

medicine minute

December 23, 2025

kudos



Barker Appointed Head of Seldin College

Blake Barker, M.D., Professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine and Associate Dean of Student Affairs, has been named Head of Seldin College, one of six Academic Colleges within UT Southwestern Medical School. The Academic Colleges serve as small learning communities that pair experienced faculty leaders with groups of six medical students to foster clinical skills, professionalism, and ethical practice. Students are assigned to a College on their first day and remain with their group throughout all four years of medical school, meeting weekly during the first two years and monthly thereafter.

The Colleges curriculum blends clinical training with professional development, emphasizing team-based learning and mentorship. Faculty heads play a pivotal role in guiding students as they observe and model the behaviors and attitudes of seasoned physicians.

Dr. Barker succeeds **Craig Rubin, M.D.**, Professor and Division Chief of Geriatric Medicine, who is retiring. In addition to Dr. Rubin, Internal Medicine faculty currently lead four other Colleges: **Reeni Abraham, M.D.**, a Professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine and Associate Vice Chair for Undergraduate Medical Education, serves as Head of Fashena College; **Temple Howell-Stampley, M.D.**, a Professor in the Division of Cardiology, serves as Head of Cary College; **David Johnson, M.D.**, a Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology, serves as Head of Estabrook College; and **David Karp, M.D., Ph.D.**, a Professor and Chief of the Division of Rheumatic Diseases, serves as Head of Pritchard College. ■

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

Dr. Howell-Stampley holds the Cissy and W. Plack Carr, Jr. Professorship in Medical Education; P. Eugene Jones, Ph.D., PA-C Professorship in Physician Assistant Studies.

Dr. Johnson holds the R. Ellwood Jones, M.D. Distinguished Professorship in Clinical Education.

Dr. Karp holds the Fredye Factor Chair in Rheumatoid Arthritis Research and the Harold C. Simmons Chair in Arthritis Research.

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



Tatara Appointed MSTP Firm Leader

The Perot Family Scholars Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) has announced the appointment of **Alex Tatara, M.D., Ph.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases and Geographic Medicine, as the new Alfred G. Gilman, M.D., Ph.D. Firm Leader.

In this role, Dr. Tatara will partner with MSTP leadership to foster mentorship, community, and professional identity among physician-scientist trainees across all stages of training. MSTP students are assigned to one of four Firms, which are longitudinal mentoring communities modeled on the Medical School's Academic Colleges and named in honor of seminal UT Southwestern physician-scientists.

"We are excited for the energy and dedication Dr. Tatara brings to this role," said **Denise Marciano, M.D., Ph.D.**, an Associate Professor in the Division of Nephrology and Director of the MSTP. "His leadership will enhance support for our students across all phases of training."

Dr. Tatara joined the UT Southwestern faculty after completing his medical degree at Baylor College of Medicine and his doctoral degree in bioengineering at Rice University through Baylor's MSTP. He then completed internal medicine residency training at Massachusetts General Hospital and a fellowship in infectious diseases at Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard University's Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering.

His clinical interests include bone and joint infections, and his research focuses on biomaterials design, tissue engineering strategies, and infection prevention. A former MSTP student leader and current member of the MSTP Admissions Committee, Dr. Tatara brings a strong commitment to mentorship and to supporting trainees navigating the unique challenges of combined clinical and research careers.

As Firm Leader, Dr. Tatara will lead monthly Firm meetings, invite guest speakers, and support community-building activities. ■



Governor Appoints Albin to Texas Nutrition Advisory Committee

Jaclyn Albin, M.D., an Associate Professor in the Division of Combined Internal Medicine and Pediatrics, Associate Program Director of the Internal Medicine-Pediatrics Residency, and Founding Director of UT Southwestern's Culinary Medicine Program, has been appointed by Texas Gov. Greg Abbot to a four-year term on the newly formed Texas Nutrition Advisory Committee. The committee is established to develop nutritional guidelines for residents of Texas.

Dr. Albin said she joined the committee to champion science-informed approaches that will benefit UT Southwestern and partner institutions throughout the UT System. Since launching UT Southwestern's Culinary Medicine Program in 2017, she has led its education, research, clinical, and equity missions. She also serves as the inaugural Medical Director of Food is Medicine Innovation within the Center for Innovation and Value at Parkland Health.

Nationally, Dr. Albin serves on the American College of Culinary Medicine Advisory Board and is an organization member of the international Teaching Kitchen Collaborative. Her research focuses on the impact of culinary medicine in medical education, community settings, and patient care.

"I'm excited to merge this policy-adjacent work with my longstanding efforts to advance institutional nutrition education for our learners alongside clinical innovation models and collaborative research," said Dr. Albin. "This work is also synergistic with federal mandates around nutrition education for which I formulated our required institutional assessment and planned approach, and I believe the overall efforts set us up to be a competitive institution for upcoming funding opportunities." ■



Torres Rodriguez Receives NKF's Rising Star Award

Stephanie Torres Rodriguez, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Nephrology and Executive Associate Program Director and Education Coordinator for the Nephrology Fellowship, has received a Rising Star Award from the National Kidney Foundation (NKF), an honor that recognizes emerging advocates who demonstrate exceptional initiative in advancing the NKF's mission to improve kidney health.

Over the past year, Dr. Rodriguez has played a pivotal role in expanding support for kidney health initiatives at UT Southwestern. Her contributions include securing organizational sponsorships, building a strong Kidney Walk team, and sharing expertise through Renal Roundtables and professional education programs. Her leadership has strengthened collaboration, elevated awareness, and fostered meaningful dialogue within the kidney community.

Dr. Torres Rodriguez earned her medical degree at the University of Puerto Rico, where she also completed a residency in internal medicine. She received advanced training in nephrology through a fellowship at UT Southwestern, where she was both Chief Fellow and the recipient of the Outstanding Nephrology Fellow Award. She joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2021. ■



Louissaint Earns Master’s Degree in Health Informatics

Jeremy Louissaint, M.D., M.S.H.I., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Digestive and Liver Diseases, has earned a master’s degree in health informatics from the O’Donnell School of Public Health. He is the second Internal Medicine faculty member to complete the program since its launch in 2021, following **Catherine Chen, M.D., M.S.H.I.**, an Associate Professor in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, who graduated in 2023.

The health informatics degree program equips healthcare professionals with the skills to leverage data and technology to improve patient care and health outcomes. Coursework covers health data standards, interoperability, big data analytics, and application development.

Dr. Louissaint earned his bachelor’s degree in neuroscience and psychology from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville and his medical degree at Cornell Medical College in New York City. He completed internal medicine residency training at Washington University in St. Louis, followed by fellowships in gastroenterology and hepatology at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and transplant hepatology at Columbia University Medical Center in New York City. He joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2022. ■

research report



Gerber Receives Two CPRIT Grants

David Gerber, M.D., a Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology, has received two grants from the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) to further his research into lung cancer screening and immunotherapy toxicity.

Dr. Gerber was awarded \$2.4 million to support his project, "Integrated Lung Cancer Screening and Smoking Cessation," which aims to improve early detection and prevention strategies for lung cancer in the safety-net population at Parkland Health. He also received nearly \$900,000 for his study, "Mechanisms and Treatment of Immunotherapy Toxicity," focused on understanding and mitigating adverse effects associated with cancer immunotherapy.

These grants are part of CPRIT's recent approval of 73 awards totaling nearly \$154 million to advance cancer-related research across Texas. Since its inception, CPRIT has invested more than more than \$4 billion in cancer prevention and research, making it the second-largest funder after the National Cancer Institute.

Overall, UT Southwestern researchers secured 13 CPRIT awards totaling more than \$16.5 million, reinforcing the institution's leadership in innovative cancer research.

Dr. Gerber serves as the Co-Director of Education and Training in the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center. ■

Dr. Gerber holds the David Bruton, Jr. Professorship in Clinical Cancer Research.



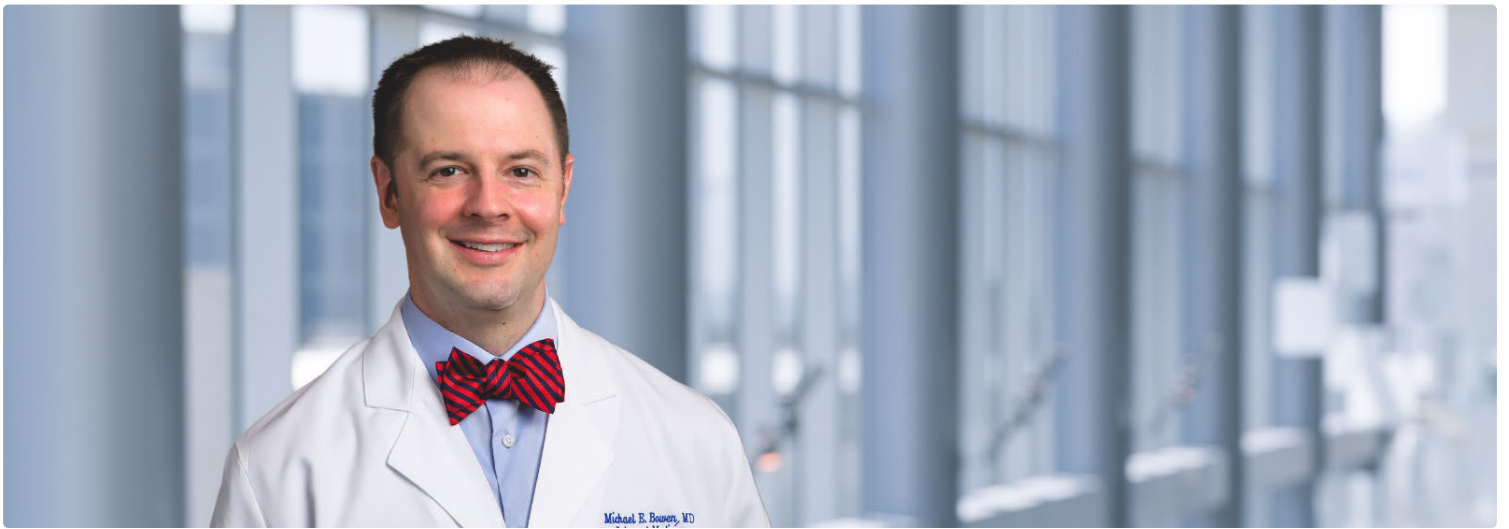
Weber Receives THR Clinical Scholar Grant

Brittany Weber, M.D., Ph.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Cardiology and Director of the Cardio-Rheumatology/Cardio-Dermatology Program, has received a Texas Health Resources (THR) Clinical Scholar grant to support her investigation into systemic inflammation as a determinant of coronary vascular health. She will use the electronic health record to create a Cardio-IMID registry to evaluate the relationship of patients' cardiovascular risk factors, management, and prevalence of atherosclerosis to health outcomes.

The THR Clinical Scholars Program provides up to 70% protected research time and other resources to promote career development for clinical investigators in their first five faculty years.

A cardio-immunologist, clinical investigator, and imaging specialist, Dr. Weber joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2025. Her work spans cardiology, rheumatology, dermatology, and immunology. Her research integrates advanced imaging, molecular biology, clinical trials, and population health to understand how systemic inflammation and immune deregulation drive cardiovascular disease.

Previously, Dr. Weber served on the faculty at Harvard Medical School and Director of the Cardio-Rheumatology Clinic at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. ■



Clinical Decision Support Boosts Diabetes Screening in Primary Care

A study led by **Michael Bowen, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.C.S.**, an Associate Professor in the Division of General Internal Medicine, shows that a simple alert in the electronic health record (EHR) can help doctors find patients at risk for diabetes and prediabetes much sooner.

"Diabetes often goes undiagnosed," Dr. Bowen said. "More than 8 million Americans have it and don't know it. Another 80 million are unaware they have prediabetes. Many patients already have elevated blood sugar results in their medical record that suggest risk, but these numbers are often missed during routine clinic visits."

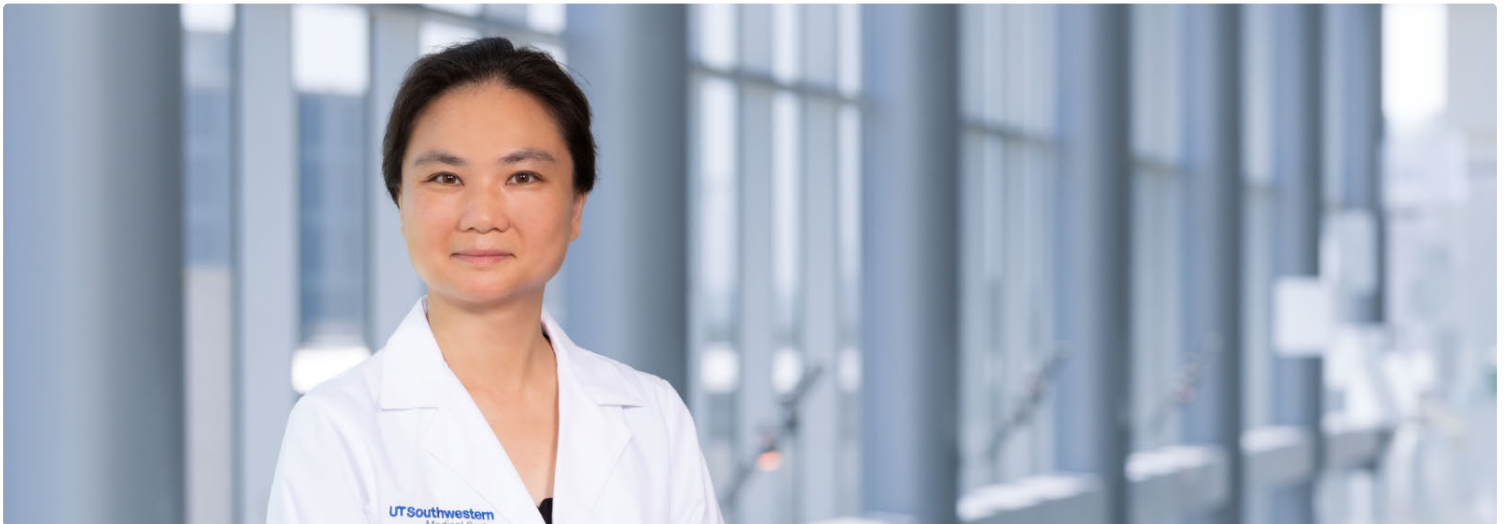
To fix this, the researchers tested a new tool in two primary care clinics. The tool looks for patients without diagnosed diabetes who have elevated blood sugar and might be at risk for diabetes. It gives doctors a gentle reminder during the visit to order a diabetes screening test (HbA1c) or update the patient's record if diabetes or prediabetes is found.

"The results were clear," Dr. Bowen said. "Forty percent of patients in the alert group got tested within 90 days, compared to only 8% in the usual care group."

Doctors using the tool were 10 times more likely to screen for diabetes, according to the [study published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*](#).

"This study demonstrates that a simple, non-intrusive alert can make a big difference in detecting diabetes early," Dr. Bowen said. "Tools like this could help millions of people get a diagnosis of diabetes sooner and get the treatment they need to prevent more serious health problems later on." ■

Dr. Bowen is a Dedman Family Scholar in Clinical Care.



Study Reveals How Antibodies Inhibit Tuberculosis Bacteria Inside Human Cells

A [new study published in *Cell Reports*](#) by **Lenette Lu, M.D., Ph.D.**, an Assistant Professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases and Geographic Medicine, reveals how antibodies can help control *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (*Mtb*), the bacteria that cause tuberculosis (TB). Despite widespread vaccination and advances in biomarkers and antibiotics, TB is still the world's deadliest infectious disease, in part because of an incomplete understanding of how infection leads to disease. In this study, Dr. Lu's team examined the human immune response through antibodies.

In blood samples from patients with TB, they found that antibodies arising in natural human infection can target bacterial proteins critical for *Mtb* survival and spread, ESAT-6 and CFP-10. These antibodies work with immune cells to block bacterial growth even after initial infection has occurred, and this protective activity is regulated by the presence of specific sugars.

“Antibodies represent a well-established arm of immunity in many infectious diseases, but their role in tuberculosis is less clear,” Dr. Lu said. “These findings highlight new ways to detect, treat, and prevent TB through engineering protective antibodies.”

Pei Lu, Ph.D., a Research Associate in the Lu Lab, also contributed to this study. ■

education and training



Okoruwa Selected for ACG Leadership Program

Ehiamen Okoruwa, M.D., a third-year gastroenterology and transplant hepatology Fellow in the Division of Digestive and Liver Diseases, has been selected for the American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) Emerging Leadership Program. The program is offered through the ACG Institute Center for Leadership, Ethics & Equity.

Dr. Okoruwa was one of only 20 applicants accepted from a large pool of nominees.

The Emerging Leadership Program provides third- fourth-year gastroenterology fellows with training to develop and sustain success as future leaders. Participants learn skills in communication, negotiation, change and time management, and strengthening leadership through fairness and collaboration. The curriculum includes lectures, Q&A, breakout and role-playing exercises, and networking.

Originally from Lagos, Nigeria, Dr. Okoruwa holds a bachelor's degree in biology and public health from Washington University in St. Louis and a master's degree in physiology at Tulane University, where she also earned her medical degree. She then completed internal medicine residency training at UT Southwestern, where she participated in the Medical Education track. ■

alumni news



Gates Colbert, Former Nephrology Fellow, Installed as DCMS President

Gates Colbert, M.D., a former Nephrology Fellow, was installed as the 143rd President of the Dallas County Medical Society (DCMS) on Saturday, Dec. 14.

Dr. Gates earned his bachelor's degree in management from the University of Oklahoma and his medical degree from the McGovern Medical School at UT Houston. He then completed internal medicine residency training at Baylor University Medical Center (BUMC) at Dallas, followed by a nephrology fellowship at UT Southwestern. He currently serves as a nephrologist with Kidney and Hypertension Associates of Dallas, located at BUMC, where he co-directs the Nephrology Fellowship program. He also serves as an Associate Clinical Professor at Texas A&M College of Medicine.

The DCMS was founded in 1876 with 30 physicians. Today, the organization is the nation's second-largest medical society, with more than 9,000 members. ■

in case you missed it

News and Digital Media Featuring Internal Medicine Colleagues

- [From Testing Slime to Creating 3D "Bones"](#) (via *CenterTimes+*, with Alexander Tartara, M.D., Ph.D.)
- [Aspiring Elder Care Physician, Advocate Wins Urann Fellowship](#) (via The University of Texas at Dallas News, with Jessica Voit, M.D.)
- [State's Investment in Cancer Research Has Helped Draw Top Talent to UTSW](#) (via UTSW Newsroom, with Daniel Addison, M.D.; David Gerber, M.D.; Joshua Gruber, M.D., Ph.D.; and Kelley Newcomer, M.D.)

need to know



Clinics, Academic Offices, Labs Closed on Dec. 25

Thursday, Dec. 25, is a designated holiday for UTSW faculty, employees, and trainees, in observance of Christmas. All UTSW clinics, central administration, academic offices, and research labs will be closed. Hospitals will be fully operational with appropriate staff in support areas.

There will be no Internal Medicine Grand Rounds or Internal Medicine Research Conference on Friday, Dec. 26. ■

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

on the horizon



Mingfu Wu to Present Moss Heart Center Seminar on Jan. 8

Mingfu Wu, Ph.D., a Professor of Pharmacological and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Houston, will present the [Moss Heart Center Seminar](#) on Thursday, Jan. 8, at noon in NA6.214. His topic: "Cellular and Molecular Mechanism of Ventricular Wall Formation."

Dr. Wu earned his doctorate in biology from Kansas State University. He then performed postdoctoral research at Duke University and at UT Southwestern.

Dr. Wu's research explores the intricate cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying cardiovascular and systemic diseases. His team employs cutting-edge genetic tools, single-cell RNA and ATAC sequencing, and advanced data analytics to unravel the causes of congenital cardiomyopathies such as left ventricular non-compaction and hypoplastic left heart syndrome. In parallel, Wu investigates the role of tunneling nanotubes in cardiac development, focusing on their influence on cardiac innervation and conduction system formation, as well as their potential link to neurodegenerative disorders. Extending this work to oncology, his group uses genetically engineered cell lines

and mouse models to examine how these nanotubes facilitate cancer cell communication and metastasis, offering insights that could transform therapeutic strategies across multiple fields. ■

reminders

Registration Open for Quality Improvement Courses

The Office of Quality, Safety, and Outcomes Education has announced registration for two Quality Improvement (QI) courses aimed at strengthening system-wide improvement efforts.

- **QI Basics – Your Foundation for Improvement**

The next cohort begins on **Monday, Jan. 12**. This interactive course introduces essential tools for driving meaningful change. No prior experience is required. It's open to physicians, nurses, advanced practice providers, administrators, researchers, and any team member committed to improvement.

- **Advanced Course in Quality Improvement**

Starting **Tuesday, Jan. 27**, this four-session program builds on QI Basics or Yellow/Green Belt training. Participants will apply systems thinking and leadership principles to real-world projects with expert coaching.

Registration closes on **Monday, Jan. 5**, and seats are limited. ■

[Learn More About the QI Courses](#)



Jon Garinn
Medicine Minute Editor

Look for the next *Medicine Minute* on **Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2025**.

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

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