The Department of Psychiatry joined the Division of Internal Medicine (DoIM) on Thursday, Sept. 1.

Psychiatry has reported directly to the Physician-in-Chief’s office since 2006, the only clinical department in the institution to do so. The transition is expected to be a good fit since many of the DoIM departments provide primary and consultative clinical care with a portion of research dedicated to the effects of cancer therapies.

“Since its inception, our division has focused on providing the best medical care to cancer patients, which I am fond of referring to as Onco-Medicine,” Division Head David Tweardy, M.D., says. “Similarly, our colleagues in Psychiatry provide the best in psychiatric care to cancer patients.”

This care includes assisting patients in their anxiety, insomnia, depression, and grief at the change in lifestyle imposed by their cancer diagnosis. The team’s research on these problems will complement the efforts of other DoIM departments, particularly the Department of Symptom Research, which conducts research on alleviating patients’ symptom burdens.

Alan Valentine, M.D., chair and professor, says his department will work hard to be a good fit in DoIM.

“Our group is keenly focused on the psychiatry of cancer, with interests ranging from applications of novel psychotherapeutic interventions to management of complex neuropsychiatric complications of disease and treatment.

“We believe this is compatible with the supportive oncology missions of DoIM. We look forward to working together to ease the many burdens of our patients and caregivers,” Valentine says.

The integration will also provide additional mentoring opportunities for Psychiatry faculty, which includes eight clinical faculty and one research faculty member. The department also includes four advanced practice nurses and a six-member administrative team led by Margaret Bell, D.N.P., Director of Psychiatry Services.
Cath Lab best practices

Guidelines educate physicians about procedures that result in better patient outcomes

Rachel Medrano is a fighter.

Medrano was diagnosed with leukemia more than 31 years ago. In and out of remission, she is currently on a twice-a-day chemotherapy treatment. But that’s only part of her medical challenges.

“You get all these poisonous medicines and get well, but then you have other side effects like heart issues,” Medrano says.

Medrano’s heart problems began occurring about the time MD Anderson’s Cardiac Catheterization Lab (CCL) opened in 2009.

Rather than have fragile patients travel between MD Anderson and other Texas Medical Center hospitals for heart catheterizations, institution leaders opted to open the CCL, making it the first in a comprehensive cancer center.

As one of its first patients, Medrano says she likes the ease of the multidisciplinary approach.

“You go to sleep, wake up and you’re done.”

Best practices shared

Interventional treatments like those which Medrano experienced are part of a Consensus Statement prepared by global leaders in cardiac catheterization labs, including CCL Medical Director Cezar Iliescu, M.D., the lead author of the paper.

“This is a powerful document,” says Iliescu, “because it includes an international group commissioned by the SCAI (Society for Cardiology Angiography and Interventions).”

MD Anderson was selected as a major player in the development of the guidelines because the CCL sees the largest volume of interventional procedures among cancer patients. To date, Iliescu and his team have performed just under 3,000 procedures.

An increasing need for Cath Lab care

Iliescu says cardiac toxicities of cancer care and the increasing number of the cancers survivors warranted the need to educate community physicians. The Consensus Statement became the tool to communicate key information.

“The majority of physicians have few patients like this, but they are the people who are closest to the patients,” Iliescu says. “We felt it was important to have something readily available to provide guidelines endorsed by those of us in cancer centers who treat this unique population.”

Among the information is a list of chemotherapeutic agents associated with myocardial ischemia. The document also includes information on:

• Best practices for radiation-induced coronary and peripheral arterial disease,
• Screening and Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease in cancer patients and survivors (pre and post-treatment),
• Special considerations for cancer patients with thrombocytopenia and anemia,
• Vascular access consideration for cancer patients undergoing cardiac catheterization and
• Other special considerations.

Iliescu says the message of the document is that cath lab operators will use a conservative approach and defer interventional procedures such as stenting whenever possible.

“It’s also a message for the oncology community that we’re not going to stent everybody,” Iliescu says. “It’s quite the opposite. We’re going to be respectful of the patients, try to understand their diseases and help oncologists manage the patients.”

Iliescu also sees the Consensus Statement as a way to thank the oncologic community for allowing his team to take care of our cancer patients. He wants to encourage dialogue to share the best paths to take in addressing their needs.

Iliescu plans to do this via small group discussions and as a speaker at Grand Rounds throughout the institution.

“We’re going to be respectful of the patients, try to understand their diseases and help oncologists manage the patients.”

–Cezar Iliescu
As this issue of IMprints goes to press, we close out FY16 and are two months into FY17. Socrates advised young Athenians to look beyond current events and interrogate their deeper meaning and implications. This advice resulted in his trial for impiety and corruption of youth, at which he uttered the dictum, “The unexamined life is not worth living,” and chose death over exile.

Under much less pressure, I am, nonetheless, inspired by these words to reflect upon the challenges that we have met and overcome this past year as an Institution and Division in our efforts to ensure the best care to our patients now and for years to come.

At the institution level, these challenges included conversions to OneConnect, Cerner Millennium, and ICD10; a Joint Commission visit; and establishment of the Executive Clinical Operations Team (ECOT) and Shared Governance Committee (SGC). Six new committees were established to funnel recommendations to ECOT and they are focused on Ambulatory Practice, Hospital Practice, Integrated Practice, Quality, Clinical Finance, and Clinical Space.

The Operations Administrative Team (OAT) was established to implement ECOT decisions. I have been impressed with the speed with which ECOT, its committees, and OAT became operational, and their effectiveness. I also remain very optimistic that the SGC, the “experiment” that was the focus of my Winter 2016 column, will achieve its full promise of becoming a highly effective body for advising the President on strategy.

At the Division level, challenges we met and overcame included the “emergency” OneConnect build out for the Cardiopulmonary Center and the heroic push to optimize charge capture in August, both of which lead to the Division’s achieving its best budgetary month of the year, and the institution’s achieving a margin that triggered year-end recognition programs for Staff and Faculty. I cannot be prouder of you for your remarkable efforts to achieve this morale-boosting goal.

In addition, FY16 saw a number of changes in leadership including the stepping up of Drs. Kumar Alagappan, Marta Davila, and Annemiek Kavelaars to leadership roles as Interim Chairs of Emergency Medicine, Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Nutrition (GHN), and Symptom Research, respectively.

This taking on of new leadership responsibilities was not limited to faculty but included Damian Walsh’s stint as Department Administrator (DA) ad interim for Infectious Diseases (ID) and Bill Atkinson’s stint as DA ad interim for GHN. They, perhaps even more than the rest of us, were delighted to welcome Rachelle Mainard and Felicia Hancock to their new positions as permanent DAs for ID and GHN, respectively. Each is off to a great start, as is Crystal Swalwell, the new Clinical Administrative Director (CAD) for the Endocrine Center.

Needless to say, there is much to be done in FY17. Permanent searches are either underway or planned this fall for permanent Chairs of Emergency Medicine, GHN, and Symptom Research. The search for the permanent Chair of Cardiology, necessitated by Dr. Ed Yeh’s departure to assume the position of Chair of Medicine at the University of Missouri, will commence in the spring. In the meantime, the Division will continue to strategically expand its clinical activities, which I am pleased to state now includes Psychiatry.

The focus in the next year or so extends to new opportunities in the Houston Area Locations. In addition, we will continue to grow our research portfolio with strategic recruitments and a new Division-based research initiative soon to be released.

Finally, we will continue to cherish and nurture the new Baylor-MD Anderson Internal Medicine Residency program as it grows to its full complement of 15 residents per month starting in July 2017. I hope you are as excited as I am about what we will accomplish this year for our patients and the Institution.
Myrshia Woods, physician assistant, Cardiology, is the recipient of the 14th Annual Geneva and James Briscoe Physician Assistant Award for Excellence. Woods received the news at a department reception held in her honor. One of her nominators is Department Administrator Christine Reid.

“Myrshia is a champion of excellence who demonstrates a sophisticated acumen in cardiovascular disease,” Reid says.

“Her well-developed emotional intelligence provides her with a keen sense of how to achieve positive cooperation and collaboration with all members of the health team; and her spirituality resonates warmth, kindness, and sincerity with her patients and their families.”

Woods is the second consecutive member of the division to win this award. Kathleen Smith, physician assistant, Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health, received the award in 2015.

The 2016 Rogers Award for Excellence recognized employees in the area of prevention. Two members of Internal Medicine, Roy Chemaly, M.D., and Betty Spears, were among the five finalists. From left: Roy Chemaly, M.D., Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health; Betty Spears, Dermatology; the 2016 winner Maher Karam-Hage, M.D., Behavior Science; Regina Rogers; Karen Basen-Engquist, Ph.D., Behavioral Science; Banu Arun, M.D., Breast Medical Oncology, and MD Anderson President Ron DePinho, M.D.

Best Boss – best practices

William Atkinson IV, division administrator, was named one of five Best Boss recipients during a reception on Monday, Oct. 17.

Atkinson has served multiple roles in the division, first as department administrator in Emergency Medicine, and then as department administrator in General Internal Medicine before taking on the division-level leadership role in summer 2015.

Atkinson was nominated by a number of his employees including Kate Lakhani, project director, who recalled a recent meeting in which performance awards were presented to employees.

“Bill allowed us to go around the room and share positive stories about the award recipients,” Lakhani says. “This was the best type of recognition because it came from our peers and everyone felt more connected by sharing these stories.”
Mentor extraordinaire

Cielito Reyes-Gibby, D.Ph., associate professor, Emergency Medicine, is the recipient of the 2016 Distinguished Research Faculty Mentor Award. Reyes-Gibby is founding director of The Program in Oncologic Emergency Medicine (POEM), which was established in 2015 to improve patient outcomes by providing an interdisciplinary research hub.

Funded by the National Institutes of Health, POEM is also committed to develop and train physician scientists and graduate students in oncologic emergency research. Reyes-Gibby mentored four faculty in FY16 who have co-authored manuscripts, presented posters at conferences and submitted grants within the past year.

She was recognized during an award’s ceremony Wednesday, Oct. 26, from 4:00-6:30 p.m.

Two named Rogers Award finalists

Roy Chemaly, M.D., professor, Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health; and Betty Spears, program coordinator, Dermatology, were honored during a reception for the finalists of the 2016 Rogers Award for Excellence.

Regina Rogers established the annual award in 1987 in honor of her parents Ben and Julie Rogers. Each year the award rotates among key institutional areas – education, patient care, research, administration and prevention. The 2016 award honored employees in prevention.

This year’s recipient Maher Karam-Hage, M.D., professor, Behavioral Science, received a $15,000 cash prize and a certificate of merit. Chemaly, Spears and two other finalists each received a $1,500 cash prize, funded by The Julie and Ben Rogers Award for Excellence endowment.

Vacated positions lead to changing of guard, ad interim chair appointments

Division Head David Tweardy, M.D., has elected to serve as Chair ad interim for Cardiology with the departure of Edward Yeh, M.D. For the past year, Tweardy has served as Chair ad interim for Symptom Research when founding Chair Charles Cleeland, Ph.D., professor, stepped down from his administrative duties.

Tweardy has passed along the leadership role in Symptom Research to Annemieke Kavelaars, Ph.D., professor.

Kavelaars joined the faculty as Professor in Symptom Research in 2012. Before MD Anderson, Kavelaars was among the faculty at the University Medical Center Utrecht in The Netherlands. She subsequently combined that position with a part-time appointment at the University of Illinois – Urbana/Champaign.

An internationally recognized leader in the field of brain-immune interactions, Kavelaars’ work focuses on neuroimmune mechanisms underlying transition from acute to chronic pain and mechanisms underlying comorbid pain and depression. Her work has identified the kinase G protein Receptor Coupled Kinase 2 (GRK2) as a key regulator of the pain response.

Since moving to MD Anderson, Kavelaars has expanded her studies to identification of mechanisms and novel interventions for chemotherapy-induced neuropathy and cognitive deficits.

She is also committed to education and has served on the Graduate School for Biosciences (GSBS) faculty since joining MD Anderson. Kavelaars is involved in didactic teaching and personally advises and mentors trainees. One reflection of her dedication is her nomination for the 2016 Robert M. Chamberlain Distinguished Mentor Award.
Cardiology Chair Edward T.H. Yeh, M.D., leaves MD Anderson

Onco-Cardiology leader named Chair of Medicine at University of Missouri School of Medicine

In 2000 when MD Anderson President John Mendelsohn, M.D., wanted to develop a department of cardiology, he invited Edward T.H. Yeh, M.D., to build it.

“Dr. (Robert) Gagel hired Dr. (Jean-Bernard) Durand. I hired everybody else,” says Yeh, who built the department from two faculty to 16 over the past 16 years.

On August 31, Yeh left MD Anderson for another “build” as Chair of Medicine at the University of Missouri School of Medicine.

“It’s a regular medicine department that has all of the divisions,” he says.

A penchant for something that moves and contracts

While Yeh has lived in Houston for more than two decades, his story line beforehand is filled with twists and turns in his personal and professional lives.

Yeh was 17-years-old when his family moved from Taiwan to San Francisco. After high school graduation, he attended University of California at Berkeley for undergraduate studies and University of California Davis for medical school. He completed his internship and one year of residency in San Francisco.

And then he says, “I met a girl who decided she was going to Boston.”

The “girl” is Hui-Ming Chang, M.D., trained in anesthesia and pain medicine, who Yeh eventually married. Their 27-year-old son Andrew is an attorney.

Yeh’s professional career also took a different route. He originally planned a career in immunology.
“After I got to Boston, everyone was talking about research, so I decided to see what it was all about.”

Yeh spent three years in a basic immunology laboratory and realized he enjoyed it. He chose the subspecialty of rheumatology, a field in which he could conduct immunology research, and then he realized, “I like something that moves and contracts, so I decided to be retrained as a cardiologist.”

**Making a fashion and research statement**

Yeh and his wife migrated to Houston in 1992 for him to focus on cardiology and learn from a leader in the field, James Willerson, M.D., who, at the time, was Internal Medicine Chair at UT Health Science Center.

Known for wearing his signature bowtie, Yeh began to leave his mark in research in his discovery of Small Ubiquitin-like Modifier (SUMO), a family of small proteins that attach and detach from other proteins in cells to modify their function.

“This is an important area in biology and medicine,” Yeh says. In his 20 years of SUMO research, he organized eight international SUMO conferences – six were held at MD Anderson. The seventh was in Shanghai, as is the eighth.

**During his tenure, Yeh built the clinical structure of the department to include all subspecialties of cardiology.**

Yeh’s wife, once again, influenced his move when he transitioned to MD Anderson.

“She was a faculty member of the Department of Anesthesia. She always told me how great the institution was, so that’s why I decided to come here. I didn’t have to move my home or lab. All I did was change my parking card and enter the trenches to take care of cancer patients’ heart problems.”

**Onco-Cardiology becomes new discipline**

During his tenure, Yeh built the clinical structure of the department to include all subspecialties of cardiology.

“It’s a full-fledged cardiology department that provides the best cardiac care to cancer patients. It’s very unique. We are the first ones who started it and it is emulated by the world. We are proud to be a leader of this movement,” he says.

His research interests have expanded, too, to include the study of doxorubicin-induced cardiotoxicity.

“The old theory hypothesizes that doxorubicin-induced cardiotoxicity is the result of reactive oxygen species (ROS) generation due to redox-cycling of doxorubicin. My research showed that cardiomyocyte-specific deletion of Topoisomerase IIb (Top2b) prevented this dreaded complication.”

He says this causes a paradigm shift in this field and leads to better strategies for preventing this dreaded complication.

Yeh is also a leader in adult stem cell research. He showed that CD34+ cells or mesenchymal stem cells repair damaged heart through releasing of pro-survival and factors that promote growth of blood vessels.

**Leaving a legacy**

Yeh points to other contributions which include published works. He edited a textbook, Cancer and the Heart, in 2006. The second edition was published in 2013. He also organized three Cancer and the Heart International Conferences, considered the definitive meetings in the emerging field of Onco-Cardiology, from 2010 to 2014.

In the past year, Yeh edited another book, MD Anderson Practices (MAPS) in Onco-Cardiology, in which he and his faculty share their unique expertise in the cardiac care of the cancer patient.

Yeh has also mentored more than 40 physicians and basic scientists who have become independent investigators and chairs of departments. But now his scope will expand from cancer to a multitude of programs and services.

“I have to say that it is relatively simple to run a department of cardiology in the cancer center. As Chair at the University of Missouri School of Medicine, I will have 10 divisions, 130 faculty, and 70 residents.”

One thing may not change – the signature bow tie.

And Yeh says he is fortunate that his wife will be working with him in his new role, initially helping him with his research.

But he has already realized the importance of football at the University of Missouri, otherwise known as Mizzou. Yeh recently joked at Internal Medicine Grand Rounds that he is considering the purchase of season tickets for the Mizzou Tiger football games.

Perhaps he should consider a tiger-striped bowtie, too.
Harrys Torres, M.D., associate professor, Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health, has been appointed medical director of the Internal Medicine Center, Main Building, effective October 4. Torres, who previously served as associate medical director, is also director of the Infectious Diseases Clinic and the founder and director of the Hepatitis C (HCV) Clinic, the first established in the United States devoted to managing HCV in cancer patients.

Board certified in Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases, Torres has additional accreditations for HIV/AIDS and Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

Outside the clinic setting, Torres is principal investigator for multiple research grants, with his major research interest in facilitating translational research in the prevention, detection and treatment of HCV in patients with cancer. His work on HCV has been awarded multiple times by the American Society of Clinical Oncology, among others.

Torres earned his medical degree from the Universidad de Oriente School of Medicine, Barcelona, Venezuela. He completed his internship and residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in infectious diseases at Universidad Central de Venezuela, in Caracas, Venezuela. Torres moved to the U.S. and completed another residency in internal medicine at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston where he was also a fellow in infectious diseases. He then completed a fellowship in HIV/AIDS.

Crystal Swalwell, M.S., an experienced oncology nurse with 14 years of professional ambulatory and inpatient experience, became Endocrine Center Clinical Administrative Director on June 27. In her new position, Swalwell manages the strategic planning and marketing efforts related to the Endocrine Center patient population and serves as member of the institutional nursing leadership team. She also works in collaboration with the division to develop annual patient volume projections based on history and work to develop new programs.

Swalwell joined The James Comprehensive Cancer Center at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center in 2002 as a staff nurse. She quickly moved up the career ladder, first as an Administrative Nursing Supervisor, and then transitioned to the role of Clinic Nurse Manager within the Radiation Oncology Department. Most recently, she was Clinic Nurse Manager of the Endocrinology Medical Oncology Ambulatory Clinic.

An Oncology Certified Nurse, Swalwell earned her Bachelor degree from Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, and her Master of Science in Nursing Administration degree from Mount Carmel College of Nursing in Columbus, Ohio.

Before Swalwell’s appointment, Dea Tulio has been serving as Endocrine Center Clinical Administrative Director in an ad interim capacity, in addition to her role as Nurse Manager.
Mainard accepts ID administrator role

Rachelle Mainard, J.D., C.R.A., became the department administrator in the Department of Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health (ID) on August 1.

Mainard has been with MD Anderson for three years as Associate Director of Finance in Grants and Contracts where she provided post award leadership and fiscal management of sponsored programs.

Her contributions during her tenure are numerous. They include the eCRT upgrade, development and delivery of the Research Operations Curriculum (ROC), implementation of various standard operating procedures and ensuring compliance with federal regulations (FFATA). She was also involved in improvements in financial reporting, specifically around CPRIT.

Before joining MD Anderson, Mainard served as Grants and Contracts Director for The Geneva Foundation. In this role, she was responsible for institutional leadership, development and implementation of strategic plans/imperatives, as well as management of teams, processes and budgets.

Before joining Geneva, she was program manager in the Department of Epidemiology, School of Public Health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

A native Alabaman, Mainard earned a Business Administration degree from Samford University in Homewood, Alabama. She completed her Juris Doctor degree in 2003 from The University of Alabama School of Law in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Since May, Damian Walsh, department administrator in Symptom Research, has served a dual role as ad interim administrator in ID during the search.

GHN welcomes new department administrator

Felicia Hancock, employed with the University of Arkansas for Medical Service (UAMS) in Little Rock, became Department Administrator in Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition on Monday, Sept. 12.

Hancock’s progressive leadership at UAMS spans 28 years. In her most recent position, she was Department Administrator in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Genetics since 2011. In that role, Hancock oversaw day-to-day operations of two complex clinical practices in which she managed the financial, human resources and administrative functions of the departments. She also managed and provided oversight of projects, programs and procedures that included academic, research and clinical efforts.

In a previous position as Department Administrator in Physiology and Biophysics (2005-2011), Hancock led a complex research department where she managed a $10 million budget. Her fiscal management repertoire also includes experience as Assistant Division Administrator/Fiscal Officer of the Department of Psychiatry (2001-2005). She was also Program Manager/Accountant in the Department of Physiology and Neurosurgery and the Grants Accounting Office in her initial position at UAMS.

Hancock earned her Bachelor of Business Administration and Marketing Degree from the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, AR. She is also a graduate of the inaugural class of the Leadership Institute at UAMS.

Since June, Division Administrator Bill Atkinson has served as ad interim administrator during the search.
Noman Ali, M.D.

Sugar Land resident Noman Ali, M.D., received his Medical Degree from Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) in May. Ali excelled academically at Houston Baptist University (HBU) where he graduated magna cum laude with a double major in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and Chemistry.

As a Welch scholar in Chemistry at HBU, Ali studied chemistry techniques that are required to convert industrial scale procedures into micro scale laboratory procedures. The work led to the development of micro scale laboratory procedures that currently aid undergraduate students to understand different mechanisms of interactions in organic chemistry.

Ali continued his interest in research at BCM with work on projects that study the effects of aging on the human brain. Fluent in three languages, English, Hindi and Urdu, Ali participated in BCM’s Global Health Track and health camps world-wide. His multi-lingual background has already served his well.

As a medical student, Ali explained implications of low potassium diets or blood glucose control to an elderly Pakistani patient with ESRD in her native language. He also provided her with culturally appropriate educational material.

According to BCM Nephrology Associate Professor Sreedhar Mandayam, M.D., “This led to an improvement in the patient’s quality of life and a reduction in presentation to the hospital with life-threatening hyperkalemia and pulmonary edema.”

It’s because of efforts like this that Ali received the BCM Humanism Award in 2012 and the BCM Power of Professionalism Award in 2014. He is only the second person to have received the Power of Professionalism Award as a third year student.
Robert Hester, M.D.

Tennessee native Robert Hester shifted careers from health care administration to patient care.

Hester earned his undergraduate degree at Davidson College in North Carolina, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. He went on to Harvard R.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston where he earned a Master of Science degree in Health Policy and Administration.

By the time Hester started medical school at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis, he already had four years of experience as a Finance Manager in Pharmacy Services at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. In that role, he planned and oversaw $100 million departmental operating and capital budgets as well as institutional pharmaceutical leadership.

It was his work in patient safety and quality improvement at Memorial Sloan-Kettering that inspired him to be a physician.

“As I worked with inspiring physicians and saw the passion they brought to fighting cancer, I realized that the intellectual challenge of medicine, combined with its innate mission to serve others was the career I had long been searching for.”

Hester briefly returned to Memorial Sloan-Kettering for a Medical Student Summer Fellowship in Research where he analyzed 10 years of data regarding overall survival and disease progression in patients with melanoma on various chemotherapy regimens.

Hester won numerous awards during his senior year in medical school including the Bland Cannon Scholarship which is given in recognition of respect, empathy, compassion, and humanism for patients and a high degree of academic achievement.

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Rafee Talukder, M.D.

Ever since he was a little boy growing up in Houston, Rafee Talukder has been fascinated with Sherlock Holmes and his ability to analyze and solve mysteries. Talukder says his experiences in medical school attracted him to Internal Medicine for the same reason. “Internal Medicine doctors are the detectives of medicine,” he says. “They are usually the first ones to see the patient. By using the patient’s history and examining diagnostic clues, physical exam findings, labs and imaging, they are able to diagnosis and treat the patient,” he explains.

Born in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Talukder is fluent in Bengali and English and has a proficiency in Arabic. He grew up in San Antonio where he attended medical school at the University of Texas School of Medicine after earning his undergraduate degree from Boston College.

Volunteerism is second nature to Talukder, who helped his family open a girls’ orphanage and free health clinic in his father’s home village of Jalakhati in Bangladesh. Talukder brought his dedication to his patients in the wards as a medical student. Assistant Professor of Medicine Scott DePaul, M.D., The University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, recognized him as the strongest intern who offered valuable contributions to management plans on a daily basis.

“Rafee devised an excellent management plan and lead family discussions regarding the patient’s treatment and plan of care. Fortunately, the patient was able to return home and enjoy his remaining time with his loved ones.”

Neeraj Joshi, M.D.

A native of Illinois, Neeraj Joshi earned his undergraduate degree in Integrative Biology at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. He received his Medical Degree from Rush Medical College of Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois.

Joshi was in his first year of residency in the Surgical Residency program at Henry Ford Hospital when he decided to pursue a career in Internal Medicine.

“While I relished the opportunity to care for multiple inpatients with complex medical and social problems, I found myself drawn to the intricacies of patient care deemed more fitting with the domain of medicine,” Joshi says.

Program Director Ann Woodward, M.D., was sorry to see Joshi leave her program, but she supported his transition. “His interest in education and thirst for knowledge and hard work are something that I wished I could have in every resident,” she wrote.

As a postdoctoral fellow, Joshi worked in the Lam Lab at Wayne State University in Detroit where he led projects in vascular tissue engineering and vascular disease modeling. Mai Lam, Ph.D., commented, “Dr. Joshi’s expertise in general surgery with a focus on vascular surgery and medicine was perfect for one of our major projects in which we are developing novel methods to tissue engineer vascular constructs.”

Joshi’s volunteer experience included serving as a steering committee member for the Indian American Health Organization Free Health Clinic and delivering outpatient surgical services to patients in an economically disadvantaged area of Detroit.

Volunteerism is second nature to Talukder, who helped his family open a girls’ orphanage and free health clinic...
The Texas Medical Center is familiar territory to Chief Resident Tony Pastor, M.D. “I grew up five minutes from here, and attended Holy Ghost Elementary School and St. Thomas High School,” says Pastor, one of five chief residents rotating among the hospitals in the Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) Internal Medicine Residency Program.

Pastor left Houston for a short time to earn an undergraduate degree in Neuroscience at Johns Hopkins University.

He selected the MD Anderson track for the first six months of his chief residency because he saw it as a clean slate. “It’s really exciting to be part of molding a program,” Pastor says.

Pastor met earlier this year with Program Site Director Amit Lahoti, M.D., and they both decided to make the MD Anderson experience more like the others in the BCM program, which includes a morning report. Initially four residents attended the sessions. “It’s hard to discuss a case with four residents,” Pastor says. “Word of the morning reports spread and four or five faculty started attending them in July. That definitely added the last component, an expert opinion.”

He recalled the discussion centering on an extremely rare case. “The faculty just watched us struggle with it, and then one of them said, ‘I think this is POEMS syndrome.’ That was spot on, which is great for the residents to see this expert faculty person think this through and come up with the correct answer.”

Lahoti says the morning report is only one example of the importance of having Pastor on site. “He’s taken ownership of the Residency Program, and has made a tremendous effort to make it successful.”

Ellen Manzullo, M.D., clinical deputy division head, says Pastor has taken the training program to a new level. “Tony has done a spectacular job engaging the housestaff, and his enthusiasm is contagious. He also serves as a role model as we work to train the next generation of internists who specialize in onco-medicine.”

A different breed

Pastor says the BCM/MD Anderson Internal Medicine Residency Program offers a unique opportunity to the residents. The balance of didactics and learning is pretty even, he says, and the faculty aren’t as dependent on the residents to help them get through their workflow as they are at the other four hospitals.

“He’s taking ownership of the Residency Program, and has made a tremendous effort to make it successful.”

Ellen Manzullo, M.D., clinical deputy division head, says Pastor has taken the training program to a new level. “Tony has done a spectacular job engaging the housestaff, and his enthusiasm is contagious. He also serves as a role model as we work to train the next generation of internists who specialize in onco-medicine.”

Before being selected a chief resident, Pastor spent the past four years at BCM where he has participated in a combined internal medicine and pediatrics residency. He’ll be chief resident at Ben Taub, before he heads to Boston next summer to begin a five-year fellowship in pediatric cardiology at Children’s Hospital.

As he reflects on his time in Houston, Pastor reminisces about the great educational experiences that he has witnessed which are available to all trainees. “Things that you see in textbooks that you may never see in another part of the country, you will see here like the crazy advanced stages of disease. There is this excitement or air of learning in the Texas Medical Center.”

Tony Pastor, chief resident
**Cardiology**

Jose Banchs, M.D., associate professor was selected to serve on the steering committee for the World Alliance Societies of Echocardiography Normal Values Study, sponsored by the American Society of Echocardiography. The study plans to answer if normal chamber quantification values vary across countries, geographical regions and cultures.

Jean-Bernard Durand, M.D., associate professor, has been confirmed as a Fellow of the Heart Failure Society of America. He was selected for his outstanding credentials and achievement in Heart Failure medicine.

Rohit Moudgil, M.D., Ph.D., is the first Onco-Cardiology Fellow. Moudgil received his medical and doctor of philosophy degrees from the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He completed his internal residency, where he was chief resident, and a fellowship in Cardiology from the University of Ottawa, Ontario.

For the past two years, Moudgil has been in the Yeh research lab studying the role of Topoisomerase II Beta in inflammation and aging. During his spare time, Moudgil is an avid traveler. Once he went to a small town near the Arctic Circle to provide cardiac care to its residents in the month of February. The temperature would dip down to -76°.

**Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders**

Retired Clinical Professor Rena Sellin, M.D., received the Making Cancer History Patient Care Award before a Grand Rounds audience on Friday, June 30. Sellin was selected for her commitment to educating trainees and fellows, research and her compassionate patient care. Her contributions to patient care stretched over a more than 35-year career at MD Anderson.

**General Internal Medicine**

Huifang “Linda” Lu, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor, was named a fellow of the American Association of Asthma, Allergy and Immunology (AAAAI), which recognizes individuals for their commitment to the specialty.

**Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health**

Roy Chemaly, M.D., professor, received the division’s Distinguished Paper Award in Clinical Research for the article, “Utility of the enzyme-linked Immunospot interferon-y-release assay to predict the risk of cytomegalovirus infection in hematopoietic cell transplant recipients,” that appeared in the June 2016 edition of *Journal of Infectious Diseases*.

Deputy Division Head Research Dimitrios Kontoyiannis, M.D., Sc.D., was selected as a founding fellow of the Academy of the European Confederation of Medical Mycology. The distinction recognizes scholars with outstanding expertise in medical mycology.

Issam Raad, M.D., chair and professor, was named a recipient of the 2016 UT Regents’ Outstanding Teacher Award. He and four other MD Anderson awardees were honored with a dinner and reception, Wednesday, Aug. 24 in Austin for their extraordinary performance in the classroom and their innovation in instruction.

Dimpy Shah, M.D., Ph.D., instructor, received a two-year, $50,000 Cancer Survivorship Research Seed Money Grant for her application, “Bronchiolitis obliterans in hematopoietic stem cell transplant survivors.”
**Nephrology**

Farhad Danesh, M.D., section chief and professor, received the division’s Distinguished Paper Award in Basic Research for his work, “miR-93 regulates Msk2-mediated chromatin remodeling in diabetic nephropathy.” The article, which appeared in Nature Communications in June, was also featured on the Faculty Resources website.

The Section of Nephrology hosted the first Onco-Nephrology Symposium, Friday, Oct. 14, in Onstead Auditorium. More than 80 registrants from the Texas Medical Center and as far away as Australia and Japan attended the conference. Among the key topics discussed were common renal complications that occur from cancer and its treatments and discussions on how to prevent or treat nephrotoxicity associated with cancer.

**Pulmonary Medicine**

Vickie Shannon, M.D., professor, will receive a Smith College Medal at Rally Day, Thursday, Feb. 23, 2017. The Medal, first presented in 1964, is given to alumnae who, in the judgment of trustees, exemplify the true purpose of a liberal arts education through their lives and their work.

**Symptom Research**

The National Institutes of Health granted a competitive renewal in the amount of $375,286 to principal investigators Robert Dantzer, D.V.M, Ph.D., professor, Cobi Heijnen, Ph.D., professor, and Annemieke Kavelaars, Ph.D., for the project, “Neuroimmune mechanisms of recover from comorbid depression and chronic pain.”

Quiling Shi, Ph.D., assistant professor, received a one-year, $75,000 Institutional Research (IRG) Grant for her work, “Establishing a symptom monitoring tool for patients with esophageal cancer.”

Xin Shelley Wang, M.D., professor, was awarded an R01 grant from the National Institutes of Health in the amount of $638,160 for her work, “Improving recovery after major cancer surgery using patient-reported outcomes.”

Lori Williams, Ph.D., assistant professor, received a two-year, $50,000 Cancer Survivorship Research Seed Money Grant for her application, “Pilot study to compare symptom burden of generic Imatinib and Gleevec.”
Victoria Serpas, M.D., second year resident, was accepted for a poster presentation at the European Society of Medical Oncology (ESMO) 2016 Congress October 7-11 in Denmark.

Serpas presented her abstract, “Selective registration of non-primary endpoints in randomized clinical trials in oncology: A comparison of endpoint reporting between clinical trial protocols and U.S. national clinical trial registration.” She also received a travel grant from ESCO.

According to Residency Program Site Director Amit Lahoti, M.D., “Dr. Serpas is a shining example of the high caliber of residents that we have on our track. To engage in research during a very busy intern year and have an abstract accepted to an international meeting is no small feat. We are very proud of her.”