

Baylor
College of
Medicine

MARGARET M. AND ALBERT B. ALKEK
DEPARTMENT OF
MEDICINE
GASTROENTEROLOGY
AND HEPATOLOGY

Annual Report 2021

SECTION OF GASTROENTEROLOGY AND HEPATOLOGY

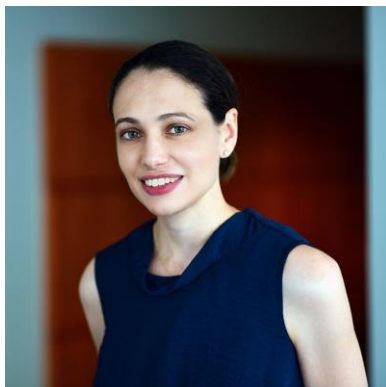


SECTION CHIEF
*Fasiha Kanwal, MD,
MSHS, AGAF, FAASLD*

Section Accomplishments

- We are **ranked among the top 10 Gastroenterology and Hepatology divisions nationally** according to [U.S News & World Report - Best Universities for Gastroenterology and Hepatology](#). We are **#1 in Texas**. These rankings are based on performance across a set of widely accepted indicators measuring excellence in research, publications, and scientific reputation overall. This recognition is a testimonial to the quality of scientific research and scholarly contributions from our Section members.
- The Section remains a leader in research in gastrointestinal and liver diseases. Our members published over 207 papers in scientific journals (up from 175 last year). Of these, 115 were in high impact journals. We had over \$10.7 million in research funding in 2021 (\$6.6 million from the NIH and \$2.2 million from State); this was up from \$7.6 million last year.
- The Section continues to be the clinical home for the NIH funded Digestive Disease Center, one of 17 federally funded centers focusing on research in GI diseases. We also serve as the coordinating center for the new Texas Collaborative Center for Hepatocellular Cancer (TeCH), which will be a platform to promote collaboration among scientists, clinicians, community leaders and policy makers to reduce liver cancer mortality in Texas. Section members are in key leadership positions, ranging from serving in the Faculty Senate at the College level to the editorship of Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology, one of the major clinical journals in the field. They also received special accolades for their contributions. Dr. David Graham received the highly prestigious William Beaumont Prize in Gastroenterology from the American Gastroenterological Association. Dr. Hashem El-Serag was named as one of the world's most influential researchers in 2020.
- Despite the pandemic, we grew in our clinical and education missions. Our top-notch faculty provide high-quality, compassionate healthcare at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center (BSLMC), Ben Taub General Hospital and the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center. BSLMC ranked nationally at No. 24 for gastroenterology this year, maintaining its trajectory over the last 3 years. We expanded our footprint outside of the Texas Medical Center by establishing general GI practice at St. Luke's Hospital, Sugarland. We continue to introduce several innovations in our practices, including cutting edge advanced endoscopic procedures and multidisciplinary treatment of complex GI disorders. We play an important role in training future clinicians and researchers. We are especially proud of our fellows and faculty who stepped up and volunteered to support our colleagues in the COVID units during the summer pandemic peak.
- Several new faculty members joined the Section last year. Five faculty members received College wide clinician awards.
- We hosted a successful Annual Baylor College of Medicine GI and Hepatology Course in March 2021.

FACULTY- Section Leadership



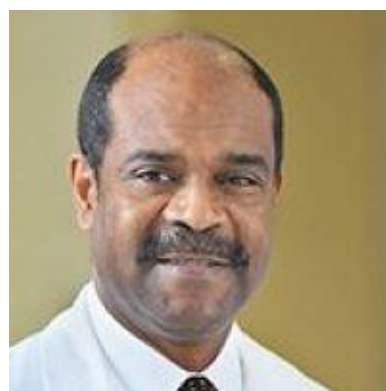
Milena Gould Suarez, M.D.
Program Director of
Gastroenterology Fellowship
Baylor College of Medicine



Jason Mills, M.D., Ph.D
Vice Chief, Research
Baylor College of Medicine



John Vierling, M.D., F.A.C.P.
Chief of Hepatology
Director of Baylor Liver Health



Fred Sutton, M.D.
Service Chief
Ben Taub



Jason Hou, M.D., M.S., F.A.C.G
Section Chief
Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical
Center



Kalpesh Patel, M.D.
Medical Director
Baylor College of Medicine



Mohamed Othman, M.D.
Chief of GI, BSLMC



Rhonda Cole, M.D.
Medical Director for Liver
Transplantation



Avinash Ketwaroo, M.D.
Director of Quality
Improvement
Baylor College of Medicine

FACULTY- Baylor Medicine

Professor

- Sharmila Anandasabapathy, MD
- Hashem El-Serag, MD, MPH
- Fasiha Kanwal, MD, MSHS, AGAF, FAASLD
- Waqar Qureshi, MD, FACP, FACG, FRCP

Associate Professor

- Jason Hou, MD, MS, FACG
- Manreet Kaur, MD
- Mohamed Othman, MD
- Kalpesh Patel, MD

Assistant Professor

- Wasif Abidi, MD, PhD
- Suneal Agarwal, MD
- Andrea Bradford, PhD
- Reena Chokshi, MD
- Salmaan Jawaid, MD
- Lukasz Kwapisz, MD, FRCPC
- Nabil Mansour, MD
- Jordan Shapiro, MD
- Rehman Sheikh, MD

FACULTY- Ben Taub

Professor

- Hemant Roy, MD

Associate Professor

- Chris Pappas, MD, JD, FCLM, FAASLD
- Melina Gould Suarez, MD
- Fred Milton Sutton Jr, MD

Assistant Professor

- Maya Balakrishnan, MD
- RJ Sealock, MD
- Richa Shukla, MD
- Mimi Chang Tan, MD

FACULTY- Hepatology

Professor

- F. Blaine Hollinger, MD
- John Vierling, MD, FACP

Associate Professor

- Ayse Leyla Mindikoglu, MD, MPH
- Gagan Sood, MD
- Rise Stribling, MD

Assistant Professor

- George Cholankeril, MD
- Prasun Jalal, MD
- Saira Khaderi, MD, MPH

FACULTY- Research

Professor

- Jason Mills, MD, PhD

Associate Professor

- Ru Chen, PhD
- Loning Fu, PhD
- Antone Opekun, PA-C
- Noah Shroyer, PhD

Assistant Professor

- Yan Liu, PhD

FACULTY- Michael E DeBakey VA Medical Center

Professor

- Hashem El-Serag, MD, MPH
- David Graham, MD, MACG
- Fasiha Kanwal, MD, MSHS, AGAF, FAASLD

Associate Professor

- Rhonda Cole, MD
- Jason Hou, MD, MS, FACG

Assistant Professor

- Avegail Flores, MD
- Clark Hair, MD
- Ruben Hernaez, MD, MPH, PhD
- Nisreen Husain, MD
- Hoda Malaty, MD, MPH, PhD, FACG
- Maria-Ellinore Jarbrink-Sehgal, MD
- Gyanprakash Ketwaroo, MD
- Natalia Khalaf, MD
- Yamini Natarajan, MD

Physician

- Maria Velez, MD

HONORS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Maya Balakrishnan, MD

Star Patient Care Award

Saira Khaderi, MD

2021 Cohort BCM Advancement Series

Reena Chokshi, MD

Early Career Faculty Award for Excellence in Patient Care

Mohammed Othman, MD

AGA Fellow (AGAF)

Hashem B. El-Serag, MD, MPH

Most Cited Authors

Kalpesh Patel, MD

Star Patient Care Award
World Endoscopy Organization Education Webinar
Committee

David Graham, MD, MACG

2021 William Beaumont Prize

Waqar Qureshi, MD, FACP, FACG, FRCP

Education Committee of Texas Society of
Gastrointestinal Endoscopy

Ruben Hernaez, MD, MPH, PHD

Early Career Faculty Award for Excellence in Patient Care

Milena Suarez, MD, FACG

Norton Rose Fulbright Faculty Excellence Award

Fasiha Kanwal, MD, MSHS

Co-Chair of AGA GI Division Chief's Consortium

Mimi Tan, MD

BCM GI Fellowship Program Teaching Award
BCM Admissions Interviewing Subcommittee Member

Gyanprakash Ketwaroo, MD

Early Career Faculty Award for Excellence in Patient Care

Vierling, MD

2021 American Association for the Study of Liver Disease
Distinguished Service Award

Grants

Sharmila Anandasabapathy

- NCI/NIH; A Low Cost Tethered Capsule Endoscope for Esophageal Cancer Screening. \$1,855,000

Andrea Bradford

- US Department of Veterans Affairs; Using Peer Navigators to Increase Access to VA and Community Resources for Veterans with Diabetes-related Distress. \$1,382,803
- Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality; Diagnostic Safety Capacity Building. \$543,370

Ru Chen

- NIH; Biomarkers for Early Detection of Colorectal Cancer in Ulcerative Colitis. \$1,716,806
- NIH; Early Detection of Pancreatic Cancer in Diabetics. \$2,006,314

Hashem El-Serag

- NIH NIDDK; Research Training in Gastroenterology. \$4,556,773
- CPRIT; The Texas Collaborative Action Center (CAP) for Hepatocellular Cancer; \$3,000,000
- CPRIT; Texas Hepatocellular Carcinoma Consortium (THCCC); \$9,771,157
- NIH NIDDK; Research Training in Gastroenterology. \$683,628
- VA Merit; Prevalence and Predictors of Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) in Veterans. \$600,000
- NIH NCI; Consortium on Translational Research in Early Detection of Liver Cancer: Data Management and Coordinating Center (DMCC). \$92,400
- NIH NCI; Understanding the Multilevel Drivers of Liver Cancer Disparities; \$104,360
- CPRIT; Interleukin-15- and -21-Armored Glypican-3-Specific CAR T Cells for Patients with Hepatocellular Carcinoma; \$20,000
- NIH; Biomarker Screening Algorithms for the Improved Early Detection of Hepatocellular Carcinoma; \$188,194
- CPRIT; Genetic Epidemiology of Hepatocellular Carcinoma in Hispanics. \$2,473,314
- Gilead Sciences, Inc. Exploring HCC in patients with chronic hepatitis C virologically cured with the direct acting antiviral (DAA) regimens. \$268,177
- Gilead Sciences, Inc., AbbVie Inc., Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp; Risk if HCC among US veterans with chronic HBV infection receiving tenofovir or entecavir. \$1,043,000

Ruben Hernaez

- NCI; Harms of Hepatocellular Carcinoma Screening in Patients with Cirrhosis. \$2,297,990
- Veterans Affairs Administration Clinical Sciences R&D; Effect of simvastatin on hepatic decompensation and death in subjects with high-risk compensated cirrhosis. \$379,787
- VA HSR; A multi-level intervention to improve cancer care for hepatocellular carcinoma. \$91,316
- CPRIT; Comparative effectiveness trial of care delivery strategies for HCC screening process completion. \$100,000.

Fasiha Kanwal

- NIH/NIDDK; Center for Gastrointestinal Development, Infection and Inquiry. \$168,010
- American Cancer Society Extramural Grant; A Personalized Surveillance Program for Hepatocellular Carcinoma. \$670,028
- HSR&D IIR; Patient Centered Care for Individuals with Advanced Liver Disease, \$989,057
- NIH; Risk Stratification for and Early Detection of Liver Cancer. \$3,460,530
- AASLD; Cirrhosis Quality Collaborative. \$995,000
- CPRIT; Risk Factors of Hepatocellular Cancer in Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease. \$660,838
- CDMRP; Risk of Hepatocellular Cancer After Virological Cure with Direct Acting Antiviral Agents in Individuals with Hepatitis C. \$759,965

- CPRIT; The Texas Collaborative Center for Hepatocellular Cancer. \$3,000,000
- NIDDK; Research Training in Gastroenterology. \$873,583
- CPRIT; Reducing Disparities in the Risk of Hepatocellular Cancer. \$2,353,575
- NIH/NCI; Multi-level Evaluation of Racial/ethnic Disparities in Liver Disease Outcomes. \$2,269,485

Manreet Kaur

- Janssen Research & development, LLC; A Phase 2B/3, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, parallel-group, multicenter protocol to evaluate the efficacy and safety of Guselkumab in participants with moderately to severely active ulcerative colitis (Quasar). \$309,881
- Theravance; A Phase 2B/3, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, parallel-group set of studies to evaluate the efficacy and safety of induction and maintenance therapy with TD-1473 in Subjects with Moderately-to-severely active ulcerative colitis (Rhea). \$130,074
- Tigenix; A Phase III, randomized double blind, parallel group, placebo controlled, international, multicentre study to assess efficacy and safety of CX601, Adult allogeneic expanded adipose-derived stem cells (EASC), for the treatment of complex periana fistula(s) in patients with Crohn's disease over a period of 24 weeks and a follow-up period up to 52 weeks. (Admire-CDII) \$99,187
- Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America, Study of prospective adult research cohort with inflammatory bowel disease (SPARC IBD). \$53,247.00
- Janssen Research & development, LLC; A phase 3B, Randomized, double-blind, multicenter study to evaluate the safety and efficacy of intravenous re-induction therapy with Ustekinumab in patients with moderately to severe active Crohn's disease, Patient optimization with Ustekinumab RF-Induction (Power). \$56,960.00
- Janssen Research & development, LLC; A phase 2B/3, Randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, parallel-group, multicenter protocol to evaluate the efficacy and safety of Guselkumab in participants with moderately to severely active ulcerative colitis (Quasar). \$309,881

Natalia Khalaf

- NCI UO1; Imaging Repository for Pre-diagnostic and Early Stage Pancreatic Cancer. \$33,333
- TMC DDC; Predicting Risk of Long-term Complications of Acute Pancreatitis in a U.S. Veteran Population. \$38,016.
- DLCC; Precision Risk Stratification for Pancreatic Cancer: A Deep Learning Approach; \$50,000

Jason Mills

- NIH; Gene therapy for GERD-associated esophageal epithelial barrier dysfunction. \$31,798.00
- NSF GRFP; National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. \$48,333.33

Ayse Mindikoglu

- Roderick D. MacDonald Research Award. \$50,000

Hemant Roy

- NCI; Area B: Minimally Invasive Colorectal Cancer Risk Stratification with Nanocytology: Targeting Underscreened Populations. \$225,734
- NCI; Microvasculature in Colon Field Carcinogenesis: Clinical-Biological Implications. \$242,024
- NSF EFMA; EFIR CEE: Macro genomic engineering via modulation of chromatin nanoenvironment. \$30,000

Robert Jay Sealock

- Phathom Pharmaceuticals; A Phase 3 Randomized Multicenter Study to evaluate the efficacy and safety of open-label dual therapy with oral Vonoprazan 20 mg or Double-blind triple therapy with oral Vonoprazan 20 mg compared to double-blind triple therapy with oral lansoprazole 30 mg daily in patients with helicobacter pylori infection. \$206,064

Noah Shroyer

- NIH/NIAID; Engineering Novel Enteroid Models for Understanding Human Enteric Disease. \$10,000,000
- NIDDK; The Role of Crypt Fissioning in IBD ulcer healing.
- NCI; Defining the Function of Age-Related Epimutation in Intestinal Tumorigenesis.
- NIH/NIDDK; Intestinal stem cells consortium: Regional identity of intestinal stem cells, \$2,500,000
- NIH/NCI; Uncovering the Role of Colorectal Stem Cells on Disease Penetrance in Lynch Syndrome; \$40,000
- NIH/NIDDK; Mechanisms of intestinal stem cell differentiation and plasticity; \$1,180,000
- NIH/NIDDK; Nutrigenomics of Intestinal Vitamin D Action; \$126,000

Mimi Tan

- Caroline Wiess Law Fund for Research in Molecular Medicine; An Automated Software Algorithm for Real-time Prediction of Neoplasia in Barrett's Esophagus Imaging with Confocal High-Resolution Microendoscopy; \$30,000
- NIH; Predicting Risk of Gastric Intestinal Metaplasia- Pilot Award Renewal; \$20,000

John Vierling

- Pliant Therapies, Inc; A Randomized, Double-Blind, Dose-Ranging, Placebo-Controlled, Phase 2a Evaluation of The Safety, Tolerability, And Pharmacokinetics of PLN-74809 In Participants With Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC) And Suspected Liver Fibrosis (Integris-PSC). Estimated: \$52,464
- Merck Sharpe & Dohme Corp; A Phase 2b Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Study to Evaluate the Efficacy and Safety of MK-3655 in Individuals with Pre-Cirrhotic Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis. Estimated: \$331,272
- Galectin Therapeutics, Inc; A Seamless, Adaptive, Phase 2b/3, Double-Blind, Randomized, Placebo-Controlled, Multicenter, International Study Evaluating the Efficacy And Safety of Belapectin (GR-MD-02) for the Prevention of Esophageal Varices in Nash Cirrhosis. Estimated: \$495,564
- Hanmi Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd; A Phase 2, Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo- Controlled, Parallel Group Study to Evaluate Efficacy, Safety And Tolerability of HM15211 Treatment for 12 Months in Subjects with Biopsy Confirmed NASH. Estimated: \$293,860
- Genfit; A Double-blind, Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Study and Open-label Long Term Extension to Evaluate the Efficacy and Safety of Elafibranor 80 mg in Patients with Primary Biliary Cholangitis with Inadequate Response or Intolerance to Ursodeoxycholic Acid. Estimated: \$248,130
- Cymabay; ASSURE: An Open Label Long-Term Study to Evaluate the Safety and Tolerability of Seladelpar in Subjects with Primary Biliary Cholangitis (PBC)). Estimated: \$188,027
- Cymabay; RESPONSE: A Placebo-controlled, Randomized, Phase 3 Study to Evaluate the Efficacy and Safety of Seladelpar in Patients with Primary Biliary Cholangitis (PBC) and an Inadequate Response to or an Intolerance to Ursodeoxycholic Acid (UDCA). Estimated: \$77,105
- Merck Sharpe & Dohme Corp; A Phase 2a, Randomized, Active-Comparator-Controlled, Open-Label Study to Evaluate the Efficacy and Safety of Efinopegdutide (MK-6024) in Individuals With Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease. Estimated: \$170,520
- NovoNordisk; A Phase 3a, Randomized, Double-Blind, Parallel-Group Trial To Evaluate The Effect of Semaglutide In Subjects with Non-Cirrhotic Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatitis. Estimated: \$204,450
- Sagiment Biosciences; A Phase 2b, Multi-Center, Double-Blind, Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Study of the Safety and Efficacy of TVB-2640 In Subjects With Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis. Estimated: \$163,674

Publications

American Journal of Gastroenterology (IF **10.383**) 9
American Journal of Human Genetics (IF **10.502**) 1
American Journal of Transplantation (IF **7.163**) 2
British Journal of Cancer (IF **5.791**) 2
Cellular and Molecular Gastroenterology and Hepatology (IF **7.076**) 2
Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology (IF **8.549**) 27
Clinical Infectious Diseases (IF **8.313**) 2
Frontiers in Oncology (IF **5.66**) 1
Gastroenterology (IF **22.682**) 14
Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (IF **5.369**) 14
Gut (IF **19.819**) 5
Hepatology (IF **17.425**) 2
Hepatology Communications (IF **5.073**) 1
Journal of the American Medical Association (IF **56.272**) 1
JAMA Internal Medicine (IF **21.873**) 1
JAMA Network Open (IF **8.483**) 5
JAMA Oncology (IF **31.777**) 2
JAMA Surgery (IF **14.766**) 2
Journal of Autoimmunity (IF **7.641**) 1
Journal of Hepatology (IF **20.582**) 10
Journal of the National Cancer Institute (IF **12.589**) 1
Liver International (IF **5.175**) 3
Molecular Oncology (IF **6.574**) 1
Nature Communications (IF **14.919**) 1
Nature Reviews Gastroenterology & Hepatology (IF **29.848**) 2
The New England Journal of Medicine (IF **74.699**) 1
PLOS Pathogens (IF **6.218**) 1
Tissue Engineering Part B Reviews (IF **6.389**) 1

Book or Book Chapters

Salmaan Jawaid

- Cost Effectiveness of Capsule Endoscopy. Gastro Clinics of North America. Actions. 2021 Apr;31(2):413-424

John Vierling

- Liver Immunology: Principles and Practice. 3rd Edition. ME Gershwin, JM Vierling, A Tanaka, MP Manns (Eds). Springer, 2021
- Graft-versus-Host Disease. In Liver Immunology: Principles and Practice. 3rd Edition.
- Springer, Pp 551-582, 2020

Baylor Medicine and McNair

The Baylor Medicine Gastroenterology practice continues to grow and thrive despite the challenges posed by the global pandemic. Dr. Kal Patel continues to lead the group as the Medical Director. Dr. Jessica Bernica, a BCM GI Fellowship graduate and Chief Fellow, will be joining the group to add further expertise in Functional Bowel Disease and Motility.

The Gastroenterology service at BSLMC was ranked #24 in the nation in the 2021 US & World News Rankings. Dr. Kal Patel was honored with the BCM Star Clinician Award in 2021 – this is one of the highest level of recognition for excellence in clinical care bestowed by BCM. Dr. Reena Chokshi was selected for Early Career Award. The group continues to perform and research cutting-edge endoscopy, including use of Artificial Intelligence for polyp detection (Dr. Mansour), Endoscopic GERD treatments (Dr. Patel), and Bariatric Endoscopy (Dr. Abidi). Drs. Mohamed Othman and Salman Jawaid continues to expand one of the nation's largest Endoscopic Submucosal Endoscopy programs. Treating patients from around the country, the group performed over 300 tumor resections and endoscopic myotomy procedures this past year.

The IBD Center, led by Dr. Manreet Kaur, successfully provided uninterrupted care to thousands of IBD patients during the COVID pandemic by quickly creating a Telemedicine IBD Center. The group continues to lead in IBD research through more than a dozen ongoing clinical trials (Drs. Hou, Kaur, Shukla, and Kwapisz). The Motility Center, led by Dr. Reena Chokshi achieved national recognition in August 2020, with addition to the ANMS National Registry of GI Motility Labs.

In November 2020, a new partnership was formalized to provide Adult GI consult services at Texas Children's Hospital. Dr. Suneal Agarwal serves as the Chief of this new service. Baylor Medicine also successfully expanded to Sugarland in 2020. Drs. Nabil Mansour and Rehman Sheikh will be joined by Dr. Jessica Bernica to provide consultation and endoscopy services at CHI St. Luke's Sugarland.

Ben Taub Hospital

The GI Service at Ben Taub continues to run a busy clinic, inpatient consult and endoscopy services. Harris Health System and Baylor St. Luke's are in negotiations to outsource procedures such as manometry, pHmetry and, capsule endoscopy. The GI eConsult platform has been well received and offers referring physicians efficient access to initial GI consultation for selected clinical disorders such as GERD, abnormal serum liver biochemistry, endoscopy for iron deficiency anemia, and abnormal GI imaging. The Chief of Medicine, Dr. Hemant Roy is active clinically in endoscopy and fellows' Smith Clinic and brings a wealth of knowledge and insight from a similar safety-net facility in Boston. We have recently initiated one of his five NIH R01 funded protocols investigating biomarkers of colon neoplasia.

The Service's highly regarded teaching efforts have reformatted how teaching will be delivered with more teleconferencing. Drs. Milena Gould and Richa Shukla manage the formal activity within the medical student's curriculum at Ben Taub. Additionally, Dr. Shukla continues to support the fellows' IBD Surgery Conference. Drs. Gould and Sealock continue to support the BCM "teach the teachers" initiatives. Expanding clinical research in drug therapy for NAFLD (in conjunction with Endocrinology) continues with Dr. Maya Balakrishnan's activities.

There are four specialty clinics operating in the Smith Clinic (liver, pancreaticobiliary, IBD and fatty liver). Dr. Sealock and Loan Ho (NP) started earlier in February 2020 a pancreaticobiliary clinic with an emphasis on benign pancreaticobiliary disease and patients needing complex endoscopic procedures. Dr. Mimi Tan's clinical research programs in Barrett's esophagus and gastric neoplasia have added a new dimension to the Service's research activity along with establishing protocols for management of such. We look forward to the new wave of minimally invasive procedures with POEM and other cutting-edge technology being brought into Harris Health System.

Liver Transplant Program at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center

The Liver Transplant Program at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center, in collaboration with Baylor College of Medicine, continues to offer the best possible patient experience for liver transplants and complex liver care. Since 1998, our nationally recognized surgeons in the Liver Transplant Program have performed more than 1,500 transplants in the city of Houston. Our patients continue to benefit from excellent outcomes and low complication rates, which makes it one of the premier centers in the country.

Our team has also undergone transitions with the welcomed arrival of George Cholankeril, M.D. from Stanford and the retirement of our treasured colleague, Norman L. "Buddy" Sussman, M.D. Despite COVID-19, our team of eight hepatologists and five transplant surgeons has maintained full transplant activities using our novel protocol to screen both donors and recipients (*Am J Transplant.* 2020). As of mid-December, our team has performed 100 adult transplants and 2 liver-lung transplants with excellent outcomes. Our faculty continued to support a broad educational mission, including a BCM Internal Medicine inpatient rotation, inpatient and outpatient training for the GI Fellows and our three Hepatology and Liver Transplantation Fellows and mentoring of medical students and fellows for clinical research projects. The scholarly productivity of the faculty in 2020 resulted in 54 peer-reviewed publications, including new AASLD Guidance and Guidelines for Autoimmune Hepatitis, several textbook chapters, and publication of the third edition of *Liver Immunology: Principles and Practice*. The faculty also received 19 grants during 2020 to support their research.

Michael E. DeBakey Medical Center

The VA continued to provide the highest quality care to our Veterans. Dr. Jason Hou took the role of Section Chief at the MEDVAMC. Under his leadership, the IBD clinic at the MEDVAMC continues to serve as a regional referral center. The motility clinic is run by Dr. Nisreen Husain and provides a full spectrum of diagnostic testing for reflux and motility disorders. Drs. Cole, Jarbrink and Velez manage the general GI clinic. The MEDVAMC advanced endoscopy program is a referral center for the region and includes Drs. Avinash Ketwaroo and Clark Hair. Drs. Avergail Flores, who joined the MEDVAMC from Washington University in St. Louis, and Ruben Hernaez run the VA transplant hepatology program, which has performed over 100 liver transplants. Our other hepatologists include Drs. Yamini Natarajan, El-Serag, and Kanwal. Dr. Natarajan's comprehensive non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) clinic has started several clinical protocols and research studies in NAFLD. Dr. Natalia Khalaf established the very first high-risk GI cancer clinic at MEDVAMC.

Our MEDVAMC section continues to be #1 VA based GI and Hepatology section with regard to patient care and research. It is the top program in terms of number and range of GI procedures and services offered. The Hepatology Clinic at the MEDVAMC was listed as #1 in the nation for its early adoption of telemedicine that enhanced access to liver care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drs. Kanwal, Hou, El-Serag, and Hernaez have federally funded research programs at the MEDVAMC. Dr. Khalaf received several pilot grants for her work in pancreatic cancer. Drs. Natarajan, Ketwaroo and Jarbrink are leading scientific inquiry through several active clinical trials at the MEDVAMC.

Quality Improvement and Innovation

The BCM Gastroenterology QI team continues to expand the footprint of quality efforts within the Section and beyond. With QI mentors and projects at each major site, patient safety conferences, and the QI Fellows' Academy, there is a robust infrastructure for QI scholarship. Many of our DDW 2021 abstracts were QI-based, including two fellow-led projects on inpatient FIT testing and gastric intestinal metaplasia that were highlighted by the AGA. We continue to lead QI efforts at the college (BCM Vice Chair Group for Quality Improvement and Innovations) and national (AGA Quality Committee and AGA Quality Leadership Council) levels and maintain certificates for excellence in quality and endoscopy (ASGE Quality Endoscopy Unit Recognition Program - Ben Taub Hospital). With an expanding team of quality leaders look out for exciting new initiatives in 2021-2022.