg, Ph.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Care Sciences. "This designation affirms our commitment to delivering the highest level of care to patients across the region and beyond."

UTSW's multidisciplinary team includes endocrinologists, genetic counselors, surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, and nuclear medicine specialists. The center offers advanced imaging and treatments, including lutetium (Lu 177) dotatate, a targeted radiotherapy for metastatic disease. Surgery is often the first line of treatment, but patients with advanced or hereditary forms may require long-term, personalized care.

"This designation ensures patients from a large geographical region have access to highly specialized care that has been approved and considered high-quality by a larger body of experts in the field," says **Perry Bickel, M.D.**, an Associate Professor and Division Chief of Endocrinology.

Drs. Hamidi and Greenberg, alongside the broader team, have dedicated their clinical and research efforts to achieving this designation, and remain motivated to set new benchmarks in improving patient care.

"As a center, we can make a difference in the lives of our patients and their families, because this disease can be challenging to diagnose and manage," Dr. Greenberg says. "When we do things to comfort our patients and our families, then we are actually fulfilling UT Southwestern's mission to provide the best possible care today, with continuous improvement and innovation for better care tomorrow." ■



Beechar Named Associate Director of Transplant Infectious Diseases

Vivek Beechar, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases and Geographic Medicine, has been named Associate Director of Transplant Infectious Diseases.

"Since joining our faculty in 2024, Dr. Beechar has distinguished himself in the care of patients who have had transplants, particularly those affected by cytomegalovirus (CMV) and other opportunistic viral infections," says **Ricardo La Hoz, M.D.**, an Associate Professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases and Geographic medicine and Director of Transplant Infectious Diseases. "He has been an invaluable educator and collaborator."

Originally from South Africa, Dr. Beechar holds a bachelor's degree in neurobiology from the University of Texas at Austin. He earned his medical degree at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and completed internal medicine residency training at UT Southwestern. He then received advanced training in infectious diseases and transplant infectious diseases through a fellowship at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, where he also earned a master's degree in clinical research. ■



Kazi Selected to Chair Annual Meeting

Salahuddin “Dino” Kazi, M.D., a Professor in the Division of Rheumatic Diseases, Vice Chair of Education, and Program Director of the Internal Medicine Residency, has been selected Chair Elect of the American College of Rheumatology’s Annual Meeting Planning Committee (AMPC). In this role, Dr. Kazi will oversee the planning and execution of ACR Convergence, the organization’s flagship annual meeting.

“ACR Convergence has always held a special place in my professional experience,” Dr. Kazi says. “It was the first major conference I attended as a rheumatologist, and now, having the opportunity to guide its direction feels like a full-circle moment.”

The AMPC is charged with curating the scientific and educational content of the meeting, which includes sessions on prevalent and rare rheumatic conditions, the latest clinical and translational research, practice management, and interdisciplinary collaboration across the rheumatology community.

“This meeting is more than a showcase of scientific progress,” Dr. Kazi adds. “It’s a celebration of the relationships and resilience that define our field. Rheumatology is unique in its blend of long-term patient care and rapidly evolving science. To help shape a platform that highlights both is incredibly rewarding. I’m excited about what lies ahead for our specialty and the patients we serve.” ■

education and training



Dalton Appointed Associate Program Director for Palliative Medicine Fellowship

Heather Dalton, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Palliative Medicine Section of the Division of General Internal Medicine, has been appointed Associate Program Director (APD) for the Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellowship.

In her new role, Dr. Dalton will contribute to the continued growth and excellence of the fellowship, supporting education, training, and mentorship for the next generation of leaders in palliative medicine. ■

Internal Medicine News Portal

in case you missed it



Dallas Heart Study Celebrates 25 Years of Transformative Research and Community Impact

Now in its 25th year, the Dallas Heart Study (DHS) continues to shape the future of cardiovascular and brain health through groundbreaking research and deep community engagement. Launched in 2000 with support from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, DHS recruited over 6,000 diverse Dallas County residents to investigate heart disease and hypertension using advanced imaging and genetic profiling.

The study has led to major medical breakthroughs, including the discovery of PCSK9 gene mutations linked to low LDL cholesterol, which inspired a new class of cholesterol-lowering drugs approved by the FDA in 2015. DHS also pioneered community-based interventions, such as barbershop blood pressure screenings, now a national model for reaching underserved populations.

Now in its third phase, the DHS has evolved into the [Dallas Hearts and Minds Study](#), focusing on aging and brain health. About 1,500 participants are undergoing cardiac and brain imaging, cognitive assessments, and full-body MRIs. UT Southwestern's magnetoencephalography (MEG) facility is generating one of the nation's largest brain-mapping datasets, positioning the institution as a leader in neurocardiac research.

The study's success is attributed to its diversity, technological innovation, and strong participant relationships. It has produced more than 230 research papers and transformed UT Southwestern's cardiology program, launching numerous scientific careers and advancing public health.

"The story of cardiology at UTSW in 2025 is really the story of the Dallas Heart Study," says James de Lemos, M.D., Professor and Division Chief of Cardiology and one of the study's principal investigators. ■

Read the Newroom Press Release

News and Digital Media Featuring Internal Medicine Colleagues

- [New IBD Therapies Take the "If Factor" Out of Crohn's, Ulcerative Colitis](#) (via *MedBlog*, with David Fudman, M.D.)
- [Highlights from the ADA's 2025 Scientific Sessions](#) (via *DiabetesBio* podcast on YouTube, with Kevin Williams, Ph.D.)
- [Empowering Oncologists: How Did We Set Up Research Infrastructure in the Community?](#) (Via *OncoDaily TV* on YouTube, with Suzanne Cole, M.D., M.A.)

need to know

Labor Day



Clinics, Academic Offices, and Labs Closed on Monday, Sept. 1

Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 1, is a [designated holiday](#) for UT Southwestern in honor of workers.

All UTSW clinics, central administration, academic offices, and research labs will be closed. Hospitals will be fully operational with the appropriate staff in support areas.

If you have questions about the holiday policy, call Human Resources at 214-648-0821. ■

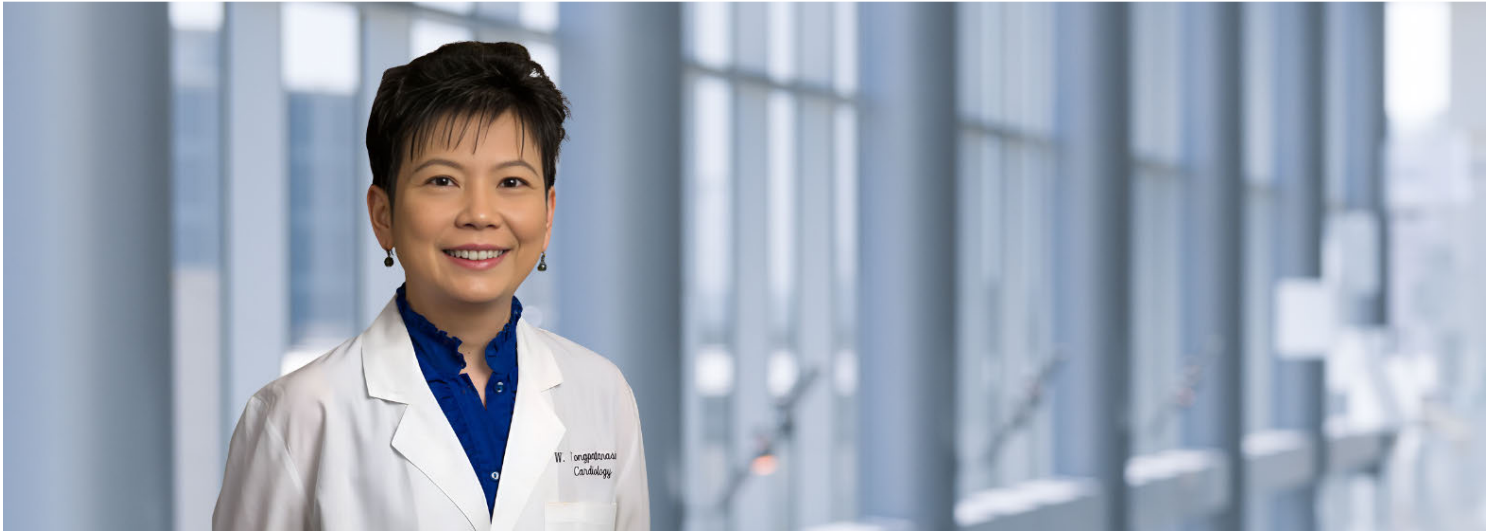
LEAD Applications: Important Submission Guidelines

Applications for the [Leadership Emerging in Academic Departments \(LEAD\) program](#) are now open and will be accepted through Wednesday, Sept. 24.

While many applicants may choose to discuss their application with their Division Chief, support from the Chair's office is highly encouraged before submitting an application. Reach out to **Rachel Bonnema, M.D., M.S.**, Associate Vice Chair of Faculty Development.

Also note: Once submitted, an application is not easily accessible. To ensure proper review, send a screenshot or copy of application responses, along with an updated CV, to [Heather Burzlaff](#), who will compile materials for final review. ■

this week



Vongpatanasin Among Panelists to Discuss Update to High Blood Pressure Guideline

Wanpen Vongpatanasin, M.D., a Professor in the Division of Cardiology and Director of its Hypertension Section, will join other members from the writing committee of the 2025 AHA/ACC Guideline for the Prevention, Detection, Evaluation and Management of High Blood Pressure in Adults to discuss updates, implications for clinical practice, and opportunities to align systems of care during a webinar on **Thursday, Aug. 28, at noon on Zoom**. The [continuing education event](#) is co-sponsored by the American Heart Association and the American Medical Association.

Participants must register in advance.

[Register for the Event](#)

Other Noteworthy Lectures & Conferences This Week

- Thursday, Aug. 28, 9 a.m.: [Infectious Diseases Grand Rounds](#) with Dr. James Willig (Infectious Diseases & Geographic Medicine) – “Undergraduate Medical Education Update”
- Thursday, Aug. 28, 9 a.m.: [Hamon Center for Therapeutic Oncology Research & Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center Experimental Therapeutics Program Lecture](#) with Dr. Tuoqi Wu (Immunology) – “Transcriptional Control of Antitumor T Cells”

upcoming events



Celebrating Women in Medicine Month: Honoring Excellence and Leadership

September marks the annual observance of **Women in Medicine Month**, a time dedicated to recognizing the contributions of women in the medical field. From pioneering research to compassionate patient care, women healthcare professionals have shaped the landscape of medicine throughout history and continue to lead transformative change today.

As in previous years, the SWAG (Supporting Women Achieving Greatness) Committee will host a week of special lectures and discussions led by distinguished women colleagues:

- **Monday, Sept. 15, Noon:** [Panel discussion](#) by Drs. **Traci Adams** (Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine), **Amy Jones** (Hematology & Oncology), **Ashley Hardin** (Cardiology), and **Winnie Wang** (General Internal Medicine) – “Assistant to Associate Professor: Working Within the System”
- **Tuesday, Sept. 16, Noon:** [Lecture by](#) Dr. **Indy Bhavsar-Burke** (Digestive & Liver Diseases) – “Finding Your Voice: Practical Lessons in Clinician Educator Development”
- **Wednesday, Sept. 17, Noon:** [Discussion by](#) Drs. **Hetal Patel** (Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine) and **Rachel Bonnema** (General Internal Medicine) – “Does Patient Gender Change Patient Care?”
- **Thursday, Sept. 18, Noon:** [Lecture by](#) Dr. **Ann Lutich** (Obstetrics and Gynecology) – “Perimenopause and Menopause Management”
- **Friday, Sept. 19, 8 a.m.:** [Internal Medicine Grand Rounds](#) with Dr. **Jada Bussey-Jones** (Emory University) – “Promotion of Women in Academic Medicine: A Unique Pathway to Achieve Health Equity”



Research Conferences to Resume in September

Following the summer research conference series, which focused on career development and emerging research technologies, the Internal Medicine Research Conference will resume in September with presentations **every Friday from noon to 1 p.m. in D1.502**. The conference is led by **Joel Elmquist, D.V.M., Ph.D.**, Vice Chair of Internal Medicine Research and **Ezra Burstein, M.D., Ph.D.**, a Professor in the Division of Digestive and Liver Diseases and Director of the Jean Wilson Society.

"The conference cycle is structured as a rotating set of activities that include works in progress by trainees in our Physician-Scientist Training Program, research talks by early career as well as senior investigators in our Department, and also invited speakers from other departments or other institutions," Dr. Burstein says. "We're inviting feedback on the summer topics and the research conference in general to inform our planning for next year." ■

[Email Feedback and Suggestions](#)

reminders

Andrea Ballabio to Receive Beth Levine Prize in Autophagy Research on Sept. 15

Italian medical geneticist **Andrea Ballabio, M.D.**, will receive the Beth Levine M.D. Prize in Autophagy Research on **Monday, Sept. 15 at 11 a.m. in the Tom and Lula Gooch Auditorium**. During the presentation ceremony, Dr. Ballabio will present a lecture highlighting his research in autophagy.

Dr. Ballabio, founder of the Telethon Institute of Genetics and Medicine and professor at the University of Naples "Federico II," is internationally recognized for his pioneering work on the lysosome's role in cellular metabolism. His research identified Transcription Factor EB (TFEB) as a master regulator of lysosomal biogenesis and autophagy, reshaping scientific understanding of the lysosome as a dynamic metabolic hub.

A visiting professor at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and a co-founder with Dr. Levine of Casma Therapeutics, Dr. Ballabio continues to explore therapeutic strategies targeting TFEB to treat neurodegenerative diseases and cancer.

Dr. Levine was a Professor of Internal Medicine and Microbiology whose pioneering research identified the role of autophagy in the development of human diseases. She is best known for discovering the first mammalian autophagy gene, which she named beclin 1. In addition to having served as Chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases and the Jay P. Sanford Professor in Infectious Diseases, she also was Director of the Center for Autophagy Research and holder of the Charles Sprague Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, and a member of the National Academy of Sciences. She died in 2020. ■

Kidney Cancer Workshop Scheduled for Sept. 11-13

The Kidney Cancer Program is partnering with the Kidney Cancer Association to host "From Mouse to Medicine: RCC Model Systems for Discovery and Translation," Sept. 11-13 in NG3.112. The workshop will bring together more than 30 leading faculty from across the world, who together with UTSW faculty, will share the latest advances in the field.

The event is open to all UTSW faculty, trainees, and staff, but due to limited space, attendees are asked to register only if they are certain they will participate, to ensure accurate planning. ■

[Click here to view the program.](#)

[Register Here](#)

Five Faculty to Present at Research Forum on Oct. 14

Five recently appointed Internal Medicine faculty members will introduce their research during the [2025 Faculty Research Forum](#), scheduled for **Tuesday, Oct. 14 from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the T. Boone Pickens Medical Education and Conference Center**.

- **Glynnis Garry Bann, M.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Cardiology, will present "Rewiring Fate: Epigenetic Factors as Drivers of Cardiac Reprogramming."
- **Laurel Lee, M.D., Ph.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Cardiology, will present "Immune Modulation of Vascular Susceptibility to Atherosclerosis."

- **Yoshiharu Muto, M.D., Ph.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Nephrology, will present “Cracking the Code of Kidney Disease Through Methionine Metabolism.”
- **Hani Suleiman, M.D., Ph.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Nephrology, will present “Molecular Determinants of Podocyte Actin Cytoskeleton in Health and in Disease.”
- **Jialing “Shirley” Wang, Ph.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Nephrology, will present “Cell-Type Specific Transcription Regulation in Skeletal Disease and Bone Cancer.”

All members of the UT Southwestern community are welcome to attend the in-person event. Boxed lunches will be provided to early registrants. ■

Look for the next *Medicine Minute* on **Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2025**.

Want to access an item in a previous edition of the newsletter? [Check our *Medicine Minute* archive.](#)

Share feedback and news items with us at JMNews@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.