



HOUSTON
MEDICAL FORUM

CENTENNIAL
1926 **100** 2026

Community Research Symposium

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Saturday, October 10, 2026

TMC³ Collaborative Building
TMC Helix Park

A Century of Service. The Future of Health.

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Adeola Abisogun, DDS



Charm Dental
Columbia University College of
Dental Medicine, Class of 2013

COMMUNITY PATHWAY

**Healthy Mouth, Healthy
Body**

1:10–2:30 PM
Helix Hall

Dr. Adeola Abisogun earned her Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) degree in 2013. Since then, her approach to patient care has been shaped by her interests in neuroscience, nutrition, and aesthetics. She treats patients in the greater Houston area and collaborates across industries to share wellness and lifestyle content on her website, e-toju.com.

Daphene Altema-Johnson, MPH, MBA, RDN, LD



*Founder and Principal, Rooted
Strategies Consulting
Health Wellness Pact, LLC
Senior Program Officer
Johns Hopkins Center for a
Livable Future*

COMMUNITY PATHWAY

**Eat Better, Feel Better:
Simple Ways to Stay Healthy**

**8:30–10:00 AM
Helix Hall**

Daphene Altema-Johnson, MPH, MBA, RDN, LD, is a registered dietitian nutritionist, public health professional, and founder of Rooted Strategies Consulting, a division of Health Wellness Pact, LLC. Her work focuses on translating nutrition science into practical, culturally relevant strategies that support healthier individuals, families, and communities. She brings experience in nutrition counseling, chronic disease prevention, nutrition policy, sustainable diets, research, and higher education. Through her clinical, academic, and public health work, Daphene helps people move beyond conflicting nutrition messages and identify realistic, balanced approaches to eating well.

Karen Basen-Engquist, PhD, MPH



(she/her)

Annie Laurie Howard Research
Distinguished Professor
Deputy Chair and Professor of Health
Disparities Research
Director, Center for Energy Balance in
Cancer Prevention and Survivorship
The University of Texas MD
Anderson Cancer Center

LUNCH PLENARY PANEL

**Multi-pronged Approaches
to Improving Cancer-Related
Outcomes for All**

12:15–1:00 PM
Helix Hall

Dr. Karen Basen-Engquist is the Annie Laurie Howard Research Distinguished Professor in the Department of Health Disparities Research and directs the Center for Energy Balance in Cancer Prevention and Survivorship at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Her research focuses on cancer survivors and high-risk individuals and investigates the role of health behavior interventions in optimizing quality of life and reducing risk of cancer, cancer recurrence, and other chronic diseases. She also studies behavior change methods with a focus on digital health interventions and implementation of interventions in clinical and community settings. Her research on physical activity for cancer survivors has been translated into Active Living After Cancer, a community program to increase physical activity among minority and medically underserved cancer survivors. The program has enrolled over 2,600 cancer survivors through partnerships with community organizations and health care organizations. Dr. Basen-Engquist is one of the leaders of the Acres Homes Cancer Prevention Collaboration, an NCI-funded U54 grant to develop a center to advance cancer prevention and control research and training in neighborhoods experiencing persistent poverty. Dr. Basen-Engquist has served as a member of the National Cancer Institute's Board of Scientific Advisors and is the past president of the American Society of Preventive Oncology.

Justin Bird, MD



*Professor, Orthopaedic Oncology &
Spine Surgery*
The University of Texas MD
Anderson Cancer Center

Dr. Justin E. Bird is a Professor in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. He specializes in the surgical treatment of complex spine and pelvic tumors using 3D computer-assisted technology. He also serves as the Division of Surgery Innovation Safety Officer and founding Director of the IDEAS Lab at MD Anderson.

RESEARCH PATHWAY

**Partnering with Industry to
Accelerate Discovery and
Innovation**

8:30–10:00 AM
Levy

Ijeoma Ekeruo, MD



Medical Director
Arrhythmia Care Center

CLINICAL PATHWAY

Redefining Atrial Fibrillation Management Across the Care Continuum

1:10–2:30 PM
Hermann Hall Auditorium

Dr. Ijeoma A. Ekeruo is a cardiac electrophysiologist practicing in Houston, Texas. She received her undergraduate degree in Chemistry from Spelman College and her medical training from Emory University, both in Atlanta, GA, before moving to Houston where she completed her training in Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Cardiology and Cardiac Electrophysiology at UTHealth.

She previously served as a faculty member at UT-Houston in the Department of Cardiology (where she still holds a part-time appointment). She has authored articles in leading journals, and has had research presented at national conferences for the American College of Cardiology and the Heart Rhythm Society. Dr. Ekeruo holds board certifications in Internal Medicine, Cardiology and Cardiac Electrophysiology from the American Board of Internal Medicine, as well as a board certification in Pediatrics from the American Board of Pediatrics. She is also board certified in adult comprehensive echocardiography by the National Board of Echocardiography, and is a fellow of the American College of Cardiology and a fellow of the Heart Rhythm Society.

Above all else, Dr. Ekeruo has a passion for treating patients with complex arrhythmias, heart failure and all associated conditions. She is an expert in device management including placement of devices and lead extraction, as well as all types of ablations. She strives to provide excellent clinical care in all aspects of cardiac rhythm management as part of her practice.

In addition, she has an interest in international health and has volunteered on medical mission trips to West Africa. She lives in Houston with her husband and two children.

María E. Fernández, PhD



*Vice President, Population Health and
Implementation Science
Co-Director, UTHealth Houston
Institute for Implementation Science
Lorne Bain Chair of Public Health
and Medicine
Professor, Department of Health
Promotion and Behavioral Sciences
Director, Center for Health Promotion
and Prevention Research
UTHealth Houston School of
Public Health*

RESEARCH PATHWAY

Turning Evidence into Action in Real-World Care

1:10–2:30 PM
Levy

Dr. María Fernández is Vice President of Population Health and Implementation Science at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth Houston) and the founding Co-Director of the UTHealth Houston Institute for Implementation Science. Dr. Fernández is also the Lorne Bain Chair of Public Health and Medicine, Professor of Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences, and Director of the UTHealth Houston Center for Health Promotion and Prevention Research (CHPPR) at the UTHealth Houston School of Public Health. As a researcher and a leader, Dr. Fernández has spent her career conducting participatory community-engaged research and practice to develop, evaluate, implement, and disseminate interventions to improve health and reduce health disparities. Her research focuses on cancer and chronic disease prevention and control among underserved populations in the U.S. and globally. Dr. Fernández is an expert in dissemination and implementation (D&I) research, having served as a member of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health Study Section and as faculty for several national and international D&I training programs. Dr. Fernández has an extensive portfolio of global, federal, and state-funded research developing and improving evidence-based interventions and guidelines for the prevention and control of cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease (among others) in clinical and public health settings. Dr. Fernández has over 250 peer-reviewed publications and has co-authored several books, including the 4th edition of *Planning Health Promotion Programs: An Intervention Mapping Approach* (2016) and the *Handbook of Community-based Participatory Research* (2017). Her awards include the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health Research Excellence Award and the UTHealth President's Scholar Award for Research Excellence.

Marla Fielder, PharmD, RPh



Health and Wellness Leader
Kroger Health

COMMUNITY PATHWAY

Immunizations Across the Lifespan: Protecting You and Your Family

1:10–2:30 PM
Helix Hall

Dr. Marla Fielder is an accomplished healthcare executive and Division Health & Wellness Leader with more than two decades of experience in pharmacy operations, clinical leadership, and community health advancement. She began her career with The Kroger Co. as a pharmacy technician and advanced into executive leadership after earning her Doctor of Pharmacy degree from Texas Southern University.

Dr. Fielder currently oversees pharmacy operations across more than 200 locations in Texas and Louisiana, leading strategic initiatives focused on patient care, access, and operational excellence.

A nationally recognized leader in retail healthcare, she has received numerous honors, including Mass Market Retailers Women of Influence and Progressive Grocer Rising Star, along with recognition from Ragan and Drug Store News as a top leader in health and wellness.

She serves on multiple boards, including IM (formerly Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston), the Texas Federation of Drug Stores, the Louisiana Alliance of Retail Pharmacies, and the Lone Star College Pharmacy Technician Advisory Board (Tomball and North Harris campuses), and she is a strong advocate for workforce development and mentorship.

Dr. Fielder is widely recognized for her commitment to improving health equity, having led major disaster relief and public health efforts, including Hurricane Harvey response initiatives and COVID-19 testing and vaccination programs in underserved communities.

Joanie Hare, MD, OBGYN



*Director of Maternal Fetal Medicine
and Obstetrics*
MyCHN Community Health
Network

CLINICAL PATHWAY

Pregnancy Risks and Long- Term Cardiovascular Health: Implications for Risk Stratification and Clinical Practice

with Poyee Tung, MD

8:30–10:00 AM
Hermann Hall Auditorium

Joanie Y. Hare is a Board-Certified Obstetrician-Gynecologist and Maternal-Fetal Medicine Specialist with over 25 years of experience in high-risk obstetrics. A trailblazer in her field, Dr. Hare was the first African American physician in Houston to complete a Maternal-Fetal Medicine fellowship and is a founding member of Houston Perinatal Associates. She earned her medical degree from the University of Alabama School of Medicine and completed her residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Baylor College of Medicine, where she served as Administrative Chief Resident. She went on to complete her Maternal-Fetal Medicine fellowship at Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia.

Dr. Hare has built a legacy of leadership and innovation in maternal-fetal care. At The Woman's Hospital of Texas, she founded and served as Medical Director of the Perinatal Diabetes Program, directed the Maternal Transport Program, and founded the Postpartum Intermediate Care Unit. She also held multiple leadership positions, including Chair of the Department of Obstetrics and President of the Board of Trustees. Her expertise spans the management of complex pregnancies, including those involving multiple gestations, fetal anomalies, maternal comorbidities such as hypertension and diabetes, and cervical insufficiency.

Beyond clinical care, Dr. Hare has contributed to the advancement of maternal health through academic appointments and national advocacy. She is a Voluntary Associate Clinical Professor at the University of Houston College of Medicine and has served on numerous boards, including the March of Dimes, the Cord Blood Association, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Advisory Council on Blood Stem Cell Transplantation.

Dr. Hare has received numerous honors for her dedication to women's health, including being named a Texas "SuperDoc" in High-Risk Obstetrics and a "Top 30 Influential Women of Houston."

Napoleon Higgins, Jr., MD



*Child, Adolescent, and Adult
Psychiatrist*
Kaleidoscope Clinical Research

RESEARCH PATHWAY

Designing and Sustaining Patient-Centered Research in Private Practice

8:30–10:00 AM
Levy

Dr. Napoleon B. Higgins, Jr. is a nationally recognized psychiatrist, entrepreneur, author, and advocate for mental health equity. He is the Executive Director of the Black Psychiatrists of America, owner of Bay Pointe Behavioral Health Services, and founder of Kaleidoscope Clinical Research. Dr. Higgins has dedicated his career to improving access to mental health care, advancing diversity in clinical research, and addressing the impact of historical and social factors on community well-being. He has spoken extensively to corporations, universities, and professional organizations on workplace culture, race, bias, inclusion, belonging, and the impact of “otherisms” on employee engagement, performance, and mental health. An award-winning physician and thought leader, he brings a unique perspective on resilience, leadership, and the continuing significance of Juneteenth in shaping opportunity, health, and progress for future generations.

Chigozirim Izeogu, MD, MPH



Assistant Professor of Neurology
McGovern Medical School/UT
Health Science Center at Houston

CLINICAL PATHWAY

**Advances in Stroke
Prevention: What Every
Clinician Needs to Know in
2026**

1:10–2:30 PM
Hermann Hall Auditorium

Dr. Chigozirim Izeogu is a board-certified neurologist specializing in vascular neurology, with clinical interests in stroke prevention, chronic disease management, and health equity. Since 2014, she has been committed to delivering high-quality neurological care with a focus on improving outcomes for patients at risk of stroke and other vascular conditions. She serves as an Assistant Professor of Vascular Neurology at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston, where she mentors medical students and contributes to research advancing the treatment of cerebrovascular diseases.

Dr. Izeogu is especially passionate about addressing health disparities and integrating equitable, patient-centered approaches into both clinical care and academic medicine. Her research is dedicated to designing and implementing multi-level interventions that improve care transitions and long-term outcomes for stroke survivors—particularly among historically marginalized and underserved populations, including immigrants, women, racial and ethnic minorities, and individuals living in low-resource settings. Through the use of mixed-methods approaches, she works to uncover structural barriers to research participation, aiming to develop scalable, community-informed recruitment strategies applicable in both U.S. and global contexts. With expertise spanning vascular neurology, population-based research, and behavioral science, she is committed to building and sustaining clinical research infrastructure in underserved communities.

Lharissa Jacobs



Health Strategist
Executive Director, Fit Houston

COMMUNITY PATHWAY

Stronger Together: Building Healthy Communities

8:30–10:00 AM
Helix Hall

Lharissa Jacobs is the Founder and Executive Director of Fit Houston, a non-profit that promotes free physical activity in under-resourced communities. As the former Vice President of Health Strategies at the American Heart Association (AHA) in Houston, she worked with clinics and community partners to maximize equitable health and well-being. She has spent the past two decades advocating for healthy communities. Prior to joining the AHA, she pioneered and led a large portfolio of evidence-based programs focused on child nutrition and chronic disease prevention for the YMCA of Greater Houston.

Lharissa is a Senior Fellow with the American Leadership Forum and an alumna of the McKinsey & Company Asian Executive Leadership Program. Lharissa is on the Board of Directors for the UH Health Family Care Center, the Houston Tool Bank, and The Common Market Texas. She is dedicated to using her professional experience and innovative thinking to support sustainable and stronger communities. She has a master's degree in education and an M.B.A. from the University of Houston and speaks Spanish.

Lharissa is happiest in the great outdoors, often running with friends, sprinting after two lovable terriers, and spending quality time with her husband and two children.

Sylvia Jones, DDS



Cancer Survivor

LUNCH PLENARY PANEL

Multi-pronged Approaches to Improving Cancer-Related Outcomes for All

12:15–1:00 PM
Helix Hall

Sylvia Molo Jones is a leader with a servant's heart. Sylvia earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Prairie View A&M University (1988) and a Doctor of Dental Surgery from the University of Missouri–Kansas City School of Dentistry (1996). She has been empowering relationships since 1991. She is the co-founder of Living in Families Effectively (L.I.F.E.), a 501(c)(3) organization. She is the founder of Woman Mate Mother (WMM) and SMJ III, Consultants. Sylvia is a retired dentist who loves to see people smile! Her mission is to believe, express, and serve truth to herself and others. Honesty and authenticity are a few things others share about her. Her purpose is to position people, and she does this effortlessly with the help of God, who provides all the resources. In her roles as a woman, spouse, parent, Spiritual Director, and Chaplain, she recognized her gifts of shepherding and praying as vital tools, supporting others on their journey. Sylvia has been married to her high school sweetheart, Ed Jones, for thirty-five (35) years and they have three adult daughters, Tiffany, Asha, and Alia. These three young ladies have taken her places and are still teaching her priceless lessons about life and loving well. She is also Lolli to her granddaughter, Makenzie Rose, with whom she loves to spend all her time. She loves her family, her friends, and people, all people. She does not meet strangers; she meets you. Her training in listening allows her to use her God-given gifts to support others. In her vision experience workshops, she walks with you in seeing a reality beyond your current situation and does it so well you are propelled to see more. You will walk away with a fresh vision after this encounter.

Ariah Leday, MD



*Georgetown Neurology, PGY-2
USAF, MC, Capt*

COMMUNITY PATHWAY

**Move Your Body, Boost Your
Health**

**8:30–10:00 AM
Helix Hall**

My name is Capt. Ariah Leday. I am the first physician in my family, and I have been passionate about neurology since the start of my journey into medicine. I enjoy exercise and art in all forms, often writing lyrics, creating workouts, traveling, trying restaurants, and thrifting in my free time. I am passionate about using my creativity to provide patient-centered care unique to each individual's values and further promoting increased quality of life and healthy practices for all. I intend to combine my experience in fitness and medicine to decrease neurological disease incidence in at-risk patients.

Lorna H. McNeill, PhD, MPH



*Professor & Chair
Department of Health Disparities
Research*
UT MD Anderson Cancer Center

LUNCH PLENARY PANEL

Multi-pronged Approaches to Improving Cancer-Related Outcomes for All

12:15–1:00 PM
Helix Hall

Dr. McNeill, Professor and Chair of the Department of Health Disparities Research at MD Anderson Cancer Center, directs initiatives focusing on the elimination of cancer-related health disparities in minority populations. As professor, she holds the Cullen Trust Health Care Chair in Health Disparities Research and serves as Director of the Center for Community-Engaged Translational Research. A noted authority in the field of cancer disparities, Dr. McNeill has over 30 years' commitment to engaging the community in research and increasing participation of racial and ethnic minorities in science. Dr. McNeill has authored or co-authored over 140 published manuscripts in peer-reviewed academic journals.

As CCSG Associate Director of Community Outreach and Engagement and Health Disparities, she oversees MD Anderson's equitable accrual of women and minorities to clinical trials. She is also co-lead of the Community Engagement core of the joint MD Anderson/UT Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences.

Dr. McNeill holds a bachelor's degree in Afro-American studies and industrial relations and a master's degree in public health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She holds a doctorate in public health studies, focused on behavioral science, from Saint Louis University in Missouri, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston.

Accolades include the following prestigious honors: the SBM Health Equity SIG Lifetime Achievement Award; the MD Anderson R. Lee Clark Prize, which pays tribute to the scholarship, service and social responsibility exemplified by the first president of MD Anderson; and the 2024 SBM Jessie Gruman Award.

Lonzetta Newman, MD, EdD, FACP



Professor
UT MD Anderson Cancer Center

LUNCH PLENARY PANEL

Multi-pronged Approaches to Improving Cancer-Related Outcomes for All

12:15–1:00 PM

Helix Hall

Lonzetta L. Newman, MD, EdD, FACP, is a professor of medicine in the Department of Clinical Cancer Prevention, Division of Cancer Prevention and Population Sciences of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

As a board-certified internist, Dr. Newman has attained expertise in clinical cancer prevention and fulfills her responsibilities in both the Cancer Prevention Center and the Undiagnosed Breast Clinic. In each arena, she is committed to a multidisciplinary approach to assisting patients.

She precepts future physicians both through the medical school and via the statewide General Internal Medicine preceptorship program, sponsored by the American College of Physicians and the Texas Medical Association. Dr. Newman exemplifies excellence in the practice of medicine and was elected to fellowship in the American College of Physicians, the national organization of internists.

Dr. Newman is also an ambassador of the institution with the Office of Public Education. In this capacity, she actively communicates MD Anderson Cancer Center's research/science/clinical endeavors to the community-at-large.

Dr. Newman previously served as the Educational Program Director in the Department of Clinical Cancer Prevention from 2012 to 2025. In this role, she developed a curriculum for

clinical rotations in the department including the Undiagnosed Breast Clinic. She also founded, implemented, and led the ten-year lecture series (2012-2022) entitled Perspectives in Cancer Prevention.

For her relentless dedication to education, Dr. Newman was honored by the Texas Chapter of the American College of Physicians (ACP) with a Decade of Service Award in November 2016, received the UTMDACC Faculty Educator Award in May 2018, and was named a finalist for The University of Texas Kenneth I. Shine Academy of Health Education in 2019. She received the Texas ACP Laureate Award in November 2025, the highest accolade bestowed by the chapter.

In 2020, Dr. Newman completed her doctorate in education with an emphasis in healthcare leadership. She continues to serve her patients, the community, and the world through invited lectures at local, state, and international conferences.

Munachi Okpala, PhD, DNP, MBA, APRN



*Assistant Professor of Neurology
McGovern Medical School,
UTHealth Houston*

RESEARCH PATHWAY

Broadening Representation in Clinical Trials to Improve Outcomes for All

1:10–2:30 PM
Levy

Dr. Munachi N. Okpala is an Assistant Professor in Neurology at McGovern Medical School, UTHealth Houston, where she focuses on stroke survivorship, post-stroke recovery, and health equity.

Her work centers on improving transitions of care and long-term outcomes for stroke survivors and their caregivers, with a particular emphasis on culturally tailored, community-engaged interventions. She plays a key leadership role in multidisciplinary stroke care and research initiatives, including programs that integrate clinical practice, caregiver support, and implementation science.

Dr. Okpala's research interests include trauma after stroke, caregiver burden, and the development of innovative assessment tools and interventions to address gaps in current care models. She is committed to advancing equitable stroke care and translating evidence into practice to improve outcomes for underserved populations.

Monique Pappadis, PhD, MEd, FACRM



Associate Professor
School of Public and Population
Health
 The University of Texas Medical
 Branch

RESEARCH PATHWAY

**Building Research with
 Communities: Strategies to
 Improve Engagement and
 Impact**

1:10–2:30 PM
Levy

Monique R. Pappadis, PhD, MEd, FACRM, is a tenured Associate Professor in the Department of Population Health and Health Disparities and Assistant Dean for Community-Based Research for the School of Public and Population Health (SPPH) at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) at Galveston. She is a Fellow of the Sealy Center on Aging and the Clinical and Community-Based Research Resource Core Lead for the UTMB Pepper Center. Dr. Pappadis is also an Investigator and the Director of Dissemination and Cultural Humility at TIRR Memorial Hermann's Brain Injury Research Center in Houston, Texas. She is a Fellow of the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM).

Her research aims to advance health equity and decrease ethnic minority health disparities, particularly among persons with traumatic brain injury (TBI) or stroke, as well as improve care transitions and continuity of care following acute and post-acute care. Her recent work aims to improve screening for elder mistreatment with emphasis on vulnerable, older adults with mild cognitive impairment or Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias, as well as the intersection between elder mistreatment and TBI. She has a continued interest in minority aging, gender/sex disparities in rehabilitation, health literacy of patients and caregivers, and psychosocial adjustment to disability.

She serves on a number of national committees and working groups, such as the ACRM, the Academy of Certified Brain Injury Specialists (ACBIS) of the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA), Pink Concussions, the Moody-Galveston Brain Injury Conference - Social and Health Disparities, the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM). She is recognized nationally for her professional service, contributions to the medical rehabilitation field, and mentorship of scholars in the US and abroad.

Brian C. Reed, MD



*Professor & Chair
Department of Clinical Sciences
Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of
Medicine at the University of
Houston*

COMMUNITY PATHWAY

Protect Your Health: Screenings Can Help

1:10–2:30 PM
Helix Hall

Dr. Brian C. Reed is a practicing family physician and the Founding Chair of the Department of Clinical Sciences at the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine at The University of Houston College of Medicine. Dr. Reed grew up in Sugar Land, Texas. He completed his undergraduate studies and medical degree at the University of Michigan. After graduation, Dr. Reed pursued a primary care specialty and completed his Family Medicine residency at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Michigan.

In 2002, Dr. Reed returned to Houston and joined the faculty of the Department of Family & Community Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine. Dr. Reed has held various administrative positions throughout his career. These administrative roles include assistant chief of staff for Harris Health System's ambulatory care services, vice chair, and interim chairman for Baylor's Department of Family and Community Medicine. Dr. Reed has worked with clinicians in the Harris Center at the Neuropsychiatric Center and ambulatory clinics for many years. Dr. Reed also served as the Division Director for Disease Control and Clinical Prevention at Harris County Public Health and was a key member of the medical response team during the Hurricane Harvey natural disaster.

Over the last eight years at the newly established Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine at the University of Houston, Dr. Reed has been a key contributor to the development and implementation of an innovative curriculum that seeks to prepare future primary care physicians for an ever-changing environment. At the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine, Dr. Reed co-directs a series of clinical focus sessions that introduce medical students to timely subjects such as the social determinants of health and health disparities. Dr. Reed continues to provide direct patient care at the UH Family Care Center and the Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD. Dr. Reed frequently volunteers with students at health fairs and community-based outreach events.

Joyce P. Samuel, MD, MS



Professor of Pediatrics
McGovern Medical School at
UTHealth Houston

CLINICAL PATHWAY

**Early Risk, Lasting
Consequences: Pediatric
Origins of Chronic Disease**

8:30–10:00 AM
Hermann Hall Auditorium

Dr. Samuel is a professor of pediatrics in the Division of Pediatric Nephrology & Hypertension at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston. Clinically, Dr. Samuel is board-certified in general pediatrics, pediatric nephrology, and obesity medicine. An internationally recognized leader in the development and implementation of personalized (n-of-1) clinical trials, she has helped shape the field of precision therapeutics in pediatric and adolescent hypertension. Dr. Samuel also leads major efforts to understand and improve obesity-related cardiometabolic risk in children and adolescents, integrating innovative research methods with clinical care.

Dr. Samuel serves as director of the Master of Science in Clinical Research Degree Program within the Institute for Clinical Research and Learning Healthcare, where she advances learning health systems science, mentors early-stage investigators, and guides the development of research-training programs. Dr. Samuel's research portfolio includes multiple NIH-funded studies focused on individualized treatment strategies, novel clinical trial designs, and the intersection of hypertension, obesity, and chronic kidney disease.

Veronica Sanchez



*Senior Director of Healthcare Systems
and Community Impact
American Heart Association*

RESEARCH PATHWAY

Fueling Research Through Philanthropy and Purpose- Driven Funding

8:30–10:00 AM
Levy

Veronica Sanchez is the Senior Director of Healthcare Systems and Community Impact at the American Heart Association. She leads the Southwest region, with 235+ healthcare organization partnerships impacting over 2.9 million patients.

She is a heart survivor with decades of experience working in both the corporate sector and community health space. A longtime supporter of community, women and veteran health, Veronica is dedicated to spreading awareness of heart health for longer, healthier lives across Greater Houston and the Gulf Coast. She has been with the American Heart Association for more than 11 years, changing lives in all communities for increased access to care, nutrition security, maternal health, and clinical excellence.

She has received numerous awards and accolades throughout her career and is a recipient of the American Heart Association's Living the Mission award. The Living the Mission award represents the best of the best among the American Heart Association's 3,000+ global employees; only one half of one percent of staff members are recognized with this prestigious award.

She attended the University of Houston for her undergraduate studies. She was invited to participate in, and was acknowledged for her work on, the City of Houston's One Complete Houston, the city's first equity indicator study. In addition, she has received recognition for her work across Greater Houston from the U.S. House of Representatives.

Robert Satcher, MD, PhD



*Professor, Department of Orthopaedic
Oncology
UT MD Anderson Cancer Center*

**DR. GEORGE WILLIAMS
KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**From Houston to the Next
Frontier: A Community-
Centered Vision for the
Future of Health**

**10:15–11:15 AM
Helix Hall**

Dr. Robert L. Satcher is a Professor of Orthopaedic Oncology at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center (MDACC) in Houston. He specializes in the treatment of skeletal metastatic disease, soft tissue sarcoma, technology applications for improving surgical outcomes, teleoncology, and intraoperative navigation. He has over 100 peer-reviewed publications, and has received research grants from DOD and NIH, and serves on grant review study sections for NIH, DOD, and ANRF (Arthritis National Research Foundation).

Dr. Satcher moved to Houston in 2004 from Chicago where he was a faculty member at Northwestern University Medical School. After joining the faculty at MD Anderson, he led institutional efforts to establish the clinical enterprise for virtual care. Dr. Satcher co-founded the eHealth Research Institute (eHRI), a collaborative endeavor between Rice University, the National Space Biomedical Research Institute, and MD Anderson Cancer Center, to bring together physicians with academic and industry researchers to improve access to specialized health care using the latest in research and technology.

Dr. Satcher is also a former astronaut, having served with NASA for seven years beginning in 2004. In 2009, he was part of NASA's STS-129 mission to the International Space Station, where he was a mission specialist and crew medical officer. Dr. Satcher performed two spacewalks and helped to pioneer the exercise protocol for pre-breathing in preparation for extravehicular activity.

In 2023, he was elected to the Board of Overseers of Harvard University. Dr. Satcher is also a founder of OrbitalMed Inc., a health management company for commercial spaceflight participants.

Dr. Satcher earned both his BS and PhD degrees in chemical engineering from MIT and his medical degree from Harvard Medical School (Health Sciences and Technology) in 1994.

Andrea Taylor, PhD



Licensed Clinical Psychologist
Associate Professor, UTHHealth
Science Center Houston

CLINICAL PATHWAY

**Beyond the Individual
Patient: Family Mental
Health Care in Communities**

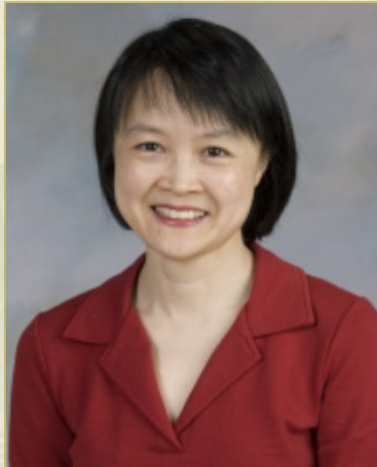
8:30–10:00 AM
Hermann Hall Auditorium

Dr. Taylor is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist with extensive experience in the assessment and treatment of anxiety, depression, behavioral health concerns, trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Harvard University and completed her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at Boston University, with her Pre-Doctoral internship at Brown University.

Following her doctoral training, Dr. Taylor relocated to Texas to complete a postdoctoral fellowship at UT MD Anderson Cancer Center. Since 2013, she has served as a faculty member at UT Health Science Center at Houston, where she currently provides clinical care for individuals affected by trauma and PTSD.

Dedicated to education and professional development, Dr. Taylor serves on a number of educational committees and as the Training Director for the UT Health Doctoral Psychology Internship Program, where she mentors and trains future psychologists. Beyond her professional responsibilities, she is actively involved in her church community and enjoys spending time with her family.

Poyee P. Tung, MD



Professor
McGovern Medical School at
UTHealth Houston

CLINICAL PATHWAY

Pregnancy Risks and Long-Term Cardiovascular Health: Implications for Risk Stratification and Clinical Practice

with Joanie Hare, MD

8:30–10:00 AM
Hermann Hall Auditorium

Dr. Tung received a B.S. in Biochemistry from the University of California at Berkeley and received her medical degree from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Medicine. She completed an Internal Medicine residency at the UCLA Medical Center. She completed an Advanced Imaging fellowship in Echocardiography at the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) Medical Center and completed a Cardiovascular fellowship at Scripps Clinic in San Diego. She was a Clinical Instructor at Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine in Evanston, IL from 2005–2006. She joined UTHealth in 2006 as an Assistant Professor in Internal Medicine at the McGovern Medical School, was promoted to Associate Professor in 2011, and was promoted to Professor in 2022. She is board-certified in Internal Medicine, Cardiovascular Disease, Adult Congenital Heart Disease, and Echocardiography.

She is the co-director of the UT Health Adult Congenital Heart Disease program and has 20 years of experience collaborating with the Maternal Fetal Medicine program in taking care of women with cardiac and vascular disease during pregnancy and the postpartum period.

Randall Wright, MD



Chief Medical Officer
US Neuroscience Institutes /
Cortex TBI

CLINICAL PATHWAY

**Vascular Disease and
Dementia Risk: Evidence,
Disparities and Clinical
Implications**

1:10–2:30 PM
Hermann Hall Auditorium

Dr. Randall J. Wright is a nationally recognized neurologist, educator, and healthcare innovator who currently serves as Chief Medical Officer of Cortex TBI and U.S. Neuroscience Institute, where he leads multi-state initiatives focused on advancing access to high-quality neurological care through innovation, technology, and patient-centered design.

Dr. Wright's academic journey reflects a rare fusion of engineering, science, and medicine. He earned dual undergraduate degrees in Physics from Xavier University of Louisiana (summa cum laude) and Electrical Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology, before completing his medical degree at Emory University School of Medicine. He then completed his neurology residency and fellowship in Clinical Neurophysiology at Baylor College of Medicine, where he served as Chief Resident and developed expertise in sleep medicine, EEG, EMG, and advanced neurodiagnostics.

Prior to his current role, Dr. Wright served as Director of the Brain Wellness Center at Houston Methodist Hospital in The Woodlands, where he pioneered programs focused on cognitive health, sleep medicine, and brain optimization.

Beyond clinical practice, Dr. Wright is an accomplished author and thought leader. He is the lead author of "Teleneurology: A Complete Guide to Implementing Telemedicine and Telebehavioral Health into Your Practice," a widely recognized resource that helped guide physicians during the rapid

expansion of telemedicine. He also authored "The Wright Choice," a practical guide to healthy living, and has contributed to multiple editions of Neurology Secrets and other clinical texts.

Dr. Wright's commitment to community impact is equally profound. He has held numerous leadership roles within the American Heart Association, including serving on its Board of Directors and as a state advocacy leader, contributing to national efforts aimed at reducing stroke and cardiovascular disparities.

His contributions have been widely recognized, earning distinctions such as Texas Top Doctor, Houston Medical Forum Physician of the Year, and multiple humanitarian and leadership awards.

At the core of Dr. Wright's work is a singular vision: to bridge science, technology, and human behavior to transform how people think about and care for their brains.