

medicine minute

November 18, 2022

kudos



Obesity Society Names Almandoz Clinician of the Year

Jaime Almandoz, M.D., M.B.A., a Professor in the Division of Endocrinology and founding Director of the Weight Wellness Program, has been named 2025 Clinician of the Year by The Obesity Society. The honor was established by the organization's Clinical Practice Section to recognize excellence in the practice of obesity medicine.

"Dr. Almandoz has built one of the largest and most comprehensive obesity medicine programs in the nation, integrating endocrinology, nutrition, psychology, and bariatric care to improve health outcomes and quality of life for thousands of patients," said Sarah Messiah, Ph.D., M.P.H., a Professor in the School of Public Health, Associate Dean for Research, and Director of the Child and Adolescent Population Health Program. "His research has been equally transformative, with pioneering work on telemedicine in obesity care, weight bias, and racial and ethnic disparities in treatment outcomes."

"This recognition is a tribute to the many people who make this work meaningful – our patients, whose journeys inspire me every day; the exceptional Weight Wellness team, whose compassion and expertise drive our mission; and the mentors and mentees who continually challenge and motivate me to grow," Dr. Almandoz said. "Every advance in obesity medicine is a shared achievement, grounded in collaboration, mentorship, and an unwavering commitment to improving lives through evidence-based, compassionate care." ■



ASN Honors Palmer for Lifelong Contributions to Nephrology Education

Biff Palmer, M.D., an Adjunct Professor in the Division of Nephrology, was honored by the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) with the Robert G. Narins Award, which recognizes individuals who have made substantial and meritorious contributions to education and teaching in nephrology. Named for Robert G. Narins – the award’s first recipient and a pioneer in nephrology education – the honor reflects Dr. Palmer’s lifelong commitment to training physicians and advancing medical education.

Dr. Palmer, now a professor at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso, spent 35 years at UT Southwestern Medical Center, where he led programs in internal medicine and nephrology and mentored countless medical students, residents, and fellows. A prolific scholar with more than 310 publications, he has held key leadership roles, including director of clinical nephrology and program director for the Nephrology Fellowship Program. His dedication to teaching has earned numerous honors, such as the Regents Outstanding Teaching Award and Piper Professor Award.

Through his work at Texas Tech and UT Southwestern, Dr. Palmer continues to shape medical education and mentor future physicians, extending his impact to students from underrepresented populations. ■



Williams Receives Inaugural Pi-Sunyer Award

Kevin Williams, Ph.D., an Associate Professor in the Center for Hypothalamic Research, has received the inaugural Xavier Pi-Sunyer Award from The Obesity Society. Named in honor of Dr. Pi-Sunyer, a Professor Emeritus at Columbia University and a founding member of The Obesity Society, the award recognizes his pioneering work in obesity physiology, treatment development, and creation of the first clinical guidelines.

“This recognition carries special meaning, not only because of Dr. Pi-Sunyer’s enduring impact on our field, but also because it reflects the collective efforts of so many who continue to advance obesity science with curiosity, rigor, and compassion,” Dr. Williams said. “I’m grateful to my colleagues, collaborators, and trainees who make this work so rewarding.”

Dr. Williams investigates how neural circuits and signaling mechanisms in the hypothalamus regulate feeding behavior, energy expenditure, and glucose metabolism. His research focuses on understanding the brain's role in metabolic processes to inform strategies for treating obesity and related metabolic disorders. ■

To learn more about Dr. Williams' research, visit the [Williams Lab site](#).



Sheybani-Deloui Receives Young Investigator Award

Sepideh Sheybani-Deloui, Ph.D., a Postdoctoral Researcher in the [Jeffrey Zigman Lab](#), has received the 2025 Ethan Sims Young Investigator Award from the Obesity Society. The endowed award recognizes excellence in research by young investigators based on their submitted abstracts and presentation during Obesity Week. It honors Ethan Sims, M.D., an early pioneer in obesity research.

Originally from Iran, Dr. Sheybani-Deloui holds a bachelor's degree in human biology from the University of Toronto, where she also completed her master's degree in physiology while studying the role of constitutive activity of hedgehog signaling in lineage decisions in early kidney development in the laboratory of **Norman Rosenblum, M.D.**, at SickKids Research Institute. She then joined the laboratory of **Chi-Chung Hui, D.Sc.**, who was studying the role of Iroquois transcription factors in hypothalamic regulation of feeding behavior and energy homeostasis. During her doctoral work in molecular genetics at the University of Toronto, she applied cutting-edge single-cell multiomic assays (RNA+ATAC-seq) to study embryonic development and neuroglial processes underlying obesity – research that sparked her interest in the emotional and motivational aspects of feeding. In 2023, Dr. Sheybani-Deloui joined the Zigman Lab to examine how the ghrelin system contributes to eating disorders, mood regulation, and alcoholism. ■

education and training



GI Fellow Leads Global Health Effort in Rwanda

Edmond Fomunung, M.D., a Fellow in the Gastroenterology Fellowship, recently represented UT Southwestern as part of Rwanda Endoscopy Week 2025, a multinational initiative to expand access to endoscopic care and training across the African nation. The effort brought together gastroenterologists, surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, and trainees from more than 10 countries – including the U.S., Nigeria, France, and Australia – to work collaboratively at 10 district hospitals throughout Rwanda.

During his two-week elective, Dr. Fomunung performed more than 150 endoscopic procedures, often in resource-limited settings where patients waited overnight for the chance to be treated. His work ranged from complex therapeutic interventions such as pyloric balloon dilations to managing high-prevalence conditions including *H. pylori* infection, variceal bleeding, and gastrointestinal malignancies.

In addition to providing direct patient care, Dr. Fomunung taught local clinicians, nurses, and trainees, emphasizing safe endoscopic practice and evidence-based GI management. Faculty mentors, including global health leaders such as **Steven Benson, M.D.**, a Professor of Medicine at Dartmouth College, and **Erik von Rosenvinge, M.D.**, a Professor of Medicine at the University of Maryland, praised his “dedication, encyclopedic knowledge, and outstanding cross-cultural collaboration.”

Dr. Fomunung’s participation marks UT Southwestern’s first formal GI Global Health Fellowship experience, underscoring the division’s growing commitment to advancing health equity and capacity-building in underserved regions.

“This experience reaffirmed my commitment to improving GI and endoscopy access in Africa,” Dr. Fomunung said. “I hope to return next year with more resources and continue building sustainable systems of care.”

“Edmond exemplifies the mission of our fellowship – combining clinical excellence, education, and global citizenship,” said **Ariel Aday, M.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Digestive and Liver Diseases and Fellowship Program Director. “His leadership will help shape future opportunities for our trainees in global health.” ■



Fellows Place First in Inaugural AASLD Trivia Night

Fellows in the Digestive and Liver Disease program won first place in the inaugural American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) Trivia Night during the organization's annual Liver Meeting in Washington, D.C., besting 12 other fellowship programs to take the gold.

Among those celebrating the win were, from left, Professor **Jennifer Cuthbert, M.D.**; Trivia Night moderator **Brian Kim, M.D.** (University of Southern California); Fellows **Ehiamen Okoruwa, M.D.**, **Roy Wang, M.D.**, **Thomas Smith, M.D.**, **Manasa Narasimman, M.D.**, **Stephanie Tsai, M.D.**, and **Heesoo Yoo, M.D.**; Assistant Professor and Associate Program Director **Indira Bhavsar-Burke, M.D.**, and Professor and Trivia Night moderator **Marlyn Mayo, M.D.** ■

research report



Najafov Uncovers Key Player in Cell Death Linked to Inflammation

Ayaz Najafov, Ph.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Digestive and Liver Diseases, has identified a protein called SIGLEC12 that helps cells break apart during a process known as necroptosis, a type of cell death that can cause inflammation and disease.

"When cells die through necroptosis, their outer membrane bursts open, releasing contents that trigger inflammation," Dr. Najafov said. "Until now, we didn't know exactly how this final 'burst' happened. Our team found that SIGLEC12 works with another protein, MLKL, to make this rupture possible."

The [study, published in *Nature*](#), also showed that SIGLEC12 changes shape and gets cleaved by another protein, TMPRSS4, creating a fragment that is essential for the membrane to break. Interestingly, certain genetic variations in SIGLEC12 – some linked to cancer – make this process less efficient.

"This discovery could lead to new treatments for diseases where too much cell death causes harm, by targeting SIGLEC12 or TMPRSS4 to control inflammation," Dr. Najafov said. ■

To learn more about Dr. Najafov's research, visit the [Najafov Lab site](#).



In Late-Breaking Session, Pandey Highlights Practical Solutions for Heart Failure Care

Ambarish Pandey, M.D., M.S.C.S., an Associate Professor in the Division of Cardiology, announced findings from two innovative randomized clinical trials during a late-breaking clinical trials presentation at the American Heart Association Scientific Sessions in New Orleans. Both studies focused on simple, practical interventions to help people with heart failure live healthier lives and included patients from UT Southwestern and Parkland Health.

The first trial, called POLY-HF, funded by the National Institutes of Health, tested a polypill approach with a single capsule that combines three heart medications against the same drugs taken separately. For the 212 patients in the trial, the polypill made a big difference: those taking it had better heart function, fewer hospital visits, and felt better overall. They were also much more likely to take their medicine as prescribed – 79% compared to 54% in the usual care group.

“This polypill strategy demonstrates that if we make it easier for patients to take medications, we can improve uptake and improve clinical outcomes,” Dr. Pandey said. “We have to do a larger study to confirm the clinical improvements, but this should pave the way for bringing the polypill as the standard of care. We can use a very simple, very cost-effective pharmacy strategy to improve uptake and outcomes.”

The second study, FOOD-HF, funded by the American Heart Association, examined whether providing patients with fresh produce or pre-prepared medical meals after a hospital stay could improve outcomes following hospitalization for heart failure. While the number of hospital readmissions didn't change much, patients who received delivery of medically tailored meals – especially fresh produce – were twice as likely to report feeling better compared to those who only received usual care with dietary counseling.

“This study highlights the value of food supplementation in improving health status for patients with heart failure hospitalization,” Dr. Pandey said. “A lot of insurance programs, including Medicare Advantage programs, cover food as medicine, so you can actually prescribe food as medicine as a covered benefit.” ■

Internal Medicine News Portal

in case you missed it

News and Digital Media Featuring Internal Medicine Colleagues

- [Recommended Reading: The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny](#) (via *Medicine Matters*, with Salahuddin “Dino” Kazi, M.D.)
- [Hill Honored with Gill, Ostadal Awards for Lifetime of Exceptional Heart Disease Research](#) (via *Center Times+*, with Joseph Hill, M.D., Ph.D.)
- [Kazi Selected for One of the Highest Honors in Graduate Medical Education](#) (via *Center Times+*, with Salahuddin “Dino” Kazi, M.D.)
- [Liver Cancer is On the Rise: Three Risk Factors You Can Control to Reduce Your Risk](#) (via *MedBlog*, with Yujin Hoshida, M.D., Ph.D.)
- [CELEBRATE: Zalunifiban, a Novel Glycoprotein IIb/IIIa Inhibitor, Helps in STEM!](#) (via *TCTMD*, with Dharam Kumbhani, M.D.)

- [Metabolic Hormone Found to Boost Resilience Against Flu Symptoms](#) (via *UTSW Newsroom*, with Kartik Rajagopalan, M.D., Ph.D.)
- [Dallas Scientist Wins Award from American Heart Association for Genetic Discovery](#) (via *The Dallas Morning News*, with Zhao Zhang, Ph.D.)
- [Dallas Clinical Trial on Pancreatic Cancer Treatment Targets Tumors, Eases Patient Side Effects](#) (via KERA-FM, with Salwan Al-Mutar, M.D., M.S.)

this week



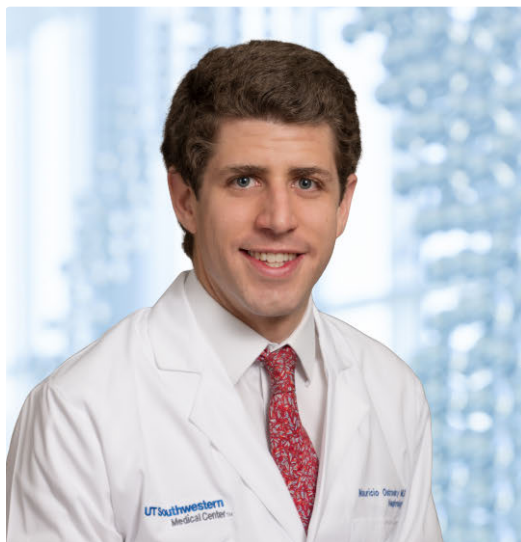
NYU's Kathryn Moore to Discuss Cardiovascular Disease and Cancer on Nov. 21

Kathryn Moore, Ph.D., Professor of Medicine and Cell Biology and Director of the Cardiovascular Research Center at University, will present the [Internal Medicine Grand Rounds](#) lecture on **Friday, Nov. 14, at 8 a.m. in DD1.502**. Her topic: "Cardiovascular Disease and Cancer: A Dangerous Liaison."

Dr. Moore received her bachelor's degree in microbiology from McGill University, where she also earned her doctorate in parasitology and immunology. Although her early research focused on the immune response to pathogens, Dr. Moore became interested in the mechanisms of "sterile" inflammation in disease, and so pursued postdoctoral training at Harvard Medical School, focusing on the mechanisms of chronic inflammation in lupus (Brigham and Women's Hospital) and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (Massachusetts General Hospital). She joined the faculty at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital in 2001 and was recruited to join the faculty at New York University School of Medicine in 2009. In 2019, she established the Cardiovascular Research Center, which fosters cross-disciplinary research in basic, translational and clinical cardiovascular sciences.

Dr. Moore's contributions to the fields of innate immunity and vascular biology have been recognized by numerous awards and honors, including among others, the NIH's Outstanding Investigator Award, Clarion's List of Most Highly Cited Researchers (top 1%), the American Heart Association's Distinguished Scientist Award, the Gill Heart and Vascular Institute Award for Outstanding Contributions to Cardiovascular Research, and election to the National Academy of Sciences USA, among others.

Dr. Moore is internationally recognized for her research on the molecular pathogenesis of cardiometabolic diseases, and the roles that non-coding RNAs and dysregulated immune responses play in those settings. By forging new links between lipids, metabolism and innate immunity, her discoveries have revealed fundamental insights into pathways that regulate cholesterol homeostasis and vascular inflammation. ■



Ostrosky-Frid to Present Research Findings on Nov. 21

Mauricio Ostrosky-Frid, M.D., Ph.D., a PSTP Fellow in the Division of Nephrology, will present the [Internal Medicine Research Conference](#) on Friday, November 21, at noon in D1.502. His topic: "Improving ADPKD Treatment Through Summative microRNA Effects."

Originally from Mexico, Dr. Ostrosky-Frid earned his medical degree and his doctorate from National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City. He completed internal medicine residency training at UT Southwestern before beginning fellowship training in nephrology through the Physician Scientist Training Program (PSTP).

He is currently training with Vishal Patel, M.D., and Ronak Lakhia, M.D., with a special interest in genetic kidney diseases, especially Autosomal Dominant Polycystic Kidney Disease (ADPKD), and the mechanisms for mRNA regulation. ■

Other Upcoming Lectures & Conferences of Note

- Tuesday, Nov. 18, Noon: [Excellence in Immunology Lecture](#) with Dr. Ping-Chih Ho (University of Lausanne) – "Mitochondria-guided Signals in the T Cell"
- Tuesday, Nov. 18, Noon: [Pathology Seminar](#) with Dr. Li Ma (MD Anderson Cancer Center) – "Exploring the Biology and Therapeutic Targets of Bone Metastasis"
- Wednesday, Nov. 19, 8 a.m.: [Anesthesiology & Pain Management Grand Rounds](#) with Dr. Jennifer Lynch (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia) – "Advanced Optical Neuromonitoring in Congenital Heart Disease"
- Wednesday, Nov. 19, 8 a.m.: [Geriatrics Grand Rounds](#) with Dr. Joseph Flaherty (Geriatric Medicine) – "Fall, Fall with Injury, Fall from X, Frequent Falls, History of Falls and Hospitalization: Can We Improve?"
- Wednesday, Nov. 19, Noon: [Psychiatry Grand Rounds](#) with Dr. Marie Anne Gebara (University of Pittsburgh) – "Rethinking Geriatric Depression: From Evidence-Based Algorithms to Precision Medicine"
- Thursday, Nov. 20, 9 a.m.: [Hamon Center for Therapeutic Oncology Research & Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center Experimental Therapeutics Program Lecture](#) with Dr. Andrew Intlekofer (Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center) – "Enzyme Hyperactivation to Target Oncometabolism"
- Thursday, Nov. 20, Noon: [Radiology/AIRC Research Grand Rounds](#) with Dr. Steven Rowe (Human Subjects Research) – "Molecular Imaging of Renal Masses: Improved Risk Stratification and Implications for Clinical Decision-Making"
- Friday, Nov. 21, 9 a.m.: [SCCC & Biomedical Engineering Organoids and Organ-on-Chips Retreat](#) with Drs. Samuel Achilefu (Biomedical Engineering), Kareem Azab (Biomedical Engineering), Isaac Chan (Hematology & Oncology), Ariella Hanker (Hematology & Oncology), Emina Huang (Surgery), Srinivas Malladi (Pathology), Tran Nguyen (Biomedical Engineering), and Muhammad Rizwan (Biomedical Engineering)
- Friday, Nov. 21, 12:15 p.m.: [Endocrine Grand Rounds](#) with Dr. Ayson Myers (Albert Einstein College of Medicine) – "Diabetes-Related Amputation: It's Time for Endocrinologists to Step Up"



Ninth Annual Liver Conference

Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025

Annual Liver Conference Scheduled for Dec. 6

The Ninth Annual Liver Conference, a one-day, hybrid CME course for gastroenterologists, GI surgeons, internists, family practice physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and other healthcare providers with an interest in gastroenterology and hepatology is scheduled for **Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Conference Center at Pegasus Park.**

Under the direction of **Indira Bhavsar-Burke, M.D., M.H.P.E.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Digestive and Liver Diseases and Associate Director of the Gastroenterology Fellowship, and **Amit Singal, M.D., M.S.**, Professor and Interim Division Chief of Digestive and Liver Diseases, the course will provide attendees with practical information that can be applied immediately in their clinical practice. Discussions will include the latest updates in recognizing symptoms and using current data to establish diagnoses and formulate appropriate treatment plans for the management of gastrointestinal diseases.

Registration is free for UT Southwestern faculty and fellows using the code **UTSW.** ■

Dr. Singal is a Dedman Family Scholar in Clinical Care and holder of the Willis C. Maddrey, M.D. Distinguished Chair in Liver Disease.

[Register for the Liver Conference](#)

reminders

Young Physician-Scientist Series to Spotlight Funding Strategies

The 2025 Young Physician-Scientist Series, a collaboration between UT Southwestern, Duke University, Vanderbilt School of Medicine, Washington University School of Medicine, Weill Cornell Medicine, will present "Building a Diverse Funding Portfolio" on **Wednesday, Nov. 19, at 3 p.m. over Zoom.** The session will explore strategies for obtaining funding a lab through multiple channels, including foundation, federal, and industry support.

[Register to Receive the Zoom Link](#)

one last thing



Faculty, Trainees Make Strong Impact at AHA Scientific Sessions

Nearly 90 faculty members and trainees from multiple divisions showcased their expertise at the American Heart Association Scientific Sessions in New Orleans. Participants delivered oral abstracts, presented posters, led learning sessions, and moderated discussions, highlighting the depth and breadth of UT Southwestern's contributions to cardiovascular research, education, and clinical care. ■

[See a Complete List of UTSW Presentations](#)



Jon Garinn
Medicine Minute Editor

Look for the next *Medicine Minute* on **Tuesday, Nov. 25, 2025**.

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

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