

# PEDI PRESS 2.0

A Department of Pediatrics Publication

## From the desk of Dr. Lara Shekerdemian



Hello Team -

As we welcome the only slight crisp air of fall and the excitement of the upcoming holiday season, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible work each of you has done throughout the year. In this season of change, it has been a true pleasure welcoming our new **President and CEO Dr. Debra F. Sukin**. I am so optimistic for what lies ahead and hope you will join me in this sense.



In the spirit of building connections, I am delighted to share the spotlight this month with Dr. Brian Rissmiller, Program Director, Pediatric Residency, and Victoria Wright, Advanced Practice Provider Director, Diabetes & Endocrinology. I hope you will learn something new about these colleagues and more in the coming months!

Happy reading and take care,

Lara

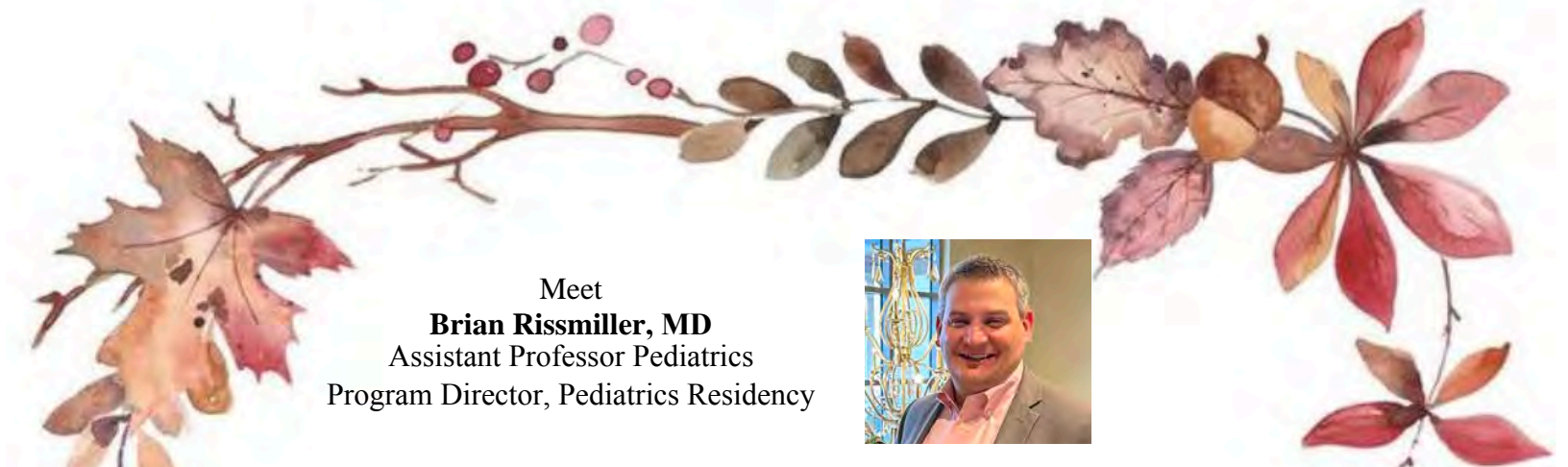


**Last DoP Faculty Meeting for 2024**

**Thursday, December 12, 2024**



Lara Shekerdemian, MD, MHA, Chair, DoP  
B. Lee Ligon, PhD, MA, MA, MAR, Editor/Graphics Design  
Joan Shook, MD, MBA, Contributing Editor  
Lindsey M. Gurganious, MHA, Administrative Advisor  
George Beasley, Technical Support



Meet  
**Brian Rissmiller, MD**  
Assistant Professor Pediatrics  
Program Director, Pediatrics Residency



**Tell us briefly about your professional background? How did you get to where you are? What is your current role in DOP?**

I always loved science and teaching and knew I wanted to work in the medical field. I majored in chemistry in college and worked for a pharmaceutical company before being accepted to medical school. I stopped maturing at around 10 years old, so being a pediatrician was a natural and easy choice for me! I worked in a PICU for the first time during my fourth year of medical school, and I knew I had found my home in the hospital. Dr. Ward convinced me to come to TCH / BCM for residency, and then I was honored to serve as one of the chief residents before my fellowship here in critical care medicine. I joined our faculty in 2016 and worked primarily in the West Campus PICU for three years. I returned to main campus after accepting roles as an associate program director of the pediatric residency and critical care fellowship programs. Adjusting to all of the changes and challenges in graduate medical education over the past 5 years has been an exciting and rewarding experience. Most recently, I was selected to be the program director of our pediatric residency program this past summer, and I am looking forward to serving our trainees and faculty in this role.

**How do you usually like to start and end your day?**

I am NOT a morning person! In fact, my ideal sleep schedule would be 2 am - 10am, which sadly isn't possible. So, my days start with coffee - usually mixed with chocolate milk, for the protein. At the end of the day, I usually unwind by reading or getting caught up on the happenings of the sports world.

**What book are you currently reading or what TV series are you watching?**

Currently, I am reading *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* for a book club as part of the APPD LEAD program and *The Creative Act* by Rick Rubin a fascinating book given to me by my mentor, Dr. Satid Thammasitboon.



**How do you practice self-care?**

I derive a great sense of meaning and fulfillment in helping others, so self-care for me is helping someone else overcome a problem or find a solution that they didn't think existed. Being creative and innovative is what brings me joy on a daily basis - whether with my family (pictured above), seeing patients, or in my educational work.

**What is your favorite part about working here?**

This is an easy question- it's the people. I always like to tell people that this is the biggest hospital that feels like a small town, and it is the personal relationships with my patients, colleagues, and trainees that I truly value. It is a privilege to make a difference on a daily basis for someone, and I have the opportunity almost every day by working here. Finally, a children's hospital is a place where you can always have fun - like getting dressed up and giving out candy on Friday afternoons just to pick up others' spirits!

Meet  
**Victoria B. Wright,**  
**MSN, APRN, CPNP-PC, BC-ADM, CDCES**  
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner  
Advanced Practice Provider Director, Diabetes & Endocrinology



**Tell us briefly about your professional background. How did you get to where you are? What is your current role in DOP?**

My first role after my undergraduate education was as a pediatrics and women's services registered nurse. I then decided to go back to graduate school to become a pediatric nurse practitioner. I received an excellent educational foundation as both a nurse and nurse practitioner from my alma mater, The University of Texas at Austin. I always had a goal to work in pediatric endocrinology, as I myself was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at 3 years old and was very positively impacted by my care providers at TCH growing up. When I received the opportunity to work in endocrinology with diabetes patients at BCM/TCH in 2021 after becoming a nurse practitioner, it felt like a full circle moment.

I have spent the last few years working both on the inpatient side and in ambulatory care with our diabetes patients. The acute care management of our patients in the hospital and as the chronic management in clinic have given me a well-rounded training and perspective that I am thankful for today. Over time, I became passionate about ensuring adequate training and education was offered for our new advanced practice providers in our department. I was promoted last year to the Advanced Practice Provider Director in our division, which has allowed me to help plan the onboarding and training of new APPs and create educational opportunities for the group as a whole, regardless of experience level. I also feel I have the ability in this role to help foster positive relationships between our APP group and the rest of the team as well as advocate for what APPs can bring to the table.



**How do you usually like to start and end your day?**

I wish I was a morning person, but I have not gotten there yet, so I always start my day with a cup of coffee no matter what. I end my day at home by watching a show or movie with my husband and pets (pictured center). I also enjoy an evening walk with my dogs as often as possible.

**What book are you currently reading or what TV series are you watching?**

I am notorious for watching true crime and re-watching old comfort shows (*Seinfeld*, *Gilmore Girls*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*) but I also am a big *Dancing with the Stars* and *Golden Bachelorette* fan. I am reading *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, *It Ends With Us*, and *The Maidens* right now.

**How do you practice self-care?**

- Cooking a meal from scratch for my husband Christopher and I to enjoy together--cooking is so relaxing for me!
- Going to the movie theater (I am a major cinephile!)
- Snuggling with my two dogs, Kramer & Lady, and cat, Loki.

**What is your favorite part about working here?**

The amazing relationships I have with patients and their families are some of my favorite parts about working at BCM/TCH. I love seeing kids and families learn to thrive with diabetes. We have some truly special patients. I also love my sweet team members - our team is filled with wonderful people. I have learned a few key things from my time here thus far through my patients and colleagues: be a lifelong learner, stay humble and ask for help when needed.



## Highlights from Public Health Pediatrics

### Injury Control Research Center to be Established

By Dr. Cary Cain

Injury Control Research Centers (ICRCs) play a critical role in advancing the understanding of violence and injuries and develop effective prevention strategies to ultimately reduce the burden of injuries and violence on individuals and communities.



BCM and UTHealth Houston were recently awarded \$4.25 million over five years from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to collaboratively establish the first Injury Control Research Center in the state of Texas. Named the **Violence and Injury Prevention Research (VIPR) Center**, it will focus on preventing adverse childhood and community experiences, violence across the lifespan, suicide, and firearm violence. The core components of the Center are research, training and education, and outreach. VIPR is led by Director Dr. Jeff Temple, Associate Dean for Clinical Research at UT Health School of Behavioral Health Sciences. The BCM site is co-lead by **Dr. Christopher Greeley**, Chief of Public Health Pediatrics and Vice-chair of Community Health (co-director), and **Dr. Cary Cain**. There are (now) 11 ICRCs around the country,

### Suicide Response & Prevention



By Dr. Angela Cummings

The Division has been actively involved in suicide prevention for the last few years. Beginning in the fall of 2021, **Ms. Diane Kaulen** (below, left), Senior Community Initiatives Coordinator, led the implementation of the **Zero Suicide Framework** for TCH. The overall strategy, workgroups formed, implementation process, and tangible results of this 1.5 year initiative have been presented at the local, state, and national levels. These efforts have resulted in virtual suicide prevention training that was taken by over 65% of the organization, the development of a SharePoint site with resources and trainings for providers and staff, a system-level dashboard that monitored suicide screening, assessment and care metrics and the development of the TCH Behavioral Health System of Care Team.



The Division has expanded its efforts to community-based initiatives and research to further expand our work in the realm of suicide prevention. Ms. Kaulen is the co-chair of the recently launched Houston Area Suicide Prevention Coalition (HASPC), which includes founding members from BCM, the Council on Recovery, the Harris Center, Mental Health America of Greater Houston, TCH, the Veteran's Administration, Resources for Children and Adults and Zero Suicide. HASPC was awarded the Outstanding Local Coalition Award through the Texas Suicide Prevention Council in September 2024. **Dr. Angela Cummings** (above, left) chairs the HASPC Strategic Planning Action Team and leads the community needs assessment to inform and guide future HASPC efforts. The needs assessment is funded through the Next Day Project, a grant awarded to fund a partnership between the City of Houston Mayor's Office of Education and BCM Psychiatry.



Rheumatology held its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Rheumatic Diseases Month on the Auxiliary Bridge in September.

Rheumatology celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month at the Astros baseball game.



## Department of Pediatrics Dinner at AAP 2024

**Dr. Lara Shekerdemian** hosted a Department of Pediatrics Faculty and Trainee Dinner in Orlando, during the meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The DoP was very well represented at this year's AAP meeting in Orlando, with many talks and abstract presentations given by students, trainees, and faculty. In addition, we were delighted that several of our colleagues received prestigious awards for their contributions to the field of pediatrics and subspecialties. The DoP dinner was a perfect opportunity for our team members to connect, chat, and enjoy each other's company.





Texas Children's Cancer and Hematology Center held the **2nd Annual Research Elevator Pitch Competition**. Hosted by Director **Dr. Susan Blaney**, the event saw a panel of 5 judges score 18 pitches from faculty, who used compelling plain language to explain their research. Congratulations to awardees! 1st place - **Dr. Michael Taylor**; 2nd place - **Dr. Jennie Foster**; 3rd place - **Dr. Lauren Scherer**.



The **National Bone Marrow Donation Program** event was back at TCH in July. Close to 140 staff, patient families, and faculty joined the registry. A key aim of the event was to increase ethnic diversity of donors in the registry to help the children that are currently underrepresented. More than 70% of the new donors at the event were people of color, which is the highest diversity achieved yet.

**FEEDBACK ON PEDI PRESS 2.0**

We would love to have your feedback on Pedi Press 2.0! You can go to the link below and enter the code (7FPJJCKMW), or scan the QR Code.

<https://tch-redcap.texaschildrens.org/REDCap/surveys>



# Pediatric Hospital Medicine Held Many Celebrations



Winter Party



March Madness  
Division Champs



Austin Acute  
Care Opening



BCM Awards Celebration



Run for  
the  
Rose



Emerging Leaders



Fellows' Graduation



TCH AAP Leadership Meeting





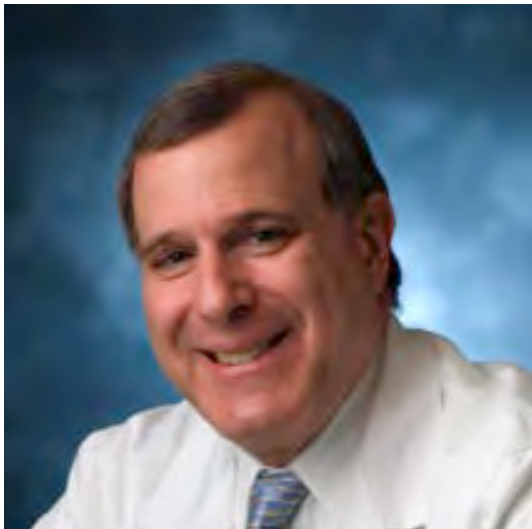
# Kudos

## Texas Children’s Ranks as Number 1 in Texas

Texas Children’s is once again among the nation’s foremost leaders in pediatric health care. Ranked #1 in Texas and the Southwest by *US News and World Report’s* Best Children’s Hospitals and ranked in the top 10 for all subspecialties in the honor roll for 2024-2025, Texas Children’s also earned the highest designation available for Behavioral Health, a newly ranked specialty this year. The hospital earns the U.S. News Honor Roll distinction by ranking:

- No. 1: Cardiology & Heart Surgery
- No. 1: Nephrology (Kidney disorders)
- No. 2: Pulmonology & Lung Surgery
- No. 2: Neurology & Neurosurgery
- No. 2: Urology
- No. 3: Neonatology

- No. 4: Cancer
- No. 4: Diabetes & Endocrinology
- No. 5: Gastroenterology & GI Surgery
- No. 7: Orthopedics
- Behavioral Health



**DR. STANLEY W. SPINNER**

HAPPY RETIREMENT  
Chief Medical Officer, Vice President  
Texas Children’s Pediatrics  
Texas Children’s Urgent Care



**DR. SAPNA SINGH**

CONGRATULATIONS  
Chief Medical Officer  
Texas Children’s Pediatrics  
Texas Children’s Urgent Care



## Department of Pediatrics Outstanding Clinicians Awards

The Award recognizes outstanding contributions to clinical care by Physician / APP Faculty members in the Department. It is intended to honor our physicians and APPs whose primary role is clinical, rather than those who contribute to the clinical mission through significant leadership roles. The awardees are:

**Dr. Anna Banc-Husu** (Gastroenterology)  
**Amanda Burkhalter, NP** (Neurology, CHoSA)  
**Dr. Clair Bocchini** (Infectious Diseases)  
**Dr. Maria Buheis** (Allergy and Immunology)  
**Henry Chau, NP** (Critical Care)  
**Dr. Ryan Coleman** (Critical Care/Pulmonary)  
**Dr. Stephanie Fetzko** (Hematology/Oncology)

**Dr. Akshat Katyayan** (Neurology)  
**Dr. Frank Placencia** (Neonatology)  
**Dr. Christopher Rhee**  
(Neonatology) **Dr. Fadel Ruiz**  
(Pulmonary)  
**Dr. Danielle Takacs** (Neurology)  
**Dr. Jo Tran** (Hospital Medicine) **Dr.**  
**Natalie Villafranco** (Pulmonary)

## 2024 Pediatric Pilot Research Awards

### CLINICAL RESEARCH

**Dr. Minh Nguyen** (Cardiology)  
**Dr. Angela Bachim** (Child Abuse/Public Health)  
**Dr. Thanh Hoang** (Hematology/Oncology)

### BASIC/TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

**Dr. Michael Curtis** (Tropical Medicine)  
**Dr. Wen Hsiang Chen** (Tropical Medicine)  
**Dr. Alexander Sandweiss** (Neurology/Dev. Neuro.)  
**Dr. Jennifer Clinton** (Tropical Medicine)

## 2023 - 2024 Pediatric Research Awards

### RESEARCH MENTORSHIP

**Dr. Keila Lopez** (Cardiology)  
**Dr. Chase McNeil** (Infectious Diseases)

### YOUNG INVESTIGATOR

**Dr. Sarah Gunter** (Tropical Medicine)  
**Dr. Jill Weatherhead** (Tropical Medicine/ID)

## Consortium Receives Prestigious Award from AMEE



The Network of Practice in Health Sciences Scholarship, a consortium of Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Children's Hospital, and the Baylor College of Medicine children's foundations in nine countries across Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa, has been awarded the 2024 ASPIRE to Excellence Award for International Collaboration by AMEE, the International Association for Health Professions Education. This recognition underscores the institutions' commitment to



educational excellence and capacity building across the global health landscape. This effort was led by **Dr. Diane Nguyen** (left) and **Dr. Satid Thammasitboon** (right) of BCM/TCH. The award was presented August 26 during the AMEE 2024 Conference in Basel, Switzerland. The accolade enhances the institution's reputation and reaffirms its leadership in health education globally, opening doors for further opportunities that will benefit the entire community.

**Dr. Mohammad H. Abu-Arja** received a prestigious Paul Calabresi Career Development Award, which provides clinician-investigators with support for the advancement of clinical and translational cancer research,

**Dr. Arianexys Aquino-López**

-- received an Outsmarting Osteosarcoma Young Investigator Award from MIB Agents Osteosarcoma Alliance.

-- received a Paul Calabresi Career Development Award, which provides clinician-investigators with support for the advancement of clinical and translational cancer research.

**Dr. Alison Bertuch** received the Carson Family Telomere Biology Disorder Research Award. The funds will support her research into identifying new therapeutic strategies for individuals with telomere biology disorders.

**Dr. Nancy Butte** was awarded the AAP Samuel J. Fomon Nutrition Award by the American Academy of Pediatrics at the Conference held in Orlando, Florida.

**Dr. Ashley Butler** received an Inaugural Pediatrics Faculty Educational Scholarship.

**Dr. Jessica Casas** received an Inaugural Pediatrics Faculty Educational Scholarship.

**Dr. Carla Davis** was honored at a "Farewell Celebration," as she leaves BCM to start the next chapter of her professional career.

**Dr. Marietta Deguzman** received the James T. Cassidy Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Rheumatology, which honors pediatric rheumatologists who have made significant contributions to the field and to the education of pediatric rheumatology fellows,

**Dr. ZoAnn Dreyer** received the Arnold J. Rudolph Award for Lifetime Excellence in Teaching from Baylor College of Medicine.

**Dr. Morven Edwards** received the 2024 Walter E. Stamm Mentor Award from the Infectious Disease Society of America, which recognizes individuals who have been exceptional in guiding the professional growth of ID professionals and preparing the next generation of ID physicians for success.

**Dr. Josaura Fernandez** was selected as an American Society of Hematology (ASH) Quality Improvement Champion.

**Dr. Ricky Flores** received a Philanthropy Award from the Fabrica de Milagros Foundation for his extensive dedication and contribution towards transforming children's lives in Latin America.

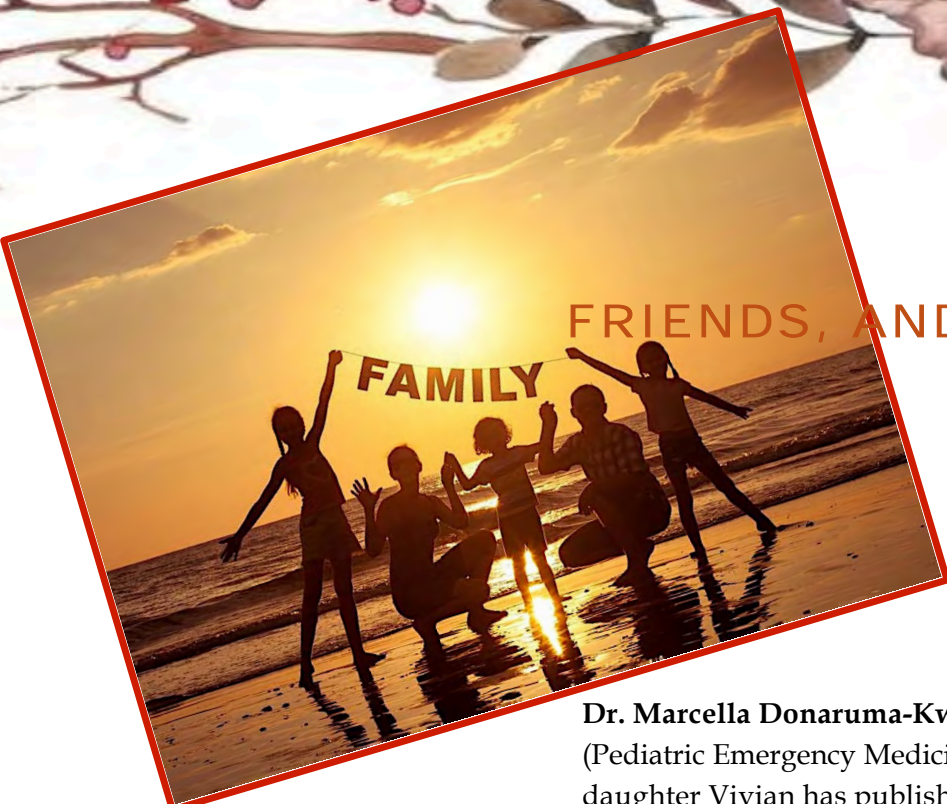
**Dr. Ernest Frugé** was awarded Distinguished Member status in the International Society for the Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations at their annual meeting in Sophia, Bulgaria.

**Dr. Christopher Greeley** was awarded the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary Spinoza Visiting Lectureship by the University of Amsterdam Medical Center. He will spend a week in Amsterdam discussing various aspects of child welfare.

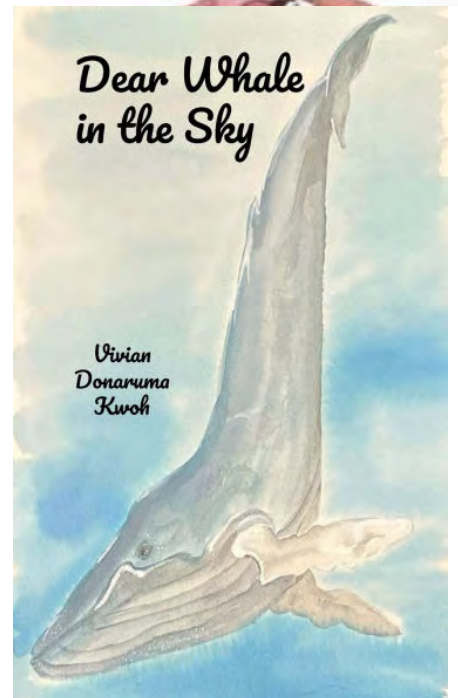
**Dr. Marietta de Guzman**

-- was selected by the American Academy of Pediatrics as the recipient of this year's James T. Cassidy Award, which recognizes pediatric rheumatologists who have made significant contributions to Rheumatology, and the education of pediatric rheumatology fellows. -- spearheaded the 2nd annual Rheumatic Diseases month, which will take place on the Auxiliary Bridge on September 4, 2024.

- Hanna Helber, MS, CGC** was named 2024 Genetic Counselor of the Year by the National Bleeding Disorders Foundation.
- Dr. Peter Hotez** was awarded the 2024 C.-E.A. Winslow Medal by the Yale School of Public Health. The award honors individuals whose work embodies the ideals of the founder of the school and pioneer of modern public health.
- Dr. Seema Jilani** was awarded the American Academy of Pediatrics Holroyd-Sherry Award.
- Julie Klinger, PA-C** has been appointed president-elect for the Society for Physician Assistants for Pediatrics. SPAP is a nonprofit arm of the American Academy of Physician Associates.
- Dr. Ajibike Lapite** received the American Society of Hematology Minority Hematology Fellow Award.
- Dr. YoungNa Lee-Kim** has been invited to serve as the 2024-2025 Chair-Elect of the Fellowship Directors' Executive Committee of the Association of Pediatric Program Directors.
- Dr. Lingzhi Li** received a prestigious Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation Young Investigator Grant. This funding will enable Dr. Li to study the effects of the protein MYCN on molecular circadian clocks, which could lead to new strategies for slowing or stopping the spread of neuroblastoma.
- Dr. Keila N. Lopez** was awarded the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Award by the American Academy of Pediatrics at the Conference held in Orlando, Florida.
- Dr. Philip Lupo** was invited to join the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Initial Review Group (IRG) Developmental Biology Study Section (CHHD). This four-year position will enable Lupo to contribute to and help guide national biomedical research efforts.
- Dr. Leonid Metelitsa** was named a recipient of the 2024 Michael E. DeBakey, M.D., Excellence in Research Awards, from Baylor College of Medicine, recognizing his contributions to cancer immunology and the development of novel immunotherapies.
- Dr. Sanghamitra Misra** has been named chair of the Mobile Healthcare Association.
- Dr. Mariana Carretero Murillo** was awarded a 2024 Community Access to Child Health grant by the AAP's Section of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics for a project entitled "Mobile Clinics Expanding Pediatric Neurodevelopmental Care."
- Dr. Tim Porea** is this year's recipient of the Jan Drutz, MD, Society Award, which highlights the significant contributions that Dr. Porea has made to medical education at BCM.
- Dr. Rayne Rouce** has been named to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society Board of Directors.
- Dr. Josie Fernandez Sanchez** was one of three clinicians announced by the American Society of Hematology as its inaugural quality improvement champions. Sanchez worked with colleagues to standardize ED management of anemia due to heavy menstrual bleeding.
- Sarah Scollon** received the Outstanding Teacher Award from BCM's Genetic Counseling Program.
- Dr. Jeremy Schraw** received the F. Clarke Fraser New Investigator Award, presented at the 2024 meeting of the Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention.
- Dr. Lara Shekerdemian** was awarded the Distinguished Career Award by the American Academy of Pediatrics at the Conference held in Orlando, Florida.
- Amy Tschirhart, APRN, PNP-AC**, was selected as this year's University of Texas at Arlington Preceptor of the Year. She was recognized for the exemplary work she does to mentor and precept Acute Care Nursing Students pursuing their master's degree in nursing.
- Dr. Teri Turner**, in conjunction with Dr. Bani Ratan, was selected as primary investigator for the Josiah Macy Jr. President's grant to create an Academy of Resident and Fellow Educators in the Office of Graduate Medical Education.
- Dr. Mili Vakharia** received an Inaugural Pediatrics Faculty Educational Scholarship.
- Dr. Jesus Vallejo** was appointed Chair-elect of the Texas Joint Medical Program for the 2026-2028 term. JAMP is the only program of its kind to forge collaborative partnerships with 68 undergraduate colleges/universities and 14 Texas medical schools to improve medical school access for underserved students.
- Dr. Andrea Vo** received an Inaugural Pediatrics Faculty Educational Scholarship.
- Dr. Adam D. Wolfe** is the recipient and steward of the Jann L. Harrison Endowed Chair in Pediatric Graduate Medical Education.



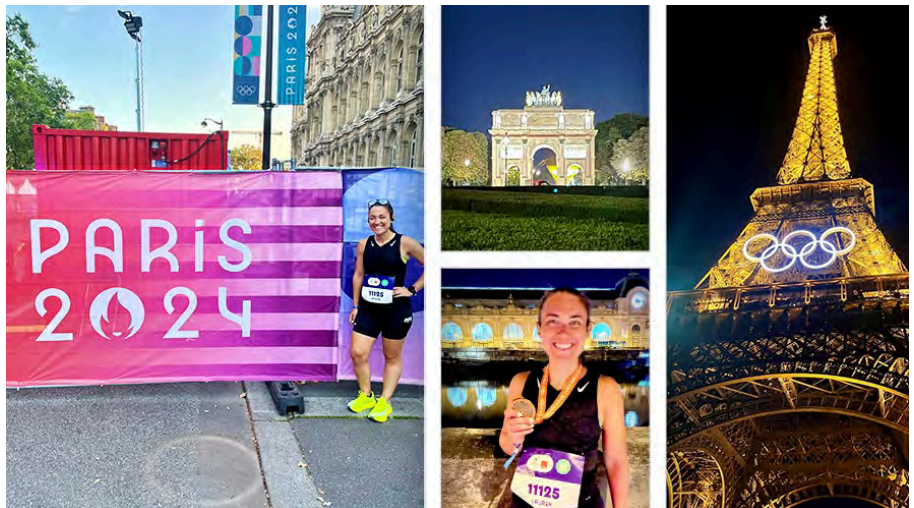
## FRIENDS, AND OTHER FUN



**Dr. Marcella Donaruma-Kwoh's** (Pediatric Emergency Medicine) daughter Vivian has published a book of poetry. She is a senior at St. John's School and has aspirations of becoming an author and a child psychologist. She has her fingers crossed that another volume will be forthcoming before she heads off to college in 2025.



Welcome to the new edition to the Pediatric Emergency Medicine family. Meet Ravi Singh, son to **Dr. Nidhi Vaidya Singh** and Monil Singh.



**Dr. Lauren Scherer** (Hematology/Oncology) ran in the Mass Participation Marathon during the Paris 2024 Olympics! She qualified to join other athletes from around the world to run the full 26.2 mile Olympic marathon route at night. The iconic course linked Versailles to Paris, passing through nine cities.

John Whitmire, Mayor of the City of Houston, presented **Dr. Andrea Tania Cruz** (Pediatric Emergency Medicine) with the Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award in healthcare and proclaimed September 24, 2024, as **Dr. Andrea Tania Cruz Day**. The award recognizes an outstanding person who has increased awareness of healthcare issues affecting Hispanics and Houstonians and has enacted improvements. The City of Houston commended Dr. Cruz for her outstanding commitment to healthcare in the community and beyond and extended best wishes for continued success in all endeavors.



**Divya Thomas**, Rheumatology Research Coordinator, has been a Powerlifter for 3 years and attended the Nationals in September. She mentions that she was drawn to the sport by the discipline it demands. The commitment and structure of powerlifting fuels her passion and keeps her motivated.



**Kenny Huynh**, Rheumatology Business Operations Coordinator, is a competitive Powerlifter and competed in the USA Collegiate Nationals in Arlington and Chicago. He started powerlifting in 2017 and grew his university's powerlifting club from 20 to 90 members, making a mark during both his undergraduate and graduate years. He competed in nationals four times and helped establish the university's club on the collegiate powerlifting map. Now, he continues to support the sport and community by directing local meets in Houston. Kenny mentions that this hobby has taught him the discipline and time it takes to improve oneself to accomplish one's goals.