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CELEBRATING OUR DEPARTMENT'S ACHIEVEMENTS

From transformative research to community-driven initiatives, this issue of *A Dose of Medicine*, highlights the strong momentum across our missions. Learn how Dr. Fasiha Kanwal is leading a \$44.2 million clinical research consortium poised to accelerate discoveries and improve patient care across Houston and beyond. Celebrate the launch and vision of our Women Physicians Group, founded to strengthen mentorship, professional growth, and peer connection across the department. Read about a high school volleyball team's ongoing tribute to Dr. Benjamin Musher, whose care helped one family build a future filled with milestones. Revisit the energy and collaboration of our inaugural Hospital Medicine Conference, and meet new section chiefs, Dr. Ellen Fremion and Dr. Mohamed Othman, whose leadership is guiding the next chapter of Adult Transition Medicine and Gastroenterology. Let me know what resonated with you, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts as we strive to strengthen our shared mission.



THE FUTURE OF HEART FAILURE TREATMENT



DR. AJITH NAIR

Heart failure is a global epidemic, affecting more than 26 million people worldwide, including 6.2 million adults in the United States. For patients with severe biventricular heart failure, treatment options are limited, and there are few hearts available for transplant, with only 6,000 donor hearts available annually worldwide. Given the urgent needs of these patients, clinicians are looking to mechanical circulatory support, with the Total Artificial Heart (TAH) emerging as an innovative solution. Dr. Ajith Nair, an advanced heart failure and transplant cardiologist, helped identify the first patient for the first-in-humans implantation trial of the BiVACOR TAH at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center.

"We knew we had to find the right patient, someone whose condition was severe enough to need this device but who could also tolerate the procedure," Dr. Nair explains.

The patient suffered from genetic cardiomyopathy that caused severe left and right heart dysfunction and eventually end-stage heart failure. Given the donor heart shortage and the patient's declining condition, the heart transplant team judged the BiVACOR TAH to be the best option for stabilizing the patient while awaiting a transplant. This FDA-approved Early Feasibility Study evaluated the device in five patients to demonstrate its potential for extending survival. "The success of this trial is a testament to the dedication of our team," Dr. Nair says. "It takes a multidisciplinary approach, including cardiothoracic surgeons, cardiac anesthesiologists, cardiologists, nurses, and mechanical circulatory support specialists, to make this possible."

With the successful completion of this procedure, BiVACOR and Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) are shifting focus toward refining the device. Among proposed device advancements, BiVACOR is looking to reduce the size of the driveline, with the ultimate goal of developing a fully implantable version that eliminates the need for a driveline entirely. **Dr. Nair emphasizes the potential impact of this innovation: "If we can develop a fully implantable artificial heart with percutaneous charging, it could one day replace heart transplants altogether. This is truly groundbreaking, and we are proud to be at the forefront of it here in Houston."**

BCM and the Texas Heart Institute continue to be global leaders in cardiovascular innovation. With the next phase of the BiVACOR TAH trial set to launch later this year, the future of treating heart failure is evolving rapidly, and BCM remains at the center of this medical revolution. Reflecting on the significance of this progress, **Dr. Nair expresses gratitude, "It is an incredible privilege to be part of this team. The progress we are making could change the lives of countless heart failure patients worldwide. This is only the beginning!"**

ADVANCING PATIENT-CENTERED RESEARCH



DR. FASIHA KANWAL LEADS TRANSFORMATIONAL CLINICAL RESEARCH INITIATIVE



DR. FASIHA KANWAL

Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) and the University of Houston (UH) secured a \$44.2 million Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) Program grant from the National Center for Advancing Translational Research. This grant establishes the Consortium for Translational and Precision Health (CTPH), a regional hub designed to advance clinical and translational research, foster innovation, and enhance healthcare outcomes. The CTPH builds on the strong research foundations at both BCM and UH and leverages multidisciplinary strengths in basic science, translational medicine, health services, and pharmaceutical sciences. The consortium also serves as a critical bridge between academic research, community healthcare organizations, and government agencies, ensuring that new discoveries are rapidly translated into real-world medical advancements.

Dr. Fasiha Kanwal, Professor of Medicine and Gastroenterology and Director of BCM's Institute for Clinical and Translational Research, plays a critical role in guiding the strategic direction of the CTPH. Dr. Kanwal's research focuses on chronic liver diseases, cirrhosis, and hepatocellular carcinoma and has impacted evidence-based clinical guidelines. Her leadership ensures that the CTPH's research efforts will be patient-centered, clinically impactful, and widely disseminated across healthcare systems. The CTPH will provide essential funding, infrastructure, and research support, enabling investigators to accelerate the pace of discovery. By enhancing study design, supporting access to clinical data, and facilitating community outreach and engagement, the CTPH will remove barriers that can hinder clinical research progress. ***"This partnership creates a rich multidisciplinary environment," said Dr. Kanwal. "By enhancing infrastructure and resources, we will streamline research efforts and implement innovative solutions that will directly improve patient care."***

The CTSA Program supports more than 60 leading medical institutions across the country. Through this prestigious award, BCM and UH join an elite network of research leaders dedicated to transforming healthcare through scientific discovery, education, and collaboration. Innovative medical research supported by the CTPH is poised to revolutionize patient care, ensuring that Houston remains a hub for cutting-edge healthcare advancements.



BCM HOSPITAL MEDICINE CONFERENCE BRINGS LEARNING, COLLABORATION, & ENERGY TO THE TEXAS MEDICAL CENTER

The Section of General Internal Medicine hosted BCM's first-ever Hospital Medicine Conference at the O'Quinn Medical Tower in Houston, TX. The goal of the conference was to deliver practice-changing, practical knowledge in a memorable way. The conference hosted more than 60 hospitalists, faculty, and trainees from across Houston for a day of learning and collaboration.

The program had a strong lineup of sessions featuring nationally recognized speakers, including presentations on fluid and electrolyte management, ethical dilemmas in hospital care, alcohol use disorder, and advanced electrocardiogram interpretation.



Dr. Joey Fisher (middle) poses with Conference Co-Chairs, Drs. Zaven Sargsyan (left) and Stephanie Sherman (right).

Attendees also participated in interactive workshops focused on professionalism, quality improvement, and medical ethics. Drs. Stephanie Sherman and Zaven Sargsyan, Associate Professors in BCM's Department of Medicine and the Conference Co-Chairs, created a dynamic learning environment that blended clinical insights with real-world case discussions. Reflecting on the event, **Dr. Sargsyan said, "We wanted to give our community of hospitalists and learners a chance to get together and share lessons from our practice, learn some of the latest evidence, and grow our love for patient care and learning."**

Attendees praised the conference's engaging content, practical takeaways, and sense of community. One highlight of the day was the "Warm Lunch, Cool Case" session, where participants reviewed complex clinical cases while enjoying lunch. As Dr. Joey Fisher, Section Chief of General Internal Medicine, shared "The gathering truly showcased the strength and dedication of the BCM hospital medicine community." The success of BCM's Hospital Medicine Conference sets the stage for an engaging annual tradition focused on lifelong learning, evidence-based care, and a shared commitment to excellence in hospital medicine.

CARING IN ACTION



PASS, SET, CURE: THE ROSE-HULMAN VOLLEYBALL TEAM HONORS DR. MUSER



A simple act of gratitude has grown into a powerful tradition. The Rose-Hulman volleyball team was inspired by the care Dr. Benjamin Musher provided to someone close to their coach. Dr. Musher, Professor of Hematology and Oncology, treated Coach Rachel Delsi's mother following her cancer diagnosis. Thanks to his expert care, her malignancy has completely regressed. ***"Dr. Musher saved my mom's life," said Delsi. "There is no way to thank someone enough for that, but we knew we could use our platform to make a difference."***

Delsi and her team began fundraising during their cancer research volleyball game where they sell t-shirts, host a bake sale, and encourage donations from their community.

The players embraced the cause, turning the match into an opportunity to rally for something bigger than themselves. Their annual fundraising game is now a staple of the season, filled with energy, emotion, and a shared sense of purpose. Over the years, they have raised \$5,255 in support of cancer research. Delsi says her mom's recovery has brought countless moments of joy that would not have been possible otherwise. "Because of Dr. Musher, my mom got to see my sister get married. She became a grandma twice. These are the things that matter most."

By supporting Dr. Musher's research, the team hopes to contribute to future breakthroughs in cancer treatment. For Delsi and her players, it is a chance to give back to the physician who gave their family more time together and to stand behind others still fighting. ***"This was never just about volleyball," said Delsi. "It is about love, gratitude, and using what we have, our time, our talent, to give back."***





THE WOMEN PHYSICIANS GROUP STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY AND LEADERSHIP IN MEDICINE



Members of the WPG pose for a photo with speaker, Dr. Jenny Christner.

Women physicians in academic medicine continue to navigate distinct professional challenges, including career advancement, leadership representation, and work-life integration. In response, the Department of Medicine established the Women Physicians Group (WPG). Founded by Drs. Hannah Ortiz, Claire Scott, Allison Heinen, and Galant Chan, the WPG provides a platform for women physicians to engage in meaningful discussions and career-building opportunities.

“We created the ‘Women Physicians Group’ within the Department of Medicine with the goal of improving mentorship opportunities, augmenting career development, and supporting personal growth,” said Dr. Ortiz. “We hope to increase awareness and support and expand across multiple departments in the upcoming years.” Women physicians often experience longer periods between promotions, lower representation in departmental leadership, and a higher rate of unpaid work for equal productivity compared with their male colleagues. These challenges contribute to a higher rate of burnout and underscore the need for institutional support structures that promote career growth and leadership development. The WPG was created to address these barriers and provide resources that empower faculty, fellows, and residents within the department.

COMMUNITY



Several events have been organized by the group, each designed to enhance professional development and community engagement. The inaugural “Get-to-Know-You” Bingo and Social let participants establish connections in an informal setting. A Fall workshop, “No One Promotes You Like You,” led by Dr. Jenny Christner, introduced personal branding strategies aimed at helping physicians advance their careers. A holiday party attracted over 30 attendees, reinforcing the importance of peer support within the department. The panel discussion, entitled “Women in Medicine: Leading the Way,” was held in January. This discussion featured Drs. Lucille Parker Gregg, Elizabeth Kvale, Laura Petersen, and Stacey Rose, and focused on navigating career transitions and overcoming professional setbacks. The panelists shared perspectives on building resilience, maintaining professional integrity, and contributing to the evolving landscape of academic medicine.

The WPG is committed to expanding its reach and strengthening its impact. Future initiatives will focus on broadening participation across departments, strengthening mentorship pathways, and increasing engagement with trainees and early-career faculty. By fostering a supportive environment, the WPG can advance professional equity and empower the next generation of women leaders in medicine.



Speakers from the “Women in Medicine: Leading the Way” Panel.



WPG Members get together for a Holiday Party with a gift exchange.

NEW LEADERSHIP



DR. FREMION BUILDS ON A LEGACY OF INCLUSIVE CARE



DR. ELLEN FREMION

Dr. Ellen Fremion, newly appointed Section Chief of Adult Transition Medicine, is no stranger to the patients, faculty, or mission she now leads. A Baylor-trained physician and proud “Baylor, Baylor, Baylor,” Dr. Fremion has been with the clinic since her early training under the founding chief, Dr. Cynthia Peacock. Now, she steps into leadership with momentum, purpose, and a clear vision. She describes the clinic as a unique model that delivers comprehensive, interdisciplinary care for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have complex medical conditions. With physicians, nurse practitioners, social workers, and nurses working together, Dr. Fremion believes the clinic is positioned to be a national leader in this growing and much

needed field. Founded in 2007, the clinic was created to serve young adults aging out of pediatric care, many of whom have chronic childhood-onset conditions.

“There was no place for them to go,” Dr. Fremion says. “We’ve built a medical home for them here.” Now, she is focused on building the next phase. That effort includes partnering with the Learning Health Accelerator to capture data and establish care quality metrics, applying for a PCORI grant to address complex behavioral health needs in collaboration with the psychiatry faculty, and participating in a national collaborative focused on publishing a guide for institutions who want to replicate this clinic model. In her new role, she is especially excited to mentor others. **“I love helping people find the intersection between the problems they see and the passions they have,” she says. “That is where innovation happens.”**

Dr. Fremion is also helping shape statewide systems. She serves on the Texas Health and Human Services’ Intellectual and Developmental Disability Systems Revision Advisory Committee, recommending policies to improve care access across the state. Education is another important focus. With two HRSA grants and a fellowship program welcoming two new fellows this summer, the clinic is expanding training opportunities for medical students, residents, fellows, and even social work interns. Through it all, what fuels her is the patients. “They are a joy,” she says. “They experience the world differently, and they teach us to slow down, to listen, and to include.” She speaks of patients who bring handmade cards and artwork to appointments. **“You could not get a Nobel Peace Prize that would mean more than a drawing from a patient who feels welcome and safe here.”** That, she says, is what it is all about.



NEW LEADERSHIP



A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS WITH DR. MOHAMED OTHMAN



DR. MOHAMED OTHMAN

On a cool spring morning, ahead of Grand Rounds, Dr. Mohamed Othman and the Gastroenterology and Hepatology (GI) faculty gathered outside for their annual section photo. It was picture day but also a moment of quiet symbolism, a new team under new leadership standing together at the start of a new chapter. Dr. Othman recently assumed the role of Section Chief of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, building on his decade of experience leading Baylor's advanced endoscopy program. Reflecting on what drew him to the role, *he shared, "At a certain point, you've built your name, secured grants, and grown your own practice, but real success is when you help others grow too."*

Dr. Othman's vision for the section is twofold: to be a national leader in personalized medicine and expand access to care beyond the Texas Medical Center. He hopes to integrate technology, including artificial intelligence (AI) and genetic mapping, while delivering more precise, individualized care. Five procedure rooms at O'Quinn Tower are now equipped with AI-assisted colonoscopy, where real-time detection helps physicians spot polyps more effectively. "It is like having a second set of eyes," he said. At the same time, he is working toward growing Baylor's GI footprint into surrounding communities, such as Sugar Land, The Woodlands, and The Vintage, by bringing high-quality subspecialty care closer to home for patients across the region.

Most importantly, Dr. Othman is focused on his people, including mentoring faculty, supporting trainees, and helping others find fulfillment in academic medicine. "At some point, you stop measuring your success by your own achievements," he said. "You measure it by the success of those around you." The Section of GI and Hepatology is already moving forward with new energy, and under Dr. Othman's leadership, the future looks focused, expansive, and bright.



FACULTY PROMOTIONS



2024 LIST OF FACULTY PROMOTIONS

Professor

Dr. Chao Cheng
Dr. Joslyn Fisher
Dr. Na Li
Dr. Janet Malek
Dr. Ayse Mindikoglu
Dr. Benjamin Musher
Dr. Edward Poythress
Dr. Savari Yellapragada

Epidemiology & Population Sciences
General Internal Medicine
Cardiovascular Research
Center for Medical Ethics & Health Policy
Gastroenterology & Hepatology
Hematology & Oncology
General Internal Medicine
Hematology & Oncology

Associate Professor

Dr. Nidhi Aggarwal
Dr. Philip Alapat
Dr. Samaya Anumudu
Dr. Ahmed Awan
Dr. Uma Ayyala
Dr. Maya Balakrishnan
Dr. Trevor Bibler
Dr. Ru Chen
Dr. Kristina Dahlstrom
Dr. Faith Fletcher
Dr. Cara Foldes
Dr. Lindsey Gay
Dr. Christi Guerrini
Dr. Elizabeth Guy
Dr. Allison Heinen
Dr. Claire Horner
Dr. Valentina Hoyos
Dr. Waleed Kayani
Dr. Yanhong Liu
Dr. Nabil Mansour
Dr. Abiodun Oluyomi
Dr. Stacey Pereira
Dr. Pralay Sarkar
Dr. Maulin Shah
Dr. Stephanie Sherman
Dr. Richa Shukla
Dr. Guilherme Silva
Dr. Sandhya Thomas
Dr. Bryan Tucker
Dr. Chandan Vangala

Nephrology
Pulmonary, Critical Care, & Sleep Medicine
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Center for Medical Ethics & Health Policy
Gastroenterology & Hepatology
Epidemiology & Population Sciences
Center for Medical Ethics & Health Policy
General Internal Medicine
General Internal Medicine
Center for Medical Ethics & Health Policy
Pulmonary, Critical Care, & Sleep Medicine
General Internal Medicine
Center for Medical Ethics & Health Policy
Center for Cell & Gene Therapy
Cardiology
Epidemiology & Population Sciences
Gastroenterology & Hepatology
Epidemiology & Population Sciences
Center for Medical Ethics & Health Policy
Pulmonary, Critical Care, & Sleep Medicine
Nephrology
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Gastroenterology & Hepatology
Cardiology
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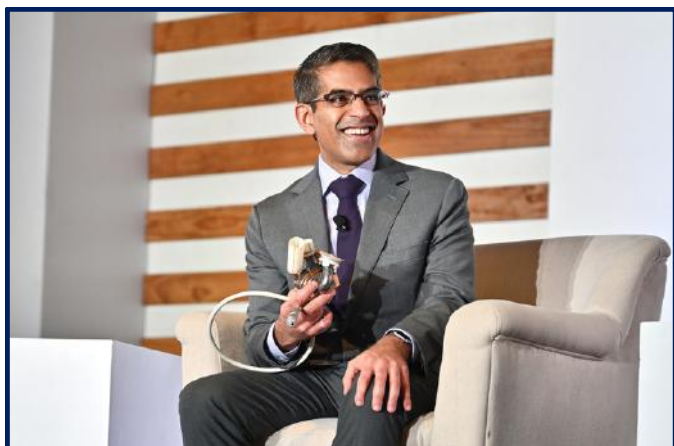
THANK YOU



YOUR SUPPORT HELPS MOVE OUR MISSION FORWARD



This issue of *A Dose of Medicine* shines a light on the momentum we are building together: from major research initiatives to new groups that strengthen mentorship, leadership, and connection across our department. Every story we shared reflects the heart of our mission and the impact we are making as a community. If you felt inspired reading these stories, we invite you to scan the QR code to support our department. Your encouragement and support help us dream bigger, reach further, and make a real difference. Together, there is no limit to what we can achieve.





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