Pedi Press

A Department of Pediatrics Publication

October 2026



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Dr. Lara Shekerdemian with the DOP Administration Team!

Message from the desk of Dr. Lara Shekerdemian

October and November bring a fresh season of celebration, reflection, and team spirit! As we look back on recent months, we are proud of the many moments that have brought us together - from recognizing outstanding achievements and celebrating APP Week to sharing experiences through retreats and other department highlights.

Now it's time to enjoy the cozy fall vibes, embrace the Halloween fun, and make room for a little seasonal magic! Beyond the festivities, these months are a reminder that our greatest strength lies in the people who make our department such a supportive, collaborative, and compassionate community.

As we move toward the end of the year, let's continue to celebrate one another, appreciate how far we've come, and carry our shared enthusiasm into the months ahead.

Thank you for everything you do to make our team extraordinary. Wishing everyone a festive fall season filled with meaningful connections, well-deserved celebrations, and just the right amount of Halloween spookiness!

Happy reading and take care!
Lara

For more Department of Pediatrics updates:
Connect with Dr. Shekerdemian on LinkedIn

Baylor College of Medicine

Texas Children's Hospital

Register for the 7th Coronary Artery Anomalies Symposium



Texas Children's Hospital is hosting a two-day scientific conference featuring outstanding lectures and case-based discussions focused on the diagnosis, treatment, and management of coronary artery anomalies (CAAs) across the lifespan.

We welcome physicians, including pediatric and adult cardiologists, radiologists, cardiothoracic surgeons, intensivists, and advanced practice providers, as well as researchers, trainees, and nurses.

Don't miss this opportunity to expand your knowledge, engage with colleagues across specialties, and advance the care of patients with CAAs!

To register and learn more - click here!

Scientific Conference
December 3rd-4th, 2026
Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute at Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Conference Center, Level 7, 1250 Moursund St. Houston, TX 77030

Patient and Family Symposium
December 5th, 2026
Health Museum, 1515 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004

Research Recap





AI INNOVATION DAY

BCM and TCH with Google and NVIDIA

Held on August 27 at the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute (NRI), **AI Innovation Day** brought together 116 attendees from Baylor College of Medicine (BCM), Texas Children's Hospital (TCH), Google, NVIDIA, and other institutions to explore the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in biomedical research and healthcare. Organized by the Data Science Hub under the leadership of **Dr. Zhandong Liu**, the event fostered interdisciplinary exchange and strengthened connections between clinical, scientific, and technology communities.

The program featured presentations on Google Health and AI for Science, a hands-on NVIDIA workshop, and focused Lab Discovery discussions, equipping participants with insights into emerging AI tools and opportunities for practical application in biomedical research.

With 246 registration submissions and 75% of survey respondents rating the event as excellent, AI Innovation Day demonstrated strong interest in biomedical AI education and collaboration. The event further advanced the Data Science Hub's and NRI's commitment to fostering AI education, enabling cross-institutional partnerships, and accelerating the integration of AI into biomedical research and healthcare.









Strengthening Pediatric Emergency Medicine Through International Collaboration

In September 2026, pediatric emergency medicine physicians from the United States and the Republic of Georgia gathered in Tbilisi for the **2nd International Pediatric Emergency Medicine Conference.** The program featured pediatric traumatology, pediatric sedation, pediatric disaster medicine, and the American College of Surgeons' Stop the Bleed® program. The group also returned to assess the progress of the emergency department at Iashvili Children's Hospital, where pediatric emergency medicine was established in Georgia in 2004 through grants from USAID.

The conference represented another chapter in more than two decades of collaboration between Georgian physicians and their American colleagues, including physicians from Atlanta. During that time, Georgian healthcare professionals have made remarkable progress, not only in developing pediatric emergency services but also in fostering a new generation of clinicians dedicated to advancing the specialty. Their achievements reflect sustained effort, professional leadership, and a commitment to continuous improvement.





The experience reinforced an important principle of international medical cooperation: progress is not achieved simply by transferring healthcare models from one country to another. Knowledge and experience flow in both directions, and effective solutions must reflect local needs, available resources, and the communities being served. Georgian physicians have demonstrated that meaningful advances are possible despite resource limitations, developing capabilities and practices that offer valuable lessons for healthcare systems around the world.

These lessons extend well beyond Georgia. Emergency medicine operates in a dynamic and constantly changing environment, where even the most advanced healthcare systems can be challenged by disasters, emerging threats, or unexpected demands. Adaptability, innovation, and the effective use of available resources are essential everywhere.

Equally memorable was the extraordinary generosity, warmth, and hospitality extended by our Georgian hosts. Their dedication to their patients, their profession, and their international colleagues was evident throughout the visit and reflected the personal relationships that sustain meaningful international cooperation.

For participating faculty from Baylor College of Medicine, including **David Goo, MD, and Robert Johnson, MD,** of Christus Children's Hospital of San Antonio, the experience provided an opportunity both to contribute to and learn from this ongoing collaboration. The progress achieved over the past two decades has been substantial, but the work continues. The relationships built, capabilities developed, and commitment of a new generation of Georgian physicians provide a strong foundation for the future.





Advancing Child Health Through Science, Prevention, and Policy

On September 3, **the Division of Public Health Pediatrics** partnered with the McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston, UTHealth Houston School of Public Health, Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, and the Texas Violence and Injury Prevention Research Center (VIPR) to welcome expert **Dr. Katelyn Jetelina**, widely known as "Your Local Epidemiologist," for a day of conversation focused on science communication, child health, and violence prevention.

At Texas Children's and Baylor College of Medicine Pediatric and Public Health Grand Rounds, **Dr. Jetelina** and **Dr. Christopher Greeley** explored how healthcare professionals can communicate clearly during periods of uncertainty, build trust, and translate evidence into action. **Dr. Jetelina** emphasized that effective science communication begins not only with accurate information (avoid the term "misinformation"), but importantly, listening to people whose viewpoints differ from your own. Seeking to understand the experiences and motivations behind those perspectives, she noted, can open the door to dialogue, storytelling, and finding common ground.

At McGovern Medical School, **Dr. Jetelina** and **Dr. Sandy McKay** examined patterns of childhood violence and injury, including firearm-related harm. Their discussion underscored an actionable message: "If it's predictable, it's preventable." The day also included an informal session with VIPR trainees and concluded at the Baker Institute with public discussions on preventing childhood violence (available here).

Together, these events demonstrated what is possible when institutions unite around a shared commitment to children and families. By combining evidence, thoughtful communication, and multidisciplinary partnership, participants advanced a common goal: creating safer, healthier communities in which every child can thrive.

Suicide Prevention Month: Building Connection Across Our Community

September





Suicide prevention starts with connection, and throughout September, the **Houston Area Suicide Prevention Coalition (HASPC)** brought that message to families, schools, workplaces, and communities across the Houston area. In recognition of Suicide Prevention Month, HASPC participated in events designed to raise awareness, share resources, and help community members feel better equipped to support one another. These efforts were supported by community partners, including Texas Children's Hospital, with TCH staff among the volunteers helping support HASPC's work.

HASPC joined the Kassler Padgett HOPE Foundation, Huffman ISD, and the Huffman community for their first Suicide Awareness & Prevention 1K Walk, bringing together schools, first responders, families, and neighbors. HASPC also participated in the 4th Annual Oil & Gas Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Summit and connected with parents and guardians in Channelview ISD to share information about family wellness, suicide prevention, and available resources. September also marked the launch of the Houston Area Suicide Prevention Podcast, a new space for stories and conversations that strengthen prevention and connection.

In addition to these special events, HASPC continued its ongoing effort to bring training opportunities to the community. HASPC conducted 10 community trainings for 300+ individuals to increase awareness, knowledge, and skills for suicide prevention.

The month culminated with the second annual Unite the Fight on September 26, bringing together 35 vendors and approximately 250 community members from Harris, Brazoria, and Galveston counties for a day centered on suicide prevention and connection.

Get involved: HASPC provides opportunities to welcome individuals and organizations interested in volunteering or partnering, as well as training opportunities to improve knowledge and skills to support suicide prevention efforts in our community. Visit HASPC or email info@houstonareasuicideprevention.org to learn more.









Caring for Children with Chronic Conditions

with Dr. Dominique "Nikki" Dagdag, MD

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Community Access to Child Health (CATCH) Grant supports pediatricians and pediatric trainees in developing community-based initiatives that improve children's health and access to care. Through education, advocacy, and collaboration, the program empowers recipients to address unmet community needs and create meaningful, lasting change for children and families.

Dr. Dominique Dagdag, a Pediatric Hospital Medicine fellow, received an **AAP CATCH Grant for her project, "Caring for Children with Chronic Conditions."** Inspired by her experiences caring for children with medical complexity and learning directly from their families, **Dr. Dagdag** developed an initiative that combines resident education with community engagement to strengthen support for this high-risk population.

Reflecting on the inspiration behind her project, Dr. Dagdag shares:
"As a UTHealth Houston resident, I was awarded an AAP Community Access to Child Health Grant titled, "Caring for Children with Chronic Conditions." Rotating in our Chronic Care Clinic, I was exposed to the reality that children with medical complexity face such as the barriers of transitioning to adult providers. My most memorable experience was visiting the home of a child with medical complexity through Project Delivery of Chronic Care (Project DOCC), a local non-profit organization with families of children with medical complexity. Her mom shared her empowering story of how she received the news of her child's life-changing diagnosis and the struggles she encounters as her daughter's biggest advocate. From that moment, I have become passionate about advocating for this high-risk population.

The beginning of my project involved teaching residents high-yield topics in caring for children with medical complexity. I implemented four Chronic Care Chats on 1) Nutrition and G-tube Care, 2) Palliative and Trach Care, 3) PM&R, Therapies, and DME, and 4) Case Management and Transition to Adulthood. The second part of my project was creating community events to establish community rapport with UT pediatric residents and Project DOCC, which were held at the West Gray Recreation Center and the Children's Museum. We most recently organized a Sugarland Space Cowboys baseball game community event, where we celebrated one of the children's birthdays!

I am hoping to expand my community events to Baylor residents so that we can develop interinstitutional partnerships in caring for children with medical complexity."

Through her commitment to resident education, family advocacy, and community partnership, Dr. Dagdag demonstrates how the AAP CATCH Grant can translate clinical experiences into meaningful action. Her work strengthens connections between healthcare providers and families while reflecting the Department of Pediatrics' HEART Values and its commitment to improving the lives of children with complex medical needs. ♥







Photo showcase event highlight through the years

Publication Highlight



Publication Highlight: The Lancet Neurology

By Ameya S Walimbe MD PhD, Francesco Muntoni MD, and Kevin P Campbell PhD

Dr. Ameya Waalimbe, our newest junior faculty member in Child Neurology, is the first author of a paper accepted for publication in The Lancet Neurology, titled **"Clinical presentations and pathophysiological mechanisms of dystroglycanopathy: advancing therapeutic strategies."**

The review explores the underlying science, genetics, clinical features, and diagnosis of dystroglycanopathies, as well as emerging treatments, including gene therapy and sugar-based therapies. This work represents the first chapter of **Dr. Waalimbe's** PhD thesis, developed in collaboration with his PhD advisor, **Kevin Campbell** (University of Iowa), and **Dr. Francesco Muntoni** of the Dubowitz Neuromuscular Centre at University College London. After delays related in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, this publication marks an important milestone in his research journey. **To read about this - click here!**



Texas Children's Researchers Highlight Path to Equitable Sickle Cell Gene Therapy Access

A new commentary in The Lancet Haematology by Alexander I. Ngwube and Cecile L. Karsenty outlines strategies to expand equitable access to sickle cell gene therapy. Building on a national survey of 138 pediatric hematology-oncology physicians, the authors highlight gaps in referral practices, clinician education, and patient counseling, emphasizing the need for coordinated care pathways and long-term follow-up to help more children and adolescents benefit from these therapies.

- **Read the commentary**
- **Read the national survey**



Washington Post Medical Mysteries: A Toddler's Wobbly Walk, Hand Tremors Send Parents on a Medical Journey - Oliver Broner Story

By Dr. Lisa Emrick

This weekend's Washington Post features a gripping Medical Mysteries story spotlighting the dedicated efforts of **Drs. Seema Lalani, Lisa Emrick, and Michael Wangler.** They have been instrumental in aiding **Oliver Broner**, a young boy whose family tirelessly sought answers for his persistent balance problems, tremors, and other neurological symptoms. Discover the journey of hope and discovery in our latest highlight! **To learn more - read here.**

CNRC Publication Highlights

A Novel Electronic Medical Record Search Method to Identify Patients With Ketosis-Prone Diabetes: Implications for Discovery of Atypical Diabetes

By Maaz Ahmed, Elizabeth Kubota-Mishra, Alejandro F Siller, Ansley Davis, Iliana Migacz, Stephanie Sisley, Jordana A Faruqi, Zeb I Saeed, Sarah Ahmed, Louis Philipson, Maria J Redondo, Ashok Balasubramanyam, Mustafa Tosur and RADIANT Study Group

Some youth diagnosed with type 2 diabetes actually have a rarer, easy-to-miss condition called A-β+ ketosis-prone diabetes, which is usually only found by combing through hundreds of charts by hand. To solve this problem, our CNRC investigators built a tool called PEPPER to change that. PEPPER can scan through thousands of charts, cutting review time and leading to faster identification of youth with this rare diabetic condition. Faster identification can lead to faster solutions.
To learn more, click here.

Lineage tracing reveals a shared cellular origin for supraclavicular brown and inguinal beige adipocytes

By Yali Ran, Kai Zhang, Yi-Ting Shen, Qianxing Mo, Ziyi Wang, Hari Krishna Yalamanchili, Sharon John, Mari Kogiso, Xia Gao, Chunmei Wang, Tanvi Sinha, Brian L Black, and Miao-Hsueh Chen

Using intersectional lineage tracing, the researchers discovered that this metabolically important tissue, usually found above the collarbone, shares a lineage with cardiac progenitor cells. This research shows a fascinating link between the developing heart and fat biology. Exciting work with real implications for understanding energy metabolism. **To learn more, click here.**

AAP experience SAN DIEGO 2026
National Conference & Exhibition
October 2–6, 2026



AAP SOTM 35th Anniversary Celebrations

The AAP Section on Transport Medicine (SOTM) celebrated its 35th anniversary at a special reception in San Diego following the AAP National Conference & Exhibition scientific session. The event honored 35 influential individuals whose leadership and contributions have helped shape SOTM and advance transport medicine - with one of them being our faculty from Neonatology **Dr. Caraciolo J. Fernandes!** Congratulations to the honorees, and thank you for your lasting impact on the field!



Highlights from Academic General Pediatrics and Critical Care Medicine presented from left to right!







The picture on the left features Marwa Mansour proudly holding her award, accompanied by Melanie Kitagawa and Moushumi Sur, who served as the SOCC NCE Program Chairs. The picture on the right showcases Charli Fox.

Award-Winning Achievements by the Critical Care Division at the AAP NCE Meeting

The Critical Care division had great representation at the AAP NCE meeting, including three award winners for their abstract presentations during the Section on Critical Care Programming.

Dr. Charli Fox was honored with the Best Research Project Award for her abstract "Examine the role of the cyclic GMP-AMP synthase simulator of the interferon genes pathway in vasculopathy linked with pulmonary hypertension due to chronic lung disease." **Dr. Marwa Mansour** was honored with the Best Quality Improvement Project Award for her abstract “Driving early enteral nutrition in the PICU: A multidisciplinary QI initiative to achieve feeding within 48 hours of admission." **Dr. Craig Pymento** was honored with the Best Poster Award for his abstract "Reducing PICU delirium by re-timing routine x-rays." Congratulations!

Buzz around the block

from the heart of pediatrics



Congratulations to Dr. Robin Kochel for the newly awarded grant!

Dr. Robin Kochel has received a **$1.1 million NIH/NIMH R01** grant to improve access to early intervention services for young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The study will evaluate Pediatricians Empowering Parents (PEP) Talk, an innovative intervention that equips pediatric primary care providers with training and electronic health record tools to help families connect with early childhood intervention and school-based services sooner.

Dr. Kochel will collaborate with **MPI Dr. Sarah Mire** of Baylor University on this project, which has the potential to improve early identification, intervention, and outcomes for children with ASD and their families. Congratulations to **Dr. Kochel** and the research team!



Celebrating Wallis Molchen's Volunteer Recognition

Wallis Molchen was honored on the field during the August 19 Astros game as Texas Children's Hospital's Employee Volunteer of the Year for the Texas Children's Houston Open. **Dr. Molchen** also received a personalized caddie bib featuring artwork created by Texas Children's patients, adding a heartfelt touch to the celebration.



Supporting Pediatric Cancer Research Through St. Baldrick's

For years, San Antonio's St. Baldrick's events have raised more than $50,000 annually for pediatric cancer research, with our CHRISTUS team proudly contributing to this mission year after year. Pictured on the left is **Dr. Ricky Rodriguez** from Hematology-Oncology, representing our team's continued commitment to advancing childhood cancer research.



Lighting the Night for Blood Cancer Awareness

The South-Central Texas chapter of Blood Cancer United (formerly the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society) hosts the annual **Light The Night Walk** to support the fight against blood cancer. In previous years, the event has **raised more than $1 million**, funding vital research, lifesaving treatments, and patient support services.

The walk brings together patients, families, and community members for an inspiring evening of hope, connection, and support for those affected by blood cancer—all while making a meaningful difference in the lives of patients.

ACE FOUNDATION

ACE HELPFUL FUND · Children's Miracle Network · American Red Cross

Resident Advocacy Committee Awarded $10,000 Grant to Support Hospital Culinary Garden

Resident Advocacy Committee received a **$10,000 grant from the Ace Hardware Foundation** to support their ongoing work in the hospital's culinary garden. Trainees who deserve recognition for this honor are **Drs. Alyssa Wilder (chief resident), Leticia Rivera (PGY-2), Bailey Brevell (PGY-3), Kalli Taylor (PGY-3), Joanna Steed (PGY-3), Christopher Lee (PGY-2), Kathia Gloria (PGY-2), Kevin Abraham (PGY-2), Ariana Garcia (PGY-1), Amanda Salinas (PGY-1), and Simran Khanna (PGY-1).**



CNRC Celebrates National Postdoc Appreciation Week 2026

The Children's Nutrition Research Center celebrated **National Postdoc Appreciation Week** from September 21–25, 2026, recognizing the achievements and contributions of the Center's **postdoctoral associates and fellows.** CNRC postdoctoral trainees receive advanced research training under the mentorship of CNRC faculty members, preparing them for competitive research-related careers. Learn more about the opportunities and resources CNRC offers its postdoctoral trainees **here.**







Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine Retreats Fun!

After a 12-year hiatus, Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine faculty from across all the campuses recently came together for a highly anticipated divisional retreat focused on connection, learning, and shaping the future of the division. Physician faculty engaged in thoughtful discussions around mission and vision, professional growth, innovation, quality improvement, and well-being, while reconnecting with colleagues and exploring new opportunities to strengthen collaboration and patient care.



Welcoming the Class of 2026-27: BCM-TMC LEAH Fellowship Program's Commitment to Adolescent Health Leadership

The **BCM-TMC LEAH Fellowship Program** proudly welcomed the Class of 2026-27 during Orientation on Friday, September 18. Through interdisciplinary training in medicine, nursing, nutrition, psychology, public health, and social work, the program develops the next generation of leaders in adolescent health. As one of nine HRSA- and MCHB-funded LEAH programs nationwide, it continues to make a lasting impact on the field.



Nephrology Highlight from USNWR ranking + Astro Game

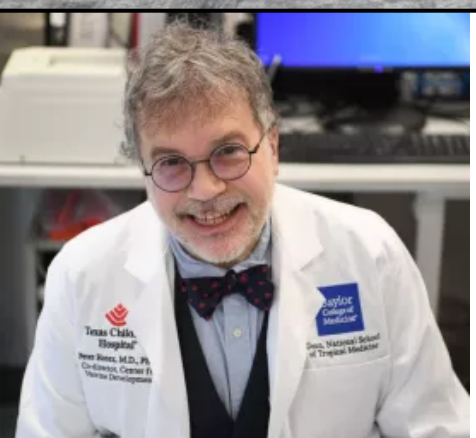
The **Division of Pediatric Nephrology** celebrated a remarkable week filled with accolades and festivities. Honored as the **#2 program in the USA by U.S. News & World Report**, the team embraced Nephrology Week with enthusiasm. Celebrations were held to acknowledge the exceptional care they provide to patients and their families, as well as the invaluable training offered to aspiring nephrologists.

To crown the week's achievements, **Dr. Jarrell** organized a special outing to an Astros game for the faculty. It was a week of pride and joyous recognition for their outstanding contributions.



Congratulations to our Outstanding Clinician Awardees!

This award recognizes individuals who demonstrate exceptional skill, dedication, and leadership in patient care. Congratulations and thank you to all our recipients: **Dr. David Moreno, MD; Dr. Chetna Pande, MD, MPH; Gina Santucci, APRN, FNP-BC; Dr. Hari Tunuguntla, MD, MPH; Dr. Daren Molina, MD; Dr. David Brennan, MD; Dr. Lauren Bretz, MD, MEd; Dr. Britney Alford, PsyD, LP; Dr. Karen Tuano, MD; and Dr. Daniel Davila-Williams, MD!**



PIDS Presents 2026 Walter T. Hughes Distinguished Physician Award to Dr. Peter Hotez!

Congratulations to **Dr. Peter Hotez** on being named the **2026 recipient of the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society (PIDS) Walter T. Hughes Distinguished Physician Award!** This award recognizes pediatricians whose distinguished careers have made significant contributions to pediatric infectious diseases as clinicians, educators, or investigators. **Dr. Hotez's** dedication to addressing infectious diseases that disproportionately affect children and underserved communities, along with his leadership in vaccine advocacy, continues to inspire colleagues around the world!



The 8th Annual BCM/TCH Diabetes & Endocrinology Research Retreat

The Division of Diabetes and Endocrinology held its 8th Annual Research Retreat on September 17, 2026, bringing together faculty, fellows, and research staff from multiple campuses and the adult Endocrinology and Metabolism team at BCM. Highlights included research presentations from pediatric and adult investigators, a keynote by **Dr. Paul Thornton** on "Hyperinsulinism: How Physiology and Molecular Genetics Got Us from Idiopathic Hypoglycemia to 2026". The retreat was organized by **Drs. Rebecca Schneider Aguirre and Lina Merjaneh** (Co-Chairs), **Dr. Maria J. Redondo** (Research Director), **Dr. Stephanie Sisley (Associate Research Director),** and the administrative team, including **Ellen Fusilier and Jolene Joseph.**



Q&A with NIH Director Dr. Jay Bhattacharya

The USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center (CNRC) had the pleasure of hosting a virtual Q&A session with **Dr. Jay Bhattacharya**, Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) on September 28, 2026.

CNRC faculty and research leaders from Baylor College of Medicine and the Department of Pediatrics had the opportunity to engage Dr. Bhattacharya in a wide-ranging discussion on issues important to the pediatric and nutrition research communities. Drawing on questions submitted by faculty, the conversation addressed NIH priorities for child nutrition and health research, rigor and reproducibility in science, the future of the biomedical research workforce, NIH's Unified Funding Strategy, and the evolving role of global research partnerships and multinational studies, including considerations related to transparency, oversight, and accountability.

We thank Dr. Bhattacharya for taking the time to engage with our research community and share his perspectives on these important topics, and Dr. David Allison, Director of the USDA/ARS CNRC, for making this possible.



Congratulations to Dr. Michael Taylor!

Dr. Michael Taylor received the **2026 Texans Conquer Cancer Award** in the High Impact Research category from the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT). The honor was presented on October 5 at the CPRIT Innovations VII Conference in Galveston.

Dr. Taylor leads the Texas Children's Pediatric Brain Tumor Research Program and serves as a professor of pediatrics and neurosurgery at Baylor College of Medicine. He is also a CPRIT Scholar in Cancer Research and holds the Cyvia and Melvyn Wolff Chair of Pediatric Neuro-Oncology at Texas Children's.

Through his research program at Texas Children's, **Dr. Taylor** and his team are uncovering how childhood brain tumors begin and progress. Their research has helped drive development of new treatments that are more targeted, more effective, and less toxic for children. Congratulations to **Dr. Taylor** on this outstanding and well-earned honor!





Tri With Heart Foundation Takes On the Waco 70.3 Ironman!

On October 4, the **Tri With Heart Foundation relay team** competed in the Waco 70.3 Ironman, rising to the challenge despite difficult weather. The team, made up of Texas Children's Hospital cardiac intensive care and cardiology attending physicians, fellows, nurses, and administrative staff, stayed energetic and had fun, and every racer finished safely.

The team cares for critically ill infants and children with congenital and acquired heart disease, and they believe that strong research and education are essential to delivering the highest level of care during a child's most critical moments. Their race doubled as a fundraiser for research and education in the Texas Children's Hospital Cardiac Intensive Care Unit. To date, the campaign has raised $3.5K, and the team hopes to raise even more to support its patients and the future of cardiac care

Buzz around the block cont.





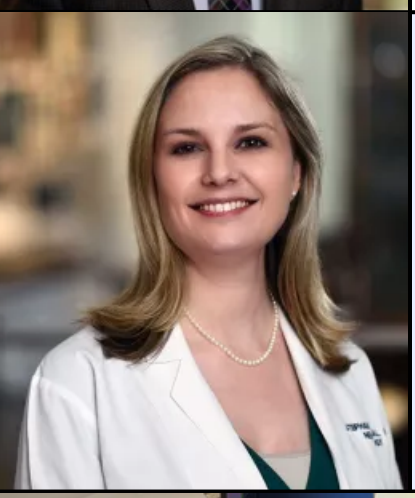
Congratulations to The Power of Professionalism Award Recipients!

Congratulations to both **Drs. Ariel Lyons-Warren and Farida Abid** (presented from left to right) on receiving The Power of Professionalism Award (POP)! The POP Award is given to Baylor community members who embody professionalism through their respectful, compassionate, and trustworthy actions. To learn more and nominate someone for the POP Award, **click here.**



Congratulations to Dr. Timothy Lotze!

Timothy Lotze has been elected as the next President of the Child Neurology Society. He expressed, "I am eager to build upon the remarkable achievements of my predecessors and continue the Society's legacy of leadership and service. I look forward to working collaboratively with the Board and Society members to further establish the CNS as the premier professional organization for specialists dedicated to caring for children with neurological and neurodevelopmental disorders."



Congratulations to Dr. Stephanie Deal

Dr. Stephanie Deal was awarded the Core Values Award (Pediatric Physician) at Ben Taub Hospital!



Congratulations to Dr. Lisa Kahalley for the 2026 Mentor of the Year Award!

Dr. Lisa S. Kahalley received the 2026 Mentor of the Year Award from the Children's Oncology Group! This remarkable recognition celebrates her lifelong contributions to COG and underscores the vital role that research has played not only in the lives of children but also in shaping the careers of future generations of cancer researchers.



Global Expertise Unites: Our Critical Care Team Shines at WFPICCS 2023 in Melbourne!

The **Critical Care Team** attended the **WFPICCS (World Federation for Pediatric Intensive and Critical Care Societies)** Meeting from September 26-30 in Melbourne, Australia. Nineteen members of our division participated in the event, delivering outstanding pre-course seminars, workshops, invited lectures, and abstracts to an international audience of intensivists. This was an incredible opportunity to exchange knowledge across continents in the field of pediatric critical care.



Advancing Pediatric Critical Care at the 2026 PPETS Conference

The fourth annual Pediatric Paracorporeal & Extracorporeal Therapies Summit (PPETS) was held October 6–8, 2026, at the NRI in Houston, Texas, bringing together experts from across the country to advance care for critically ill children requiring extracorporeal support. The summit featured leading-edge insights into pediatric ECMO, CRRT, apheresis, ventricular assist devices, and liver support therapies through evidence-based lectures, interactive case discussions, and hands-on learning. Powerful patient stories underscored the impact of these therapies, while a dynamic simulation day provided opportunities for practical skill development and collaboration. Hosted by Texas Children's Hospital, PPETS fostered meaningful knowledge-sharing and collaboration among specialists dedicated to improving outcomes for critically ill children.



Building Connections Across Our GI Teams

The Gastroenterology teams from TCH Woodlands and West Campus gathered for their first-ever social on October 5 at Creekwood Grill in Cypress. It was a fun evening and hopefully the start of a new tradition to strengthen connections across our campuses!

Congratulations to Dr. Sameer V. Thadani on His Selection for a National Pediatric Research Mentorship Program!

Dr. Sameer V. Thadani has been selected for the **2026–2027 APS–SPR Journeys & Frontiers in Pediatric Research Program**, an interactive mentorship initiative focused on leadership development, professional growth, and collaboration in pediatric research. This recognition highlights **Dr. Thadani's** continued growth in the field and commitment to advancing pediatric research!

APS SPR Society for Pediatric Research
Journeys & Frontiers in Pediatric Research

Congratulations to Developmental Pediatrics and Transition Medicine awarded grant!

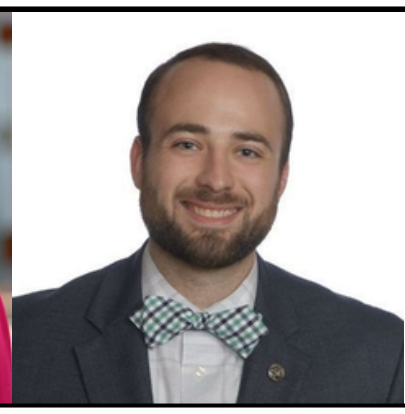
Developmental Pediatrics and Transition Medicine are excited to share that we have been awarded a five-year HRSA Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) grant. This significant investment will support interdisciplinary training to prepare the next generation of leaders to improve care, services, and outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Through the LEND program, we will have the opportunity to strengthen collaboration across disciplines, expand leadership development, and provide trainees with meaningful experiences that integrate clinical care, education, advocacy, and community engagement. The program will emphasize family-centered, culturally responsive, and evidence-based approaches while helping trainees develop the skills needed to address the complex needs of individuals with developmental disabilities across the lifespan.

This five-year $2.3 million award represents an important investment in the future of our developmental disabilities workforce and provides an exciting opportunity to build on the strengths of Developmental Pediatrics and our interdisciplinary partners. We look forward to developing a robust training program that supports emerging leaders, strengthens partnerships with individuals and families, and ultimately contributes to more accessible, coordinated, and high-quality systems of care.

Texas Lifespan LEND Program





Drs. Lisa Emrick and Steven Lazar, from the Division of Pediatric Neurology and Developmental Neuroscience, had an AAP News article in the October 2026 issue on disease-modifying therapies for neurogenetic disorders.



Resident Dr. Jocelyn Alvar was selected as the statewide Resident Representative to the Texas Pediatric Society Executive Board, 2026-2028



Cystic Fibrosis Walk Fun!

Associates from CHRISTUS Children's and Baylor College of Medicine joined together to participate in the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Great Strides 5K run. The event brought colleagues, families and community members together in support of indivudals living with this chronic conidtions and to raise awareness and funds for research, treatment and care!





CHRISTUS Children's Makes an Impact at the SIOP Conference

Pediatric cancer specialists from around the world gathered at the **International Society of Pediatric Oncology (SIOP)** Conference, where the **CHRISTUS Children's Hematology-Oncology team** connected with colleagues, showcased the programs and opportunities available at CHRISTUS Children's, and welcomed prospective providers to join the team. The conference provided a valuable opportunity to strengthen professional relationships, share expertise, and support continued growth in pediatric cancer care.



Dr. Kristin Henley Advances Life-Saving Emergency Training in Africa

Dr. Kristin Henley recently represented Africa Fire Mission at the World Federation of Pediatric Intensive and Critical Care Societies (WFPICCS) Congress in Melbourne, Australia, highlighting her work to strengthen emergency response in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Her presentation, "Active Bleeding Control: A Pilot Life-Saving Training Program in Sub-Saharan Africa," showcased efforts to equip professional and community first responders with critical bleeding control skills, helping road traffic accident victims receive lifesaving care before reaching a healthcare facility.

Through her dedication to emergency response education, Dr. Henley is helping expand access to essential lifesaving skills. Last year, she was recognized as Africa Fire Mission's Volunteer Instructor of the Year for her contributions to this important work.



CNRC Welcomes New Research Collaborators

The Children's Nutrition Research Center (CNRC) is pleased to welcome new and returning collaborators from across Baylor College of Medicine, strengthening its research network and expanding opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. These partnerships bring together diverse expertise to advance nutrition research and improve health outcomes for children and pregnant and lactating women. Department of Pediatrics faculty collaborators, pictured from left to right, include **Mustafa Tosur, Hari Krishna Yalamanchili, Amy Hair, Geoff Preidis, Maria Redondo, Fong Lam, and Sara Anvari.**



Faculty from left to right: Dr. Olivia Ginnard, Xia Gao and Jayna Dave

Congratulations to CNRC faculty who recently received New Grants as Principle Investigators

Dr. Olivia Ginnard received a $30,000 BCM Junior Faculty Seed Award for her project, Role of Vitamin D in Neural Control of Energy Homeostasis, investigating how vitamin D signaling influences energy regulation and metabolic health.

Xia Gao received a $150,000 American Cancer Society Catalyst award for Understanding Lac-Phe, an Exercise-Induced Metabolite, in Cancer Treatment, exploring the potential role of Lac-Phe in cancer therapy.

Jayna Dave received a $420,576 NIH R21 award for Empowering Families: Culinary Medicine for Managing Pediatric Chronic Kidney Disease, a project focused on developing and evaluating a culinary medicine curriculum for children with chronic kidney disease and their families.



Congratulations to our 2026 Leadership College Graduates!

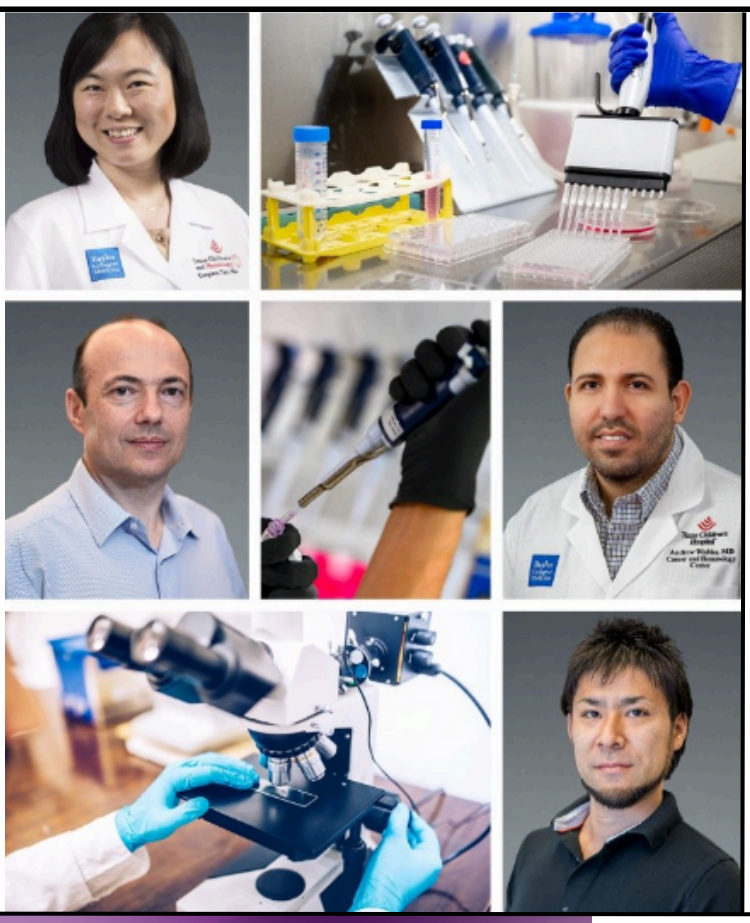
The BCM Department of Pediatrics Leadership Team (Drs. Shekerdemian, Kim, Schmidt, Singhal, and Slack) would like to extend our congratulations to the graduates of Leadership College. On September 25, 2026, 14 BCM midcareer pediatric faculty members graduated from the program. As part of the graduation requirements, each participant led a project with the support of their division chief. They were quite impressive, and we hope they will bring some acute ROI!

Here are their names and their divisions:

Kimberly E. Sawyer - Palliative Care
Ganga Gokulakrishnan - Neonatology
Sarah Lyons - Endocrine
Bonnie McCann-Crosby - Endocrine
Ashley E. Teasdale - Psychology
Jaime Jump - Palliative Care
Holly Harris - DBP
Shagun Sachdeva - Cardiology
Betul Yilmaz - Cardiology
Amit Thakral - Rheumatology
Faith Ihekweazu - GI
Lisa Ayoub-Rodriguez - PHM
Joseph Angelo - Renal
Shweta S. Shah - Renal

Pictures highlights some of the graduates at the event!
Congratulations to our graduates!

News from Hematology/Oncology



Advancing Hope Through $2.6 Million in New Research Funding

The Center for Advanced Innate Cell Therapy has secured more than $2.6 million in new research funding to advance innovative immunotherapies for children with cancer and other complex diseases. This work focuses on next-generation cell therapies designed to improve treatment options and outcomes for young patients. Featured investigators and projects (pictured L–R, top to bottom):

- **Gengwen Tian, MD, PhD** — Advancing CAR NKT cell therapies for neuroblastoma, with support from Hyundai Hope on Wheels and CURE Childhood Cancer.
- **Leonid S. Metelitsa, MD, PhD** — Developing CAR NKT cell immunotherapy for neuroblastoma, supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).
- **Andrew A. Wahba, MD** — Advancing CAR NKT immunotherapy for pediatric cancers, including osteosarcoma, with support from MIB Agents Osteosarcoma Alliance and Hyundai Hope on Wheels.
- **Norihiro Watanabe, PhD** — Developing innovative cell therapy for osteosarcoma, supported by CPRIT.

Congratulations to our investigators, and a heartfelt thank-you to our funding partners for helping turn scientific discoveries into new possibilities for children and their families.



ITP Awareness Month

September was also an opportunity to recognize children and families affected by immune thrombocytopenia (ITP), a blood disorder that can cause low platelet counts and an increased risk of bleeding and bruising.

To raise awareness, we honor patients like **Elidi** (pictured, center) and her family, along with the many others navigating platelet disorders. We also recognize the physicians, nurses and care teams who help guide families through diagnosis, treatment and ongoing care.



On the Media

Featuring **Valeria R. Smith, MD, and 10-year-old Fitz** who shared his rare cancer journey on social media and is celebrating being cancer-free!
Click here to learn more!



Hispanic Heritage Month

Ricardo "Ricky" J. Flores, MD**,** was invited by the Astros Foundation and the Houston East End Chamber of Commerce to serve as a panelist at the Astros Foundation's Hispanic Heritage Month Reception at Daikin Park. Centered on the theme, "Celebrating Art, Culture and Legacy," the event brought together leaders from medicine, education and business to discuss the contributions and impact of the Hispanic community. Fellow panelists included Dr. Ruth López Turley, director of the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, and Alex López Negrete, founder and CEO of López Negrete Communications. The program also featured a presentation from ALMAAHH (Advocates of a Latino Museum of Cultural and Visual Arts & Archive Complex in Houston).



AJHG: Limited Overlap Between Inherited and Tumor Mutations

Baylor graduate student **Suhasini Lulla**, in **Dr. Sharon Plon** research group, found that tumor-related and inherited genetic changes follow different patterns, offering new insights to improve cancer genetic testing and interpretation.

Read the study: Click here!



Image displayed from left to right from the name listed

Leukemia Program Leadership

Eric S. Schafer, MD, MHS, Director of the Leukemia Program, has announced new leadership roles for **Michelle S. Redell, MD, PhD, and Joanna S. Yi, MD**, as Associate Program Directors; **Lauren D. Scherer, MD**, as Assistant Program Director; **Alexandra M. Stevens, MD, PhD**, as Associate Program Director for Basic and Translational Research; and **Julienne Brackett, MD,** as Associate Program Director for Education. Congratulations to **Michelle, Lauren, Joanna, Alexandra and Julienne** on their new leadership roles!

News from Immunology, Allergy and Retrovirology (IAR)



Peanut-Free Astros Day

On Saturday, August 23rd, IAR's Food Allergy Program, led by **Dr. Sara Anvari**, hosted their annual Peanut-Free Astros Day. This day was another memorable success, bringing together 24 patients and their families for a fun and safe day at the Astros vs. Athletics game. Special thanks to **Theresa Aldape** for her outstanding coordination, the **Sports Authority Group** for generously providing the suite, and **Joe Penland** for a decade of unwavering support. We would also like to thank **Christina Cowperthwait, Kathy Green, our TCH Dieticians, Ashley Alford, Cindy Stowell, and Dr. Tony Olive,** for their support and contributions in making the day such a positive experience for everyone involved. This event is a wonderful example of the impact that community, generosity, and collaboration can have on the families we serve.

JMF Kids Day 2026

On Saturday, September 29, IAR hosted its annual JMF Kids Day at Main Event Stafford, generously sponsored by the **Jeffrey Modell Foundation.** Nearly 20 families along with 3 of our national industry partners for a memorable day of food, fun, and connection, celebrating the strength of our primary immunodeficiency community. A special thank you to **Dr. Lisa Forbes Satter,** Director of the Texas Children's Jeffrey Modell Center, and the dedicated planning committee; **Samantha Johnson, Kayla Mahler, Taiya Ivery, Sherry Grant, and Kim Nguyen**, together with the exceptional support of **Noel Wilford**, whose efforts made the event a tremendous success. As a touching surprise, the venue recognized committee lead **Samantha Johnson** for her continued partnership by presenting her with a personalized bowling pin, adding a notable highlight to an already special day.





Double the Love, Double the Joy!

On Monday, September 14th, The WTS Center for Human Immunobiology hosted a baby shower in celebration of their faculty members, **Dr. Alexander Sandweiss** and **Dr. Sarah Gunter** as they prepare to welcome their newest family members. The baby shower was a wonderful success, and it would not have been possible without the support, generosity, and teamwork of so many people across the Center. Special thank you to **Daniela Carrasco, Dr. Shannon Ronca, Samantha Johnson, Maya Murray** and the members of the decoration team.



Fall Symposium 2026 Highlight

On Tuesday, September 22, the **William T. Shearer Center for Human Immunobiology** hosted its **Fall Symposium 2026: "Immunity Across Organs: Connecting Systems, Advancing Discovery."** This exceptional day of science, collaboration, and learning highlighted the remarkable breadth of research across the Center. Each presenter shared unique perspectives and discoveries that reflected both the scientific excellence of our community and the collaborative spirit that drives the WTS Center forward. A special thank you to keynote speakers **Dr. Francesca Polverino and Dr. Mark Sundrud** for generously sharing their time, expertise, and insights. We also extend our gratitude to **Daniela Carrasco, Dr. Lisa Forbes Satter, Dr. Tiphanie Vogel, Julia Schauer, Samantha Johnson, and Magda Gomez,** whose efforts helped make this outstanding event possible.

News from Infectious Diseases





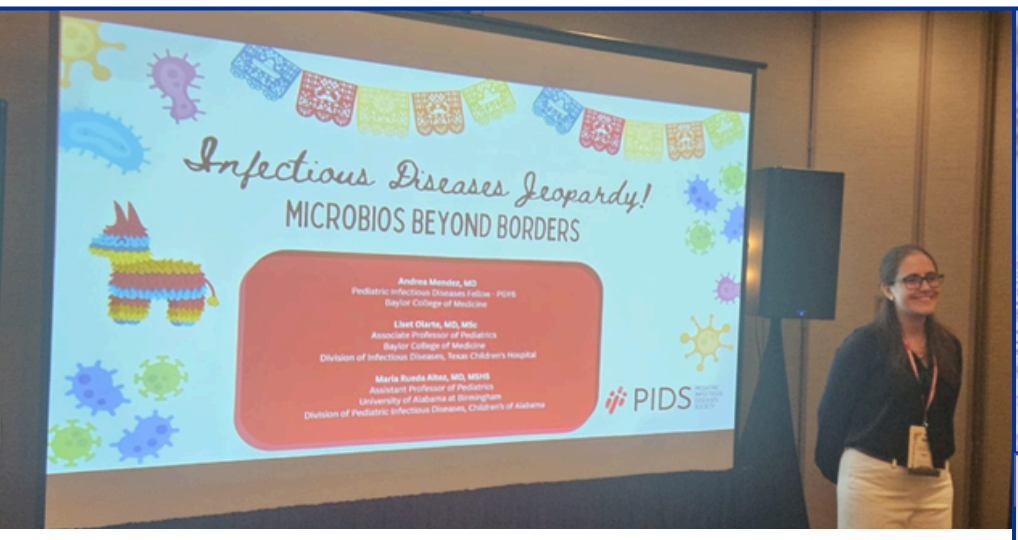




The Pediatric Infectious Diseases Fellowship Team, Dr. Catherine Foster, Dr. Kristen Deray, and Gyselle Villegas-Garduno, Coordinator.

Welcoming New Fellows with a Pediatric Infectious Diseases Fiesta + Ice Cream Social!

The Pediatric Infectious Diseases Division welcomed three new Pediatric Infectious Diseases fellows and one new Pediatric Transplant Infectious Diseases fellow. The incoming fellows were introduced to the division through a festive ice cream social and a lively Pedi ID Fiesta, providing an opportunity to connect with faculty, staff, and colleagues as they begin their training journey.



Dr. Andrea Mendez presented at the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) National Conference. The LMSA is the flagship annual gathering of over 1,000 pre-medical and medical students, resident physicians, faculty members, and healthcare leaders.



Welcoming Vivianna Renee Charles: A Joyful New Addition to the Villegas-Garduno Family

Gyselle Villegas-Garduno, Pediatric Infectious Diseases Fellowship Coordinator, and her family joyfully welcomed their lovely baby girl, **Vivianna Renee Charles, on August 15, 2026.**

Wishing **Gyselle, Brandon, and Eli** all the best as they embark on this wonderful new journey!





Baby Sprinkle Celebration for Leigh Heller, PA-C's Upcoming Arrival!

The Pediatric Infectious Diseases group celebrated the upcoming arrival of **Leigh Heller, PA-C's** new baby with a baby sprinkle.

News from Neurology



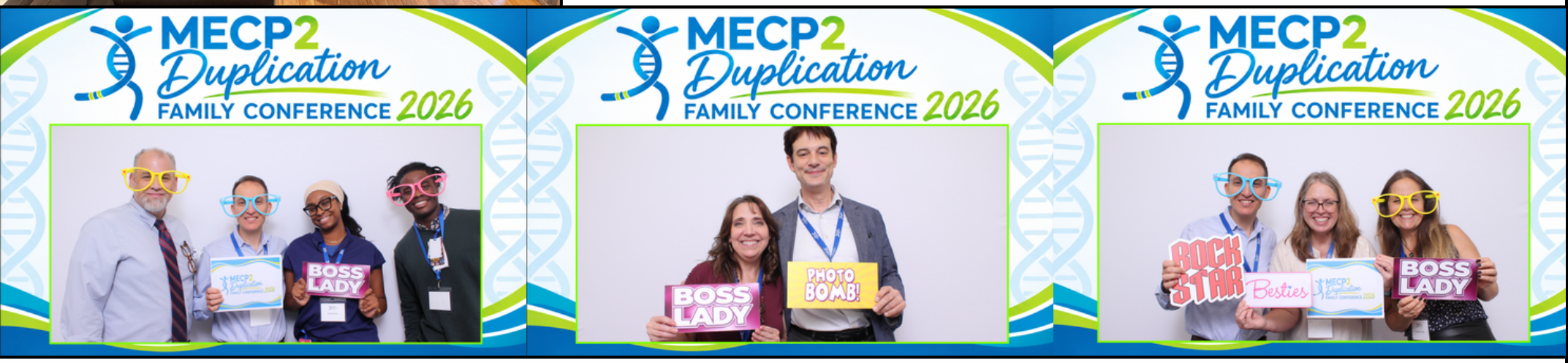
Congratulations to the 2026 Litel Grant Awardees' and Norton Scholars

Congratulations to **Irfan Ali, MD; Kimberly Houck, MD; Josh Cousin, MD; Daniel Davila-Williams, MD; Maria El Hallal, MD; Kristen Fisher, DO; Mikael Guzman, MD, PhD; Steven Lazar, MD; Steven Lee, MD; Jasia Mahdi, MD; Howard Koh, MD; Aishwarya Pareek, MD; Michael Quach, MD, BA; Deepankar Mohanty, MD; Alex Sandweiss, MD; and Sonali Sen, MD, BS,** on this well-deserved recognition!



Welcome our New Pediatric Neurology Faculty!

- **Gabrielle Bludau, NP** - Nurse Practitioner
- **Joshua Cousin, MD** - Assistant Professor
- **Mikael Guzman, MD, PhD** - Assistant Professor
- **Jeffrey Kuerbitz, MD, PhD** - Instructor
- **Chrissie Massrey, MD** - Assistant Professor
- **Maegan Newell, MD** - Assistant Professor
- **Karla Salazar, MD** - Assistant Professor
- **Birce Taskin, MD** -Assistant Professor
- **Ameya Walimbe, MD** - Instructor
- **Douglas Wells, MD** -Assistant Professor



MECP2 Duplication Syndrome Family & Research Conference

MECP2 Duplication Syndrome (MDS) is an ultra-rare neurodevelopmental disorder that has been extensively studied by multiple investigators at Baylor College of Medicine. A proof-of-concept genetic therapy using antisense oligonucleotides (ASOs) was developed by **Dr. Huda Zoghbi** and her team. Comprehensive genomic studies conducted in the **Dr. James Lupski** Laboratory have significantly advanced our understanding of the syndrome and continue to guide the development of gene-based therapeutic approaches. In addition, **Dr. Mirjana Maletic-Savatic** and her team have made important contributions through the discovery of molecular biomarkers that may facilitate disease monitoring and therapeutic evaluation. Dr. Davut Pehlivan is providing clinical care to the largest MDS population in the world.

Since 2010, we have organized the Biennial MDS Family Conference, a unique international event that brings together leading researchers, clinicians, industry partners, advocacy organizations, and families affected by MDS. The conference serves as a collaborative platform to share the latest advances in MDS research, clinical care, and therapeutic development, while fostering meaningful interactions between the scientific and patient communities.

The most recent conference was held at the Texas Children's Hospital Neurological Research Institute (TCH NRI) on September 25-26, 2026, and featured presentations and discussions on emerging therapies, biomarker discovery, natural history studies, clinical management, and ongoing research initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for individuals with MDS.



Celebrating Dr. Lin Yao's Research Achievements

Congratulations to **Dr. Lin Yao,** a senior Neurology resident in the Basic Neuroscience Research Pathway, on several notable achievements. **Dr. Yao** and collaborators received the 2026 Texas Children's Hospital Pediatrics Innovation Accelerator Award, including $40,000 in research funding for a project focused on AI-driven outcome prediction in pediatric brain injury. **Dr. Yao** also coauthored a publication in The American Journal of Human Genetics, has two additional manuscripts under review, and presented two research posters at the American Academy of Neurology Annual Meeting.



Dr. Rima El Atrache was awarded the Epilepsy Exchange Young Researcher Award for her research project, "Disrupted Rest Activity Rhythms in Infants with Epileptic Spasms: An Actigraphy-Based Study." Her research was presented at McGovern Medical School in Houston where her work was recognized for its contributions!

News from Rheumatology



Dr. Cagri Yildirim-Toruner, Associate Professor and Director of Quality Improvement in the Rheumatology Division, continues to advance pediatric rheumatology care through leadership in research and quality improvement initiatives. As Co-PI of the Arthritis Foundation-funded project, "Effective Use of Patient-Reported Outcomes (PROs) to Support Shared Decision Making (SDM) and Improve Outcomes in Juvenile Arthritis," she helped secure $250,000 in funding and serves as site investigator, with our institution participating as one of 14 sites nationwide.

Additionally, as site Principal Investigator for the Pediatric Rheumatology Care Outcomes Improvement Network (PR-COIN), **Dr. Toruner** represented our institution at the 2026 Fall Learning Session in Seattle, where she led educational workshops, presented on patient-centered goal setting, and highlighted patient and family perspectives in juvenile idiopathic arthritis care.



Shelby Jones featured on the left

Shelby Jones, Nurse Practitioner and Assistant Professor, presented a case report at the 2026 Rheumatology Advanced Practice Providers (RhAPP) Association Conference in Las Vegas, NV. Her presentation, "Augmenting Diagnostic Accuracy in Pediatric Rheumatology: AI-Assisted Identification of Gaucher Disease Using OpenEvidence," showcased the use of AI to support the diagnosis of Gaucher disease. To enhance audience engagement, she developed an interactive case-based learning experience that allowed attendees to work through the diagnostic process before revealing key findings and the final diagnosis.



Dr. Eyal Muscal was an invited speaker at the 33rd European Paediatric Rheumatology Congress (PReS) in Belgrade, Serbia, September 16-19. The topic of his presentation was "Inflammatory Brain Disease and Fires for Clinicians".

Dr. Muscal is pictured with **Dr. Meirav Hesin-Bekenstein**, an attending at Dana-Dwek Children's Hospital, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Baby News:

Congratulations to Dr. Maria Correa, (2nd year Fellow) and her husband, Sebastian on their brand new baby girl, Elena, who was born on September 16 at 3:29 pm!





Congratulations to Dr. Meredith Rae, (3rd year Fellow) and her husband, Harold on their brand new, healthy baby boy, Samuel Rae Olaya! Born on Aug 28th at 5:02 pm!



Inaugural Grand Rounds with Dr. Daniel Lovell!

The Rheumatology Division hosted the inaugural Grand Rounds speaker, **Dr. Daniel Lovell,** Joseph E. Levinson Professor of Pediatrics, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, Division of Rheumatology, Cincinnati Children's Hospital on September 11, 2026. **Dr. Lovell** is widely recognized as one of the founding leaders in modern pediatric rheumatology. He was one of the first Texas Children's Hospital Pediatrics Rheumatology fellows and then became a Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA) and clinical trials expert at Pediatric Rheumatology Collaborative Study Group (PRCSG) and Cincinnati Children's Hospital.

Happy Advanced Practice Practitioner Week!

The Department of Pediatrics proudly recognizes our Advanced Practice Providers (APPs) for their outstanding dedication, clinical expertise, and commitment to improving the health and well-being of children and families. Thank you for the meaningful difference you make in the lives of our patients every day!





APP week at CHRISTUS Children's!



Nicole D. Triggs, alongside her colleague **Tanisha Richards, MSN, APRN, FNP-C,** representing Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition Clinic.



Martha Curry, CPNP and **Shelby Jones** for APP week!

Message from Shelby Jones:
"Martha will be retiring at the end of 2026, and we will miss her so dearly! She is a huge LSU fan and one of the funniest people in our department! I wanted to give her a shoutout for all that she has taught me as a clinician and mentor. Martha has been a part of the pediatric rheumatology department for 30+ years! She has so many valuable nuggets of knowledge to share with APP's across our camp!"



From Hematology and Oncology: Thank You for Making a Difference

In the spirit of National APP Week, join us in recognizing the outstanding contributions made by Advanced Practice Providers (APPs), including Nurse Practitioners, Physician Associates, Clinical Nurse Specialists, and others, who help drive innovation, expand access to care, and improve patient outcomes every day.

This year's theme, "The Pulse of Progress: APPs Powering Tomorrow," highlights the vital role APPs play as clinicians, educators, researchers, and leaders across the healthcare continuum.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our APP colleagues for their expertise, compassion, and commitment to delivering high-quality, patient-centered care. Their dedication strengthens interdisciplinary teams and helps advance the health and well-being of the communities we serve.

veteran's Day

This Veterans Day, the Department of Pediatrics honors all who have served our country, including members of our own pediatric community and the family members and loved ones of our faculty and staff who have served.

We recognize their courage, sacrifice, and dedication, and express our heartfelt gratitude for the lasting impact of their service. Today, we honor these individuals and the families who have supported them, celebrating their contributions to our nation and the communities we serve.

Thank you to all who have served and to the loved ones who stand beside them





Honoring Veterans

Sergeant Sylvester J. Johnson Jr.
US Marine Corps
Vietnam War – "Zulu" Company
Grandfather of Samantha Johnson (IAR)



Luis Paxtor's Navy Journey

Rheumatology Divisions

Luis Paxtor served in the United States Navy from 1994 to 1998. From 1996-1997, he served aboard the aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67) alongside his friend Jonathan Presley, who sadly passed away in 2012. This photo was taken while they were crossing the Suez Canal in Egypt. Luis held the Personnelman (PN) rating, a historical enlisted role in the United States Navy specializing in personnel administration, career counseling, and clerical duties. He attained the rank of Seaman (SN) PSSN. His duty stations included USS Brunswick (ATS-3), U.S. Fleet Activities in Sasebo, Japan, Naval Air Station Meridian in Mississippi, and USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67) at Naval Station Mayport in Mayport, Florida.

Down Syndrome Awareness Month!

At the Department of Pediatrics, we celebrate and support individuals with Down syndrome, honoring the unique strengths, perspectives, and spirit they bring to our community. We recognize the importance of fostering a world where everyone feels valued and included.



Dr. Lisa Ayoub-Rodriguez with her eight-year-old son, Joey!

HALLOWEEN HIGHLIGHTS!



Dia-BOO-tes Bash 2026

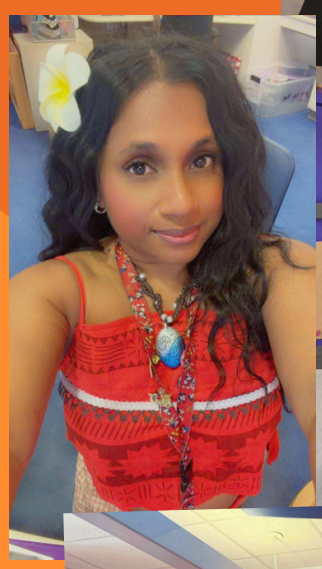
The Texas Children's Hospital Division of Pediatric Endocrinology proudly hosted the annual **"DiaBOOtes Bash"** for our patients with diabetes and their families on October 17, 2026, at the Houston Health Museum. This much-anticipated event was led by **Katelyn Yzquierdo**, the clinical nutrition manager at The Woodlands campus, alongside **Dr. Bonnie McCann-Crosby.**

A remarkable team of 30 TCH/BCM staff members volunteered, welcoming over 330 patients and families, with a total attendance of 416, including volunteers, vendors, and staff families. This year's event saw an impressive turnout of vendors, providing a valuable opportunity for families to engage with representatives from the American Diabetes Association, Afrezza, iLet, Breakthrough T1D, Freestyle Libre, Medtronic, Omnipod, Tzield, Tandem, Trial Net, and a local author of a children's book about life with T1D.

Beloved by both staff and families, the DiaBOOtes Bash offers a heartwarming platform for connection, support, and inspiration, as we continue our dedication to bringing hope to our patients!

COSTUME FROM THE PAST!

Dr. Xanthi Couroucli with her grandkids **JoJo (Jonathan Joseph Bender)** and **Teddy (Theodore James Bender).**











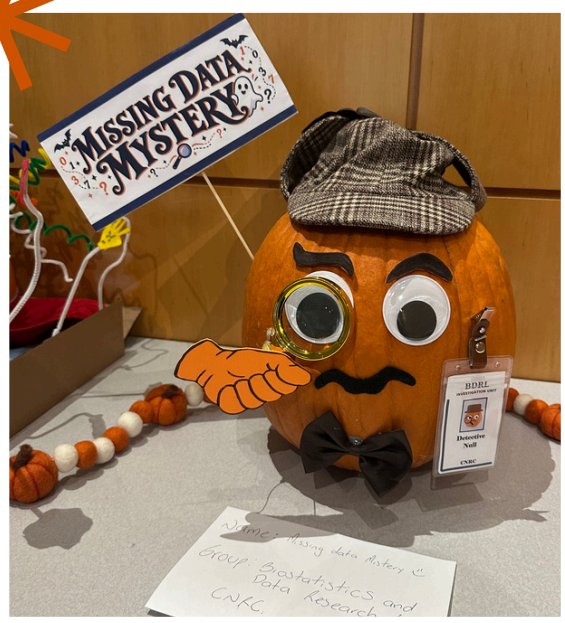




PUMPKIN CONTEST WINNERS!

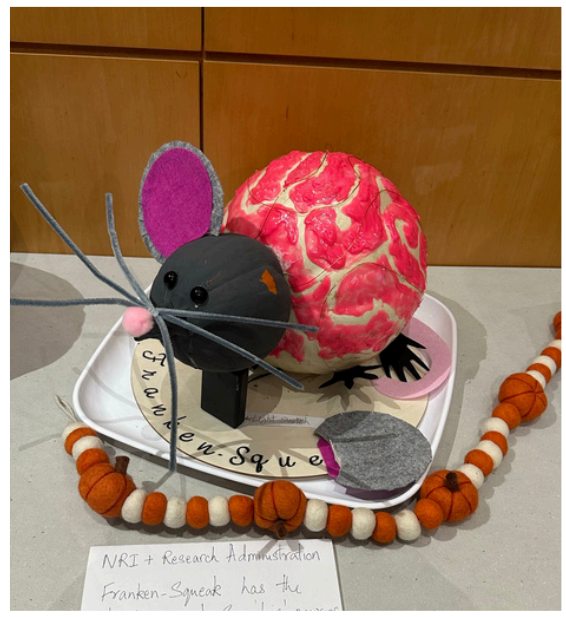
The Department of Pediatric Administration hosted its 2nd Annual Pumpkin Decorating Contest, featuring a wonderful variety of creatively decorated pumpkins for everyone to enjoy! Congratulations to our winners, and thank you to everyone who participated and helped make this event a success!

Here are this year's pumpkin contest winners!



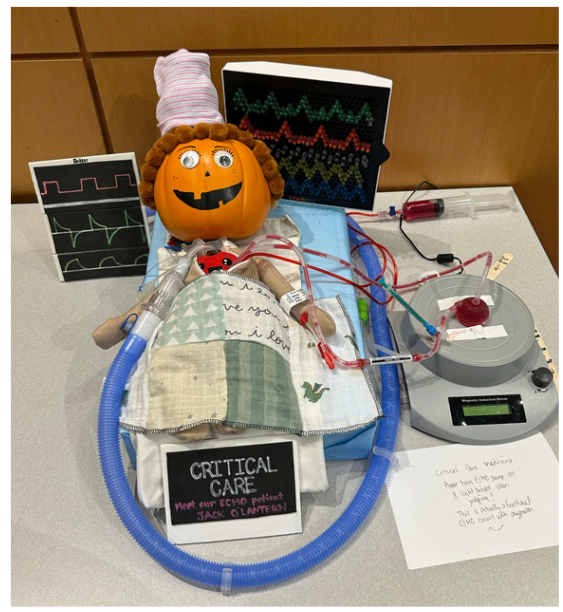
Best Division/Sub Specialty Theme

Missing Data Mistery from Biostatistics and data Research Lab (CNRC)



Most Unique

Franken-Squeak by NRI + Research Administration



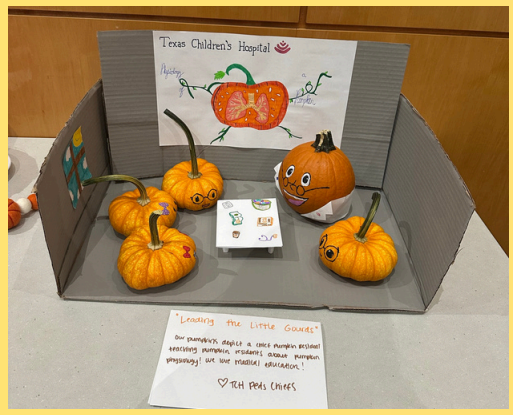
Best Overall

Meet our ECMO Patient JACK O' LATERN by Critical Care

Highlights of our other participaints!



Reaching for the stars with EVERY BREATH by Pediatric Pulmonary Department



Leading the Little Gourds by the TCH Peds Chief



Su-Pro Vacc! from Immunization Project

Celebrating October and November Observances

October and November shine a spotlight on the people, programs and causes that help make exceptional patient care possible. From raising awareness of important health conditions to celebrating the dedicated healthcare professionals who support our patients and families, these months offer meaningful opportunities to recognize the work that makes a difference every day.

Explore this month's observances below.

October Month:

- Orthopedics (Bone & Joint Health Awareness) Month
- Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- Cybersecurity Awareness Month
- Down Syndrome Awareness Month
- Health Literacy Month
- National Physical Therapy Month
- SIDS Awareness Month
- Care Coordination Week
- Fire Prevention Week
- Healthcare Quality Week
- Healthcare Security and Safety Week
- Respiratory Care Week
- International Infection Prevention and Control Week
- National Emergency Nurses Week
- National Physicians Week
- Neonatal Nurses Week
- National Mammography Day
- Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day
- World Menopause Day
- World Mental Health Day
- American Pharmacists Month
- Pharmacy Week
- National Pharmacy Technician Day
- Medical Ultrasound Awareness Month
- Palliative Care Day
- Hospice Care Day
- Material Management Week
- Sterile Processing Week

November Month:

- American Diabetes Month
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Month
- National Native American Heritage Month
- National Diabetes Care and Education Week
- Medical-Surgical Nurses Week
- National Radiologic Technology Week
- National Nurse Practitioner Week
- Perioperative Nurses Week
- Medical-Surgical Nurses Day
- Operating Room Nurse Day



Let us know how we did!

Scan or press this QR code to share your thoughts!

For **photo and content submissions,** email us at **DepartmentofPediatrics@texaschildrens.org**

If you want to **request a page for content**, email **Lana Thai at Lxthai@texaschildrens.org**



Thank you for Reading!

keep doing you and take care!