

Issue 10, May 2022



Edward T. Yeh, M.D.

## Message from the Chairman

As we emerge from the shackles of COVID, it is so liberating to see each other's smile in person, not on a screen, in the Town Hall, in the Research Symposium, and in the Grand Rounds.

I would like to thank you all for staying the course and accomplishing our missions of patient care, education, and research under challenging circumstances.

This issue of Impact features exceptional contributions from our faculty and trainees, their recognition in the Dean's Honor Day, and their wonderful presentations at the Research Symposium. However, a patient's story really catches my eye (read on here: [Patient's Story, The Impact of Caring Physicians](#)).

## Dr. Fenghuang Zhan, Section Head, Multiple Myeloma Research



Fenghuang Zhan, M.D., Ph.D.

Dr. Fenghuang (Frank) Zhan is a professor of Internal Medicine and the research director of the UAMS Myeloma Center. He was previously at the UAMS Myeloma Center from 2002 to 2008 as an assistant professor.

Dr. Zhan knew he would "go into the family business" of medicine after growing up in an environment seeing the patients treated by his grandfather and father. Dr. Zhan focuses on translation research and identifying markers to cure myeloma. Although major progress has been made in treating multiple myeloma (MM), many patients will still relapse and die from the disease. Relapse is due to the persistence (even after the most intensive treatment) of non-replicating and drug-resistant MM cells.

Dr. Zahn's research focuses on understanding how genetic changes in malignant plasma cells cooperate with the microenvironment of bone marrow to support malignant cells growth and identifying targetable markers of each subtype of myeloma to ultimately cure myeloma.

Since he returned to UAMS in 2020, Dr. Zhan has received over **seven million US dollars** in external funding/awards to support his research including NIH R01s, Department of Defense, Myeloma Crows, Riney Family Multiple Myeloma Research Program Fund, and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Dr. Zhan shares the importance of staying competitive and working hard to obtain funding to further research.

His four major projects are:

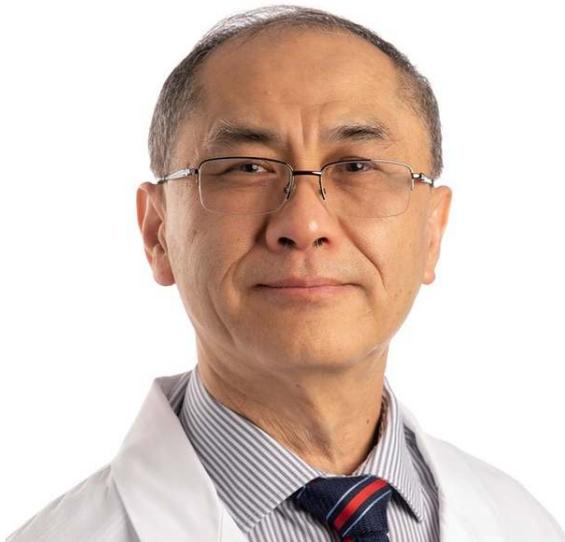
1. Targeting NEK2 Enables Immune Checkpoint Blockade in High-Risk/ Relapsed Myeloma
2. Using Humanized CD24 Antibody or a Compound Chimeric Antigen Receptor Strategy to Target Myeloma Stem Cells
3. Reprogramming of the Bone Marrow Microenvironment in MGUD Progression to Myeloma
4. The Functional Role of DKK1 and CST6 in Myeloma Bone Disease

Dr. Zhan collaborates with national and international scientists and has published fourteen papers since his return in 2020 including in high-impact journals such as *J Clin Invest* (JCI) and *Mol Cancer*, et al. Another JCI paper from his group is under revision and will be published soon.

A fundamental part of Dr. Zhan's laboratory's mission is to train physicians and basic scientists to conduct rigorous cancer research. Dr. Zhan has been mentoring several junior faculties of research or clinicians at UAMS since 2020. Several of them have received KL2 (Dr. Cody Ashby) and/or COBRA grants (Dr. Donghoon Yoon and Dr. Carolina Schinke). With the potential addition for more Ph/D/ and/or medical students, he and his team are able to create an active environment that fosters collaboration among clinicians, researchers, and students. He says that though knowledge is limited, collaboration can synergize new ideas.

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## Dr. Shi-Ming Tu, Section Head, Medical Oncology



**Shi-Ming Tu, M.D.**

Dr. Shi-Ming Tu joined our faculty in March after a distinguished career at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Dr. Tu brings with him a wealth of knowledge as both a cancer clinician and scientist. Dr. Tu focuses on genitourinary (GU) cancers, specifically prostate and testicle cancer. He finds these tumors to be very interesting and enjoys taking care of patients with GU cancers and continuing to learn and test theories on the origin of prostate and testicular cancer in particular and of cancer in general.

While many institutions want to excel in drug development, Dr. Tu is proud that UAMS wants to do more and better in therapy development. Therapy development means knowing the patient and the disease and knowing when and how to use the drugs to provide an optimal clinical outcome.

He is interested in the stem cell theory of cancer and finding a way to incorporate unconventional approaches (such as nutritional intervention) to enhance standard treatments and maintain remissions by targeting minimal residual cancer stem cells after successful induction therapies.

Dr. Tu is thankful for the opportunity to collaborate with the exceptional scientists at UAMS to further investigate and subjugate cancer stem cells. He shares that the best achievements come from working together with researchers, clinicians, and students whose fresh ideas, energy, and enthusiasm make cancer care and research rewarding and fulfilling.

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## **Dr. Konstantinos Arnaoutakis, Hematology Oncology Fellowship Director**



Dr. Konstantinos Arnaoutakis took the helm of the Hematology Oncology Fellowship Program two years ago after serving as the Associate Director. Dr. Arnaoutakis enjoys the structure and organized administrative work that comes alongside the opportunity to mentor and work with trainees.

The formal training that comes with working with fellows allows him to become a better educator as well as the ability to create curriculum and programs. One of the aspects of the program that Dr. Arnaoutakis highlights is the simulation curriculum that grants students the ability to practice difficult conversations with patients and introduces aspects of wellbeing and resilience.

### **Konstantinos Arnaoutakis, M.D., FACP**

As the director of the program, Dr. Arnaoutakis finds the biggest satisfaction of his job to be meeting people he and his colleagues have trained many years later. It is gratifying to see how they have grown and how they fondly remember their years training at UAMS. When asked for the perspectives he has gained throughout his career, Dr. Arnaoutakis shares three pieces of advice: always find time to take care of yourself and read books, no matter what is happening everything will be okay in the end, and it is important to work in an environment with people who are nice and give good advice.

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# A Patient's Story, The Impact of Caring Physicians

Recently, a colleague from Arkansas Children's shared her appreciation for the staff here at UAMS for the care her mother received during the four weeks she spent here before her passing. Her heart warming story thanked several of her physicians by name, including a few of our own.

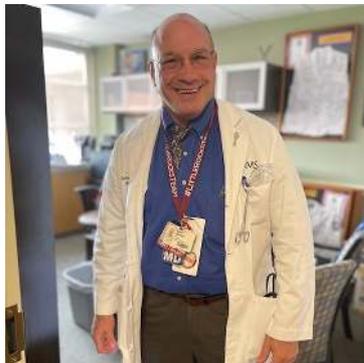
"Dr. Seth Berney...went out of his way to see my mom and ensure we were being well taken care of. He was my mom's favorite attending who saw her, and she loved his nonsense, tell it like it is approach. Every time he left the room, she just raved about him. He was also tireless in his drive to figure out what was making my mom so sick."

"Dr. Nikhil Meena...the intensivist for most of her ICU stay. He took care of us like we were family. He always made sure we were updated and made sure to call me when I was not able to be at my mom's bedside."

"Dr. Kara Phillips...an internal medicine resident who took care of my mom in the MICU. When I had to go back to work Dr. Phillips took the extra step to ensure my sister (who was at my mom's bedside) was kept updated and was being taken care of. She offered to sit with my mom so my sister could leave to get food and my mom would not have to be alone. She sat with my sister when she was upset and crying. This compassion was not lost on my family. Dr. Phillips is not only an excellent physician but also a great person."

As a former student and trainee of UAMS, she stated that her pride and sentiment has grown even more after her experience with her mother. She stated that " UAMS, as a institution, should be proud that these people who have been decimated by a pandemic still have empathy and compassion for the people they serve."

Thank you to all of our faculty and staff for your tireless work and the impact you are leaving on our patients and their families.



**Seth Berney, M.D.**



**Nikhil Meena, M.D.**



**Kara Phillips, M.D.**

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## Dean's Honor Day Award Winners



**Emily Kocurek, M.D.**  
Educational Innovation  
Clinical Excellence -  
Rising Star



**Deepa Raghavan, M.D.**  
Educational Innovation

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## College of Medicine Honors Convocation Ceremony



**Manisha Singh, M.D.**  
Sophomore Golden Apple  
Award



**Tony Hoyt, M.D.**  
Resident Physician  
Teaching Excellence Award



**James Tullis, M.D.**  
Resident Physician  
Teaching Excellence Award

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## Changes in Clinical Leadership

On May 16, several new leadership positions were announced that included members of our Internal Medicine Faculty. Click [here](#) to read the full announcement from Dr. Steppe Mette and Dr. Michelle Krause.



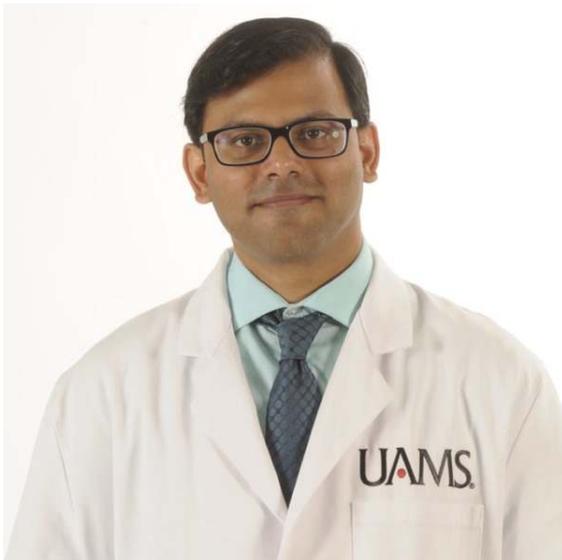
**Dr. Aaron Wenger:** With the promotion of Dr. Michelle Krause, Dr. Aaron Wenger will serve as the Integrated Medicine Service Line (IMSL) Director.



**Dr. Larry Johnson:** Dr. Johnson will continue as the Medical Director for the Medical Specialty clinics and as the Critical Care Quality Officer for the Integrated Medicine Service Line.



**Dr. Ahmed Abuabdou:** As Dr. Michelle Krause assumes the role of Interim Chief Executive Officer when Dr. Steppe Mette retires, Dr. Abuabdou will take on the role of Interim Chief Clinical Officer for UAMS Medical Center.



**Bharat Dhanireddy, M.D.**

### **Dr. Bharat Dhanireddy selected to the UAMS Physician Advisor Group**

Dr. Bharat Dhanireddy, Assistant Professor in the Division of Hospital Medicine, has been selected to serve as a Physician Advisor. He will focus on the area of Utilization Review at UAMS Medical Center.

Congratulations, Dr. Dhanireddy!

## **Translational Research Institute Announces New KL2 Scholars for 2022-2023**

TRI's KL2 Mentored Research Career Development Scholars Program recently announced nine new scholars, including three of our own in Internal Medicine. Congratulations!



**Jennifer Andersen, Ph.D.**  
Community Health & Research



**Nishank Jain, M.D.**  
Nephrology



**Deepa Raghavan, M.D.**  
Pulmonary & Critical Care

## Farewell and Good Luck!

Thank you to our 2021-2022 Chief Residents Dr. Lauren Taylor, Dr. Zachary Tilley, and Dr. Charles Lavender. We will miss you and wish you all the best in your future endeavors!



## 2022-2023 Internal Medicine Chief Residents

We are happy to welcome our new chief residents on June 1. Pictured from left to right: Dr. Thomas Spradley, Dr. Lana Abusalem, and Dr. Husam Salah.



## **2023-2024 Internal Medicine Chief Residents**

Congratulations to our newly selected chief residents for the 2023-2024 year!



**Farah Mazahreh, M.D.**



**Tanya Savenka, M.D.**



**Morgan Tripod, M.D.**

# Internal Medicine Annual Research Symposium

The 2022 Internal Medicine Annual Research Symposium took place on Tuesday, May 10 highlighting the research done by students, residents, and fellows under the guidance of Internal Medicine Faculty. See below pictures from the event.

## Symposium Winners:

### Poster Presentation

- Mock Codes
  - Kara Phillips, M.D.
  - Ples Spradley, M.D.
  - Mason Harper, M.D.
  - Heath Mitchell, M.D.
  - Prachi Saluja, M.B,B.S.

### QI Project Oral Presentations

- Improving Resident to Patient Feedback of Test Results Obtained in Internal Medicine Clinic
  - Julie Gardner, M.D.

### Clinical Research Oral Presentations

- Incidence and Outcomes of Acute Kidney Injury in COVID-19: A Systematic Review
  - Prabhav Vasistha, M.B,B.S.



**Kara Phillips, M.D.**



**Ples Spradley, M.D.**



**Mason Harper, M.D.**



**Heath Mitchell, M.D.**



**Prachi Saluja, M.B;B.S.**



**Julie Gardner, M.D.**



**Prabhav Vasistha,  
M.B;B.S.**



The Department of Internal Medicine is the largest department in the College of Medicine at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. The department is home to approximately 150 full-time faculty members, 81 residents, and 68 fellows serving two residency programs and twelve fellowship programs. Dr. Edward T.H. Yeh, a cardiologist and physician/scientist, is a pioneer in the field of onco-cardiology.

**Questions, comments, or suggestions for future newsletters? Email Shelby Shields at [smshields@uams.edu](mailto:smshields@uams.edu) or Natalie Moore at [NMoore@uams.edu](mailto:NMoore@uams.edu).**

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