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CELEBRATING OUR DEPARTMENT'S ACHIEVEMENTS

In this issue of *A Dose of Medicine*, you will find stories and updates about our department. I hope you will enjoy reading them and share your feedback!

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DR. BRANN'S SWIFT RESPONSE SAVES A LIFE RESULTING IN A SUNDAY MORNING MIRACLE



DR. CHRISTOPHER BRANN

In the midst of a serene Sunday morning church service, an emergency brought the congregation to a standstill, and brought on the heroism of Dr. Christopher Brann, Hospitalist, General Internal Medicine, who stepped in to save the day.

As the pastor's words filled the air, Dr. Brann's wife tapped him on the shoulder and pointed at the person in front of them, an 88-year-old man who had slumped over and was leaning up against his wife. Dr. Brann reached up and felt for a pulse, while noticing that his skin felt cool to the touch and that the man was diaphoretic. With a quick call for assistance to a fellow physician and a prompt summoning of emergency services, Dr. Brann initiated life-saving CPR in the middle of the church aisle.

Their efforts paid off as the man regained a pulse and even regained consciousness before being carried away by EMS to receive further medical attention. The gentleman, with the aid of a pacemaker, not only survived but returned to church the very next week, accompanied by his grateful wife.

Reflecting on the incident, Dr. Brann credited his training and professional experience for enabling him to step into the role of a lifesaver when fate intervened. He shares, "I was in the right place at the right time and feel blessed to have been in the position to offer life-saving interventions which allowed this couple to enjoy more time together." His timely actions granted this man more life and a moment that neither of them will forget.

"I was in the right place at the right time and feel blessed to have been in the position to offer life-saving interventions which allowed this couple to enjoy more time together." - Christopher Brann, M.D.



HONORING CHARLIE RHODES: A LEGACY OF DEDICATION AND INNOVATION



CHARLIE RHODES

Charlie Rhodes, with a loyal presence in the Department of Medicine for over four decades, stands as a testament to passion and the steady pursuit of excellence. As the Assistant Laboratory Director of the Lipid Layer Atherosclerosis Clinical Research Lab, her journey has been exceptional. Originally from Palestine, Texas, Charlie's ascent in the field of science was a path less traveled, especially for an African American woman during those times.

Driven by curiosity and a thirst for knowledge instilled by her parents, she embarked on a career in medical research. Charlie harbored a deep-rooted desire for education. Her childhood fascination with medical issues and anatomy sowed the seeds of a future in medicine.

"One day I was reading one of my books... and I saw something about anemia. I didn't know what that was, I'm a little kid, but the curiosity told me that I was going to be a doctor one day."

Armed with a major in biology and chemistry, Charlie started her pursuit. Her career trajectory led her to Jefferson Davis Hospital, where she sharpened her skills in the pathology laboratory. It was here that her passion for medical technology was ignited, setting the stage for her contributions in the years to come. Upon joining Baylor, Charlie's innovative spirit and dedication shone brightly. Her work in lipid standardization laboratories laid the foundation for impactful research in cardiovascular disease with publications in prestigious journals. Throughout her career, Charlie witnessed a significant shift in medicine and scientific research. From manual methodologies to automated instruments, she embraced technological advancements with open arms.

As a mentor and role model, Charlie's impact extended far beyond the confines of her laboratory. She has inspired many young African American women at her church to pursue their dreams, irrespective of the challenges they may face. "You can do anything you put your mind to if you really are determined. And I try to do that by example." As Charlie prepares for the next chapter of her life, her legacy spans from impactful discoveries to lasting friendships, and her contributions have left a mark on the Department of Medicine.

**"You can do anything you put your mind to if you really are determined.
And I try to do that by example."
- Charlie Rhodes**

VICE CHAIR GROUP



TRIUMPHS OF INNOVATION AT QUALITY ACADEMY DAY



DR. KYLER GODWIN

Amidst the vibrant atmosphere of Quality Academy Day, hosted by the Vice Chair Group for Quality Improvement and Innovation (VCGQII), one poster presentation of twelve emerged as an excellent example of healthcare innovation. Under the leadership of Dr. Kyler Godwin, Chair of the VCGQII, and the planning by Dr. Neerag Agrawal, the event blossomed into a celebration of innovative ideas aimed at elevating patient care standards.

The winning poster titled, “Implementing New Metabolic Dysfunction Associated Steatotic Liver Disease (MASLD) Screening Guidelines in Patients with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus at the Baylor Medicine Endocrinology Clinic” spotlighted the critical importance of proactive screening for MASLD within endocrinology clinics.

Drs. Hamza Quadri, Deyger Navarrete, Marco Andres Ruiz Santillan, and Marcos Daniel Villarreal implemented a Smart Phrase in the Electronic Medical Record system. This streamlined the screening process, enabling physicians to identify patients at high risk of MASLD efficiently. The initiative witnessed a remarkable 50% increase in FIB-4, non-invasive markers of MASLD, scores ordered post-implementation, underscoring its tangible impact on clinical practice.

The project’s lead acknowledged the invaluable mentorship received, stating, “Working under the guidance of Drs. Bajaj and Jiang has been instrumental in my success. Their insights and support have been pivotal in shaping this project’s direction and impact.” Furthermore, he highlights the allure of tackling novel challenges within the burgeoning field of metabolic dysfunction, a domain ripe with opportunities for exploration and discovery.



Section of Gastroenterology and Hepatology Fellows pose after their presentation.



Drs. Godwin and Agrawal pose with poster winner Dr. Hamza Quadri.



BAYLOR'S LEARNING HEALTH SYSTEM



The pursuit for integration between medical research and patient care has long been sought after. How do we bridge the gap between research discoveries and their practical application in clinical settings? How do we systemically use clinical practice information for research and making discoveries? Baylor's Learning Health System (LHS) is a dynamic approach aimed at harnessing the power of integrated relevant data to drive discerning continuous improvement in healthcare delivery. Dr. Hashem El-Serag, Chair of the Department of Medicine, has been appointed as the Vice President of the LHS.

Dr. El-Serag is excited about the potential, "A Learning Health System will allow Baylor to build a transformative approach to biomedical research and healthcare, where every participant is a learner and knowledge generator in an environment of continuous improvement and scholarship, enabling delivery of personalized healthcare."

What is Baylor's LHS? It is a system in which there is an ongoing interactive pursuit of leveraging data and insights to enhance patient outcomes. Imagine a healthcare ecosystem where data from clinical interactions, research discoveries, and community feedback are integrated into a virtuous cycle of discovery learning and innovation.

Baylor's LHS revolves around four objectives: improve health outcomes, enhance the quality and safety of healthcare, achieve health equity, and improve patient experience. Through structured coursework, hands-on projects and mentorship from seasoned professionals, fellows gain practical skills in data analytics, evidence synthesis and implementation science, essential for conducting translational research and driving quality improvement initiatives within clinical settings.

"A Learning Health System will allow Baylor to build a transformative approach to biomedical research and healthcare, where every participant is a learner and knowledge generator in an environment of continuous improvement and scholarship, enabling delivery of personalized healthcare." - Hashem El-Serag, M.D., M.P.H.



Central to Baylor’s LHS approach is the concept of precision medicine—a frontier where genomics, phenomics, and other data (ex. wearables) converge to revolutionize and personalize patient care. New entities have been launched, like the **LHS Accelerator**, which provides support for clinicians and researchers to explore innovative ideas and accelerate the integration of the LHS into clinical practice. LHS has also launched the InnovAlte program to fund AI related projects, and new competitive programs to provide protected research time opportunities. These LHS programs provide clinicians with the resources and support needed to engage in cutting-edge research aligned with the LHS paradigm. Baylor physician-scientists are eager to bring the highest quality care to patients, offer the most cutting-edge therapies, and use trailblazing approaches to define and design advanced therapeutics. The Baylor LHS seeks to redefine the future of healthcare.



Architectural rendering of the Dynamic One building at TMC Helix park.

NEW LEADER



DR. JASVINDER SINGH BRINGS A HEALING TOUCH TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE



DR. JASVINDER SINGH

Dr. Jasvinder Singh has joined the Department of Medicine as the new Section Chief of Immunology, Allergy, and Rheumatology (IAR). He brings a rich expertise in research, a deep commitment to patient care, and a vision for collaborative growth and excellence.

Dr. Singh's academic journey began at the University Medical College in New Delhi, India, followed by a residency at Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, New York, and a fellowship at Washington University in St. Louis. With nearly 15 years of experience at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Dr. Singh is eager to embrace new challenges at Baylor. One of the factors that drew Dr. Singh to Baylor is the institution's strong reputation for academic excellence and collaborative environment.

He is excited about the opportunity to enhance research, clinical operations, and educational programs within the Section of IAR. "I look forward to furthering the feeling of camaraderie and collaboration and using that to further develop and grow the Section."

Dr. Singh's perspective on rheumatology underscores the unique bond between physician and patient, emphasizing the enduring relationships cultivated in the field. Dr. Singh emphasizes that rheumatologists continue to uphold the tradition of the healing touch, offering not just medical expertise but also human connection. "Every patient who walks into my clinic receives the reassurance of this touch—a symbol of our commitment to their well-being and journey to improved quality of life." Dr. Singh's impactful research in rheumatology has led to almost 700 publications and several grants. He has developed a patient decision aid for immunosuppressive medication, significantly aiding those with lupus and kidney diseases. This tool, born from patient feedback and designed for accessibility, helps patients understand their treatment options and make informed decisions. Dr. Singh aims to expand this initiative at Baylor, making it widely available to lupus patients across various languages and regions.

Personally, Dr. Singh is guided by his Sikh faith, which emphasizes brotherhood, serving humanity, and respecting all religions. These values deeply influence his approach to medicine and life. He is also a dedicated father and an enthusiastic learner. Dr. Singh is particularly excited about engaging with the Houston community, continuing his practice in a vibrant city, and even honing his Spanish language skills.

"Every patient who walks into my clinic receives the reassurance of this touch—a symbol of our commitment to their well-being and journey to improved quality of life." - Jasvinder Singh, M.D., M.P.H.

NEW LEADER



DR. LUZNIK'S VISION FOR ADVANCING CANCER CARE AND RESEARCH



DR. LEONIDO LUZNIK

Dr. Leonido (Leo) Luznik, our incoming Chief of Hematology and Oncology, brings with him a wealth of experience and a visionary approach to cancer care and research. In addition, Dr. Luznik's decision to join Baylor he says, "Baylor is undergoing a significant transformation, focusing on translational medicine, which aligns perfectly with my interests," he explained.

Dr. Luznik is excited about the growth potential of Baylor's hematology and oncology programs and the institution's mission and people. The expansion and growth of the Department of Medicine and its rising national prominence was also a major traction for his decision to move.

Dr. Luznik spent the last 20 years at Johns Hopkins. His tenure at such a prominent institution has instilled in him a commitment to humility, teamwork, and a broader mission. He draws parallels between the community service missions of Johns Hopkins and Baylor, emphasizing his dedication to serving both private patients and underserved populations. He highlights the importance of collaboration in advancing cancer care and research. He aims to strengthen ties between clinical and basic science colleagues to foster innovation. "As a physician-scientist, integrating basic and clinical research has been a cornerstone of my career. I intend to bring this paradigm to Baylor, enhancing our translational research efforts," he said. Dr. Luznik's research has impacted patient care, in hematologic malignancies and bone marrow transplantation. He developed strategies to find donors for all patients, including minorities, addressing a significant challenge in Baltimore. His research has set national and international standards for practice.

Dr. Luznik's goals for the Section of Hematology and Oncology include recruitment and mentoring of faculty and trainees, expanding fellowship, especially research track, translational research groups, expanding collaborations and clinical trial portfolios, and supporting and mentoring early career investigators. He is enthusiastic about meeting his new colleagues and collaborating with leading experts like Drs. Pavan Reddy, Director of Baylor's Dan L Duncan Cancer Center, and Helen Heslop from the Center for Cell and Gene Therapy. "Baylor's commitment to exceptional cancer care and research facilities is commendable. I look forward to contributing to this vision," he said. When not improving cancer care, Dr. Luznik enjoys reading and sailing, a childhood passion, and dreaming of doing transatlantic crossing—a reminder that even the most dedicated professionals need a bit of time to dream.

"Baylor's commitment to exceptional cancer care and research facilities is commendable. I look forward to contributing to this vision."

-Leo Luznik, M.D.

NEW LEADER



INTRODUCING JOSEPH SAYEGH: A JOURNEY IN HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP



JOSEPH SAYEGH, M.B.A.

We often hear tales of unexpected journeys leading to significant destinations. Joseph Sayegh's path from studying philosophy in Rome, Italy to assuming the role of Chief Administrator for the Department of Medicine at Baylor is nothing short of empowering. Joseph's academic journey commenced in Rome, where he pursued studies in philosophy. This path laid the groundwork for his future in management and administration. His undergraduate years instilled in him the art of effective communication and interpersonal skills, and shaping his approach to leadership.

Transitioning from philosophy to healthcare administration might seem like a leap, but for Joseph, it was a natural progression fueled by familial influence and a passion for making a difference.

“To foster collaboration is to understand that as a department we are better when working together.” Joseph Sayegh, M.B.A.

“I've always been someone who strives to be the best I can be in whatever role I am in.” Joseph's journey led him to Baylor in 2012, where he found a workplace and a platform for personal and professional growth. From his early days as a Senior Project Manager to his role as Director of Business Operations for the Section of General Internal Medicine, Joseph has consistently demonstrated his commitment to excellence. He facilitated the recruitment of over 70 faculty members, contributing to the expansion and financial health of the section.

His overarching goal? “To foster collaboration is to understand that as a department we are better when working together.” In an ever-evolving healthcare landscape, challenges are sure to arise. Yet, Joseph embraces these uncertainties with passion, viewing each obstacle as an opportunity for growth and innovation. His vision for the department centers on collective progress, aligning staff and faculty in pursuit of a shared vision, culture, and strategy. As Joseph embarks on this new chapter, his message to the Department of Medicine is clear: keep moving forward. “One day at a time, no matter the challenges presented, as a department we can grow together to achieve the overarching goal of advancing human health and promoting the growth and success of our faculty, staff, and trainees.”

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