

ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

THOUGHTS AND UPDATES FROM DR. W. P. ANDREW LEE

June 21, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to announce the appointment of **Jorge A. Bezerra, M.D.**, as the new Chair of the Department of Pediatrics, effective Oct. 1. He will hold the Robert L. Moore Chair in Pediatrics.

Dr. Bezerra will provide strategic vision and operational leadership of the clinical, research, and training programs in the Department of Pediatrics. He will also serve as Pediatrician-in-Chief for Children's Medical Center Dallas and oversee the quality of pediatric patient care and the integration of clinical and academic activities.

Dr. Bezerra joins us from Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC), consistently recognized as one of the premier pediatric hospitals in the country. At CCHMC, he has been Director of the Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, and Medical Director of the Pediatric Liver Care Center. He served as Professor of Pediatrics and held The William and Rebecca Balistreri Chair in Pediatric Hepatology. Dr. Bezerra also served as Director of the Cincinnati Digestive Health Center, a Research Core Center funded by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) to advance digestive disease research at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine.



After earning his medical degree from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte School of Medicine in Brazil, he completed his pediatric residency at the University of Arizona Health Sciences Center and pursued clinical and research fellowships in pediatric gastroenterology, hepatology, and nutrition at CCHMC.

During his 28-year career at CCHMC, Dr. Bezerra has cared for children with liver disease and led research and clinical trials with the goal of developing innovative diagnostic tests and therapeutic interventions to improve the care of children suffering from these disorders. His laboratory investigates regulatory mechanisms of liver and biliary injury, focusing on preclinical and translational research on biliary atresia, the most common cause of chronic liver disease in children. His research has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health and industry.

Among his scientific accomplishments, he discovered a key immunologic signature in the liver of children with biliary atresia. By applying predictive analytics to survey the blood proteins of babies with biliary atresia, he found that matrix metalloproteinase-7 (MMP-7) accurately distinguishes patients with the disease from other liver diseases. This discovery led to a test that is now transitioning to clinical use to facilitate diagnostic algorithms and shorten the time to surgical treatment.

Dr. Bezerra is an elected member of the American Society of Clinical Investigation and the Association of American Physicians. He is a Fellow of the American Gastroenterological Association and served as President of

the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases in 2020. He is currently serving as Chairman of the Board of Scientific Counselors of the Intramural Research Program of the NIDDK.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Thomas Wang, Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine, for his service as Chair of the Search Committee; and to all the Search Committee members – Dr. Beth Brickner, Dr. Quinn Capers IV, Dr. Dai Chung, Dr. Helen Hobbs, Dr. Alex Kane, Dr. Sean Morrison, Dr. Craig Peters, Dr. Catherine Spong, Dr. Jasmin Tiro, Ms. Lindsey Tyra, and Dr. Dwain Thiele – for the dedication and insights they brought to this comprehensive national search. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Stephen Skapek for his steady leadership during the Department’s transition and continued growth and expansion.

Dr. Bezerra’s expertise as a clinician and researcher and his proven leadership will further elevate UT Southwestern Medical Center and Children’s Health as a national hub for excellence in pediatric discovery and clinical care.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Bezerra to Dallas and UT Southwestern.



Sincerely,

Andy

W. P. Andrew Lee, M.D.

Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Dean, UT Southwestern Medical School

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