

## Supporting the Advancement of Science and Medicine

# President's Research Council 2020

## Supporting the Advancement of Science and Medicine

### Schedule of 2020 Programs

January 28

March 10

September 29

November 3

6:15 p.m. Reception

6:45 p.m. Program

Medical Education and Conference Center

T. Boone Pickens Biomedical Building

6001 Forest Park Road

Dallas, Texas 75390

**UT Southwestern**  
Medical Center

[engage.utsouthwestern.edu/prc](http://engage.utsouthwestern.edu/prc)

Members of the President's Research Council (PRC) directly propel the advancement of medical research at UT Southwestern. Joining the PRC brings opportunities to hear from internationally recognized scientists conducting high-impact research. Your membership supports promising young scientists who are the innovators of tomorrow. As a member of the PRC, you'll be advancing the future of medicine, today.

President's Research Council member functions and activities include:

- Supporting the annual Distinguished Researcher Awards for faculty members early in their research careers when federal grants can be difficult to obtain. Support may also be given to a past recipient named as the Marnie and Kern Wildenthal President's Research Council Professor in Medical Science;
- Attending four stimulating programs each year by prominent faculty researchers;
- Meeting outstanding scientists who are revolutionizing the scope and practice of medicine;
- Hosting an annual dinner with UT Southwestern President Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D., to honor the recipients of the Distinguished Researcher Awards; and
- Learning about the latest advances in medical science from one of the nation's leading institutions.

President's Research Council programming in 2020 will be stimulating and informative. This year will offer members the opportunity to hear directly from gifted researchers who are rethinking and redefining what is possible in medical science today. Biographies of the four exciting speakers scheduled can be found on the back of this brochure.

An annual membership in the President's Research Council is \$1,000 for individuals or couples, but larger gifts to support the work of UT Southwestern physician-scientists are always appreciated.

For additional information about the President's Research Council, please call the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at **214-648-2344** or visit **[engage.utsouthwestern.edu/prc](http://engage.utsouthwestern.edu/prc)**.

### About UT Southwestern Medical Center

One of the top academic medical centers in the world, UT Southwestern is a premiere educational, clinical, and research institution with an innovative approach to medicine. Our physicians and researchers seamlessly integrate breakthroughs in science, advances in comprehensive patient care, and prestigious educational programs to improve health care in North Texas and around the world.

Consistently ranking among the top institutions for biomedical research, UT Southwestern is home to six Nobel laureates, 17 members of the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine), 22 members of the National Academy of Sciences, and 15 Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigators, which is more than all other academic medical centers in Texas combined. More than 5,800 research projects totaling more than \$469.5 million annually are underway at UT Southwestern on a host of medical disorders including: cancer, heart disease and stroke, neurological diseases, arthritis, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease.

Faculty and residents provide care to more than 105,000 hospitalized patients and oversee more than 3 million outpatient visits each year. UT Southwestern also impacts the regional economy as an employer of more than 17,000 people in North Texas.

### President's Research Council Co-Chairs

Karen and Jim Wiley

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\* Steering Committee Members



**Amit Khera, M.D.**

*Professor, Internal Medicine  
Director, Preventive Cardiology Program  
Dallas Heart Ball Chair in Hypertension and Heart Disease*



*Putting a Nobel-Prize Winning Discovery Into Practice:  
Familial Hypercholesterolemia*

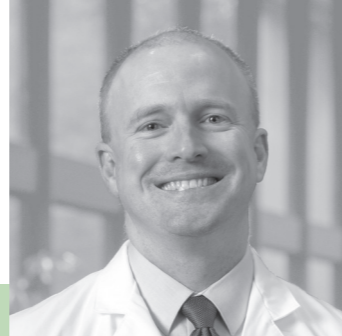
Tuesday, January 28, 2020

**D**r. Amit Khera's interest in cardiac disease prevention began while he was a resident at Brigham and Women's Hospital at Harvard Medical School. As he cared for a patient in his 40s having his seventh procedure to fix blocked arteries, Dr. Khera wondered why certain patients develop such recurrent heart problems and what could be done to prevent them. Answering this question continues to inspire his work almost 20 years later.

Dr. Khera is Director of UT Southwestern Medical Center's Preventive Cardiology Program. Considered an expert in cardiac risk assessment and risk factor modification, Dr. Khera studies hereditary contributions to coronary artery disease, including familial hypercholesterolemia (FH), a condition causing extremely high levels of cholesterol beginning in childhood.

In a recent study, Dr. Khera's team examined blood donation records from Carter BloodCare in Dallas to identify patients who met the criteria for FH. "For someone with FH, the risk of heart disease is higher because their clock started early. They've been bathed in cholesterol since birth, and also may not know that their children are at risk as well," Dr. Khera said. "Sometimes by identifying one patient with FH, we find as many as 10 more family members who are at risk."

Dr. Khera holds a master's degree in epidemiology from the Harvard School of Public Health and a medical degree from Baylor College of Medicine. He completed both his internship and residency in internal medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital at Harvard Medical School and a cardiology fellowship at UTSW, where he joined the staff in 2004. He is currently the President of the American Society for Preventive Cardiology.



**Theodore Laetsch, M.D.**

*Associate Professor, Pediatrics  
Norma and Jim Smith Professorship in Clinical Excellence,  
in Honor of Dr. John Warner  
Eugene P. Frenkel, M.D. Scholar in Clinical Medicine*



*Precision Therapy for  
Pediatric Cancer*

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

**D**r. Theodore Laetsch has been leading pioneering efforts in novel therapeutics for childhood cancers at the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center since joining the faculty at UT Southwestern in 2013. He also leads the Experimental and Cellular Therapeutics Program (ECTP) at the Pauline Allen Gill Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders at Children's Health, a leading program providing emerging therapies to children with relapsed or refractory cancer. Dr. Laetsch heads several early Phase 1 and Phase 2 clinical trials, including two of the clinical trials that led to the first ever FDA approval of CAR-T therapy, a type of immunotherapy that uses a patient's own genetically modified T-cells to attack their cancer cells.

These trials provide treatment to children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) that is either resistant to traditional chemotherapy or recurrent, a patient group with a high mortality rate. "Children with leukemia deserve better," said Dr. Laetsch. "It is very gratifying to see children who previously did not have any good options respond so well to this new therapy and continue to do well. We are truly encouraged by the results of this study for children with relapsed ALL and their families. This is a new frontier in cancer treatment."

After receiving a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering from the University of Arizona, Dr. Laetsch completed his medical degree at the University of California, San Francisco. He was Chief Resident at the University of Colorado/Children's Hospital Colorado before completing his fellowship training and an instructorship at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. In 2018, Dr. Laetsch received both Children's Health's Physician of the Year Award and UTSW's Rising Star Award.



**Zhijian "James" Chen, Ph.D.**

*Professor, Molecular Biology  
Director, Center for Inflammation Research  
George L. MacGregor Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science  
Investigator, Howard Hughes Medical Institute*



*Inflammation:  
The Culprit of All Maladies?*

Tuesday, September 29, 2020

**D**r. Zhijian "James" Chen has been on a lifelong journey of discovery, from his childhood in a small village in China, to his research in a molecular biology lab at UT Southwestern, to the pinnacle of the international scientific community. One of the world's leading investigators in deciphering cell signaling, Dr. Chen was awarded the prestigious 2019 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences and the 2018 Lurie Prize from the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health for his discovery of the DNA-sensing enzyme cGAS, which launches the body's immune defense against infections.

With his discovery of the enzyme cGAS, Dr. Chen has unlocked a century-old medical mystery: How does the immune system know when it's under attack? Dr. Chen's discovery of the cGAS pathway has led to intense efforts by the pharmaceutical industry to develop new medicines for the treatment of autoimmune diseases and cancer.

Dr. Chen received his Bachelor of Science in biology from Fujian Normal University in China. After completing his doctorate in biochemistry from the State University of New York, he held a postdoctoral position at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies. He then joined a biotechnology company in Boston (ProScript Inc) where he helped develop the medicine VELCADE for the treatment of multiple myeloma. In 1997, he was recruited to UTSW to establish his laboratory in the Molecular Biology Department. In 2005, Dr. Chen was selected as an Investigator of Howard Hughes Medical Institute. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2014.



**William Dauer, M.D.**

*Professor, Neurology and Neurotherapeutics | Neuroscience  
Inaugural Director, Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute  
Lois C.A. and Darwin E. Smith Distinguished Chair  
in Neurological Mobility Research*



*Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute:  
Purpose and Destination*

Tuesday, November 3, 2020

**I**n July 2019, Dr. William Dauer joined the UT Southwestern faculty as the inaugural Director of the Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute. "The personal and societal burden of neurological and psychiatric disease is great and increasing," said Dr. Dauer. "The Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute represents the bold and visionary commitment of UT Southwestern to tackle the challenge of improving the lives of individuals with brain disease. I am extraordinarily honored and excited to direct the Institute and to join the remarkable UT Southwestern community."

For two decades, Dr. Dauer's groundbreaking research has focused on the molecular basis of dystonia and the mechanisms of neurodegeneration of Parkinson's disease, the second most common age-related neurodegenerative disease after Alzheimer's. His findings have elucidated the critical role of the torsinA protein in the progression of dystonia, a dominantly inherited disease characterized by disabling, involuntary movements. Dr. Dauer's work has also advanced understanding of the neurological basis of falls in Parkinson's disease, pointing the way to a novel therapeutic approach for this currently untreatable symptom. In addition to his pioneering investigative efforts, he is a board-certified neurologist who treats patients with a range of movement disorders.

Dr. Dauer earned his Bachelor of Science from Duke University before receiving his medical degree from the Washington University School of Medicine. After a postdoctoral research fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital and an internship at Beth Israel Hospital, he completed his residency in neurology and a fellowship in movement disorders at Columbia University. In 2009, Dr. Dauer joined the faculty at the University of Michigan Medical School, where he served as Director of the Movement Disorders Group and the Morris K. Udall Center of Excellence for Parkinson's Disease Research.