

**Editor: Henny van Dijk**

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**October, 2023**

## **The 2023 Health Symposium ...**

## **About Our Speakers:**

### **Last Call- Sign Up Before Oct. 15 UTHRO's 2023 Health Symposium**

**Wednesday October 18 10:00—2:00  
OCB, Rio Grande Room**

- ◆ **12:00—12:30 Philip Orlander MD**  
**Diabetes in the Older Adult:**  
*Can changes in lifestyle prevent or control the disease*  
12:30—12:45 Q & A
- ◆ **12:45—1:15 Nahib Rianon**  
**Frailty & Fractures:**  
*How to prevent bone loss while getting older*  
1:15—1:30 Q & A

The City of Houston Health Department has agreed again to send a team to administer the Flu vaccine. We also have been able to get "on location" screening for oral cancer by the School of Dentistry, and hearing testing by a team from UTHealth McGovern Medical School's Audiology team in the Dept. of Otolaryngology.

Finally we will have tables with info about the Texas Silver Hair Legislature as well as a table representing AAA, the Area Assistance on Aging, a City of Houston Health Department agency and Jason Burnett's efforts to recruit volunteers for Dr. Dyer's Second Family Program, pioneering a program to bring connection and community to isolated older adults.

Contact Janice Thomas  
before Oct. 15 to say you will attend  
so we have enough lunches for everyone.  
by email ([flyte99@yahoo.com](mailto:flyte99@yahoo.com)) or phone (832-515-0280).

*Parking Validated  
I believe quite a program, so come on out and join us!*



*Dr. Orlander*

Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death nationally and the prevalence is continuing to increase, now affecting on average over 25% of all individuals over the age of 65 and slightly more common in men and non-white populations. The prevalence is even higher for prediabetes. Texas has one of the highest rates of diabetes with projections to continue to increase. There are many reasons for this, but the principle ones are genetics and lifestyle, with increasing weight and decreasing activity being the primary drivers. Many individuals can prevent or control diabetes with relatively simple changes in lifestyle.



Dr. Nahid Rianon is an Assistant Professor of the Division of Geriatric Medicine at McGovern Medical School. She sees patients in the Acute Care for the Elderly (ACE) unit at the Memorial Hermann Hospital and at the Center for Healthy Aging (CHA) in Bellaire, TX. She runs the Geriatric Osteoporosis clinic at the CHA and her main research interest is osteoporosis

due to age-related bone loss and fracture prevention. Her current research investigates the role of antihypertensive medication in the prevention of bone loss. More than one in four people age 65 years or older fall each year.

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## Ferid Murad, Nobel Winner

I still remember vividly the excitement that October morning in 1998 when we were all told to congregate in the lecture hall on the first floor and Dr. Low took to the podium to announce that our UTHSC-H had their first Nobel Prize winner, the Chair of the Dept. of Physiology/ Pharmacology Dr. Ferid Murad. The next 3 months were busy for me to make sure that whatever the press needed in terms of images and graphics of the Nobel coin and the Nobel certificate as well as images of Dr Murad in his lab were available.



So when I heard that he had passed away on September 4 all those things came flooding back. Murad became a star and the school and the Center were basking in that glow. He won for his research in Nitric Oxide and shared the prize with 2 other researchers working on the same problem. When Bryant Boutwell wrote his book "A Conversation with a Medical School" the Nobel coin, Murad's Nobel coin, was featured on the cover. One of the conversations was of course about and with Dr Murad and I went up to his room and asked for his autograph in that book, which he signed.



## John Ribble, MD—Dean



On Sep.21 I got word from the Office of Communications that John Ribble passed away. The news came too late for me to contact those who knew the longest serving Dean in the Medical School's history who at one time not only was Dean but also President of the Health Science Center. I plan to dedicate a special issue celebrating his life by those who knew him, had worked with him and admired what he meant to the school.

RIP Dean Ribble.

## Patricia Sigler Remembered



My friend and colleague both at Duke and at UTHSC-H informed me that his wife Pat passed away on August 10. Both were longtime UTHRO members and though I usually just show an image of the deceased, Joe was such a well recognized face that I decided to portray them both. Married for more than 50 years I could always count on their contributions for the Evergreen. What I didn't know but learned today that Pat had a long career here in Houston and some of you might have had kids in schools Pat taught or was a principal. Originally from Oregon, Patricia moved to West Virginia where she met Joe. Joe (and Pat) moved to Durham, NC and Duke University where I met Joe in 1968. When I moved to Houston in 1972 I got the surprise of my life when one day Joe now the Public Affairs Director under President Roger Bulger just stepped into my office and we have stayed connected ever since. Pat in the meantime made her own career. After moving to Texas in 1979, Pat worked for a year as a health educator with The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, leaving to accept the principalship and open a new school, The Grace Ward Harby Junior High School in Alvin, TX. When she retired in 1995 she had been principal for 13 year at Alvin Elementary School. In 1995 she was certified in Reality Therapy through Dr. William Glasser's International Training Institute for Reality Therapy in California. After retiring to Tallahassee, she worked for four years as a counselor at Turn About, Inc., a program for addictions and behavior modification in adolescents and their families.

In retirement Joe and Pat did a lot of traveling and shared their experiences with their UTHRO colleagues. It is with my deepest condolences that I wish Joe the strength to look at those experiences and memories and find solace in them.

May Pat Rest In Peace.

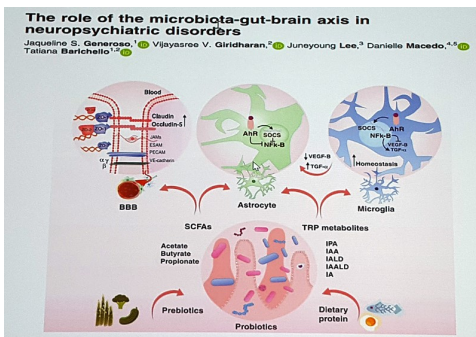




## And the Winner is ...



A small group of UTHRO members met on September 13 to hear the top three proposals presented for the UTHRO Endowment seed grant award. Dr. Laila Bekhet from the UTHealth McWilliams School of Biomedical Informatics talked about improving and refining animal models to help bridge the gap between preclinical studies and clinical outcomes, especially for geriatric patients. Dr. Neha Parikh from the UTHealth School of Dentistry presented her proposal to utilize a large data base to look at possible links between inflammation, as occurs in periodontal disease, and dementia. Dr. Vijayasree Giridharan from the UTHealth McGovern Medical School discussed her studies associating changes in the gut microbiome with possible mental health issues in elderly COVID-19 survivors.



By vote of the members present, Dr. Giridharan was the winner and will be awarded \$5,000 from the Endowment fund interest. It was exciting to see proposals from five of the school at UTHealth this year and a variety of interests.

While \$5,000 is a nice amount for a small seed grant project which will hopefully lead to a larger funded project, it would be even better to offer a larger amount. That is what we hope to do with our Endowment. Our goal is to reach a corpus of at least \$200,000. It is estimated that this amount would generate interest of around \$10,000 per year. That would be a very nice seed grant award!

Peggy O'Neill, Chair of the Endowment Committee

## Vaccines & Alzheimer's



Prior vaccination against tetanus and diphtheria, with or without pertussis (Tdap/Td); herpes zoster (HZ), better known as shingles; and pneumococcus are all associated with a reduced risk for developing Alzheimer's disease, according to new research from UTHealth Houston.

A pre-press version of a study was published online recently in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*. Alzheimer's disease affects more than 6 million people living in the U.S., with the number of affected individuals growing due to the nation's aging population.

The new findings come just over a year after Schulz's team published another study in the journal, which found that people who received at least one influenza vaccine were 40% less likely than their unvaccinated peers to develop Alzheimer's disease.

"We were wondering whether the influenza finding was specific to the flu vaccine. This data revealed that several additional adult vaccines were also associated with a reduction in the risk of Alzheimer's," said Schulz; "We and others hypothesize that the immune system is responsible for causing brain cell dysfunction in Alzheimer's. The findings suggest to us that vaccination is having a more general effect on the immune system that is reducing the risk for developing Alzheimer's."

Researchers performed a retrospective cohort study that included patients who were free of dementia during a two-year lookback period and were at least 65 years old by the start of the eight-year follow-up period. They compared two similar groups, one vaccinated and another unvaccinated, with Tdap/Td, HZ, or pneumococcal vaccine. "

"By leveraging modern data analysis models and the very large claims database subscribed by McWilliams School of Biomedical Informatics, we gained valuable insights into which vaccines may protect against Alzheimer's and potentially develop more effective prevention strategies," said Xiaoqian Jiang, PhD, a co-author on the study. Patients who received the Tdap/Td vaccine were 30% less likely than their unvaccinated peers to develop Alzheimer's disease (7.2% of vaccinated patients versus 10.2% of unvaccinated patients developed the disease). Similarly, HZ vaccination was associated with a 25% reduced risk of developing Alzheimer's disease (8.1% of vaccinated patients versus 10.7% of unvaccinated patients). For the pneumococcal vaccine, there was an associated 27% reduced risk of developing the disease (7.92% of vaccinated patients versus 10.9% of unvaccinated patients). For comparison, Schulz said, three new anti-amyloid antibodies used to treat Alzheimer's have shown they slow disease progression by 25%, 27%, and 35%.

Edited from a longer article by Cara Munez

# UTHRO

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*To update your address or phone number  
please contact us at 281-655-1983*

## **And Now For Something Completely Different... Advantages of Being Sixty Plus (or Older)**

*In a hostage situation you are likely to be released first  
No one expects you to run anywhere  
People call at 9 PM and ask you "Did I wake you?"  
There is nothing left to learn the hard way  
Things you buy now, won't wear out  
You can eat dinner at 4 PM  
You cannot live without your glasses  
You enjoy hearing about other people's operations  
You get into heated arguments about pension plans  
You no longer think of speed limits as a challenge  
You no longer hold your stomach in no matter who walks into the room  
You sing along with elevator music  
Your investments in health insurance is finally beginning to pay off  
Your joints are more accurate meteorologist than the National Weather Service  
Your secrets are safe with your friends because they can't remember them either  
Your supply of brain cells is finally down to a manageable size  
You can't remember the .....!*

### **UTHRO OFFICERS 2023**

**President** Barbara Kelly  
**Vice-Pres** Efen Pena  
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**Web Administrators** Henny van Dijk, Pat Grealy & Glenn Schreyer

To protect our officers' personal information on our website, UTHRO has instituted a new general purpose email address: [uthro@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:uthro@uth.tmc.edu). This is a "forwarding" email that will send copies to both the UTHRO president and Efen Pena who will then forward the email to the appropriate person. Including the recipient's name in your subject will be very helpful; e.g. Subject: For Barry, BBQ lunch. If UTHRO members already know the phone number or personal email address of an officer then by all means continue using that for your communication needs.  
**Newsletter Editor** Henny van Dijk