

Schadler Awarded CPRIT Grant to Pursue Connection Between Exercise and Chemotherapy



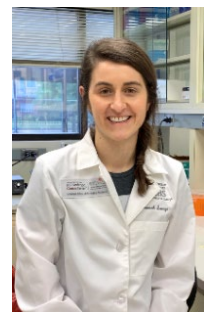
Keri Schadler, Ph.D., assistant professor of Pediatrics—Research, was awarded an \$899,922 grant from the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas ([CPRIT](#)) in February. The funding supports her ongoing investigation of the “Role of S1PR1 in exercise-induced tumor vascular remodeling.” Schadler studies how exercise impacts tumor biology in the laboratory and has been working with physicians and surgeons in clinical trials at MD Anderson to determine if exercise can change the vasculature of tumors in patients undergoing treatment. If the change positively alters the structure of blood vessels, it may improve chemotherapy delivery specifically to the tumor and could potentially improve survival.

Necessary studies are underway to determine if exercise works in patients as predicted in mice. MD Anderson received a total of \$19.6 million in the most recent funding period to support research, recruitment and prevention efforts. Learn more about recent [CPRIT awardees](#) at MD Anderson.

Schadler Student Wins CPRIT Graduate Scholar Award

Congratulations to **Hannah Savage**, a graduate research assistant in the Schadler Laboratory, for winning a 2019-2020 CPRIT Graduate Scholar Award! The stipend is part of an innovative program that supports high-quality mentoring in basic biological concepts pertaining to cancer, helps trainees develop critical thinking skills in the area, and helps them develop areas they may be interested in pursuing and future translational researchers.

Savage, a UT Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences student, is working on a project that focuses on elucidating molecular mechanisms by which exercise influences tumor vasculature. The goal is to identify exercise responsive pathways in tumor endothelial cells and important mediators of tumor vessel hyper-permeability.



First Young Adult Wellness Retreat Leaves Attendees Smiling, Looking Forward to Next Experience

By Special Contributor—Wendy Griffith, LCSW, AYA program manager

For our inaugural Young Adult Wellness Weekend, we took 22 young adult cancer survivors from across the MD Anderson campus to the Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort & Spa outside of Austin. Kendra Scott generously funded this amazing opportunity and provided impressive swag bags for the attendees. She also shared her inspirational story and spent time with the patients. We kicked off the weekend with a light-hearted welcome party where the attendees got to meet Kendra, make a piece of jewelry at the Kendra Scott Color Bar, and enjoy appetizers and ‘mocktails.’ The remainder of the weekend was a whirlwind of activities including yoga—**Dr. Mike Roth** can tell you all about the new skills he learned—and horseback riding. There was also an Iron Chef cooking competition—**Tomika Gamble** and **Chloe Tillman** mastered the guacamole and mango salsa—hip hop, dance class prodigy **Dr. Andy Livingston** can teach you his moves—and making s’mores by the campfire.

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Wellness Retreat Continued--

We also had small groups for more intimate sharing, which I facilitated with [Heather DeRousse \(social work counselor\)](#), two art sessions facilitated by **Zach Gresham**, and three mindfulness sessions that I lead focused on deep breathing and guided meditation. One thing we heard continuously through the weekend was that most of the attendees had never been in a space with so many other young adult survivors! And while it felt great to be able to provide them with that opportunity, a small part of me couldn't help but be bothered. There are roughly 7,000 young adults treated at MD Anderson each year. 7000! And yet they were blown away at being in the same room with only 22 of them.

I think for all of the staff this reinforces two things. The first is that we are moving in the right direction, and the

second is: there is an immense amount of work still to be done.

Since the retreat, attendees have been posting on social media about all the fun they had and the friends they made. They've also been texting each other daily. They check in with one another, post about upcoming AYA events, ask about appointment schedules so that they can be here to support one another, etc.

It's powerful to see the ripple effect of sharing one simple weekend together. The Young Adult Wellness Weekend was an amazing experience, and I think I speak for everyone involved when I say that we are so thrilled to have been able to provide that unique opportunity for our young adult patients.

Future Redefined Shows School and Job Prospects Still Bright for Young Adult Survivors

The Pediatric Education and Creative Arts Team hit it out of The Park—literally—with its first “[Future Redefined College and Career Fair](#),” held March 6. More than 53 patients and their families attended the event, which featured dozens of representatives from community partners such as Google, several local colleges and universities, the Texas Workforce Commission, United Airlines, Four Seasons Hotel, and MD Anderson's Human Resources department, among others.

“We could not have been more pleased with the turnout. The purpose of our career fair was to talk to our patients, ages 13-30, about their future plans because even though they were diagnosed with cancer, their work and academic future is still possible and very bright beyond treatment,” said **Bonne Butler, M.Ed.**, senior coordinator at our in-hospital school, and a lead organizer for the career fair.

Many of our patients came thoroughly prepared! One patient who will graduate in a few months came to the fair with beautifully printed resumes and passed them out to company representatives.

Another patient still in active treatment attended the event even though he will graduate in 2020. He also had resumes and spoke to people about career prospects. “Our community partners were so impressed with both young men for their determination, and character that they promised to work to set them up with internships. If it happens for either patient, the effort was worth it,” said Butler.



Education Team Shares Approaches for Serving Cancer Patients Returning to School

The Pediatric Education & Creative Arts Program hosted an Education Conference in October for local school officials, internal nurses, and psychosocial support professionals. The platform was designed to bridge gaps in serving students with cancer and other chronic conditions. Topics included lesson plans for inpatients, approaches to helping parents get school districts to provide services that help their kids become successful upon returning to class, and managing grief. More than 60 attendees heard from **Mike Roth, M.D.**, associate professor and Leukemia specialist, and from motivational speaker Paul Long, who talked about engagement.

Early Childhood Education and Arts in Medicine Coordinators Share Practices with Peers

By Special Contributor Ashley Smith, B.A.



Laura Rodriguez, M.S., early childhood coordinator, joined **Ashley Smith, B.A.**, program coordinator for Arts in Medicine (AIM), to give a presentation at an Early Childhood Education Showcase that was organized by the Houston Museum Educators Roundtable (HMER) on April 2. Local educators from several museums and unconventional learning settings came together to discuss ideas and innovations in programming. Attendees learned about the collaborative effort between early childhood (EC) Education and Arts in Medicine. In a classroom environment, these special teachers work together to accomplish many of the children's core developmental goals, as well as the individual goals of each program.

This showcase demonstrated a typical activity used in our class that accomplishes many of the intended goals in an age-appropriate way. Using shaving cream, liquid watercolors, and eye droppers, participants created "marbled" collage papers to keep. This activity encompasses many goals for Early Childhood Education including (but certainly not limited to) fine motor control, counting, following directions, and science concepts like how materials mix with one another; and Arts in Medicine goals like color identification and mixing, sensory stimulation, and project-based skill-building. It's a LOT of fun and makes a HUGE mess! Parents of Children's Cancer Hospital patients can connect their children to the EC and AIM programs by requesting consults from their care teams, or contacting school@M.D.anderson.org and aim@M.D.anderson.org.

Kim's Place Reopens with WNBA Star's Family & Teammates Attending Relaunch

Kim's Place reopened on Jan. 18 with a grand rededication on what would have been Kim Perrott's 51st birthday. The former Houston Comets point guard passed away 20 years ago from lung cancer that had metastasized to her brain.

The fun room located on the second floor of the Main Building is brighter, more beautiful, and has new technologies to improve socializing opportunities for adolescents and young adults! Several of Kim's family members attended the ribbon-cutting, including her sister, Loretta Perrot and her mother, Consuella Perrot. Also in attendance were several of our teen pediatric patients, and Kim's teammates Cynthia Cooper and Sheryl Swoopes, along with former coach Van Chancellor! Guests enjoyed lunch and dessert, music, a photobooth, and souvenir basketballs autographed by Cooper, Swoopes, and Chancellor! Kim's Place was built 15 years ago with a contribution from the Houston Rockets and Comets Clutch City Foundation. To learn more about Kim's Place, log on: <http://bit.ly/2FAL48D>.



Our Clinicians Earn Top Rating in CGCAHPS Survey

Patients ranked several Children's Cancer Hospital clinicians as top providers in an ambulatory setting in the Clinician and Group Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CGCAHPS) Survey. The ranking compares providers in all disciplines at more than 1,000 healthcare institutions, including other academic medical centers like MD Anderson.

- **Beatriz Roza, R.N., M.S.**, advanced practice registered nurse, earned a perfect score and is at the top of the 1% group
- **Michael Rytting, M.D.**, listed among top 1%
- **John Slopis, M.D.**, listed among top 1%
- **Steven Waguespack, M.D.**, listed among top 1%

- **Anita Ying, M.D.**, among the top 1%
- **Najat Daw, M.D.**, among the top 10%
- **Soumen Khatua, M.D.**, among the top 10%

Each provider earned top scores in three areas: overall ranking of the provider, whether the patient (or parent/caregiver) would recommend the provider to others, and the quality of the provider's communications. These great scores show our patients appreciate their providers' commitment to their care and communication skills despite the seriousness of their diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment.

Nunez Elected to Institutional Executive Committee

Cesar Nunez, M.D., associate professor, was elected to serve on the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate starting Sept. 1. This group makes recommendations to the Shared Governance Committee, which is the foremost advisory body to the president.



New Faculty Members Join Our Ranks to Expand our Research and Clinical Capabilities



New faculty members who joined the division were not new to MD Anderson. They received some part of their training or spent the first couple of years of their academic careers at this institution.

Following completion of his Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Fellowship at Children's Cancer Hospital, **Branko Cuglievan, M.D.**, returned Jan. 11 as an assistant professor and is providing care to lymphoma patients. The recipient of a 2018 Hyundai Hope Young Investigator Award is also investigating implantable microdevices in Ewing sarcoma patient-derived xenografts (PDX). The goal is to assess tumor response in 24 hours by using a device as small as a grain of rice. Cuglievan is collaborating with biomedical engineers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University. **Maria Chang Swartz, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.D., L.D.**, returned Jan. 1 as an assistant professor, where she is conducting health outcomes research at our South Campus location.



Zsila Sadighi, M.D., joined the division on Nov. 1, 2018, as an associate professor and is seeing neurology and neuro oncology patients. She came from St. Jude Children's Research Hospital's, where she worked for six years after completing an adult and pediatric neuro-oncology fellowship at MD Anderson. At St. Jude, one of her research interests was neurological outcomes in pediatric cancer with an emphasis in brain tumors. She helped St. Jude become the leading site for accrual for a COG trial that investigated modafinil versus placebo in brain tumor patients to determine neurocognitive outcomes, such as improvement in attention, memory, fatigue, and the ability to process information quickly.



Priti Tewari, M.D., returned to the division on Nov. 15, 2018, as an associate professor and director of the Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Fellowship Program. Previously at MD Anderson, she served as the medical director on the bone marrow transplant service focusing on multiple quality initiatives for the team. She created and introduced the inpatient mobility incentive program: TEAM Me as a successful multidisciplinary patient quality improvement program.

Li Co-Leads Study that Discovers Protein That May Be an Effector Target for Glioblastoma

Shulin Li, Ph.D., professor of Pediatrics-Research and MD Anderson colleague Amy Heimberger, M.D., professor of Neurosurgery, have discovered an immune regulator that seems to dictate glioblastoma progression by shutting down immune surveillance, possibly leading to a new area of therapeutic investigation. Findings from their preclinical study were published in the Jan. 25 web issue of [Nature Communications](#).

Several Pediatrics research faculty, affiliated faculty, fellows, and students were awarded grants and published manuscripts in journals since our last newsletter. Some were also invited to review articles and give lectures or presentations. A student won a departmental recognition. Among them:

Publications:

Shulin Li, Ph.D.

- "The Role of Fibrinogen-Like Protein 2 on Immunosuppression and Malignant Progression in Glioma." Coauthors: Latha K, Yan J, Yang Y, Gressot LV, Kong LY, Manyam G, Ezhilarasan R, Wang Q, Sulman EP, Davis RE, Huang S, Fuller GN, Rao A, Heimberger AB, Li S, Rao G. [J Natl Cancer Inst.](#) 2019 Mar 1;111(3):292-300. doi: 10.1093/jnci/djy107.
- "Osteopontin mediates glioblastoma-associated macrophage infiltration and is a therapeutic target." [J Clin Invest.](#) 2019 Jan 2;129(1):137-149. doi: 10.1172/JCI121266. Epub 2018 Nov 19.

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Publications continued---

- “A small molecule Hedgehog agonist HhAg1.5 mediated reprogramming breaks the quiescence of non-injured liver stem cells for rescuing liver failure. “Mitra A, Yan J, Zhang L, Li S.” [Transl Res](#). 2019 Mar;205:44-50. doi: 10.1016/j.trsl.2018.10.004. Epub 2018 Oct 19.
- “The Role of Fibrinogen-Like Protein 2 on Immunosuppression and Malignant Progression in Glioma. “ Coauthors: Latha K, Yan J, Yang Y, Gressot LV, Kong LY, Manyam G, Ezhilarasan R, Wang Q, Sulman EP, Davis RE, Huang S, Fuller GN, Rao A, Heimberger AB, **Li S**, Rao G. [J Natl Cancer Inst](#). 2019 Mar 1;111(3):292-300. doi: 10.1093/jnci/djy107.
- **Stavinoah P, Askins M**, Powell SK, Pillay Smiley, **Robert RS**. “Neurocognitive and Psychosocial Outcomes in Pediatric Brain Tumor Survivors.” Soumen Khatua was the editor of this special edition. [Bioengineering \(Basel\)](#). 2018 Sep 11;5(3). pii: E73. doi: 10.3390/bioengineering5030073.
- Holland AA, Colaluca B, Bailey L, **Stavinoah PL**. Impact of attention on social functioning in pediatric medulloblastoma survivors. *Pediatric hematology and oncology*. 2018 Jan 2;35(1):76-89. PMID: 29652554.

Grants:

Shulin Li, Ph.D.

- NIH/NCI. “Pathway Specific Functional Biomarkers for the Early Detection of Liver Cancer.” Other co-principal investigators are from Johns Hopkins University, Georgetown University, Washington University, and University of Hawaii. Consortium on Translational Research in Early Detection of Liver Cancer: Translational Research Centers (TRC) and the Data Management and Coordinating Center (U01)

Study Section Leader:

Shulin Li, Ph.D.

- Served as a study section for the Department of Defense’s (DOD) Congressionally-Directed Medical Research Program’s (CDMRP) grant review committee to give input on cancer applications for PRCRP - Cancer in Children, Adolescents and Young Adults - Solid Tumors

Presentations:

- Shulin Li, Ph.D., gave two presentations at the Cambridge Healthtech Institute’s 5th Annual Adoptive T Cell Therapy Conference in Boston, Aug. 28-29. The first talk was titled, “Macrophage-Like Circulating Tumor Cells for Prognosis of Metastasis. The second talk was titled, “Simple Therapeutic Approach for Overcoming Solid Tumor Heterogeneity and Boosting T Cell Infiltration/Function.”
- **Grace Nehme, M.D.**, gave a poster presentation. “Autophagy and HSP27: A Potential Link to Define Autophagy Fate in Osteosarcoma,” at the American Association for Cancer Researchers (AACR) Special Conference on Targeting PI3K/mTOR Signaling. “Autophagy and HSP27: A potential link to define autophagy fate in Osteosarcoma.”
- **Jun Yan,**, “FGL2 expression by tumor cells in the CNS impairs systemic adaptive antitumor immune response by suppressing CD103+ dendritic cell differentiation,” at Greehey Children’s Cancer Research Institute Symposium in March.

Conference Allows Knowledge Exchange about Preventing and Managing Stem Cell & CAR-T Complications

More than 70 clinicians who care for pediatric patients receiving stem cell transplantations and CAR-T therapies attended a conference to share best practices in this field. The event, held in February at MD Anderson, was a collaboration between the Children Cancer Hospital, the Pediatric Acute Lung Injury and Sepsis Investigators (PALISI) Network, and the Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses (APHON). Division faculty: Drs. **Kris Mahadeo, Priti Tewari, Shehla Razvi, Sajad Khazal**, and Pediatric Hematology/Oncology fellows **Drs. Sana Mohiuddin, Drishti Ragoonnann, Avis Harden**, and **David McCall**, were among experts leading discussions about evidence-based management of the severe complications that can occur with these high-risk treatments. Attendees also talked about future opportunities for research collaborations and participated in two hands-on simulation training scenarios addressing Sinusoidal Obstruction Syndrome and Cytokine Release Syndrome/Neurotoxicity after CAR-T cell infusion. “The verbal feedback was excellent. We received requests to do more sessions and to share education materials at hospitals throughout the country,” said Tewari.



Our critical care physicians will give presentations on managing intensive care oncology patients at the Pediatric Critical Care Summit of the Americas, Nov. 8, in Houston. Organizers say it will be the first of its kind bilingual assembly that is supported with dual-language translation to ensure full participation and rich discussion. More details at this site: <https://bit.ly/2lqza2S>.

Sheila Brown Honored as Heart of MD Anderson in February



Congratulations to **Sheila Brown, MPS, CCLS**, on being named the Heart of MD Anderson for February! A reception was held for the veteran child life specialist!

Wearing the pink blouse, she was surrounded by Child Life colleagues as she received a plaque, a pin, a badge featuring a photo that will be seen throughout the institution for the next year, and other goodies! Brown says a good day at work means “seeing a lot of kids and making a difference” in their lives. She's been doing that here for 25+ years! Her portrait will remain in several places throughout the institution until February 2020.

Division Recognizes Child Life Month with Many Events

Reverse Medical Play Day at our Pedi Dome was so much fun on March 26! It was among many events held to honor Child Life field.

The fun experience gave our patients the opportunity to "turn the exam tables" on our nurses and doctors, pharmacists and even their parents by performing some of the things they encounter as part of their treatment: exams with stethoscopes, blood pressure readings, shots, blood draw sticks, visits with pharmacists, having a port inserted, experiencing PEG tube feedings, and spending time on hospital beds.



One Camp Down---A Few More to Go!

The first camp of the season—Camp for All 2 U—was a success with lots of happy kids under 12 having a blast. They enjoyed games, exercise and dance opportunities thanks to community partners. The kids explored their artistic abilities through art projects, and wrapped the week of March 11-15 with Pie in the Face.



Future camps are scheduled. Some include:

- May 16—Camp Family Night, Pedi Dome (all ages and parents)
- June 16-21—Camp Star Trails, Burton, TX (ages 6-14)
- June 19—Jr. Camper Day, Burton, TX (ages 4-5 and parents)

Pediatrics faculty and employees can encourage our parents and teen patients to visit our [website](#) and go to the “Camps Program” tab for more information and to gain access to applications. The camps are free and transportation is provided to all off-site locations. Parents who have more than one child must submit applications for each child. Information about our *Camp H-Town* at the Four Seasons Hotel for kids ages nine through 12 will be shared later this spring.

Aiming for Beautiful Artistic Experiences for our Patients

Who Says Ceiling Tiles Can't be Beautiful?

Our patients and their families recently completed a project in which they had a hand in how their hospital will look by painting beautiful tiles that will hang on the ceiling of G9. As part of a special Arts in Medicine (AIM) Program project, they had fun transforming 12 tiles that will be placed above where the bells hang--six at each end of the hall. The AIM team is working with Facilities organizers to figure out when the tiles will be placed.



Da Camera Artists Return to Bring Smiles to our Patients

The AIM Program introduced [Da Camera of Houston](#) orchestral harpist Hope Cowan to provide in-person concerts and played for families enjoying a holiday function at our Pedi Dome in December. Her appearance is part of our Arts in Medicine Program. She played Christmas music and songs by [John Legend](#). Cowan earned a master of music degree from Rice University and now performs professionally with the El Paso Symphony, Symphony of Southeast Texas, and the Mississippi Symphony. She also teaches harp lessons at her studio in Katy.



Singing Sensations...

On January 24, AIM hosted over 80 singers from the Harvard University Choirs who performed for patients and families in three settings – at bedside, in the Pedi Dome, and in The Park.



This spring, AIM began partnering with Houston Ballet's Education and Community Engagement department, to provide patients and families with adapted dance classes at bedside.



The impACT of their Friendship Wears Well



The impACT Council is a patient advisory council for teens at the Children's Cancer Hospital. During a meeting in January, our teen members received a t-shirt and sweatshirt they designed from scratch using words that represent their experience as impACT Council members and as cancer survivors. We think it turned out great! If you're a teen patient or survivor age 13-18 and are interested in sharing your ideas please email impact@mdanderson.org to learn more about joining the impACT Council. By the way, what does the PACT stand for? It means Patient Advisory Council for Teens!

Houston Dynamo Partnership Announcement

Several of our patients took part in the November 2018 announcement that MD Anderson is the official cancer center and jersey partner of the Houston Dynamo. The partnership began in January. At the big party, the team's 2019 away jerseys were revealed showing our strike-through-cancer logo.





Always Appreciated: Support from Community Partners

In the past several months, the Children's Cancer Hospital took part in institutional initiatives and received several philanthropic gifts and in-kind donations to enhance our research, support services, and AYA programs. Among them were:

- **AFLAC My Special Duck**, gave more than a dozen electronic ducks to entertain our patients (ages 3-13) and their siblings during a scavenger hunt event in October. Each duck is valued at \$200 and can offer mock emotional expression, medical and nurturing play, music and dancing, breathing and heartbeats, and has a removable skin which can be washed to achieve high hygiene standards.
- **Boot Walk**, Theda Williams (in photo) was the CCH team lead for MD Anderson's effort that raised \$2 million dollars in November. Our team raised \$3,392.21.

- **Kendra Scott Texas Charm Promotion**—Sales of the golden Texas state charm, introduced during Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in September 2018, helped to fund the AYA Young Adult Wellness Weekend in March 2019.
- Employees and customers of **STRIPES Convenience Stores** donated more than \$700,000 through its Celebrates Tomorrows Campaign this past fall.
- **Energy Transfer** and the Sunoco Foundation presented a check for over \$1.6 million in December. Division Head **Richard Gorlick, M.D.**, and **Nancy Gordon, M.D.**, were part of the event, as well as pediatric parent ambassador Jennifer Robinson. The funds are supporting innovative cancer research and patient care initiatives in Pediatrics.

Doctors, nurses, and the entire team at Children's Cancer Hospital are diving in to raise money for pediatric brain cancer research by participating in **Swim Across America** on May 4. Our team is called **Swim4Kids** and you can join.

Swimmers of all ages and skill levels are invited to take part in our

Swim Across America: Swim4Kids



inaugural event hosted in Lake Houston at Alexander Deussen Park.

Proceeds benefit pediatric and adult neuro-oncology research at MD Anderson. Log onto our team page to learn more or sign up! <https://bit.ly/2XOdkuj>

Editorial Team

Richard Gorlick, M.D., Division Head and Department Chair

Lisa Hafemeister, MHA, FACHE, Division Administrator

Michelle Gatliff, BS, Assoc Dir, Pediatrics Finance

Kevin Long, MBA, Dir, Pediatric Operations

Maxsane Mitchell, BS, Prog Mgr, Pediatrics (Editor)

Tajuanna Thibodeaux, MBA, Dept Administrator, Pediatrics-Research

Theda Williams, Program Manager



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