

medicine minute

Tuesday, July 2, 2024

noteworthy

HYPOTHALAMIC RESEARCH

Williams Lab Provides New Insights into Treating Obesity



New research findings published in [Science](#) about a brain circuit that controls the feeling of fullness (satiety) could lead to targeted therapies for obesity or improve the effectiveness of currently available anti-obesity medications.

“We discovered that GLP-1 receptor agonists specifically target neurons in the dorsomedial hypothalamus (DMH) to induce pre-ingestive satiety,” says **Kevin Williams, Ph.D.**, an Associate Professor in the Center for Hypothalamic Research. “The identification of a precise and novel brain circuit advances our understanding of the neural mechanisms underlying appetite control.”

For the first time, the researchers identified the primary GLP-1R expressing neurons that inhibit arcuate NPY/AgRP neurons, Dr. Williams explains. Stimulation of arcuate NPY/AgRP neurons motivates food-seeking and appetitive behavior, and it’s notable that this circuit suppresses this activity.

“Our findings could lead to personalized treatment approaches based on individual neural responses to GLP-1 receptor agonists,” Dr. Williams says. “This can help tailor treatments to patients’ specific physiological and neural profiles, enhancing treatment success.”

Read the full interview transcript on the [Medicine Matters site](#). To learn more about Dr. Williams’ research, visit the [Williams Lab site](#). To read a related article in Nature, click [here](#).

kudos

SERVICE

Vazquez Appointed Member of NIH Study Section



Miguel Vazquez, M.D., a Professor in the Division of Nephrology, has been invited to serve as a member of the Healthcare Delivery and Methodologies Integrated Review Group, part of the Interdisciplinary Clinical Care in Specialty Care Settings Study Section in the Center for Scientific Review at the National Institutes of Health.

Members of review groups evaluate applications submitted to NIH, make recommendations on the applications to the

appropriate NIH national advisory council or board, and survey the status of research in their respective fields.

Dr. Vazquez was nominated because of his “demonstrated competence and achievement as evidenced by the quality of his research accomplishments, publications in scientific journals, and other significant scientific activities, achievements, and honors,” says **Noni Byrnes, Ph.D.**, CSR Director. “Service also requires mature judgment and objectivity as well as the ability to work effectively in a group, additional qualities we believe he will bring to this important task.”

“This could not have happened to a more ethical or service-oriented person,” says **Samir M. Parikh, M.D.**, Professor and Chief of the Division of Nephrology. “Applicants will be fortunate to have him reviewing and advising them.”

HONORS

Faculty Members Recognized for Outstanding Teaching



Nisha Unni, M.D., an Associate Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology, received the Eugene P. Frenkel M.D. Outstanding Teacher Award in the Hematology and Oncology Fellowship program.

Dr. Unni earned her medical degree from the University of Kerala, Government Medical College, in India. After completing an internal medicine residency at Saint Vincent Hospital, a teaching affiliate of the University of Massachusetts, she performed a clinical fellowship in transfusion medicine and blood banking at Yale University School of Medicine – Yale New Haven Hospital, followed by a

clinical fellowship in hematology and oncology at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey – Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, where she served as Chief Fellow.

Dr. Unni joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2013.



Nicholas Hendren, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Cardiology, received the L. David Hillis Award for Excellence in Teaching in the Cardiology Fellowship program.

Originally from West Allis, Wisconsin, Dr. Hendren holds a bachelor’s degree in medical microbiology, immunology, and zoology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he also earned his medical degree. He completed a residency in internal medicine, a fellowship in cardiovascular disease, and a fellowship in advanced heart failure and transplant, at UT Southwestern, where he served as Chief Fellow.

Dr. Hendren joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2022.



Nagendra Pokala, M.D., an Assistant Professor in the Division of Rheumatic Diseases, received the Rheumatology Faculty Teaching Award for the 2023-2024 academic year. The award is given by the Rheumatology Fellows in recognition of excellence in mentoring and teaching.

Dr. Pokala holds a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Texas at Austin, which he received with high honors. He received his medical degree from UT Southwestern, where he also completed internal medicine residency training and fellowship training in rheumatology.

Dr. Pokala initially joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 2019 in the Division of Hospital Medicine. After fellowship training, he joined the Division of Rheumatic Diseases, with clinical responsibilities at the Dallas VA Medical Center.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Gastroenterology Fellows Selected for Career Development Opportunities



Amin Fallahzadeh, M.D., (left) a second-year Gastroenterology Fellow, received the 2024 Advanced/Transplant Hepatology Fellow Award from the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) Foundation. Recipients of this award participate in curated career development opportunities geared toward leadership within academic hepatology.

Sasha Kapil, M.D., (center) a third-year Gastroenterology Fellow, was selected for the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) Editorial Fellowship. Participants gain hands-on experience in scientific publishing under the

mentorship of renowned editors.

Sumana Reddy, M.D., (right) a third-year Gastroenterology Fellow, was selected for the 2024 American Neurogastroenterology and Motility Society (ANMS) Advanced Motility Program for Fellows. Recipients of this award interact with distinguished faculty and participate in a one-on-one educational program to promote advanced skills in motility.

RECENT JOB CHANGES

Staff Members Take on New Roles



We congratulate the following staff members who recently took on new positions within the Department:

- **Heather Burzloff** – Sr. Administrative Associate, Department Administration
- **Thirupugal Govindarajan** – Research Scientist, Digestive & Liver Diseases
- **Christian Lopez** – Research Assistant I, Histopathology Core
- **Lorenza Sandoval** – Grants & Contracts Specialist,

Research Administration

- **Khyati Vadera** – Population Science Project Coordinator II, Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine
- **Ayushi Vashisht** – Clinical Research Project Manager, Cardiology

research roundup

CARDIOMETABOLIC RESEARCH UNIT

Biorepository Team Plays Crucial Role in Clinical Trials



The Cardiometabolic Research Unit (CMRU), under the direction of **Thomas J. Wang, M.D.**, Professor and Chair of Internal Medicine, and **Ambarish Pandey, M.D., M.S.C.S.**, an Associate Professor in the Division of Cardiology, maintains a large biorepository of samples of blood and urine, in addition to COVID-19 specimens and a collection from the heart failure biobank.

“Our biorepository plays a crucial role in supporting our research by providing high-quality samples for numerous studies,” says **Elviche Lenou, M.S.**, a Senior Research Associate in the CMRU. “Additionally, it ensures the integrity

and reliability of the data generated from these samples, which is essential for advancing our understanding of cardiometabolic diseases.”

The team is responsible for several essential tasks to ensure seamless operations. They maximize the use of freezer space, monitor temperature control systems, and perform regular maintenance and servicing of freezer units. Additionally, they manage inventory levels and track product expiration dates to reduce waste. The team also coordinates with suppliers for timely restocking and promptly addresses any equipment malfunctions. Furthermore, they enforce strict safety protocols to maintain quality.

“By maintaining a diverse collection of biospecimens, we will be able to track health outcomes over time and study the progression of various diseases, ultimately contributing to improved public health strategies and interventions,” Dr. Pandey says.

To learn more about the biorepository, click [here](#).

education and training

INTERNAL MEDICINE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Teaching Teams Added to Clements University Hospital



Two new teaching teams have been added to the Clements University Hospital’s ward rotation.

“This is a recognition that the educational experience at CUH has matured and developed into a first-rate component of our Department and its training programs,” says **Jonathan Weissler, M.D.**, Vice Chair of Clinical Affairs at CUH and a Professor in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine. “Along with the experience at Parkland Health and the Dallas VA Medical Center, which continuously reinforces that our purpose is to serve all of those who need our help, our training programs for students, residents, and fellows provide

an unparalleled environment for teaching. I am grateful to **Dr. Thomas Wang** and **Dr. Salahuddin Kazi** for their confidence in CUH, and to **Chris Rubio** and **Dr. Craig Glazer** for their support in expanding the role of CUH in training our students and residents.”

Dr. Wang is Chair of Internal Medicine, Physician-in-Chief for Clements University Hospital, and a Professor in the Division of Cardiology. He holds the Donald W. Seldin Distinguished Chair in Internal Medicine.

Dr. Kazi is Vice Chair for Education and Training, Director of the Internal Medicine Residency Program, and a Professor in the Division of Rheumatic Diseases.

Mr. Rubio is the Chief Operating Officer for Clements University Hospital.

Dr. Glazer is Associate Vice President and Chief Medical Officer for University Hospitals and a Professor in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine.

Dr. Weissler holds the James M. Collins Professorship in Biomedical Research.



Internal Medicine News Portal
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need to know

DESIGNATED HOLIDAY

Clinics, Academic Offices, and Labs Closed on July 4



Independence Day, **July 4**, is a designated holiday for UTSW in commemoration of the day in 1776 when the American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain.

All UTSW clinics, central administration, academic offices, and research labs will be closed. Our hospitals will be fully operational with the appropriate staff in support areas.

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

events

HEALTHCARE OBSERVANCES

July is National Minority Health Month



Together with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, we observe National Minority Health Month and promote this year's theme, "Be the Source for Better Health: Improving Health Outcomes Through Our Cultures, Communities, and Connections."

When patients are provided culturally and linguistically appropriate information, they are better able to create healthier outcomes for themselves, their families, and their communities.

To learn more about how to be a source for better health by addressing social determinants of health and helping eliminate health disparities, click [here](#).



Internal Medicine Events Calendar
Click to view additional events

reminders

PHYSICIAN RECOGNITION

Nominations Being Accepted for Leaders in Clinical Excellence Awards



Nominations are being accepted through **Tuesday, July 23**, for the 2024 Leaders in Clinical Excellence Awards.

Established in 2018, these awards recognize clinical faculty for their exceptional contributions to the care of patients, to the education and training of the next generation of health care professionals, and to UT Southwestern overall.

“We invite and encourage you to help us identify UTSW clinical faculty who merit special recognition and who are deserving of any of the seven awards,” says **Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.**, President of UT Southwestern and a Professor in the Division

of Digestive and Liver Diseases.

The 2024 awards ceremony will be held in person on **Thursday, Nov. 14**, in the Tom and Lula Gooch Auditorium, with an option to join virtually.

For more details, click [here](#).

save the date

INFLUENCERS

Health Equity Committee to Present Lecture Series



The Internal Medicine Health Equity Committee has announced a summer lecture series focused on how UTSW faculty members are making a positive difference in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Elaine Duryea, M.D., an Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, will lecture on **Wednesday, July 31, at noon**. Her topic: “Improving Maternal Postpartum Access to Care: Reducing Maternal Morbidity.”

To join the July 31 lecture via Zoom, click [here](#).

Emmanuel Ohuabunwa, M.D., an Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine, will lecture on **Wednesday, Aug. 7, at noon**. His topic: “What’s in a Name.” This lecture will be co-presented by the Internal Medicine Health Systems Track.

To join the August 7 lecture via Zoom, click [here](#).

Stephanie Nguyen, D.O., M.P.H., a Family Medicine staff physician at Parkland Health, will lecture on **Wednesday, Aug. 21, at noon**. Her topic: “Refugee Healthcare at Parkland.”

To join the August 21 lecture via Zoom, click [here](#).

Look for the next *Medicine Minute* on **Tuesday, July 9**.
Share feedback and news items with us at IMNews@UTSouthwestern.edu

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