

# Pedi Press

A Department of Pediatrics Publication



## Message from the desk of Dr. Lara Shekerdeman

Dear All

As the festive season approaches, I would like to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation to the staff across our Pediatrics offices. Your dedication, professionalism, and compassion are at the heart of everything we do and have been fundamental to the exceptional care we provide to children and their families across the nation.

It is your daily commitment, teamwork, and resilience that create an environment where patients feel supported and hopeful, families feel heard and comforted, and meaningful progress continues to be made. Through clinical care, education, research support, and administrative excellence, your efforts strengthen our services and leave a lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for your continued hard work, resilience, and unwavering commitment. I am sincerely grateful for all that you do and for the difference you make - often in ways that go unseen, but never unappreciated. As the year comes to a close, I hope the holiday season offers you time for rest, reflection, and connection with those who matter most. Whether you are celebrating with family, friends, or colleagues, or continuing to care for others throughout the holidays, your dedication does not go unnoticed.

I wish you and your loved ones a joyful festive season filled with laughter, and a healthy, happy New Year overflowing with renewed energy, hope, and countless moments of happiness and fulfillment.

Happy Holiday, happy reading and take care!  
Lara



### TABLE OF CONTENT

Press title to go to page!

Faculty Highlights	02
Meet the BPR New Recruits	03
Cultivating Corner	05
Employee Resources	06
Award Highlights	07
Publications Highlights	08
Buzz around the Block	10
The Good Stuff	14





# Highlighting Our Faculty!



## Congratulations to Dr. Daniel Penny

**Dr. Daniel Penny, Executive Co-Director of Texas Children's Heart Center** is widely recognized for his exceptional leadership as well as an unwavering commitment to advancing the care for individuals with Marfan syndrome and related genetic aortic and vascular conditions. **On November 14th, he was honored with the prestigious "Hero with Heart" Award at the Marfan Foundation HeartWorks Gala!**



**Dr. Daniel Penny with many team members at the Marfan Foundation HeartWorks Gala**



## Congratulation to Dr. Jeffrey Kuerbitz!

On October 16, 2025, **Dr. Kuerbitz** was **awarded funding through the highly competitive Child Neurologist Career Development Program (CNCDP-K12)**. This prestigious national award supports early-career physician-scientists in child neurology and neurodevelopmental disabilities, and his application earned one of the highest scores in this year's review cycle. **As a CNCDP-K12 Scholar, Dr. Kuerbitz** will receive dedicated support for mentored research and career development over the next three years, positioning him to advance toward independent NIH funding. His research project, **"EBF3-mediated transcriptional regulation of cerebellar circuitry,"** will be conducted under the mentorship of **Hsiao-Tuan Chao, M.D., Ph.D.**



## Shoutout to Dr. Kristin "Kiki" Henley!

**Dr. Kirstin Henley**, an assistant professor of pediatrics at Christus Children's Hospital in San Antonio, **was named Volunteer of the Year by the Africa Fire Mission**. Dr. Henley was recognized for her efforts to reduce deaths in Africa caused by life-threatening bleeding, which led to the launch of an Active Bleeding Control training program!



## Congratulation to Dr. Natasha Afonso!

**Dr. Natasha Afonso, Division of Critical Care Medicine** has been selected as the **2026 MHRI Clinician Fellow at Rice** and will hold a joint faculty appointment during her fellowship. She has been a valued collaborator, mentoring Rice undergraduates on six research projects at Texas Children's Hospital and serving as a faculty judge for our research showcases. We look forward to working with her on grant proposals and publications that build on this work!



# Meet

## The Department of Pediatrics Research Recruits!



### Dr. Xiangling Meng

Assistant Professor Pediatrics  
Neurology, Baylor College of  
Medicine

#### Introduction

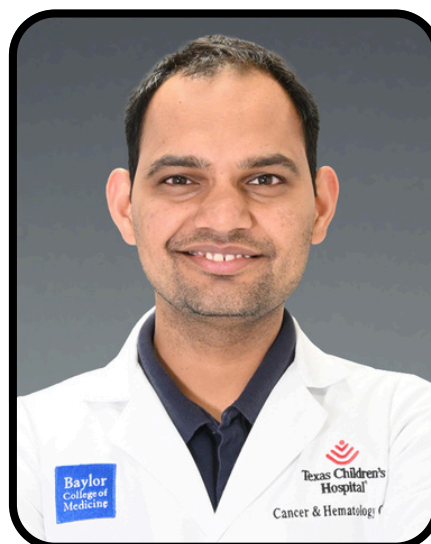
Dr. Xiangling Meng received her Bachelor of Medical Science from Peking University in China before joining the Neuroscience Department at Baylor College of Medicine for her graduate training. She conducted her doctoral research in Dr. Huda Zoghbi's laboratory, where she investigated the mechanisms of neurodevelopmental disorders using animal models. Driven by a strong passion for advancing basic science and improving patient care, she continued her postdoctoral training in Dr. Sergiu Pasca's lab at Stanford University, focusing on human induced pluripotent stem cell-derived brain organoids and assembloids. Her work aims to uncover the mechanisms underlying neurodevelopmental disorders and develop translational approaches to improve treatments for neurological diseases.

#### Can you provide a brief description of the work you do?

The Meng Lab investigates the molecular mechanisms underlying a range of neurological disorders, including autism, epilepsy, and neurodegenerative diseases—conditions that affect millions of individuals and present long-term challenges for patients and families. A major obstacle in understanding these disorders has been the limited access to intact and functional human brain tissue for detailed investigation. To address this, the lab utilizes brain organoids derived from human induced pluripotent stem (hiPS) cells to model human brain development and disease. These three-dimensional organoids recapitulate key features of early brain development, providing a powerful and human-relevant platform for studying disease mechanisms. The lab's research is centered around three core aims: (1) investigating the role of gene regulation in human-specific brain traits; (2) uncovering novel pathogenic mechanisms of neurological disorders; and (3) developing innovative gene therapies to treat these conditions. By integrating cutting-edge cellular models with functional genomics and therapeutic development, the Meng Lab aims to advance our understanding of the brain and translate discoveries into strategies for treating neurological disorders.

#### Current/Desired collaboration

We are currently collaborating broadly with laboratories across BCM and Texas Children's Hospital to use brain organoid and assembloid models to study epilepsy and psychiatric disorders. We welcome new collaboration opportunities that leverage human cellular models to investigate neurological disorders.



### Dr. Shubham Singh

Assistant Professor, Pediatrics  
Hematology and Oncology,  
Baylor College of Medicine

#### Introduction

I am an assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics, Division of Hematology-Oncology. I completed my Ph.D. training at IISER-Pune, followed by postdoctoral training at Harvard Medical School and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. My research focuses on lipid metabolism and signaling in mammalian physiology.

#### Can you provide a brief description of the work you do?

Lipids are fundamental to cellular compartmentalization, signal transduction, energy production, and metabolic homeostasis. As organisms evolved, lipid diversity expanded extensively, requiring cells to develop precise metabolic and transport mechanisms. Disruption of lipid homeostasis is implicated in more than 100 human diseases, including obesity, lipodystrophy, neurodegeneration, and cancer. Yet, the fundamental mechanisms of lipid homeostasis and how its disruption leads to diseases remain poorly understood. We are particularly interested in elucidating mechanisms of lipid homeostasis during the development and maintenance of the central nervous system, where lipids contribute ~50% of the dry mass. We aim to identify mechanisms through which aberrant lipid accumulation and signaling contribute to the pathophysiology of neurodegenerative diseases and brain tumors. Towards this, we integrate chemical, cell, and molecular biology approaches, including organic synthesis of lipid probes, chemical proteomics, and lipidomics.

#### Current/Desired collaboration

We collaborate with multiple investigators across TMC to expand our expertise in neuroscience and tumor biology and share our expertise in lipid metabolism and mass spectrometry based targeted/discovery lipidomics. We are actively seeking collaborators to utilize our analytical platforms to establish lipid-based biomarkers. Using similar platforms, we recently identified multiple sphingolipids in plasma that correlate with the severity of frontotemporal dementia (PMID: [40922380](#)).



# Meet

## The Department of Pediatrics Research Recruits Cont.



### Dr. Vishnu Anand Cuddapah

Assistant Professor, Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute, Texas Children's Hospital, Baylor College of Medicine

### Highlights!

We're launching a study to identify genetic drivers of severe sleep and circadian disorders. We'll soon recruit affected individuals nationwide for whole genome sequencing and test candidate variants in fly models. If you know patients or families facing these challenges, we'd love to connect and explore collaborations.

### Introduction

Howdy! I am a child neurologist and neuroscientist who joined the Division of Pediatric Neurology and Developmental Neuroscience and the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute (NRI) in July 2024. I trained in child neurology and clinical neurogenetics at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and pursued postdoctoral research training with Dr. Amita Sehgal at the University of Pennsylvania. During my training, I cared for children with epilepsy who had seizures cluster at specific times of the day. I learned how to leverage fruit flies as a model system to understand how sleep and circadian rhythms modulate the risk of neurological symptoms across long timescales. At the Duncan NRI, my lab now focuses on understanding how sleep and circadian rhythms promote brain health. In my Neurogenetics Clinic at the Blue Bird Circle Clinic for Pediatric Neurology, I work to identify genetic causes of neurological disorders in children. I share a love of genetics with my better half, Dr. Sanmati Cuddapah, a clinical geneticist at TCH/BCM. We're having fun building a new home in Houston with our children—Krishna (11), Keshav (9), and Aadya (2 going on 12).

### Can you provide a brief description of the work you do?

The Cuddapah Lab studies how sleep and circadian rhythms keep the brain healthy and buffer against neurological symptoms, including seizures. We have developed high-throughput video tracking systems in fruit flies that allow us to detect spontaneous neurological events, including seizures, continuously over many days. Using unbiased screening approaches, we seek to identify the molecular pathways, cell types, and brain networks that toggle seizure risk across time. In parallel, we are working to understand what causes severe sleep and circadian disturbances in people. Ongoing projects focus on identifying children and adults with marked sleep and circadian phenotypes and performing genetic sequencing to discover novel genetic drivers, with the ultimate goal of translating these findings into better predictive tools and therapies.

### Current/Desired collaboration

One of the biggest draws of BCM and TCH for me was the deeply collaborative culture. I've been fortunate to begin several partnerships within the Department of Pediatrics and the Duncan NRI. With Dr. Ryan Dhindsa's group, we are analyzing linked genomic data and electronic health records from UK Biobank participants to identify genes associated with sleep disorders and epilepsy. We have identified candidate genes and are now working to functionally validate these candidates using high-throughput approaches in flies.

## The Academic Angle



### Center for Research, Innovation, and Scholarship in Health Professions Education

Advancing health for children and families globally through pioneering research, innovation and scholarship in health professions education

**At the Center for Research, Innovation, and Scholarship (CRIS), our work continues to expand in both reach and impact beyond Baylor Pediatrics. Several pediatric faculty are leading pioneering initiatives that strengthen our educational mission:**

- **Faculty Development:** Our **Faculty College** provide structured programs that help early and mid-career educators grow as leaders, innovators, and scholars. Recent sessions have integrated design thinking and guided inquiry learning to foster creativity in teaching. The Academy of Master Clinical Teachers has been reimaged with gamification elements, transforming faculty development into an engaging, mastery-oriented experience that brings deliberate practice principles into the program.
- **Innovation in Diagnostic Reasoning:** In partnership with industry and academic collaborators, CRIS is co-designing AI-augmented virtual patient and learning platforms that provide learners with interactive cases to strengthen diagnostic reasoning. This work is advancing under a research protocol and offers opportunities for trainees to join in educational research.
- **Innovation in Technology-Enhanced Learning:** CRIS is sponsoring multiple projects at the intersection of education and emerging technologies—including AI-augmented virtual patient platforms, game-based learning modules, and extended reality platforms. These initiatives are reshaping how trainees, patients and their families gain knowledge and skills.
- **Educational Scholarship in Print:** Next month, our faculty will release a new book, *Transforming Educational Scholarship: Medical Educators' Stories*. This volume highlights diverse journeys in academic medicine and serves as inspiration and guidance for current and future educators.
- **Scholarship and Evidence Synthesis:** CRIS has launched the Evidence Synthesis Community of Practice (**EviSynCoP**), an international, collaborative network to build capacity in various reviews. Faculty and trainees now have access to curated resources, bootcamps, and mentorship in evidence synthesis, with strong engagement across divisions.
- **Global Partnerships and Scholarly Networks:** Our team continues to support the East, Central, and Southern Africa Paediatric College (**ECSAPACH**) in implementing competency-based medical education, co-designing workplace-based assessments and competency milestones that will directly shape pediatric training in the region. In parallel, CRIS faculty are cultivating a **Network of Practice** in Health Sciences Scholarship, a global community of scholars committed to fostering equitable participation, cultivating scholarly identity, and addressing epistemic injustice across the Global North and South.

**We invite colleagues who are interested in contributing to these efforts—or simply learning more about our resources—to connect with CRIS (CRIS@texaschildrens.org). Together, we are building a thriving ecosystem of educational innovation and scholarship at Baylor Pediatrics and beyond!**





## Cultivating Connections Corner

Brought to you by the Department of Pediatrics

**In last month's issue, we introduced Cultivating Connections—a new Department of Pediatrics initiative dedicated to strengthening our sense of belonging and connection. This campaign is a key part of the department's broader commitment to supporting well-being for the faculty! Below showcases initiatives happening around the block!**

### Listening Rounds: Amplifying Faculty Voices

**Drs. Joan Shook and Binita Patel** have been visiting divisions—snacks in hand—to hear what matters most to you. Listening Rounds give Department of Pediatrics (DOP) faculty leadership the chance to **connect directly with faculty, understand your experiences, and amplify your voices within the organization.**

**DOP leadership** is partnering with **TCH leaders** to **address concerns and opportunities that arise and implement solutions where possible to enhance the physician and APP experience while supporting our academic, research, and clinical missions.** This initiative aligns with AMA and IHI models, and is guided by the Stanford Model of physician wellness, which emphasizes three equally important elements: efficiency of process (streamlined communication, reducing burdens), culture of wellness (professional development), and personal resilience (collegial relationships).

**Listening rounds always start with two simple questions:**

- What brings you joy?
- What are your pebbles?

**Listening Rounds at the Woodlands are led by Drs. Andy Chu and Ankhi Dutta; at the Medical Center - by Dr. Binita Patel; and at the West campus - by Dr. Janani Sundaresan.**

### Stay Interviews 2.0!

We are thrilled to bring back **Stay Interviews—an opportunity to learn directly from our pediatrics faculty.** The insights we gather will help shape programs that strengthen communication, deepen engagement, and support faculty retention and well-being. Faculty members who were hired in 2019 or 2020 and are at the rank of assistant professor or higher will be invited to participate soon. Interviews will take about 45-60 minutes and will be conducted in person or virtually.

**We hope those who are eligible will take part!**

**If you have any questions, please contact Susan Gillespie (Vice Chair) ([slg@bcm.edu](mailto:slg@bcm.edu)).**

### Join Us for Dine-In Lunch and Discussion

Connect with colleagues on the second Thursday of every other month (even months) for lunch and meaningful conversation. **The Dine-In program promotes medical staff well-being by exploring topics that foster community and build resilience—while giving you the chance to meet peers from different areas.**

**Sessions are held in the medical staff spaces/lounges at the three Houston hospital campuses, with plans to expand to Austin soon.**

**We look forward to seeing you! For information on upcoming dates, please email Dr. Geeta Singhal at ([gsinghal@bcm.edu](mailto:gsinghal@bcm.edu))!**

## New Faculty Awards Coming Soon

In the coming year, look forward to new faculty awards celebrating the contributions of our physicians and advanced practice providers (APPs). **Wendy Quiroz Nasser, DNP, APRN, CPNP-AC/PC**, is spearheading the development of these awards, designed to unite three distinct institutions—Texas Children's Hospital (TCH), Baylor College of Medicine (BCM), and MD Anderson—around shared values.

**The awards will highlight excellence in five key areas:**

- Discovery and Innovation
- Respect, Humility, and Caring
- Integrity and Accountability
- Teamwork, Safety, and Trust
- Excellence and Stewardship

**Stay tuned for more details in an upcoming edition of Pedi Press!**

### DINE-IN LUNCH HIGHLIGHTS



## Interested in a Book Club?

We've heard growing interest in book clubs across our campuses—and we'd love to build on that momentum! If you'd enjoy discussing books with colleagues, let us know by reaching out to **Dr. Shreya Sheth** or **Dr. Joan Shook**. We're gathering names and preferences to learn what types of books you'd like to explore.





The BCM Department of Pediatrics Faculty Development Team is proud to announce the successful launch of our **new Leadership College**. Developed in direct response to faculty requests for advanced training, the program was spearheaded by **Dr. Geeta Singhal, Executive Vice Chair in the Department of Pediatrics**, and **Jeff Kim, Division Chief of Pediatric Cardiology**.

The program officially began in **October 2025 with a cohort of 14 mid-career faculty members**. Built on the foundation of essential leadership skills, the curriculum focuses on empowering participants to lead rather than manage.

The cohort meets monthly to engage with experts from Texas Children's Hospital (TCH), Baylor College of Medicine (BCM), and the broader Texas Medical Center. Recent highlights include:

- **Organizational Alignment:** In November, **Dan DiPrisco (EVP and COO of Texas Children's Physician Organization)** discussed the critical importance of aligning individual and team goals with organizational strategy.
- **Conflict Resolution:** In December, **Dr. Tammy Kang (Division Chief of Palliative Care and Executive Vice Chair)** and **Melanie Jagneaux (BCM Ombudsman Director)** shared best practices and personal insights on navigating workplace conflict.

A central pillar of the Leadership College is the transition from theory to practice. Throughout the year, each faculty member identifies a specific challenge within their own work environment and develops it into an achievable leadership project. **By applying classroom concepts to these real-world pediatric challenges, participants are driving tangible improvements across the department!**

**\*The DOP faculty leadership program is not affiliated with the Texas Children's and Rice Leadership Program happening in February 2026.**



**Pictured left to right:**

Drs. Jeff Kim, Joseph Angelo, Shweta Shah, Jaime Jump, Sarah Lyons, Shagun Sachdeva, Holly Harris, Betul Yilmaz, Lisa Ayoub-Rodriguez, Faith Ihekweazu, Kimberly Sawyer, Ashley Teasdale, Geeta Singhal and Ganga Gokulakrishnan. Not pictured are Amit Thakral and Bonnie McCann Crosby.



## COACHING FOR OPTIMAL REFLECTION AND EFFECTIVENESS

By Dr. Gia Washington, Director, CORE Coaching Program

The holiday season often brings joy, celebration, and connection, but for many leaders, it also introduces competing priorities, increased emotional labor, and a pace that can feel unsustainable. In pediatrics especially, this time of year can stretch people thin: clinical needs remain high, families need support, and personal responsibilities intensify. From an executive coaching perspective, the holidays present an ideal moment to pause and practice intentional time management, not simply to "get more done," but to protect your energy, model healthy leadership, and set the tone for your team.

### Here are three strategies I often share with leaders during this season:

#### 1. Prioritize What Is Essential, Not Just What Is Urgent

Instead of trying to fit everything in, identify the 2-3 priorities, professionally and personally, that truly matter in the next four weeks. Give yourself permission to release or delegate the rest. This protects your bandwidth and helps you show up where you're needed most.

#### 2. Communicate Boundaries Clearly and Early

Let your colleagues, teams, and families know what to expect. Whether it's adjusting clinic blocks, carving out time for administrative tasks, or protecting a family tradition, clarity reduces resentment and last-minute stress. Leaders who communicate boundaries model psychological safety for their teams.

#### 3. Create Micro-Moments of Recovery

You don't need long vacations to recharge, and honestly, these aren't always available when needed, but short, consistent pauses can keep you grounded. A five-minute breathing break between meetings, a brief walk after rounds, or a protected lunch can improve focus, decision-making, and emotional regulation.

The holiday season is not just a time to manage your calendar; it is a time to steward your energy. As we support the children and families who rely on us, let's also support the people leading that work, ourselves, and each other.

**Wishing you a season of intention, balance, and wellness. If you'd like support in developing sustainable leadership practices for the year ahead, the CORE Coaching Program is here to help. Would you like to make a referral to the CORE Coaching Program? Please follow this link: [Click here](#)**





# CONGRATULATIONS! DOP OUTSTANDING CLINICIAN AWARDEES, 2025

The Outstanding Clinician Award recognizes outstanding contributions to clinical care by Physician/Psychologist/Advance Practice Provider Faculty members in the Department of Pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine!  
Congratulations to this year's winners!



**Sandip Patel, MD**  
Neonatology  
Community Initiatives



**Margaret Taylor-Danner, MD**  
Infectious Disease  
West Campus



**Deidra Ansah, MD**  
Cardiology  
Med Center



**Kriti Puri, MBBS**  
Critical Care  
Med Center



**Kristen Fisher, DO**  
Neurology  
Med Center



**Stephanie Gruner, NP**  
Hem/Onc  
Med Center



**Emy Kuriakose, MD**  
Cardiology  
Woodlands



**Erin Henkel, MD**  
Emergency Medicine  
Main Campus



**Lyannette Calderone, NP**  
Hem/Onc  
CHRISTU San Antonio



**Catherine Gannon, MD**  
Neonatology  
Ben Taub

## CONGRATULATIONS!

### 2025 RESEARCH MENTOR CHAMPIONS

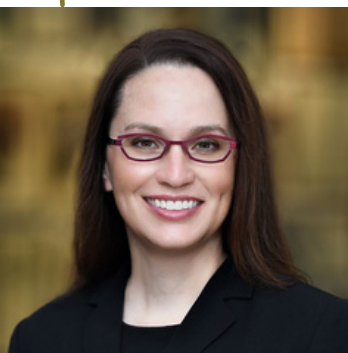
Congratulations to our 2025 Research Mentor Champions! Your guidance and dedication have inspired and supported our medical students in their journey of discovery and innovation. **Thank you for making a lasting impact!**



**Duc T. Nguyen, MD, PhD**  
Infectious Diseases



**Alexander Ngwube, MD**  
Hem/Onc



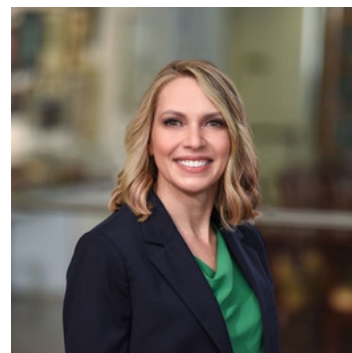
**Tiphanie Vogel, MD, PhD**  
Allergy + Rheumatology



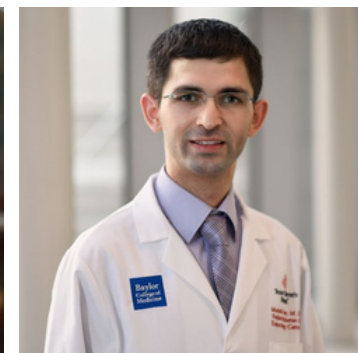
**Alexis Wood, Ph.D, F.A.H.A**  
Nutrition



**Jolie Britt, MD**  
Cardiology



**Miriah Gillispie-Taylor, MD**  
Rheumatology



**Tosur Mustafa, MD, FAAP**  
Diabetes + Endocrinology



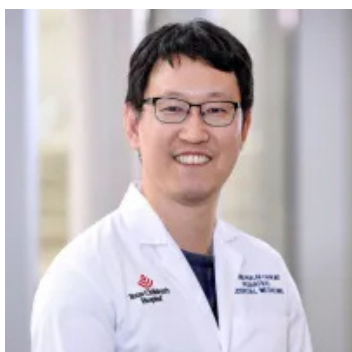
**Daniel Desalvo, MD**  
Diabetes + Endocrinology



**Marissa Hilliard, PhD**  
Psychology



**Raysa Morales Demori, MD, FAAP**  
Critical Care



**Raymond Parlar-Chun, MD, MS**  
Hospital Medicine



**Anil George, MD**  
Hem/Onc



**Silvana Molossi, MD, PhD**  
Cardiology



**Joud Hajjar, MD, PhD, MS, FCIS**  
Allergy + Immunology



# Pedi Features!

## Publication Highlight: Science Under Siege

From pandemics to the climate crisis, humanity faces tougher challenges than ever. Whether it's the health of our people or the health of our planet, we know we are on an unsustainable path. But our efforts to effectively tackle these existential crises are now hampered by a common threat: politically and ideologically motivated opposition to science.

Michael E. Mann and **Peter J. Hotez** are two highly respected and well-known scientists who have spent the last twenty years on the front lines of the battle to convey accurate, reliable, and trustworthy information about science in the face of determined and nihilistic opposition.

In this compelling manifesto, the authors examine five forces that are shaping, or in some cases undermining the role of science in society: powerful financial interests, professionalized influence, resource-dependent states, misinformation, and media dynamics. The book offers a framework for understanding these pressures and provides practical guidance for responding to them, equipping readers to better support scientific integrity, address practices that harm environmental and public health, and help steer society toward more sustainable and evidence-based decisions.

[To read more](#)

## SCIENCE UNDER SIEGE



**HOW TO FIGHT THE FIVE  
MOST POWERFUL FORCES  
THAT THREATEN OUR WORLD**

**MICHAEL E. MANN**

**PETER J. HOTEZ**

## Learn more about the Author!

**Peter Jay Hotez** is an accomplished American scientist, pediatrician, and global health advocate who is widely recognized for leadership in vaccinology and the control of neglected tropical diseases. **Dr. Hotez** is the founding **Dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine** and a **Professor of Pediatrics and Molecular Virology & Microbiology** at **Baylor College of Medicine**. At **Texas Children's Hospital**, **Dr. Hotez** serves as **Director of the Center for Vaccine Development** and holds the **Endowed Chair in Tropical Pediatrics**. **Dr. Hotez** is also a **University Professor of Biology** at **Baylor University**.







# Publication Highlight: Perseverance in Pediatrics

In this powerful section, readers are introduced to **Fong Lam, MD**, a physician-scientist whose persistence, ingenuity, and deep compassion are reshaping pediatric critical care. **The chapter opens with a gripping scene: Dr. Lam working through the night in the ICU, manually lowering an infant’s dangerously high white cell count—an extraordinary intervention that reveals both his skill and his commitment to saving the smallest and sickest patients.**

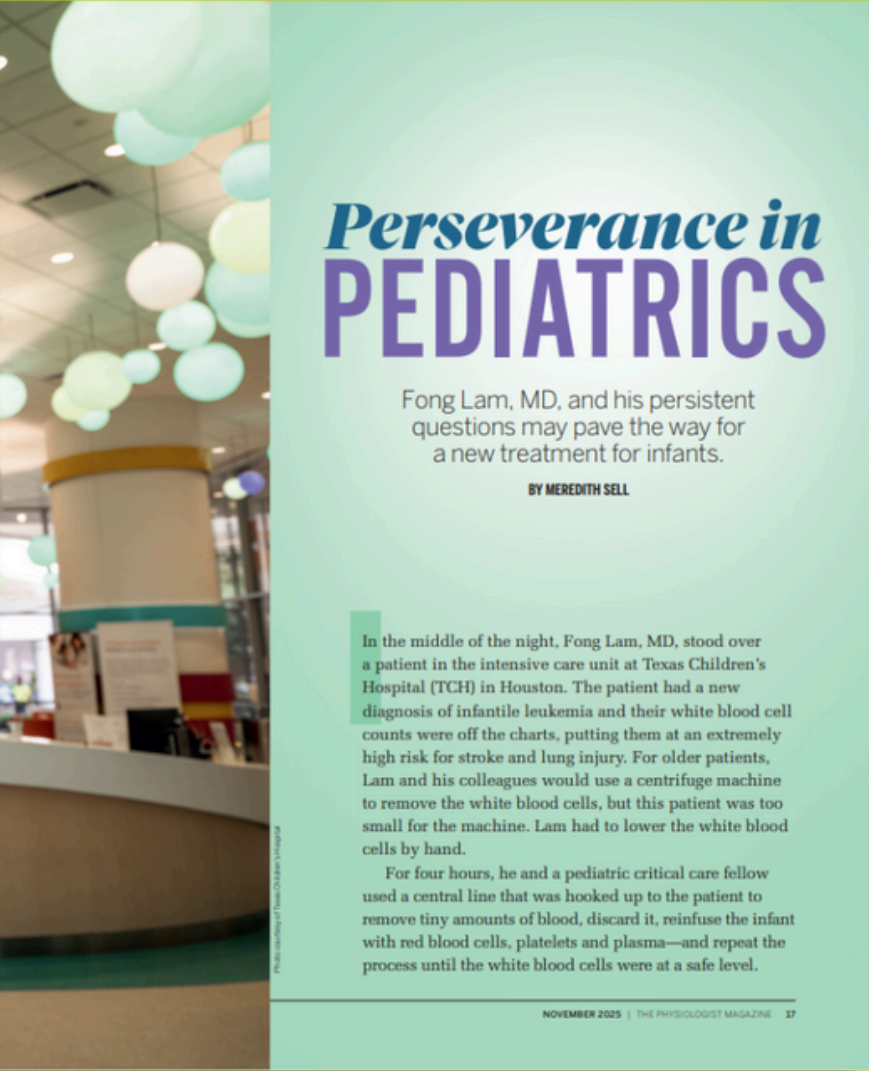
From there, the story journeys through Dr. Lam’s remarkable path: childhood weekends spent in his father’s research lab, the moment he realized medicine blended the teaching and problem-solving he loved, and the mentorship that pushed him to pursue rigorous science alongside clinical care. Readers will also learn how a chance lecture—attended after a sleepless call night—sparked a collaboration that may lead to a groundbreaking therapy for infants with leukemia.

Dr. Lam’s career is defined by persistence: years of refining research questions, setbacks in grant funding, and unwavering dedication to mastering both medicine and science. Today, he is known not only for his innovative research in microcirculation and blood cell interactions, but also for his beloved teaching style, which encourages residents to question everything with childlike curiosity.

This chapter captures what makes Dr. Lam exceptional: ***His ability to turn clinical challenges into research innovations, his passion for teaching, and his relentless drive to make care safer and more effective for the most fragile children.***

Read on to explore Dr. Lam’s inspiring journey—one of perseverance, discovery, and the belief that every problem, no matter how daunting, has a solution waiting to be found.

[To read more](#)



## Buzz around the block Latin American Colloquium

The Latin American Pediatric Colloquium brought together more than **50 physicians from across Latin America for two days of networking and scientific exchange during the Latin American Colloquium, a CME conference hosted at Texas Children’s Hospital.** The event welcomed **over 40 additional attendees**, making it a vibrant and engaging gathering for all involved!





## Houston Public Library honor Peter Hotez as part of the inaugural fellows program!

Dr. Peter Hotez was honored as one of five outstanding individuals **selected for the inaugural Honorary Fellowship program.** This program recognizes exceptional leaders whose work, vision, and contributions embody the library's mission to inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen the community through access to ideas and information. **HPL Director Sandy Gaw will host a celebratory dinner on January 22, 2026, to formally install the honorees at the Julia Ideson Building.**



# Buzz around the block

## from the heart of pediatrics

## Celebrating Marina Masciale: A Rising Star in Child Advocacy

Marina Masciale was honored with the statewide **Rising Star in Child Advocacy award at the 2025 Texas Academy of Child Advocacy — Children at Risk Accolades Luncheon.** This recognition celebrates her outstanding commitment to improving the lives and well-being of children across Texas.



## Heartfelt Gratitude - Second Look Event

The Department of Pediatrics extends its sincere appreciation to **Dr.'s Jennifer Rama and Buck Kyle, and Ronnetta Etter** for their outstanding leadership and coordination of this year's Fellowship Second Look event. A total of 49 prospective applicants registered, and the energy throughout the day was remarkable—warm, enthusiastic, and filled with genuine engagement. The strong turnout and positive atmosphere were a direct reflection of the thoughtful planning, seamless logistics, and meticulous attention to detail that Jen, Buck, and Ronnetta brought to the event. From clear communication to the polished flow of the program, their work truly showcased the strength of our fellowship offerings. **The Department of Pediatrics is also grateful for the opening remarks that set a welcoming tone and reinforced the importance placed on fellowship training. Jen, Buck, and Ronnetta consistently work behind the scenes to elevate our trainees and programs, and this event was an outstanding example of their dedication and excellence. The Department proudly recognizes and thanks them for their exceptional contributions!**



## Pediatric Faculty Social hosted in Austin!

The Pediatric Faculty Social hosted by Department Chair **Dr. Lara Shekerdemian** in Austin was a great success! Colleagues connected, relaxed, and enjoyed a wonderful time together.

## Two BCM Faculty Elected to the American Pediatric Society

The American Pediatric Society has announced its **newest members**, and we are proud to share that **Lisa Forbes Satter, M.D. (Pediatrics – Immunology, Allergy, and Retrovirology), and Maria Monica Gramatges, M.D., Ph.D. (Pediatrics – Hematology and Oncology),** have been selected for this **distinguished honor.** Election to the Society is one of the highest recognitions in academic pediatrics, celebrating exceptional contributions to pediatric research, leadership, and advocacy. **Please join us in congratulating Dr. Forbes Satter and Dr. Gramatges on this prestigious achievement!**





# Buzz around the block

from the heart of Immunology, Allergy and Retrovirology



## IAR hosted annual JMF Kid's Day at the Houston Downtown Aquarium!

On September 6th, IAR hosted its **annual JMF Kids' Day at the Houston Downtown Aquarium**. The **Jeffrey Modell Foundation** sponsored this special event for children with immunodeficiencies, offering a day filled with fun, food, and community. **More than 100 attendees** joined in the celebration. Special thank you to **Director Dr. Lisa Forbes Satter** and the dedicated planning committee: **Samantha Johnson, Taiya Ivery, Lillian Sharp, Adriana Kindelan, Kim Nguyen, and Sherry Grant** for making this day possible.



## IAR's Food Allergy Program 12<sup>th</sup> Annual TCH Food Allergy Symposium!

Hosted on October 11, 2025, at the TCH Pavilion for Women. Thanks to the outstanding work of the team, led by **Dr. Sara Anvari**, the symposium featured a day full of expert-led presentations, impactful panels, and interactive sessions for children and teens. We're especially grateful to **Mrs. Mireya Montelongo** for her central role in organizing the event and ensuring everything ran smoothly—from speaker coordination to family engagement.



## Immunology, Allergy and Retrovirology Retreat Conference hosted in November!

On November 14, the IAR Division held its retreat at the TCH Pavilion for Women. Led by Division Chief **Dr. Lisa Forbes Satter** and organizational psychologists **Kelley Slack** and **Lacey Schmidt**, the event featured organizational updates and engaging team-building exercises. As **Dr. Satter's** first retreat as division chief, she emphasized transparency and fostering camaraderie across the division. The retreat also included impactful presentations from **TCH leadership, Dr. Lara Shekerdemian, Laura Hardy, Paige Schulz, and Weldon Gage**, highlighting the true state of the organization. A special thank you to **Samantha Johnson** for coordinating the retreat, with tremendous support from **Lori Briones, Taiya Ivery, and Kim Nguyen**.



## IAR Annual Retrovirology Kids Holiday Party!

On November 19, IAR received generous contributions for its **annual Retrovirology Kids Holiday Party** from a fundraiser organized by **Cindy Stowell** and conducted by **EOG Resources, Inc.** Representing the Retrovirology team, **Dr. Mary Paul, Teresa Aldape, and Frank Stowell** accepted an array of toys and gift cards, which will help make the celebration special for the children.



## It's a Girl!

On Wednesday, September 10th, IAR hosted a surprise baby shower for Nurse Practitioner **Ashley Reiland Saucedo**. Coordinated by **Samantha Johnson**, colleagues from across TCH gathered to celebrate Ashley and shower her with love and joy as she prepared to welcome baby Saucedo. Just a few weeks later, on **October 1st, we were thrilled to welcome Rylee Jo Saucedo into the world!**



# News from Hematology/Oncology



On October 14, 2025, **Mark C. Zobeck, MD, MPH**, was awarded the **PEAR Award (Professional Educator Appreciation and Recognition)** from **Baylor College of Medicine!**



On October 15, 2025, **Shelby R. Boone, MSN, APRN, CPNP-AC, CPN**, was one of just six nurses statewide selected from over 1,000 nominations to be named a **Gold Medalist by the Good Samaritan Foundation.**



On December 10, 2025, **Will Parsons, MD, PhD**, and **Austin L. Brown, PhD, MPH**, were announced as the **“Seven Blocks of Granite”** Honorees and received the **Lombardi Award** presented by the **Rotary Club of Houston**. This award **recognizes their significant contributions to advancing cancer research and improving the lives of cancer patients and their families.**



On November 3, 2025, **Camila Pabon, MD**, **American Society of Hematology** was awarded the **2025 ASH Abstract Achievement Award: Outcome disparities among survivors of hematologic malignancies diagnosed in childhood!**



## Hosted the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Salute to Champion Luncheon and Fashion Show!

Texas Children’s Cancer and Hematology Center celebrated its **14th Annual Salute to Champions Luncheon and Fashion Show** with an afternoon filled with inspiring runway walks by **Patient Champions** and heartfelt support from the community. **Chaired by Scott Basinger, Elsie Eckert, Sidney Faust, and Judi McGee**, the annual affair once again brought Houston’s philanthropic empathys together for a cause that tugs at every heartstring! Hosted at The Revaire, the event honored dedicated supporters, showcased fashions from Dillard’s and Tootsies, and created a warm atmosphere of hope and celebration. **Thanks to generous attendees and sponsors, the event raised over \$440,000 to advance Texas Children’s leading pediatric cancer and hematology programs.**

Featured on [Culture Map](#) and [Paper City!](#) Click the name to learn more!



## Featured on Houston Matters

**Houston Matters** spotlighted the **nation’s first immunotherapy center** dedicated to fighting pediatric cancer, featuring insightful conversations with **Donald Williams (Will) Parsons, MD, PhD**, and **Shoba A. Navai, MD**. The segment highlighted how Texas Children’s Hospital launched the **Sky High Immunotherapy Center** five years ago and explored its growing impact in a discussion with **Michael Hagerty**.

Link to watch, [click here!](#)



# News from Infectious Diseases



**Katie Matatall, Ph.D.** was promoted from **Instructor to Assistant Professor in the Baylor College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics.** Her research in Dr. Katherine King's lab is focused on the effects of infection and inflammation on the hematopoietic system and the potential role this plays in neurodegenerative disease.



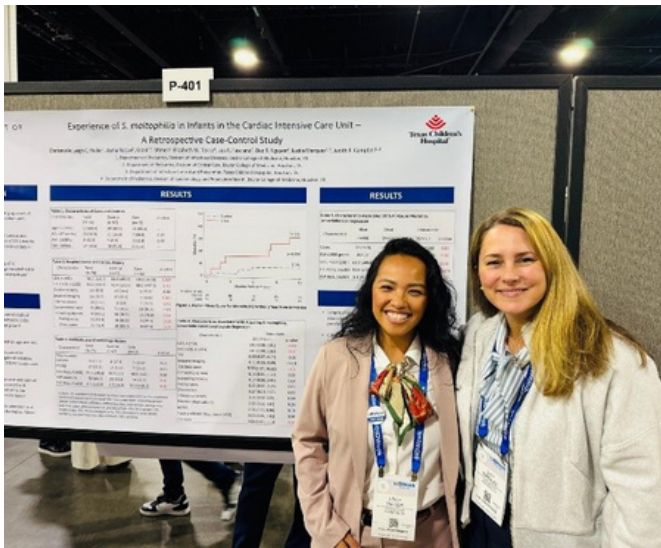
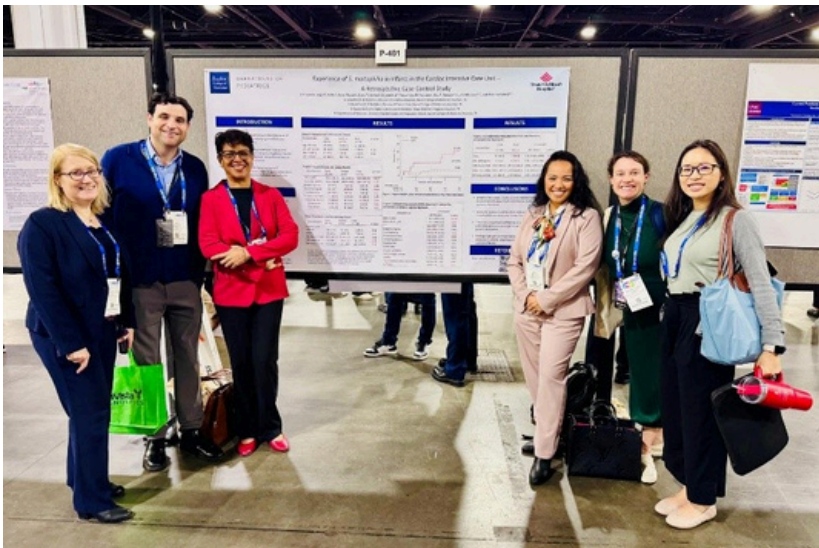
**Grant Stimes, PharmD,** has been promoted from **Instructor to Assistant Professor in the BCM Department of Pediatrics.** Grant is an invaluable member of our team whose leadership and expertise have significantly advanced the integration of evidence-based practice into patient care. He has contributed to the development of numerous clinical protocols at both local and national levels, published his work and presented it at national conferences, and provided education to a broad spectrum of learners. Grant also established a residency program dedicated to training infectious diseases pharmacists and has held notable national leadership roles, including serving as president of a professional pharmacy fraternity and as a director on the board of the Pharmacy and Leadership Education Institute.



**Debra Palazzi, M.D., MEd** was elected as the **incoming president of the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society for 2025-2027.**



**Denver Niles, M.D.** was presented with the **BCM Power of Professionalism (POP) Award** for his exemplary role-modeling of humility, kindness and professionalism based on several nominations from various members of the medical staff.



**We're proud of our Pediatric Infectious Diseases faculty and fellows for making a remarkable impact at the 2025 ID Week Meeting in Atlanta, GA, presenting an impressive array of posters and oral presentations.**



**Our Pediatric Infectious Diseases faculty and fellows attended the PIDS Foundation Dinner at the 2025 ID Week Meeting in Atlanta, GA in October, 2025.**





# Halloween Features



**Around the block:**  
In Renal, staff and faculty handed out treat bags with fun questions written on the back. They asked the children the questions, and the kids got a treat in return!



**A-Rocket**  
Relocation Services  
"Celebrating Over 50 Years of Service"  
713-748-6024  
www.arocket.com



# More Halloween Features!



## Highlight from CHRISTUS Children's

Each year, the residency program celebrates Halloween by dressing up as Minions and hosting a trick-or-treat parade through the hospital lobby—ensuring that our young patients don't miss out on the fun or the treats!



## From CHRISTUS Children's: Annual Christmas Decorating Contest!

At **CHRISTUS Children's Hospital**, we celebrate the season with our beloved **annual Christmas Tree Decorating Contest!** Each year, departments and clinics come together to create beautifully themed trees, and a friendly competition unfolds as trophies are awarded to the top designs. Our Baylor residents and faculty participate alongside the BCM administrative office, making this a truly hospital-wide tradition.

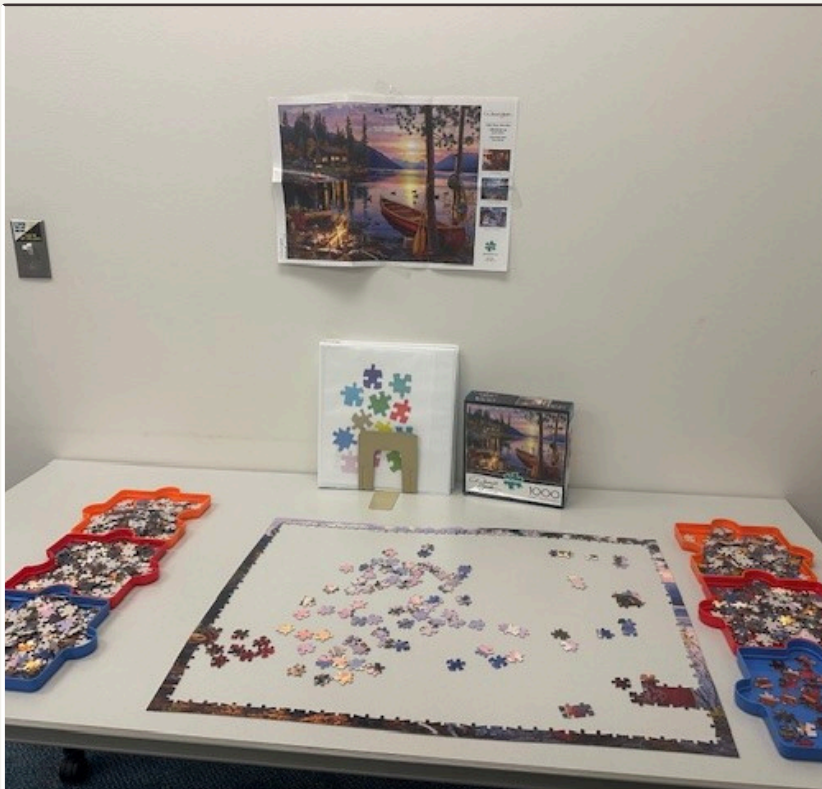
What makes this event especially meaningful is its mission: every decorated tree is donated to Catholic Charities in mid-December, where they are given to families in our community who may not otherwise have a Christmas tree. We typically create around 50 trees each year, and the results are nothing short of magical. The hospital lobby is transformed into a dazzling winter wonderland that brings joy to all—especially to the children, whether they are visiting as outpatients or staying with us as inpatients. It's a tradition that warms hearts and brightens our entire community!





# Mindfulness and Connection

Across our offices, mindfulness comes to life through simple, hands-on moments—puzzles, sand gardens, and other calming tools that invite team members to pause, reset, reflect, and recharge.



## From the Office of Diabetes and Endocrinology

Team members can participate in a collaborative puzzle, providing a moment to relax, engage with the activity, and enjoy a brief break from work. An activity that was started during the pandemic and has continued!



## From the Residency Office

At the residency office, a “compliment wall” lets visitors and team members share kind words with the residents. A meaningful way to foster connection, promote a culture of care and wellness.



## From Pediatric Hospital Medicine

At the Pediatric Hospital Medicine office, art therapy is incorporated to help team members de-stress while expressing themselves and exploring their sense of freedom.



## From the Palliative Care Office

At the Palliative Care Office, visitors can move the sand and play with the rocks—a simple, therapeutic activity that promotes relaxation and mindfulness.



# holidays around the globe!

We love to celebrate the diverse ways the holidays are honored across different cultures—and how those traditions make our community feel whole. From our Pedi family, we learn about the unique customs and celebrations that shine during this festive season!



## From Dr. Katri V. Typpo

### Traditional Finnish Potato Casserole — Janssonin Kiusaus (Jansson's Temptation)

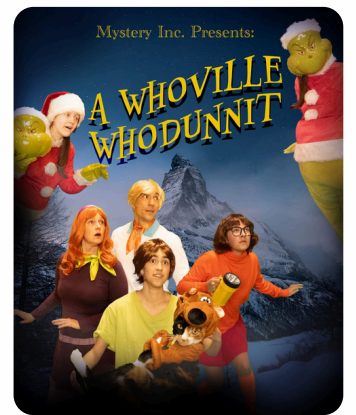
This beloved Finnish dish gets a family-friendly twist in my kitchen! While the classic recipe includes smoked herring, I make a less traditional version to suit my kids' tastes—skipping the herring and using convenient pre-shredded hash browns instead of hand-cut potatoes. It's a simple, cozy, and delicious take on a Nordic favorite!

#### Ingredients:

2 leeks, sliced thin and cooked until fragrant in oil  
2 bags of shredded hashbrowns  
2/3 cup heavy cream  
2 containers of Trader Joe's smoked Trout  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Butter and breadcrumbs.

#### Instruction:

Mix leeks, hashbrowns, cream, trout (& the oil from the canned trout), salt and pepper in a casserole dish. Bake at 350F for 45 min. Sprinkle top with breadcrumbs mixed with butter. Put back in oven until nicely browned on top and bubbling.



Katri's Annual Holidays Photo



## From Dr. Leyat Tal

Hanukkah is a celebration of freedom, light overcoming darkness and finding small miracles during difficult times. We light the menorah for 8 days to celebrate the miracle of oil. It is one of our favorite holidays where we sing songs, play dreidel and eat fried food such as latkes and jelly-filled doughnuts (sufganiyot).



## From Dr. Joseph Lubega

**Holiday in Africa is all about community: "I am because we are."**

I miss the random exchanges of small portions of holiday cooking among homesteads. For some reason, the neighbor's food always tasted better; may be it's not the food, but the taste of community, meticulously wrapped in nature's giftwrap – banana leaves.



## From Dr. Manuel D. Silva-Carmona

We are so proud of our multicultural family, with loved ones from Canada, Italy, Ireland, Chicago, Texas, Lithuania, and Mexico. Christmas Eve and Christmas day is a very special time for us to gather. We often spend part of the season in the northern desert region of Mexico, where we cook a mix of Italian and Mexican dishes, enjoy Lithuanian bread, celebrate American, Canadian, and Mexican traditions, and fill the house with live American, Mexican, and Irish music that we play ourselves. It truly is the best time of the year for our family.



Part of the family members gathered in the central square of the town of Cuatro Ciénegas, Mexico. (Coahuilan Dessert)

## From Dr. Maria Elena Bottazzi

**It just wouldn't be the holidays without Honduran "Torrejas"!**

**What are Torrejas? A soft, custardy, bread-pudding-style French toast!**

#### Ingredients:

1 qt oil  
16 oz whole cane sugar or dark brown sugar  
1 cinnamon stick  
2 whole cloves  
2 tbsp bourbon

#### Instructions:

1. Heat oil in a deep skillet.
2. In a pot, simmer 4 cups water with sugar, cinnamon, cloves, and bourbon until thickened (about 15 min). Set aside.
3. Whip egg whites to stiff peaks, then add yolks and beat until pale yellow.
4. Dip challah slices into the egg mixture and fry until golden.
5. Move fried bread into the syrup, cover well, and cook on low until very soft (about 1 hour).

**Serve warm and enjoy!**







*Happy Holidays  
from the Pedi-Admin Team!*



Let us know how we did!  
**Scan or press this QR code to share  
your thoughts!**

For **photo and content submissions**, email us at  
**[DepartmentofPediatrics@texaschildrens.org](mailto:DepartmentofPediatrics@texaschildrens.org)**.  
If you want to **request a page for content**, email  
Lana Thai at **[Lxthai@texaschildrens.org](mailto:Lxthai@texaschildrens.org)**.

**Message from Lana Thai, our media specialist:**

Thank you for the kind word from the previous  
pedi-press! Hope everyone stay warm and have  
a great holiday!

**Thank you for reading and take care!**

