



The University of Texas Systemwide Brain Research Summit

NOV. 18-19, 2024
AUSTIN, TX

Speaker Biographies



Jorge Almeida, MD, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Psychiatry &
Behavioral Sciences
Dell Medical School, UT Austin

Jorge Almeida, M.D., Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin and director of the Bipolar Disorder Center. He has over twenty years of research experience in neuroimaging and neuromodulation in mood disorders.



Zhiqiang An, PhD
Professor and Director of the Texas
Therapeutics Institute &
Vice President of Drug Discovery
UT Health Houston

Dr. Zhiqiang An is Professor and the Robert A. Welch Distinguished University Chair in Chemistry, Director of the Texas Therapeutics Institute, and Vice President of Drug Discovery at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. His laboratory focuses on antibody drug discovery. During the last 10 years, he has advanced six drug candidates to clinical trials for diseases ranging from acute myeloid leukemia (IO-202), cancer bone metastasis (ALMB-0168), solid tumor (IO-108), spinal cord injury (ALMB-0166), COVID-19 (IGM6268), and solid tumor (PRTH-101). Previously, he served as Chief scientific Officer at Epitomics, Inc. and was Director of Biologics Research at Merck Research Laboratories. Dr. An is an elected fellow of Society of Industrial Microbiology and Biotechnology (SIMB, 2015), American Academy of Microbiology (ASM, 2018), American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS, 2019), and the National Academy of Inventors (NAI, 2022).



Noelle C. Anastasio, PhD

Associate Professor
Center for Addiction Sciences &
Therapeutics, Department of
Pharmacology and Toxicology
UT Medical Branch

Dr. Anastasio is an Associate Professor in the UTMB Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology and member of the Center for Addiction Sciences and Therapeutics. Her research focuses on the biology and psychopharmacology of individual differences in decision-making seen with respect to neuropsychiatric and substance use disorders. Her research proposes that biobehavioral phenotypes, such as trait impulsivity or state-induced drug-seeking, would be advantageous to subclassify individuals so that potential subgroup biosignatures could be elucidated and implemented as drug discovery targets for precision medicine. Her goal is to determine that neuronal glutamate and serotonin systems mechanistically converge to govern these behaviors and that rebalancing these systems may ultimately support recovery. She leads the Center for Addiction Sciences and Therapeutics Cellular and Molecular Signaling Core. She has 15+ years of experience, 60+ publications, and two patents.



Greg Bonnen, MD

Chair of the House
Appropriations Committee and
State Representative for House
District 24

Representative Greg Bonnen (Friendswood) is Chair of the House Appropriations Committee and is currently serving his sixth term as State Representative for House District 24.

Prior to serving as Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, he served as Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher and Public Education and as a member of the Insurance Committee. He has also previously served on the Energy Resources Committee; Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services; Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government, the Judiciary, and Criminal Justice; Joint Interim Committee on Coastal Barrier Systems; Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA) Funding Structure Oversight Board; Interim Committee on Border Security; and Interim Committee on Mental Health.

Dr. Bonnen is a practicing neurosurgeon and serves as the Chairman of the Board of Houston Physicians' Hospital.



Josh Cisler, PhD

Associate Professor
UT Health Houston

Dr. Josh Cisler received a doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville in 2010. His research at that time focused on emotional and cognitive mechanisms that mediate anxiety disorders. He completed a clinical internship at the Medical University of South Carolina through the National Crime Victim Research and Treatment Center, where his research focused on understanding risk factors for psychopathology following trauma, with a particular focus on assaultive events (e.g., physical and sexual assault). He then completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the Brain Imaging Research Center at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, where he received training in fMRI methodology and advanced computational approaches to imaging analysis. He was on the faculty of the Brain Imaging Research Center at UAMS from 2012-2016 and the faculty of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin Madison from 2016-2021. He joined the faculty of UT Austin's Dell Medical Center in the Psychiatry department as the Associate Director of the Institute for Early Life Adversity Research.



Tom Craddick

Texas Representative for House District 82 and former Speaker of the House

When Tom Craddick was 25 years old, he decided to seek office in the Texas House of Representatives as a Republican from his hometown of Midland. His tenure has been characterized by landmark events. He was the first Republican Committee Chair in 100 years when he was appointed by Speaker Bill Clayton. He then became the first Republican Speaker of the House in over 130 years after playing an instrumental role in helping Republicans win the control of the house. Craddick has had a hand in historic legislation such as tort reform, reducing medical liability insurance costs, property tax cuts, and school finance reforms. Craddick is a successful businessman and family man. He has been married to his wife, Nadine, for over 54 years. His greatest pride are his children, Tommy and Christi, and grandchildren Tripp, Claire and Catherine.



Kathryn A. Cunningham, Ph.D.

Chauncey Leake Distinguished Professor of Pharmacology, Director, Center for Addiction Research, Vice Chair, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology at John Sealy School of Medicine
UT Medical Branch

My laboratory has catalyzed translational research advances in neuropsychopharmacology with a particular emphasis on substance use disorders (SUDs), the underlying neurobiology of behavior, and new target and drug discovery. While investigators typically pursue research from a single perspective (e.g., basic or clinical endeavors), my strategy is to discover key mechanism-based advances in cellular and animal models and move this knowledge into human psychopharmacology research to develop effective and safe therapeutics to maximize human function. I have strong collaborations with chemists, cellular biologists, bioengineers, preclinical and clinical scientists with the goal to develop innovative diagnostics and therapeutics based upon biosignatures of SUDs with the molecular precision to effectively prevent and manage these disorders across diverse populations. My research program has been continuously funded by NIDA for 30 years and we have made numerous seminal observations and developed new technologies which are described in 180+ peer-reviewed publications. I am an active educator, mentor and board member for community programs and work regionally and nationally to foster clinical research, awareness and knowledge of SUDs and their appropriate treatment.



Bill Dauer, MD

inaugural Director of the Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute and a Professor of Neurology and Neuroscience
UT Southwestern

A neurologist acclaimed for his research into dystonia and Parkinson's disease, he holds the Lois C.A. and Darwin E. Smith Distinguished Chair in Neurological Mobility Research. Dr. Dauer earned his medical degree at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. For nearly two decades, Dr. Dauer's groundbreaking research has been focused on the molecular basis of dystonia and the mechanisms of neurodegeneration in Parkinson's disease. His findings have elucidated the critical role of the torsin A protein in the progression of dystonia, which is marked by disabling, involuntary movements. Studies taking place under his direction focused on the neurobiologic basis of falls in Parkinson's disease are being used to pioneer a novel therapy for this currently untreatable symptom. He is an elected member of the American Society for Clinical Investigation, and his work has been recognized with the Dystonia Medical Research Foundation's Fahn Award and the Harold and Golden Lamport Award for excellence in clinical science research from Columbia University.



Carmen Dessauer, PhD

Professor and Chair of the
Department of Integrative Biology
and Pharmacology
UT Health Houston

Dr. Dessauer holds the John P. and Kathrine G. McGovern Distinguished Chair at McGovern Medical School, part of the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. She is the Director of a NIH funded T32 graduate program, “Training Interdisciplinary Pharmacology Scientists”, Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), a Fellow and past chair of the Molecular Pharmacology Division of the American Society of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET), and a former member of the NIH Advisory Council for the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. Her research examines how cyclic AMP signaling functions to maintain chronic pain and why the response to opioids is dampened in neuropathic pain conditions, including those after spinal cord injury. Her laboratory uses biochemical, molecular, imaging, and functional studies to identify drugs and drug targets that can block signaling pathways that maintain chronic pain states. She currently serves on the Executive committee for the Gulf Coast Consortium on Translational Pain Research.



Anila D'Mello, PhD

Assistant Professor, Jon Heighten
Scholar in Autism Research
University of Texas Southwestern
Medical Center
UT Dallas

Dr. Anila D'Mello is an assistant professor and Jon Heighten Scholar in Autism Research in the Department of Psychiatry and O'Donnell Brain Institute at UT Southwestern. She is also faculty within the Department of Psychology at the University of Texas at Dallas. Dr. D'Mello received her BA in Psychology from Georgetown University and completed a PhD in Behavior, Cognition, and Neuroscience at American University. She completed postdoctoral training at the McGovern Institute for Brain Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Dr. D'Mello's research combines tools from cognitive neuroscience, psychiatry, and developmental psychology to elucidate the brain circuits and mechanisms that support language and cognition in humans. Her lab applies these tools to understand how these circuits differ in neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism. Dr. D'Mello is particularly interested in the role of cerebro-cerebellar circuits in language, cognition, development, and disorders.



Sara Doyle, MD

Assistant Professor at
UT Health San Antonio,
Biggs' Institute for Alzheimer's
and Neurodegenerative Diseases

Dr. Doyle is a neurologist focused on brain health and developing a preventive neurology practice, both at the individual level in the clinic and at the population level in policy. After graduating from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, she completed a residency in Neurology at Northwestern University in Chicago. After this, she completed a fellowship in Preventive Medicine and Public Health at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She joined the faculty at UT Health San Antonio in the fall of 2023.



Francesca Filbey, PhD
Professor and Bert Moore Chair in
the School of Behavioral and
Brain Sciences, UT Dallas

Dr. Francesca Filbey is a Professor and Bert Moore Chair in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences. She directs the Neuroimaging of Reward Dynamics Laboratory at the Center for Brain Health. The overarching goal of Dr. Filbey's research is to advance the understanding of biobehavioral mechanisms related to addiction with the goal of enhancing early detection and intervention. She incorporates translational approaches from the fields of cognitive neuroscience, neuroimaging, genetics, neuropharmacology, psychology, and psychiatry. Current projects involve the determination of drug effects on brain mechanisms using neuroimaging tools (sMRI, DTI, task and resting state fMRI, EEG), neuromodulation (rtMS, taVNS), genetics and computational modeling.



Greg Fonzo, PhD
Psychologist, Bipolar Disorders
Center Psychologist, Trauma
Recovery and Research Center
UT Austin

Greg Fonzo, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist in both UT Health Austin's Bipolar Disorders Center and UT Health Austin's Trauma Recovery and Research Center. He specializes in assessment and evidence-based psychotherapy for depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorders. Additionally, Dr. Fonzo is an assistant professor in the Dell Medical School Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. Dr. Fonzo graduated summa cum laude from the University of Georgia with dual bachelor's degrees in biology and psychology and earned his doctorate degree from San Diego State University/University of California, San Diego Joint Doctoral Program.



Myriam Fornage, PhD
Professor of Molecular Medicine
and Human Genetics
UT Health Houston

Dr. Fornage is a molecular epidemiologist with training in human genetics. She leads an active research program dedicated to identifying novel genes influencing vascular and neurodegenerative diseases of the aging brain in diverse populations and across the lifespan. Her scientific approaches leverage multi-omic data combining genetic, epigenetic, metabolomic, and proteomic data to discover molecular targets of aging brain diseases for precision medicine applications. She is a leading investigator in several large national and international consortia, including the Cohorts of Heart and Aging Research in Genomic Epidemiology (CHARGE) consortium, the NIA Alzheimer Disease Sequencing Project (ADSP) and the NHLBI Trans-Omics for Precision Medicine (TOPMed) Program. She is a member of the American Society of Human Genetics and the American Heart Association Council on Genomic and Precision Medicine. Dr. Fornage regularly serves on National Institutes of Health expert advisory and peer-review panels.



Peter Grace, PhD

Associate Professor and Chair ad interim
UT MD Anderson

Peter Grace, PhD is tenured Associate Professor and Chair ad interim of the Department of Symptom Research at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. The goal of his research laboratory is to understand the neuroimmune mechanisms of chronic pain and its treatment. He obtained his PhD in Medicine at the University of Adelaide, Australia. His training in neuroimmunology continued as a post-doctoral fellow (funded by the Australian NHMRC and American Australian Association) in the laboratory of Dr. Linda Watkins at the University of Colorado Boulder. The impact of his work has been recognized through several fellowships and awards, including the American Pain Society Future Leaders in Pain Research Award (2014), the University of Texas System Rising STARS Award (2017), the PsychoNeuroImmunology Research Society Robert Ader New Investigator Award (2018), the Brain and Behavior Foundation Young Investigator Award (2019), and the Rita Allen Foundation Award in Pain (2019). His work is funded through the National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, and industry partnerships.



Ken Hargreaves, DDS, PhD

Professor and Director, Center for Pain Therapeutics and Addiction Research
UT Health San Antonio

Ken Hargreaves received his DDS from Georgetown University, his PhD in physiology from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, MD, and his certificate in Endodontics from the University of Minnesota. Ken spent 5 years at the Pain Clinic of the NIDCR and 7 years as an associate professor of Endodontics and Pharmacology at the University of Minnesota. He joined the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio in 1997, as professor in the Department of Endodontics and is cross appointed as professor in the Departments of Pharmacology, Physiology and Surgery in the Medical School. He maintains a private practice limited to endodontics and is a Diplomate of the American Board of Endodontists. Ken has received two IADR Distinguished Scientist Awards, the AAE President's Award and the ADA Gold Medal for Research. He has published more than 250 articles, generated 5 patents and edited two textbooks



Seth Hays, PhD

Associate Professor of Bioengineering / Fellow, Eugene McDermott Endowed Professorship
UT Dallas

Seth Hays received his BS in biomedical engineering from the University of Texas at Austin and his Ph.D. in neuroscience from University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Dr. Hays is an Associate Professor in the Department of Bioengineering at the University of Texas at Dallas where he is developing novel neurostimulation therapies for stroke and other neurological disorders. He is currently performing three clinical trials evaluating this technology. Dr. Hays has authored over 70 peer-reviewed publications and was awarded the prestigious American Heart Association Robert G. Siekert New Investigator for Stroke Award in 2015 and the Anthony Cerami Award for Translational Medicine in 2024.



Maya Henry, PhD

Associate Professor, Associate
Dean for Research
UT Austin

Maya Henry, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor jointly appointed in the Departments of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences and Neurology at the University of Texas, Austin. She is also the Associate Dean for Research in the Moody College of Communication. As director of the Aphasia Research and Treatment Lab, her research investigates the cognitive and neural bases of progressive aphasia and interventions to promote communication and quality of life for this population.



Elliot Hong, MD

Endowed Professor at the
Department of Psychiatry,
UTHealth at Houston

Elliot Hong, MD, is an Endowed Professor at the Department of Psychiatry, UTHealth at Houston. He is the Director of the Houston Psychosis Research Center at UTHealth Houston. The Center uses cutting-edge brain imaging and brain modulation technologies to uncover the cause of schizophrenia and related psychosis disorders. Dr. Hong is a board-certified psychiatrist and specializes on the treatment of individuals with complex presentations. He also directs the Psychosis Specialty Clinic at UTHealth Houston. The clinic provides expert care for patients with schizophrenia spectrum disorder, early onset and first episode of schizophrenia.



David Houghton, PhD

Assistant Professor
UT Medical Branch at Galveston

I am a translational clinical psychological scientist with established skills in experimental psychopathology, longitudinal research, behavioral and neurocognitive assessment, and artificial learning statistical methods. My research has focused on elucidating the mechanisms of action in treatments for various mental health and substance use disorders, developing a better understanding of patient-specific etiological mechanisms, and harnessing those insights to develop personalized treatments and prevention strategies. Indeed, one of the problems in mental health research is that we consistently observe similarities between unique conditions, but heterogeneous symptom presentations within a single condition. My research aims to address this problem by developing a better understanding of how transdiagnostic etiological mechanisms translate into diverse clinical phenotypes. My time at UTMB has led to several innovative, converging research projects aimed at better understanding heterogeneity within substance use disorders and trialing novel brain stimulation treatment approaches.



Jenny Hsieh, PhD

Professor and Department Chair
Department of Neuroscience,
Developmental and Regenerative
Biology in the College of Sciences
UT San Antonio

Jenny Hsieh is the founding chair of the Department of Neuroscience, Developmental and Regenerative Biology in the College of Sciences at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She is also the founding director of the UTSA Brain Health Consortium. She holds the Semmes Foundation Distinguished Chair in Cell Biology. Dr. Hsieh and her trainees studied many of the genes responsible for newly generated neurons in the adult mammalian hippocampus. Her work showed that aberrant neurogenesis contributes to temporal lobe epilepsy. Her most recent work focuses on using human brain organoid models to study neurodevelopmental and neurodegenerative disorders, including epilepsy and Alzheimer's disease. Among Dr. Hsieh's proudest professional achievements is mentoring young scientists and advocating on behalf of women and historically underrepresented populations in science.



Joan Huffman, JD

Senator District 17 and Chair of
the Senate Committee on
Finance

Senator Joan Huffman started her career as a public servant in 1981. After earning her undergraduate degree, she became a secretary for the Harris County District Attorney's office. She became inspired by the work of prosecutors and decided to attend law school while working full time.

Upon earning her law degree, Joan was hired as a prosecutor and eventually advanced to Chief Felony Prosecutor, Special Crimes Gang Prosecutor, and Legal Counsel to the Organized Crime Narcotics Task Force. She served as lead prosecutor in over 100 jury trials including murders, aggravated robberies, and sexual assaults of adults and children. With a reputation as a fair and tough enforcer of the law, she was twice elected Judge to the 183rd Criminal District Court.

Senator Joan Huffman was first elected to the Texas Senate in 2008 and has since been re-elected five times by the voters of Senate District 17. She currently serves as Chair of the Senate Committee on Finance, Chair of the Senate Special Committee on Redistricting, and is a senior member of the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice and the Legislative Budget Board.



Elena Ivleva, MD, PhD

Associate Professor, Director of
Early Psychosis Clinical and
Research (HOPE) Program,
Department of Psychiatry
UT Southwestern

In her research and clinical practice, Dr. Ivleva specializes in schizophrenia and related psychotic disorders. The overarching goal of Dr. Ivleva's research is understanding mechanisms of schizophrenia and developing brain-based biomarkers that can inform future diagnostic algorithms and novel targets for intervention. Dr. Ivleva investigates the effects of aging, and interactions between the schizophrenia course and aging. She is specifically interested in the role of the anterior limbic system (i.e., medial temporal lobe, prefrontal cortex) in the lifespan neurobiology of schizophrenia, and how alterations in this brain circuit contribute to cognitive dysfunction and psychosis in schizophrenia. She uses multimodal brain imaging (structural, perfusion, functional MRI and Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy), including ultra-high resolution hippocampal subfield imaging, in conjunction with broad cognitive and clinical batteries. Dr. Ivleva's research has been supported by NIH/NIMH, Brain & Behavior Research Foundation/NARSAD, American Psychiatric Association, Stanley Medical Research Institute, and other foundations. She is a member of the Society of Biological Psychiatry, Early Intervention in Mental Health Society, Society for Neuroscience and Schizophrenia International Research Society, among other professional organizations.



Rakez Kayed, PhD

Professor, Mitchell Center for
Neurodegenerative Disorders
John Sealy Chair for Parkinson's
Research
UT Medical Branch at Galveston

Dr. Rakez Kayed is the John Sealy Distinguished Chair in Parkinson Disease Research and a Professor at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. He earned his PhD in Chemistry from the University of Tübingen and completed postdoctoral training at UC Irvine, focusing on Alzheimer's disease and protein misfolding. His lab studies amyloid aggregates and toxic oligomers in diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, pioneering the development of oligomer-specific antibodies and key reagents for studying protein aggregation and toxicity. Dr. Kayed leads NIH-funded projects, including the U24 AG072458, which focuses on tau aggregates in Alzheimer's and related dementias. He has published over 170 peer-reviewed articles with more than 40,000 citations, contributing significantly to amyloid research.



Young Shin Kim, MD, MPH, PhD

Professor, Associate Chair,
Director of Child and Adolescent
Psychiatry
UT Austin

Young Shin Kim, MD, MS, MPH, PhD, serves as a Professor of Psychiatry and Associate Chair of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at University of Texas, Dell Medical School. A trained epidemiologist from Yale and UC Berkeley, she is an expert in developmental psychopathology and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Dr. Kim led a pivotal study in 2011 that identified a 2.6% ASD prevalence using a total population approach. Her research spans multiple disciplines and various cohorts, investigating the risk mechanisms behind neurodevelopmental disorders. Dr. Kim is dedicated to community service, advocating for psychiatrically challenged youth and their families.



Fernanda Laezza, MD, PhD

Professor at the Departments of
Pharmacology & Toxicology and
Biochemistry & Molecular Biology
UT Medical Branch at Galveston

She is also the founder and President of IonTX Inc., a startup company dedicated to developing modulators of excitability for neurotherapeutic applications (www.iontxinnovation.com). Dr. Laezza began her tenure-track journey as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology at UTMB in late 2008 and advanced to become a tenured Full Professor. As Principal Investigator, she has secured six R01 grants during the past 10 years, three of which received single-digit percentiles in separate NIH study sections—along with one U18, one R03, one R21, and over 15 smaller grants from private foundations, pilot mechanisms, or larger NIH grants in a co-investigator role to support her research in neuropharmacology and neurotoxicology. Over recent years, her work has focused on protein-protein interactions (PPIs) at the level of voltage-gated Na⁺ channels, revealing mechanisms regulating neuronal excitability via intracellular fibroblast growth factors (FGFs) and kinases. She has served as the Graduate Program Director of the Pharmacology & Toxicology graduate program since 2017, founded and continues to chair the Gulf Coast Consortia Mental Health Research Consortium (GCC-MHRC) at the Texas Medical Center.



David Lakey, MD
Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs
and Chief Medical Officer
UT System

David Lakey, M.D. also serves as Senior Advisor to the President and Professor of Medicine at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler. Dr. Lakey's focus is on public health issues such as obesity, tobacco use, nutrition, and maternal and infant health. He is seeking to identify ways, including but not limited to direct patient care, to improve the health of Texans statewide. Prior to being appointed to The University of Texas System and The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler, Dr. Lakey was the Commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services, one of the largest state agencies. As Commissioner, he led one of the state's largest agencies with a staff of 12,000 and an annual budget of \$3.3 billion and oversaw programs such as disease prevention and disaster preparedness, family and community health services, environmental and consumer safety, regulatory programs and mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment programs. Additionally, Dr. Lakey serves on the boards at March of Dimes and Trust for America's Health.



Bradley Lega, MD
Neurosurgeon and Associate
Professor
UT Southwestern

Dr. Bradley Lega is a neurosurgeon specializing in epilepsy surgery at UT Southwestern Medical Center. His clinical practice focuses on treating patients with drug-resistant epilepsy, using surgical interventions to control seizures. In addition to his clinical work, Dr. Lega leads an NIH funded research lab investigating the neurophysiology of human episodic memory, exploring how the brain encodes and retrieves new information. His research uses intracranial recordings and brain stimulation techniques to understand neural circuits, with the ultimate goal of developing novel therapeutic strategies for patients with memory disorders due to epilepsy or degenerative conditions.



Daniel Lodge, PhD
Professor and Chair of
Pharmacology
UT Health San Antonio

Dr. Lodge is a Professor and Chair of Pharmacology at UT Health San Antonio, where he has dedicated over 15 years to research and education. His laboratory focuses on unraveling the mechanisms behind psychiatric diseases, aiming to develop innovative therapeutic strategies. By utilizing preclinical models, Dr. Lodge investigates the role of critical brain regions—such as the hippocampus, thalamus, and cortex—in regulating dopamine neuron activity under both normal and pathological conditions. His research team explores pharmacological, surgical, and cell-based approaches that show promise for treating disorders like psychosis, major depressive disorder, and PTSD.



Claudia Lucchinetti, MD

Professor of Neurology Frank and Charmaine Denius Distinguished Dean's chair in Medical Leadership Dean, Dell Medical School Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs
UT Austin.

Dr. Lucchinetti serves as dean of Dell Medical School and senior vice president for medical affairs at The University of Texas at Austin. In these roles, she oversees Dell Med's work in education and research, as well as leads the University's comprehensive health care strategy. This entails the expansion of the University of Texas academic health system, which includes the building of a new tertiary-care hospital. Dr. Lucchinetti received the B.S. in biology from Northwestern University. She earned the M.D. from Rush Medical College in Chicago. After an internship at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center, she was a neurology resident at Mayo Clinic School of Graduate Medical Education. She also completed a fellowship in neuro-immunology at Mayo Clinic, with additional subspecialty training as a Mayo Foundation Scholar in experimental neuropathology at the Brain Research Institute in Vienna, Austria. Before coming to UT, Lucchinetti spent nearly three decades at Mayo Clinic. As Mayo Clinic's Dean of Clinical Translational Science, she helped to establish the infrastructure to accelerate clinical adoption of digital health innovations. As chair of the Department of Neurology, she led Mayo Clinic's Neurology Artificial Intelligence Program. She was also the recipient of the American Academy of Neurology Robert Wartenberg Lecture, given at the Presidential Plenary Session of the 2018 annual meeting.



Gladys Maestre, MD, PhD

Professor at the Department of Neuroscience
UT Rio Grande Valley

Gladys Maestre, M.D., Ph.D, is a professor at the Department of Neuroscience at UTRGV School of Medicine. She is also director of the Rio Grande Valley Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging Research and Co-Director of the South Texas Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. She previously served as visiting professor of Psychiatry and Neurology at the G.H. Sergievsky Center in Columbia University. Dr. Maestre received a Doctor of Medicine degree from University of Zulia, her Masters in Genetic Epidemiology and her PhD in pathobiology from Columbia University. She recently completed her Masters of Arts in Neuroarchitecture from Luav University of Venice. Dr. Maestre is a neuroscientist who has worked with Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias for more than 20 years. She is the PI of the Maracaibo Aging Study, a unique community-based cohort of individuals who have undergone in-depth assessments for cognitive, neuroimaging, and cardiovascular traits since 1997. As PI on several NIA and Fogarty International Center funded grants, her research has explored cultural, educational, and genetic risks for Alzheimer's disease and cognitive decline, as well as cognitive function and health among minorities and ethnically diverse populations across the life span.



Rex Marco, MD
Professor and Orthopedic Spine
Fellowship Director
UT Health Houston

Dr. Rex Marco is a distinguished orthopedic surgeon specializing in musculoskeletal oncology and reconstructive spine surgery. Born in California, he graduated Magna Cum Laude from UC Irvine, completed a research fellowship at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, and earned his medical degree from UCLA. His postgraduate training includes an orthopedic surgery residency at UC Davis and fellowships in Musculoskeletal Oncology at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and Reconstructive Spine Surgery at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center. Dr. Marco has held positions at MD Anderson Cancer Center and Houston Methodist Hospital. He currently serves as Professor and Orthopedic Spine Fellowship Director at UTHealth Houston. In 2019, a mountain biking accident left him paralyzed from the neck down. He now serves as Chief Medical Ambassador for the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, focusing on spinal cord injury (SCI) research and quality of life improvements. Practicing mindfulness since 2015, Dr. Marco completed the Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Certification Program in 2023. He integrates mindfulness into his life and shares his journey through speaking engagements. He has contributed to over 350 presentations, journal articles, and textbooks, and has trained over 100 orthopedic surgery residents and 25 spine surgery fellows. Dr. Marco continues to advance medical research and improve the quality of life for those living with SCI.



**Panagiotis Mastorakos, MD,
PhD**
Assistant Professor at the
Department of Neurological
Surgery
UT Southwestern

Dr. Panagiotis Mastorakos, M.D., Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Neurological Surgery at UT Southwestern Medical Center, specializing in cerebrovascular diseases, including aneurysms, vascular malformations, and stroke. After earning his medical degree and Ph.D. in neurosurgery at the University of Athens, he completed a residency at the National Institutes of Health and the University of Virginia, followed by fellowships in endovascular and cerebrovascular neurosurgery at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. He began his research training at Johns Hopkins University, developing non-viral gene vectors for targeted delivery of nanotherapeutics. His interest in secondary injury from cerebrovascular disease grew during his training in neuroimmunology at the National Institutes of Health, where he studied myeloid cell responses following hemorrhagic stroke. Currently, Dr. Mastorakos is focused on characterizing immune drivers of secondary injury after aneurysmal subarachnoid hemorrhage, investigating the impact of subarachnoid blood and intracranial pressure fluctuations on immune responses in the brain.



Louise McCullough, MD, PhD
Professor and Chair, Neurology
UT Health Houston

Dr. Louise McCullough is the Roy M. and Phyllis Gough Huffington Distinguished Chair and Professor of Neurology at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth. She is a physician-scientist and a practicing vascular neurologist with clinical expertise in sex/gender disparities, the microbiome, stroke and aging, and acute stroke treatments. A renowned investigator, she is well recognized for her work in cerebral vascular disease and is known for her research identifying sex differences in cell death pathways during stroke, which have now been shown to be a major factor in the response to ischemic insult. Working closely with the Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR) and the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH), she was instrumental in the National Institute of Health's requirement to include female animals in basic and translational studies. Among Dr. McCullough's many honors and awards are the prestigious National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) Javits Neuroscience Investigator Award, the NINDS Landis Award for Outstanding Mentorship, the Inaugural American Heart Association (AHA) Outstanding Stroke Research Mentor Award, the AHA Merit Award and the AHA Thomas Willis Lecture Award.



Stanton McHardy, PhD
Associate Professor, Director
CIDD
UT San Antonio

Dr. Stan McHardy is the Director of the Center for Innovative Drug Discovery and Associate Professor in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). McHardy has effectively served as the Director of The Center for Innovative Drug Discovery (CIDD) since 2012. The CIDD, a joint venture between UTSA and UT Health San Antonio (UTHSA), is composed of four core facilities: a High-Throughput Screening Facility (HTSF) and Computer-Aided Drug Discovery Core Facility (CADD) located at UT Health San Antonio, and a Medicinal Chemistry Core Facility (MCFF) and a Pre-Clinical Pharmacology Core Facility (PCPC) at UTSA. The ultimate intent of the CIDD is to provide a diverse array of core facilities and expertise to facilitate the translation of basic scientific discoveries into tangible pre-clinical candidate drugs that can be further developed into clinical therapies for human disease. Dr. McHardy has established a state-recognized drug discovery research center and core medicinal chemistry/drug discovery facility at UTSA and developed state and national research collaborations with both academic and private industry partners, securing >\$23M in collaborative extramural funding to date. Currently, the private, state, and federally funded collaborative research programs in Dr. McHardy's CIDD labs are focused on various small molecule drug discovery approaches to cancer, psychotherapeutic and neurodegenerative diseases, non-opioid pain and infectious diseases.



Christa McIntyre, PhD
Associate Professor at the School
of Behavioral and Brain Sciences
UT Dallas

Christa McIntyre earned a PhD in Psychobiology at the University of Virginia in 2000. She was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, Irvine until she joined the faculty in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences at the University of Texas at Dallas in 2006. Her research falls into two separate but complementary lines; one is rooted in basic research and the other is more translational. The basic research question is, "How do we rapidly store lasting memories for events that are emotionally arousing when other memories require rehearsal?". The more translational research uses what is known about the systems of the brain that are involved in the enhancement of memory storage during emotional arousal to drive plasticity in those systems for the purpose of treating memory and anxiety disorders. One target for manipulation is the vagus nerve, a cranial nerve that is activated by elevated stress hormone levels. Vagus nerve stimulation (VNS) increases neuromodulator release in the brain and enhances memory consolidation. Dr. McIntyre's research indicates that VNS also enhances the consolidation of extinction of conditioned fear in rat models of PTSD and autism. Based on these preclinical findings, VNS is now being tested in PTSD patients.



Esther Melamed, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor of Neurology,
Research Director Post COVID
Program Clinic
UT Austin

Dr. Melamed is a board-certified neurologist and neuroimmunologist. She completed MD PhD training at the University of California, Los Angeles; Internal Medicine internship at Cedars Sinai, Los Angeles; and Neurology residency and Neuroimmunology fellowship at Stanford. She is currently Assistant Professor in the department of Neurology at Dell Medical School, UT Austin, and serves as the Director of Research of the Post-COVID Clinic and attending physician at the Dell Medical School Neuroimmunology Center, Post-COVID clinic and Dell Seton Medical Center.



Robert Messing, MD
Professor, Depts. of
Neuroscience and Neurology
UT Austin

I am Professor and Chair of Neuroscience and Professor of Neurology at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin). I also hold the Waggoner Chair in Cell and Molecular Biology and am Director of the Waggoner Center for Alcohol and Addiction Research at UT Austin. My expertise is in molecular neuroscience, with major interest in chronic pain and substance use disorders. My expertise stems both from over 35 years of research experience and from practicing as a physician treating patients with chronic pain and substance use disorders. Currently my lab uses a variety of molecular (gene targeting, transgenic expression, RNA interference, RNAseq) and circuit mapping (electrophysiology, optogenetics, immunohistochemistry) techniques in our work. Our goal is to discover new drug targets for treatment. I have coauthored over 195 articles, book chapters, reviews, and commentaries, and am a recognized authority on the neurobiology of pain and addiction.



Charles Nemeroff, MD, PhD
Endowed Chair and Professor,
Department of Psychiatry,
UT Austin

Charles Nemeroff is chair and professor with the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. He is also co-director of the Center for Psychedelic Research and Therapy. Additionally, he directs the Institute for Early Life Adversity Research within the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences as part of the Mulva Clinic for the Neurosciences. He has served as president of the American College of Psychiatrists and the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology, and he sits on the Scientific Advisory Board of the Brain and Behavioral Research Foundation. He is president-elect and a member of the board of directors of the Anxiety and Depression Association of America. He is a member of the APA Council on Research and chairs both the APA Research Colloquium for Young Investigators and the APA Work Group on Biomarkers and Novel Treatments. He is co-director of the Texas Childhood Trauma Research Network. His research focuses on the pathophysiology of mood and anxiety disorders with a focus on the role of child abuse and neglect as a major risk factor. He has also conducted research on the role of mood disorders as a risk factor for major medical disorders including heart disease, diabetes and cancer.



Lena Nguyen, PhD
Assistant Professor of
Neuroscience
UT Dallas

Lena Nguyen is an Assistant Professor of Neuroscience at The University of Texas at Dallas (UT Dallas). She received a Ph.D. in Neuroscience from Baylor College of Medicine and completed postdoctoral training at Yale School of Medicine. She currently leads a basic and translational neuroscience research laboratory at UT Dallas, where she works to understand the neurobiological mechanisms of brain development and how dysregulation of molecular signaling pathways contributes to neurodevelopmental disorders, such as malformations of cortical development and epilepsy.



Kimberly Nixon, PhD

Professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology at the College of Pharmacy
UT Austin

Dr. Kimberly Nixon is a Professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology at The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy, James T. Doluisio Centennial Fellow, and Director of a National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism-funded T32 training grant. She attended The University of Texas at Austin where she received a B.A. and Ph.D. in Psychology (Behavioral Neuroscience) under the mentorship of the late Dr. Abram Amsel and co-mentored by Dr. Steven W. Leslie. Following a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Bowles Center for Alcohol Studies with Dr. Fulton Crews, she accepted a faculty position at the University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy where she rose through the ranks to full professor. In 2018, she was delighted to be recruited home to The University of Texas at Austin where her laboratory continues to lead the field in the study of alcohol's effects on neural stem cells and adult neurogenesis as well as make provocative discoveries on the role of neuroimmune signaling in adolescent development of alcohol addiction-relevant behavior. Dr. Nixon's novel approach to studying alcohol-induced neurodegeneration and recovery has been continuously funded by the NIAAA for over 15 years. She has received international media recognition and multiple national awards including the 2008 Research Society on Alcohol Young Investigator Award, and a 2009 Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) awarded by President Barack Obama. Dr. Nixon has been inducted into Phi Kappa Phi and Rho Chi honor societies and is an active member of the Research Society on Alcohol and Society for Neuroscience.



Robin Novakovic, MD

Professor of Radiology and Neurology
UT Southwestern

Dr. Robin Novakovic-White is a professor of Radiology and Neurology at UT Southwestern Medical Center. She is board certified in Neurology, Vascular Neurology, Neurocritical Care, and Neuroendovascular Surgery. Aside from her clinical and research responsibilities, Dr. Novakovic-White serves as the current Chair for the Texas Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council Stroke Committee, Co-Medical Director for the North Central Texas Trauma Regional Advisory Council, and Commissions Editor for the S:VIN Journal. Additionally, she is past Board member, Treasurer, Chair for the Women in Interventional and Vascular Neurology subcommittee and Education Committee for the Society of Vascular and Interventional Neurology. She has served on the stroke quality measure development work group for the American Academy of Neurology Institute and as an HSA Quality Officer for UTSW.



Chukwuemeka (Emeka) Okafor, PhD, MPH

Assistant Professor
Department of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases, and the Be Well Institute on Substance Use and Related Disorders
UT Health San Antonio

Dr. Emeka N. Okafor is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases, and the Be Well Institute on Substance Use and Related Disorders at UT Health San Antonio, Texas. Dr. Okafor's educational background is in Epidemiology and Community Health, and his expertise lies at the intersection of infectious diseases and behavioral health, particularly substance use. Dr. Okafor's research program is focused on developing targeted behavioral interventions that directly address factors that negatively impact prevention and treatment outcomes for persons with and without HIV.



David Paydarfar, MD

Professor and the Inaugural chair of the Department of Neurology at Dell Medical School, and Director of the Mulva Clinic for the Neurosciences
UT Austin

David Paydarfar, MD., is a professor and the inaugural chair of the Department of Neurology at Dell Medical School, and director of the Mulva Clinic for the Neurosciences. Dr. Paydarfar conducts both clinical and basic research programs. Clinically, he seeks to develop novel biosensors, signal-processing algorithms and user interfaces that will enable clinicians and researchers to track and predict the health of individual patients as well as entire populations; this approach is far more proactive -- enabling doctors to forecast and avert adverse disease trajectories -- than the current reactive systems, and strongly pulls upon engineering, informatics, human physiology and pathophysiology. In the laboratory sciences, Dr. Paydarfar's research seeks to understand mechanisms underlying disease states associated with abnormal behavior of neural oscillators (such as apnea, circadian dysrhythmias and epilepsy), as well as the coordination of pacemakers with other physiological and behavioral functions. Dr. Paydarfar brings his cross-disciplinary translational research and cumulation of experiences to uplift mentees and bolster their own novel research ideas.



Jennifer Potter, PhD, MPH

Senior Vice President for Research, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, and Founding Director of the Be Well Institute on Substance Use and Related Disorders
UT Health San Antonio

Jennifer Sharpe Potter, PhD, MPH, Senior Vice President for Research, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, and Founding Director of the Be Well Institute on Substance Use and Related Disorders at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. As Senior Vice President for Research, Dr. Potter oversees research administration and services to support the university's research mission. Dr. Potter is a nationally recognized public health scientist and practitioner in the field of substance use and substance use disorders. Dr. Potter serves as a principal investigator (MPI) of the Institute for Integration of Medicine and Science (IIMS), home to our UT Health San Antonio's NIH-supported Clinical Translational Science Award (CTSA) and of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Clinical Trials Network (CTN). Dr. Potter is also a principal investigator of the Peer Recovery Innovation Network (PRIN), a National Institutes of Health-funded initiative to build and expand the field of recovery science. As Founding Director of the Be Well Institute on Substance Use and Related Disorders, Dr. Potter oversees a comprehensive statewide system of care to increase access to evidence-based substance use services in Texas. Programs include the Be Well Texas Provider Network of over 150 providers, the Be Well Clinic that provides telehealth and in person services statewide, the Center for Substance Use Training and Telementoring, and the Texas Substance Use Symposium, now the largest substance use related conference in Texas.



Nadar Pouratian, MD, PhD

Professor and Chair of Neurological Surgery
UT Southwestern

Nader Pouratian is Professor and Chair of Neurological Surgery at UT Southwestern Medical Center. He earned his MD and PhD degrees at the UCLA before completing neurosurgical and subspecialty training at the University of Virginia. In his clinical practice, he uses advanced neurotechnologies to improve brain and spine function for neurological and psychiatric disease, including Parkinson's, tremor, pain, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and blindness. His research aims to understand brain diseases and to develop targeted biological therapies. He take advantage of unparalleled opportunities presented by neurosurgery to study human brain function and design novel neurotechnologies. His work is supported by several NIH grants, including the BRAIN and HEAL initiatives.



Ted Price, PhD

Ashbel Smith Professor in the
Department of Neuroscience
UT Dallas

Theodore (Ted) Price is Ashbel Smith Professor in the Department of Neuroscience at University of Texas at Dallas where he is the Director of the Center for Advanced Pain Studies. Ted did his PhD with Ken Hargreaves at UT Health San Antonio and his postdoc with Fernando Cervero at McGill. Ted started his independent lab in 2007 at University of Arizona and moved to UT Dallas in 2014. Ted's lab's goal is to identify molecular mechanisms causing chronic pain with emphasis on developing new drugs to treat pain. His lab's focus is on human molecular neuroscience with specialization on dorsal root ganglion and spinal dorsal horn. Ted has published more than 200 peer reviewed studies and has been continuously funded by NIH for more than 15 years. He is the co-founder of many companies, including 4E Therapeutics.



Anita Quintana, PhD

Associate Professor at the
Department of Biological
Sciences
UT El Paso

Dr. Anita Quintana is an Associate Professor at the University of Texas El Paso in the Department of Biological Sciences. She obtained her PhD in Biomedical Sciences from the University of New Mexico and performed her post-doctoral training at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. The primary focus of the Quintana laboratory is to identify novel genes associated with congenital birth defects and to perform functional analysis of gene functions using the developing zebrafish embryo. Over the last 10 years, Dr. Quintana has helped to identify novel genetic variants that cause birth defects, and her laboratory has developed expertise developing germline zebrafish alleles to model specific phenotypes. Her emphasis has been to understand the function of vitamin B12 and cholesterol metabolism in brain and craniofacial development. Dr. Quintana teaches developmental neurobiology, gene regulation, and advanced scientific writing. She is the director of the Bioscience Doctoral Program and co-director for three training programs on the UTEP campus.



Jim Ray, PhD

Executive Director, Neuroscience
UT MD Anderson

Jim Ray, PhD is the Director of The Belfer Neurodegeneration Consortium (BNDC), a multi-institutional collaboration whose mission is to slow, stop, or reverse AD and related neurodegenerative diseases, and the Co-Director of MD Anderson's Cancer Neuroscience Program. The NDC is a collaboration between investigators at five institutions, including MIT, Mt Sinai School of Medicine, and the drug discovery center based at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX. Prior to joining the NDC in April 2015, Dr. Ray was Director, CNS Research at Takeda Pharmaceuticals, and led several drug discovery projects from basic research into development for schizophrenia, Parkinson's disease, autism, and other CNS disorders. He joined Takeda in 2013 as part of their acquisition of the biotech start-up Envoy Therapeutics, where he was Senior Director and responsible for developing both a pipeline of CNS therapeutics as well as platform technology. Prior to Envoy Therapeutics, Dr. Ray spent 11 years at Merck, where he led multiple research projects in Alzheimer's disease, including MK-7622, Merck's investigational M1 muscarinic receptor potentiator. He earned his PhD from Washington University Medical School in Neuroscience and has 62 publications and 25 patents.



Rodney Ritzel, PhD
Assistant Professor of Neurology
UT Health Houston

Dr. Ritzel conducted his graduate studies in the Department of Neuroscience at UConn Health and obtained his PhD in 2016. He then pursued postdoctoral training at the Shock, Trauma and Anesthesiology Research Center at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore, where he studied traumatic brain injury. Dr. Ritzel received the inaugural Outstanding Alumni Award from UConn Health and the inaugural Michael Shipley Postdoctoral Award for Excellence in Neuroscience Research. Dr. Ritzel has been the recipient of NIH/NINDS F31, F32, and K99/R00 training awards. Dr. Ritzel's laboratory explores the intersection of aging, brain injury, and immunity. His research is focused on identifying systemic factors and immune mechanisms that regulate CNS homeostasis and the pathogenesis of brain injury, with special emphasis on the role of aging. His work seeks to discover novel preclinical treatment strategies to enhance long-term neurological recovery, reduce risk or severity of neurodegenerative disease, and promote healthy brain aging.



David Roberts, PhD
Associate Professor of Psychiatry
UT Health San Antonio

Dr. Roberts is a clinical psychologist and associate professor of psychiatry at UT Health. He is focused on teaching the next generation of psychiatrists and psychotherapists and conducts research on developing and disseminating psychosocial interventions to improve functioning and independence among people with behavioral health problems. His current focus is helping community therapists to delivery psychological interventions with high quality and effectiveness.



Claudia Satizabal, PhD
Associate Professor
UT Health San Antonio

Dr. Claudia L. Satizabal is an Associate Professor at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. She works at the Glenn Biggs Institute for Alzheimer's & Neurodegenerative Diseases of UT Health San Antonio, where she leads the Population Neuroscience Core. Dr. Satizabal leads several studies that focus on identifying lifestyle and genetic factors influencing abnormal brain aging and is actively involved in the validation of biomarkers reflecting brain vascular injury contributing to dementia. More recently, she launched The San Antonio Heart and Mind Study, a large initiative to study the connection between heart and brain health in over 1,000 Mexican American and non-Hispanic White adults from San Antonio. This study will generate invaluable knowledge on specific factors that could improve cognitive aging in our community.



Giselli Scaini, Pharm D, PhD

Assistant Professor in the Faillace
Department of Psychiatry and
Behavioral Sciences
UT Health Houston

Giselli Scaini, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Faillace Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and a translational researcher in the field of biological psychiatry. Her research focuses on research focuses on understanding the role of redox modulations and mitochondrial dysfunction in mental illness, especially in mood disorders, with the ultimate goal of developing better diagnostic tools, personalized treatments, and an enhanced quality of life for patients. Dr. Scaini received her Master's degree and her PhD in Health Science from the University of Southern Santa Catarina (UNESC, Brazil). As an Assistant Professor, she currently collaborates with basic and clinical investigators on the search for cellular and molecular underpinnings of severe mental illnesses. She has published over 140 peer-reviewed articles and received awards for her research work from multiple scientific societies.



Sudha Seshadri, MD

Behavioral Neurologist and the
Robert R. Barker Distinguished
University Professor of Neurology,
Psychiatry and Cellular and
Integrative Physiology at the Joe
R. and Teresa Lozano Long School
of Medicine
UT Health San Antonio

Sudha Seshadri, MD, is a behavioral neurologist and the Robert R. Barker Distinguished University Professor of Neurology, Psychiatry and Cellular and Integrative Physiology at the Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long School of Medicine at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center at San Antonio. Since December 2017, she has served as the founding director of the Glenn Biggs Institute for Alzheimer's and Neurodegenerative Diseases which was awarded a National Institute on Aging designated Alzheimer's Disease Research Center in 2021. The Biggs Institute combines comprehensive, compassionate, continuing clinical care for a broad range of vascular and neurodegenerative diseases with basic, computational and epidemiological research, community outreach, advocacy, training and education. The institute has a special emphasis on bringing the most advanced precision prevention, diagnosis and treatment approaches to the underserved Hispanic communities in South Texas. Her research interests are in uncovering the biology of Alzheimer's and related dementias, stroke and vascular brain injury through epidemiological, genetic, multi-omic and biomarker studies on large, population-based cohorts. In parallel, she continues to see patients and lead clinical trials of promising therapies.



Steven Shabel, PhD

Assistant Professor
Department of Psychiatry
UT Southwestern

Dr. Shabel received his B.S. from UC San Diego and his Ph.D. from UC San Francisco where he studied affective encoding in the amygdala using single-cell electrophysiology. As a postdoctoral fellow at UC San Diego, Dr. Shabel characterized plasticity of basal ganglia inputs to the lateral habenula in animal models of depression using brain slice electrophysiology and optogenetics. Dr. Shabel joined the Department of Psychiatry at UTSW in June 2017.



Sunil Sheth, MD

Associate Professor and Director,
Division of Vascular and
Interventional Neurology,
Department of Neurology
UT Health

Dr. Sheth is originally from Houston, TX and attended Harvard University, graduating magna cum laude with an A.B. in Chemistry and Physics. He received his M.D. from Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he was enrolled in the Health Sciences and Technology Program. He graduated magna cum laude and was also awarded a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Research Fellowship. He completed his residency in Neurology at the University of California, San Francisco where he served as the chief resident, and fellowships in Vascular Neurology and Interventional Neuroradiology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Dr. Sheth is currently an Associate Professor of Neurology at UT Health McGovern Medical School. Disclosures: Consultant (Cerenovus, Medtronic, Imperative Care, Viz.AI, Route 92, Penumbra) Grant Funding (NIH, McNair Foundation) Ownership (Motif Neurosciences)



Anjali Sivaramakrishnan, PT, PhD

Assistant Professor in the
Department of Physical Therapy
UT Health San Antonio

Anjali Sivaramakrishnan is an assistant professor in the department of physical therapy at UT Health San Antonio, Texas. Her background is in neurological physical therapy with a PhD in rehabilitation sciences. She is specifically interested in using aerobic exercise as a primer to add on therapies for promoting neuroplasticity in stroke and Parkinson's disease. Her mechanistic research involves the use of transcranial magnetic stimulation, spinal reflexes, and blood-based biomarkers to understand the neural correlates of aerobic exercise. Her interventional research focuses on improving balance, gait and muscle strength using techniques such as transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS), aerobic exercise, virtual reality, and blood-flow restriction. She is a site co-PI for the SPARX3 study which utilizes exercise as a long-term intervention to slow disease progression in PD. Her long-term research goal is to develop rehabilitation treatments for slowing disease progression and reducing falls in individuals with Parkinson's disease.



Jair Soares, MD, PhD

Vice-President for Behavioral
Sciences
Executive Director of Harris
County Psychiatric Center and
John S. Dunn Behavioral Sciences
Center
UTHealth Houston

Dr. Jair C. Soares is a renowned academic leader and physician-scientist. He serves as Vice-President for Behavioral Sciences at UTHealth Houston. Dr. Soares is the Executive Director of UTHealth Harris County Psychiatric Center and John S. Dunn Behavioral Sciences Center. A Board-certified psychiatrist, he oversees the Psychiatry Services at Memorial Hermann Hospital and LBJ Hospital. The sites provide patient care and are clinical training and research facilities for UTHealth medical students, psychiatry residents and psychiatry fellows. Dr. Soares is the founding dean of UTHealth Houston's School of Behavioral Health Sciences. As the inaugural dean of UTHealth Houston's seventh school, he will build the school's platform and infrastructure in preparation for its first students, who are expected to begin coursework in the fall of 2025. As the Professor and Chair of the department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, and the Pat Rutherford Chair in Psychiatry at the McGovern Medical School; Dr. Soares directs the UTHealth Center of Excellence on Mood Disorders, which focuses on the search for causes and the development of new treatments for mood disorders. The Center is comprised of an active research team that specializes in clinical neurosciences (neuroimaging, neurophysiology, cognitive neurosciences, and genetics) and clinical psychopharmacology and interventions research.



Michael "Mick" Soth, PhD
Institute Director of Medicinal
Chemistry in the Therapeutics
Discovery Division
MD Anderson

Mick Soth is the Institute Director of Medicinal Chemistry in the Therapeutics Discovery Division at MD Anderson Cancer Center. He obtained his PhD in organic chemistry from the University of California at Irvine, followed by Postdoctoral training in synthetic organic chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh. He spent the early part of his career at Roche Pharmaceuticals, where he advanced drug discovery programs in the inflammatory diseases area. He joined MD Anderson in 2013 and has led multiple drug discovery programs to development candidates in both the cancer and neurodegeneration fields, including a glutaminase-1 inhibitor currently in clinical trials.



Carol Tamminga, MD
Professor and Chief of the
Translational Neuroscience
Division in Schizophrenia in
Psychiatry Department
UT Southwestern

Dr. Tamminga holds the Lydia Bryant Test Distinguished University Chair in Psychiatric Research and has just stepped down from the Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry; she remains the Chief of the Translational Neuroscience Division in Schizophrenia at UTSW. Dr. Tamminga has been a member of NIMH's National Advisory Board and has served on the Board of Scientific Counselors of the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute of Drug Abuse, as Council member and President of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology, as a Member and Chair of the Psychopharmacological Drugs Advisory Committee of the FDA, as well as consultant for the Orphan Products Development Review Group, FDA. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the Brain and Behavioral Research Foundation (NARSAD). She has been the Deputy Editor of the American Journal of Psychiatry and is on the editorial board of several other journals in the field. Dr. Tamminga was elected to the National Academy of Medicine of the National Academies of Sciences in 1998 and has served on several IOM committees in that capacity.



Madhukar Trivedi, MD
Professor of Psychiatry, Chief of
the Division of Mood Disorders,
and founding Director of the
Center for Depression Research
and Clinical Care
UT Southwestern

Madhukar Trivedi, M.D., is a Professor of Psychiatry, Chief of the Division of Mood Disorders, and founding Director of the Center for Depression Research and Clinical Care at UT Southwestern Medical Center, where he holds the Betty Ho Hay Distinguished Chair in Mental Health and the Julie K. Hersh Chair for Depression Research and Clinical Care. Dr. Trivedi serves on the editorial board of CNS Spectrums, Clinical Medicine: Psychiatry, Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, Journal of Affective Disorders, Psychiatric Annals and Asian Journal of Psychiatry. Dr. Trivedi currently serves as Deputy Editor of the American Journal of Psychiatry and as president of the American Society of Clinical Psychopharmacology (ASCP). Named a Texas Monthly Super Doctor multiple times, he has received numerous accolades, including the Gerald L. Klerman Award from the National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association Scientific Advisory Board, the Psychiatric Excellence Award from the Texas Society of Psychiatric Physicians, the Gerald Klerman Senior Investigator Award, the American Psychiatric Association Award for Research, and the Mood Disorders Research Award from the American College of Psychiatrists. Dr. Trivedi was listed by Thomson Reuters' World's Most Influential Scientific Minds as one of the nation's most highly cited researchers in psychiatry six years in a row.



Karen Wagner, MD, PhD

Chair of the Department of
Psychiatry and Behavioral
Sciences
UT Medical Branch at Galveston

Karen Dineen Wagner, M.D., Ph.D. is the Titus H. Harris Chair, and Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Dr. Wagner is an internationally recognized expert in the pharmacological treatment of childhood mood disorders. Her work has led to the development of evidence-based treatments for children and adolescents with major depression and bipolar disorder. Dr. Wagner is the recipient of numerous honors, including receipt of an Honorary Doctorate from State University of New York; the Klerman Senior Investigator Award from Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance; the Blanche F. Ittleson Award for Research in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry from the American Psychiatric Association; the Colvin Award for Outstanding Achievement in Mood Disorders from the Brain and Behavior Research Foundation; and the Mood Disorders Research Award from the American College of Psychiatrists. Dr. Wagner has served in leadership positions in professional organizations and has been a member of the National Advisory Mental Health Council of the National Institutes of Health. She is Section Editor of the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry. Dr. Wagner is Past President of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and is past President of the American Association of Directors of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.



Consuelo Walss-Bass, PhD

Professor and John S. Dunn
Foundation Distinguished Chair
UT Health Houston

Dr. Walss-Bass trained in psychiatric genetics at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. She is currently Professor with tenure and the Director of the Psychiatric Genetics Program and the UTHealth Houston Brain Collection in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston. The central focus of the Walss-Bass laboratory is to identify the biological causes of psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, and substance use disorders. Her laboratory utilizes a model of collaboration and dialogue between investigators working in the laboratory and investigators working directly with patients, to correlate behavioral outcomes with genetic underpinnings and biological mechanisms. The Walss-Bass lab utilizes multi-omic approaches in human models to investigate how changes in DNA sequence in combination with epigenetic modifications lead to development of mental health disorders. Dr. Walss-Bass established the UTHealth Brain Collection to help study brain disorders.



Long-Jun Wu, PhD

C. Harold and Lorine G. Wallace
Distinguished University Chair,
Professor and Founding Director
of Center for Neuroimmunology
and Glial Biology
UT Health Houston

Dr. Long-Jun Wu obtained PhD of Neurobiology from University of Science and Technology of China in 2004. He received his postdoc trainings at University of Toronto (2004-2008) and Harvard Medical School (2008-2011). Currently, Dr. Wu is C. Harold and Lorine G. Wallace Distinguished University Chair, Professor and Founding Director of Center for Neuroimmunology and Glial Biology, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Prior to this, he was Professor of Neurology and Associate Director for Neuroscience PhD program at Mayo Clinic. Dr. Wu's current recent research primarily focuses on the neuroimmune interaction, particularly the function of microglia, in normal and diseased brain. Dr. Wu has published more than 180 peer-reviewed articles, including those in Nature Neuroscience, Neuron, Journal of Clinical Investigation, Nature Communications, Trends in Neuroscience etc. Dr. Wu serves as an Associate Editor for Neuroscience, Molecular Brain, Neuroscience Bulletin and Cell & Biosciences as well as in editorial boards for multiple journals including Glia, Brain Behavior and Immunity, Molecular Pain, etc.



Nan Yan, PhD

Professor and Vice Chair of
Department of Immunology and
Edwin L. Cox Distinguished Chair
in Immunology and Genetics
UT Southwestern

Dr. Yan received his Ph.D. in Molecular Biology from University of Texas at Austin in 2006. He completed postdoctoral training at Harvard Medical School in 2010 and started his own lab in University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in 2011. He is currently Professor and Vice Chair of Department of Immunology and Edwin L. Cox Distinguished Chair in Immunology and Genetics at UT Southwestern. His lab studies mechanisms of innate immunity in infection, autoimmune diseases, neuroinflammatory diseases, and cancer. His lab made major contributions to the understanding of homeostatic functions of innate immunity using inborn error disease mouse models, especially the cGAS-STING nucleic acid sensing pathway. In the area of neurodegenerative disease, his lab showed that mitochondrial DNA activation of the cGAS-STING pathway underlies NGLY1-deficiency, which is an early-onset neuroinflammatory disease similar to Parkinson's disease. His lab also showed that STING signaling drives neuroinflammation and neuropathology in Niemann-Pick disease type C, which is a lysosomal storage disorder. His lab has ongoing interest in the role of innate immune signaling in neurodegenerative diseases. Research in his lab is supported by fundings from the NIAID, NINDS, CPRIT, and private foundations.



John Zerwas, MD, FSA

Executive Vice Chancellor for
Health Affairs
UT System

John M. Zerwas, M.D., FASA, joined The University of Texas System as Executive Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs in October 2019. He provides oversight and guidance for the five UT System health institutions, one of the largest networks of academic health institutions in the country with an aggregate FY25 annual operating budget of more than \$21.2 billion. Governor Abbott appointed Zerwas to the Texas Healthcare Workforce Task Force in 2024 and to the Supply Chain Strike Force in 2020 to assist with hospital and health care preparedness relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. Zerwas also served on the Governor's Strike Force to Open Texas and the State's Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel. In 2023, Zerwas was designated to serve on the Texas Pharmaceutical Initiative Advisory Council. Prior to joining UT System, he served the citizens of Texas House District 28 for seven terms in the Texas House of Representatives and as Chair of the Texas House Appropriations Committee. A physician for more than 30 years, Zerwas is past president of the American Society of Anesthesiologists and certified as a Fellow of the American Society of Anesthesiologists. Zerwas cofounded a Houston area group practice in 1996 which became part of US Anesthesia Partners in 2012. He remained active in the practice and operations of the practice until joining the UT System. From 2003 to 2008, Zerwas served as Chief Medical Officer of the Memorial Hermann Hospital System, and as Chief Physician Integration Officer until 2009.