

medicine minute

October 7, 2025

kudos



Kazi Named GME Program Director of the Year

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 named the Program Director of the Year by the Graduate Medical Education (GME) Office, a recognition that reflects his transformative leadership and commitment to resident training. Since assuming the role in 2012, Dr. Kazi has guided the program through a period of rapid innovation and unprecedented growth, establishing psychological safety as the cornerstone of the program.

“I believe in fostering an environment where residents feel safe to ask questions, admit uncertainty, and advocate for patient and personal wellbeing,” Dr. Kazi says. “Over the past decade, this focus has led to increased trust, morale, and engagement among trainees, and has paved the way for curricular reform, enhanced wellness initiatives, and a more humane work schedule.”

In recognizing his accomplishment, the GME Office noted Dr. Kazi’s style of “servant leadership,” has had a profound impact on residents, both personally and professionally. “His compassionate guidance, accessibility, and visionary leadership have strengthened the program’s culture, enhanced resident education, and fostered a supportive, high-performing community of trainees.” ■

education and training



CSTP Aims to Fast-Track Clinical Research Careers

The Clinical Scientist Training Program (CSTP), a new research-focused track within the Internal Medicine Residency, combines rigorous training in clinical internal medicine and subspecialties with comprehensive training in clinical research. Modeled after the successful Physician Scientist Training Program (PSTP), the CSTP is designed to develop the next generation of clinical investigators at UT Southwestern.

The program follows a streamlined pathway: A short-track residency (typically two years), followed by an integrated clinical and research subspecialty fellowship lasting four to six years, depending on subspecialty requirements. Trainees receive protected research time to pursue independent projects under the mentorship of experienced faculty, along with structured educational opportunities such as lecture series and formal coursework tailored to clinical research careers.

"CSTP prepares clinician-scientists to advance medical knowledge through studies involving human subjects," says **Lisa VanWagner, M.D., M.Sc.**, an Associate Professor in the Division of Digestive and Liver Diseases and Program Director of the CSTP. "Scholars may engage in interventional (for example, clinical trials), observational, epidemiologic, behavioral, health services and outcomes, data science, or translational research across Internal Medicine disciplines."

The program emphasizes mentorship, grant and manuscript writing, and career development, "reflecting the Department's commitment to building a strong and sustainable clinical research workforce," Dr. VanWagner adds. "Trainees benefit from UT Southwestern's rich research environment, diverse patient population, and collaborative academic culture." ■

research roundup



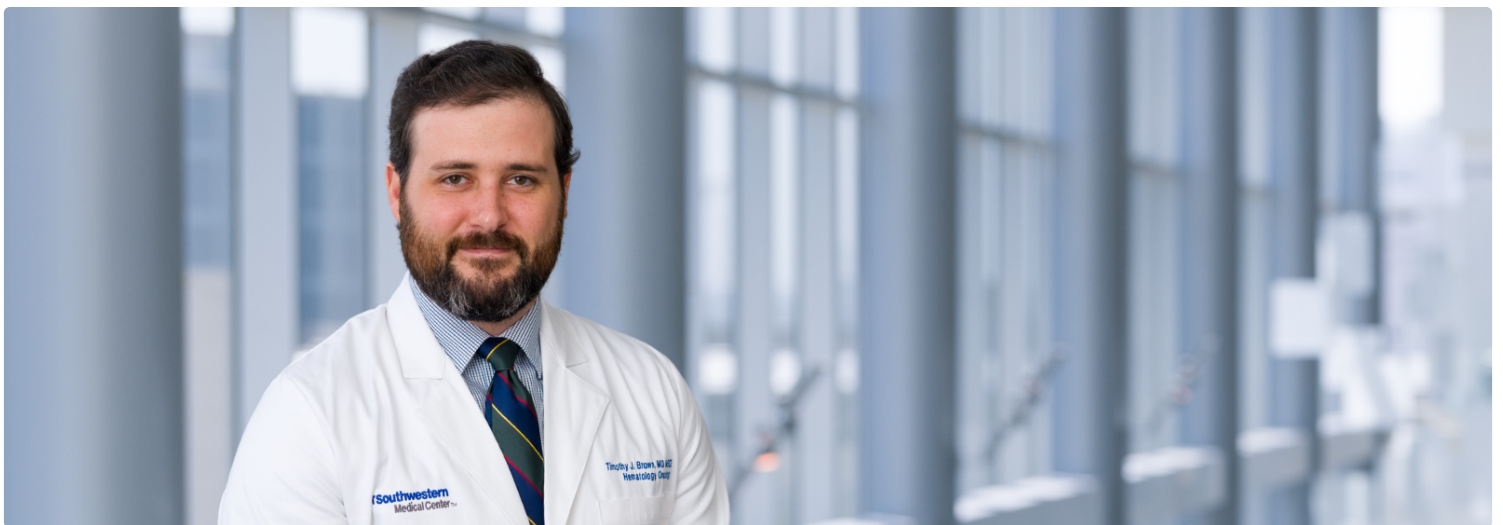
Sridhar Recognized for Commitment to Inclusive Clinical Trials

Arthi Sridhar, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology, has been named a recipient of the Robert A. Winn Diversity in Clinical Trials Career Development Award. The two-year program with a \$240,000 award is designed to help recipients become independent investigators who advance health equity through their research.

Dr. Sridhar's research centers on expanding access to clinical trials for patients with thoracic malignancies, with a particular focus on innovative strategies to improve recruitment and outcomes for individuals diagnosed with lung cancer. Through the Winn CDA, she will receive structured mentorship, funding, and leadership training to further her work in equitable trial enrollment and patient-centered cancer care.

"This recognition underscores Dr. Sridhar's commitment to reducing disparities in oncology and shaping the future of clinical research by ensuring that cutting-edge therapies are accessible to all patients," says **Jonathan Dowell, M.D.**, a Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology and Chief of Hematology and Oncology at the Dallas VA Medical Center. ■

Editor's note: The Winn Awards are made possible by the support of several funding partners, including the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation, Gilead Sciences, and Amgen.



Brown Named Cary Council 'Docstar'

Timothy Brown, M.D., M.S.C.E., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology, will receive a \$50,000 Early Stage Research Grant from [The Cary Council](#), which provides funding to advance the research of early-career investigators.

Dr. Brown specializes in the treatment of upper gastrointestinal cancers, including the stomach and esophagus. He plans to evaluate the addition of an adaptive radiation therapy, known as PULSAR, in combination with chemotherapy and surgery for patients with esophageal cancer.

Originally from Florida, Dr. Brown holds a bachelor's degree in human nutrition, foods, and exercise from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) in Blacksburg, Virginia, and a medical degree from the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine in Hershey, Pennsylvania. He completed internal medicine residency training at UT Southwestern, where he served as Chief Resident, and then gained advanced training in hematology and oncology through a fellowship at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, where he served as Chief Fellow and where he also earned a master's degree in clinical epidemiology.

Dr. Brown joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2023. ■

[Watch a Video of Dr. Brown on Youtube](#)



Yin Receives TSGE Grant to Study Ulcerative Colitis

Jianyi Yin, M.D., Ph.D., an Instructor in the Division of Digestive and Liver Diseases, has received a \$10,000 grant from the Texas Society of Gastroenterology & Endoscopy (TSGE) to support his research on "Discovering Novel Predictors of Therapy Response in Acute Severe Ulcerative Colitis."

Dr. Yin's research aims to advance the understanding of IBD mechanisms and explore relevant clinical implications to improve patient outcomes.

Originally from China, Dr. Yin received his medical and doctoral degrees from Nanjing University, followed by research fellowship training at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. He completed internal medicine residency and gastroenterology fellowship training at UT Southwestern through the Physician Scientist Training Program.

Dr. Yin joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2025. ■



NOTEWORTHY PUBLICATIONS

Study Links High Phosphate Diet to Brain Changes in Mice

A new study led by **Wanpen Vongpatanasin, M.D.**, a Professor in the Division of Cardiology and Director of its Hypertension Section, sheds light on a surprising connection between diet and mental health. The researchers found that mice fed a diet high in inorganic phosphate, a common additive in processed foods, developed behaviors consistent with chronic anxiety.

Over a 12-week period, male mice consuming high levels of phosphate showed increased signs of stress, such as spending more time near the walls of an open field and freezing more often during fear-based tests. These behavioral changes were accompanied by a drop in neuronal density in the hypothalamus, a brain region involved in emotional regulation.

The [study, published in *Brain, Behavior & Immunity Health*](#), also revealed shifts in the brain's immune landscape.

"Mice on the high-phosphate diet had fewer T cells and natural killer cells, suggesting that excess phosphate may disrupt the brain's immune balance," says **Han Kyul Kim, Ph.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Cardiology, who contributed to the study. "Further genetic analysis of the hippocampus, a key area for memory and stress response, showed altered expression of genes linked to inflammation, neurodegeneration, and emotional regulation."

While the research was conducted in mice, the findings raise important questions about the long-term impact of phosphate additives in human diets. With phosphate commonly used to enhance flavor and shelf life in processed foods, the study underscores the need for closer scrutiny of its effects on brain health.

"This may explain why we don't feel so good after having a Whopper or a Big Mac," Dr. Vongpatanasin says. ■

Dr. Vongpatanasin holds the Fredric L. Coe Professorship in Nephrolithiasis Research in Mineral Metabolism and the Norman and Audrey Kaplan Chair in Hypertension.

Investigators Discover Hormone's Protective Role Against the Flu

In a [study, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*](#) (PNAS) by researchers at UT Southwestern, investigators uncovered a surprising ally in the fight against influenza: a hormone called fibroblast growth factor 21, or FGF21. Known for its role in regulating metabolism, FGF21 is produced by the liver and communicates with the brain during times of physiological stress.

"In both humans and mice infected with the flu, we found that levels of FGF21 in the bloodstream rose significantly," says **Kartik Rajagopalan, M.D., Ph.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine and co-corresponding author.

In mouse models, the hormone helped counteract some of the flu's most debilitating effects, such as loss of appetite, weight loss, and a drop in body temperature. Mice lacking FGF21 fared worse during infection, while those treated with the hormone showed marked improvement.

The study revealed that FGF21 works by activating noradrenergic neurons, particularly in a brain region called the *locus coeruleus*. This activation boosts energy expenditure and stimulates heat production in brown fat, helping the body maintain its temperature during illness.

Importantly, the researchers confirmed that the rise in FGF21 wasn't simply a result of reduced food intake, but a direct response to the viral infection.

"These findings open the door to exploring FGF21 as a potential therapeutic agent to improve outcomes for flu patients," Dr. Rajagopalan says. ■

Researchers Gain New Insights About Disparities in Breast Cancer Outcomes

A new analysis from the Dallas Metastatic Cancer Study sheds light on survival trends among patients diagnosed with de novo metastatic breast cancer, or breast cancer that has already spread at the time of initial diagnosis. Drawing from a decade of data and a cohort of 412 patients, **Isaac Chan, M.D., Ph.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology, and colleagues examined how clinical and demographic factors influence outcomes across different breast cancer subtypes.

[The study, published in *Communications Medicine*](#), found that patients who are Black, uninsured or publicly insured, or living with conditions like hypertension and diabetes face significantly higher mortality rates. These risks were compounded by the presence of visceral metastases, particularly in the brain, liver, and lungs. Even after accounting for cancer subtype, diabetes and liver metastases remained independently associated with poorer survival.

The median age at diagnosis was 54, and most patients were either overweight or obese. While bone was the most common site of metastasis, liver and lung involvement were strongly linked to decreased survival. One-year survival stood at nearly 80%, but dropped to just 34.5% at five years, underscoring the aggressive nature of the disease.

Younger patients were more likely to be Hispanic and less likely to have hypertension or diabetes. They also showed distinct patterns in cancer subtype distribution compared to older patients.

"This analysis reveals the need to explore these disparities at the individual level, with the goal of identifying actionable targets for intervention and improving outcomes for vulnerable populations," says Dr. Chan.

Other members of the Division of Hematology and Oncology who contributed to the study include Assistant Professor **Hannah Chang, M.D.**; Assistant Professor **Anna Moscovitz, M.D.**; Assistant Professor **Sangeetha Reddy, M.D.**; Professor **Heather McArthur, M.D., M.P.H.**; and Research Intern **Lily Xu**. ■

Dr. McArthur holds the Komen Distinguished Chair in Clinical Breast Cancer Research.

Supplement Labels May Mislead Consumer About Health Benefits, Study Finds

A [new study published in *JAMA Network Open*](#) and led by **Ann Marie Navar, M.D., Ph.D., M.Sc.**, an Associate Professor in the Division of Cardiology, reveals that commonly used statements on dietary supplement labels, such as "supports heart health" or "supports cognitive function," may lead consumers to believe these products prevent or treat specific diseases, despite regulatory guidelines stating otherwise.

In two large online surveys involving more than 4,400 U.S. adults, participants were shown labels for either a fish oil supplement or a fictitious product called Viadin H. Those exposed to labels with health-related claims were significantly more likely to report that the supplements could prevent conditions like heart attacks, heart failure, or dementia. For example, 62.5% of respondents who saw a "Supports Heart Health" label on fish oil believed it could prevent heart attacks, compared to 53.9% who saw a label without such claims.

The findings underscore a disconnect between regulatory intent and consumer interpretation of structure/function claims, which are legally not meant to imply disease treatment or prevention. Dr. Navar and her team suggest that clearer labeling regulations may be needed to reduce consumer misunderstanding and ensure informed decision-making.

Eric Peterson, M.D., M.P.H., a Professor in the Division of Cardiology and Vice Provost and Sr. Associate Dean for Clinical Research, also contributed to the study. ■

Dr. Peterson holds the Adelyn and Edmund M. Hoffman Distinguished Chair in Medical Science.

Internal Medicine News Portal

in case you missed it

News and Digital Media Featuring Internal Medicine Colleagues

- [New ACC Consensus Document Helps Clinicians Navigate Issues Around TR](#) (via *TCTMD*, with Dharam Kumbhani, M.D.)
- [How the New Blood Pressure Guidelines Can Help Your Heart Health](#) (via *MedBlog*, with Wanpen Vongpatanasin, M.D.)
- [Culinary Medicine Service Aims to Boost Food Skills, Health](#) (via *MEDSCAPE*, with Jaclyn Albin, M.D., and Willis Wong, M.D., M.B.A.)

this week



INTERNAL MEDICINE Faculty Town Hall

Faculty Town Hall Scheduled for Oct. 9

A virtual Town Hall to update Internal Medicine faculty on the FY26 compensation plan is scheduled for **noon on Thursday, Oct. 9, via Zoom**. The event will conclude with a Q&A session. It will also be recorded so those who cannot attend will be able to view at a later time at their convenience.

The Town Hall will be presented and moderated by **Mark Drazner, M.D., M.Sc.**, Professor and Vice Chair of Clinical Affairs; **Hetal Patel, M.D.**, Professor and Chair of the Performance Incentive Committee; and **Rachel Bonnema, M.D., M.S.**, Professor and Associate Vice Chair of Faculty Development. ■

[Click to Join the Town Hall on Zoom](#)



Harvard's Paul Yu to Discuss the Genetics of Pulmonary Hypertension on Oct. 10

Paul Yu, M.D., Ph.D., an Associate Professor of Medicine in the Division of Cardiology and Director of the Cardiovascular Research Center at Harvard Medical School, will present the [Internal Medicine Grand Rounds](#) lecture on Friday, Oct. 10, at 8 a.m. in D1.502. His topic: "Targeting BMP, Activin, and TGF Beta Signaling in Pulmonary Hypertension: Lessons from Human Genetics, Disease Models, and Clinical Trials."

Dr. Yu holds a bachelor's degree in biological sciences from Stanford University. He received his medical and doctoral degrees from Duke University. He then completed internal medicine residency training at the University of California San Francisco, followed by clinical and research fellowships in cardiovascular disease at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Dr. Yu's laboratory studies the role of cytokine growth factor signaling in cardiovascular homeostasis, injury repair, and regeneration. Specifically, Dr. Yu and his team have devised novel models, molecular tools, and pharmacologic probes for examining the function of bone morphogenetic protein (BMP), activin, growth and differentiation factor (GDF), and transforming growth factor-beta (TGF- β) signaling in cardiovascular and musculoskeletal development and function. A major focus of this work is to discern how BMP/TGF- β signaling achieves spatio-temporal and functional specificity for developmental patterning, and to modulate the tissue-specific consequences of inflammation and injury. Dr. Yu's clinical and translational interests include pulmonary vascular disease, cardiovascular rheumatology, and fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva. ■



Don Berwick to Speak on Redesigning U.S. Healthcare on Oct. 10

Don Berwick, M.D., M.P.P., a leading voice in healthcare reform, will present a [special lecture](#) on Friday, Oct. 10, at noon in D1.502. His topic: "Rescuing U.S. Healthcare: Principles for Redesign."

Dr. Berwick is President Emeritus and Senior Fellow at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, which he co-founded in 1991 and lead for nearly 20 years. A Harvard-trained pediatrician and public policy expert, he has dedicated his career to improving healthcare delivery through evidence-based practices and systemic reform.

In July 2010, President Barack Obama appointed him Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, where he oversaw the rollout of the Affordable Care Act and managed a budget exceeding that of the Pentagon. His leadership emphasized patient-centered care, cost efficiency, and improved outcomes.

During his distinguished career, Dr. Berwick has held faculty appointments at Harvard Medical School and the Harvard School of Public Health and served on the staffs of several major Boston hospitals. He has also advised national and international health organizations, earning global recognition, including an honorary knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II, for his contributions to healthcare systems worldwide. ■

Other Upcoming Lectures & Conferences of Note

- Wednesday, Oct. 8, 8 a.m.: [Geriatrics Grand Rounds](#) with Dr. Lynne Kirk (Geriatric Medicine) – “Clinical Competence and the Aging Clinician”
- Wednesday, Oct. 8, 9 a.m.: [Ethics in AI Symposium](#)
- Thursday, Oct. 9, 9 a.m.: [Incorporating Policy & Advocacy in Your Career](#) with Dr. David Gerber (Hematology & Oncology) and Others
- Friday, Oct. 10, Noon: [Pancreatic Cancer Program Meeting](#) with Dr. Simon Schwoerer (University of Chicago) – “Metabolic Control of Fibroblast State and Function in Pancreatic Cancer”
- Friday, Oct. 10, 12:15 p.m.: [Endocrine Grand Rounds](#) with Dr. Iram Hussain (Endocrinology) – “Management of Benign, Solid Thyroid Nodules in the Era of Minimally Invasive Therapies”
- Friday, Oct. 10, 2:30 p.m.: [CORT Lecture](#) with Dr. Raghu Mirmira (University of Chicago) – “Stress, Inflammation, and the Spiral of Autoimmunity in Type 1 Diabetes”

reminders

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. ■

[Register for the Research Forum](#)

Heart & Vascular Team to Support AHA Heart Walk on Oct. 18

The American Heart Association (AHA) Heart Walk is scheduled for **Saturday, Oct. 18, at Levy Event Plaza**, 501 East Las Colinas Boulevard, in Irving. Members of the Heart & Vascular Service Line team invites all faculty, staff, and trainees to join them in supporting this important event.

A nationwide initiative, AHA Heart Walks raise awareness of cardiovascular disease, celebrate heart health, and honor those whose lives have been affected by heart-related conditions. By participating, the Heart & Vascular team seeks to fulfill its mission of improving cardiovascular health. ■

[Register to Join the Heart & Vascular Team](#)

Team UTSW to Raise Awareness of Kidney Disease at Annual Event on Oct. 18

On **Saturday, Oct. 18**, Team UTSW will take part in the National Kidney Foundation's (NKF) Kidney Walk to raise awareness of and support for those affected by kidney disease.

The Dallas-Fort Worth event, which starts at **8 a.m. at Lone Star Park**, serves as a meaningful opportunity to honor the lives of individuals who live with the daily challenges of kidney disease, as well as remember those who died from this chronic illness.

Team UTSW's participation affirms its commitment to advancing the NKF mission of ensuring that patients and families have access to essential resources and promotes innovation in transplantation to reduce wait times and improve outcomes.

The team invites you to join in this important effort. ■

[Join Team UTSW or Support a Team Member](#)



Jon Garinn
Medicine Minute Editor

Look for the next *Medicine Minute* on **Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2025**.

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

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