

MANY FACES. ONE MISSION.

Impact Stories of Philanthropy



Carrying the light

Aspiring nurse pursues her dreams thanks to scholarship support



A step in the right direction

UTHealth Houston reimagines geriatrics education



Meeting the moment

UTHealth Houston stroke experts harness ingenuity and philanthropy to save lives

 UTHealth[®] Houston



MANY FACES.
ONE MISSION.

—
The Campaign for UTHealth Houston

Our communities face complex and pervasive conditions, and the increased demand for health professionals poses significant challenges for health systems around the nation.

Throughout our nearly 50-year history, UTHealth Houston has stood at the forefront of these challenges, combining education, research, and patient care to move health care forward. To build on our expertise and bring our unique capabilities where they are most urgently needed, we launched our largest philanthropic effort yet, *Many Faces. One Mission.*

Within these pages, you will read stories about how your commitment to *Many Faces. One Mission.* combines with others to improve lives throughout our community—from providing scholarships and education to address shortages in the workforce, to training health professionals fluent in the unique needs of underserved populations, to addressing conditions where every second matters.

Because of you, we are able to rise up and meet the challenges at hand. *Thank you* for being a part of the UTHealth Houston story—and for your dedication to building a healthier community.

MANY FACES. ONE MISSION.

The Campaign for UTHHealth Houston

Many Faces. One Mission. is our **\$500 million** commitment to:



TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

We will deepen our commitment to the next generation of practitioners and innovators, as well as the educators who train them, to address shortages in critical health professions.



IMPROVING

HOUSTON'S HEALTH

We will save lives and improve health outcomes throughout Houston and Texas by amplifying collaborative research; encouraging a passion for learning; and promoting patient care and public health projects, programs, and outreach initiatives.



ADVANCING

BRAIN AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

We are building a leading center of care for brain and behavioral health, dedicated to discovering better treatments for neurological conditions and making mental health care accessible to all.

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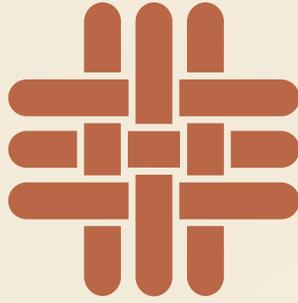
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TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Today's students hold the potential to tackle tomorrow's health challenges. By harnessing a passion to improve lives, they will become the physicians and researchers who guide our communities to better health, the dentists who deliver bright new smiles, and the nurses who provide compassionate relief to patients during their darkest hours.

As our nation faces growing shortages of health care workers, UTHealth Houston is deepening our commitment to training the next generation of health professionals—as well as the experts who educate them. Through scholarships that help students achieve their dreams and lecture series that unite the world's top scientific minds, we are positioning our graduates to make an even greater impact on health.

*Scan the QR code with
your mobile device.*





TAKING ROOT AND BRANCHING OFF

Scholarship nurtures graduate students and inspires
a new generation of giving



PAVING PATHS TO EUREKA

UTHealth Houston lecture series muster magnificent
minds to drive innovation



CARRYING THE LIGHT

Aspiring nurse pursues her dreams thanks
to scholarship support





TAKING ROOT AND BRANCHING OFF

SCHOLARSHIP NURTURES GRADUATE STUDENTS
AND INSPIRES A NEW GENERATION OF GIVING

Stony precipices and wooded slopes swell out of the rocky landscape in the rural village in Guizhou, China, where Yanhong Zhou, PhD '20, grew up. The view is breathtaking, but this sparse, rugged terrain makes it difficult to cultivate much—whether crops, livestock, or people. Despite the challenges, families work together to harvest corn and nurture dreams, while rapid development continues to improve living conditions for all.

“Many parents in our village had to earn a living in a faraway city, leaving their children to work on the farms under the supervision of their grandparents,” she says.

“Growing up, I always dreamed of doing something to improve the lives of my family and neighbors.”

In 2011, Yanhong left China with her husband to pursue her dream in the United States. She started a graduate program in recreation, parks, and tourism resources at West Virginia University, but she quickly discovered a passion in statistics after taking a couple of courses. Unable to choose between the two, she eventually earned a master's degree in each discipline.

When her husband's job prompted a move to Houston, Yanhong began researching how she could further her education in statistics and launch a career in this new city.

With a three-year-old child at home, the couple also wanted to keep their growing family together.

Hard work, guidance from brilliant mentors, and support from a special scholarship helped Yanhong Zhou, PhD '20, build a bright future—for herself and for others who follow in her footsteps.





The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences combines the expertise of the nation's leading cancer hospital and the excellence of a health science university that graduates more health professionals than any other Texas institution. Faculty at the school account for more than **\$476 million** in research expenditures, and together, UTHealth Houston and MD Anderson Cancer Center are ranked **25th in the nation** for total funding from the National Institutes of Health.

"I learned the Texas Medical Center was the largest of its kind in the world, and that The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center was among the best cancer centers," she says. "When I read about the Quantitative Sciences program at MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School, I knew it was where I wanted to pursue my dream."

It was the only PhD program Yanhong applied to, and she was accepted in 2016. Early in her studies, she found two exceptional faculty mentors in J. Jack Lee, DDS, PhD, and Ying Yuan, PhD, who hold primary appointments in the Department of Biostatistics at MD Anderson. Under their tutelage, Yanhong worked to develop adaptive designs and software for early-phase clinical trials and outline a path for her future.

"As a first-generation graduate student, I found it difficult to even envision what my career path might look like before joining MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School," says Yanhong. "But my time there was a life-changing period for me, and it was largely thanks to Dr. Lee and Dr. Yuan, who taught me how to conduct rigorous research and prepared me for a successful future career."



J. Jack Lee, DDS, PhD

**Associate Vice President,
Quantitative Research**

Professor, Department of Biostatistics

**The University of Texas
MD Anderson Cancer Center**

—

Member, Quantitative Sciences

**MD Anderson UTHealth
Graduate School**

—

**Adjunct Professor, Department
of Biostatistics and Data Science**

UTHealth School of Public Health



Ying Yuan, PhD

**Professor and Deputy Chair,
Department of Biostatistics**

**The University of Texas
MD Anderson Cancer Center**

—

**Associate Member,
Quantitative Sciences**

**MD Anderson UTHealth
Graduate School**

■ In 2019, Yanhong received the Investing in Student Futures Scholarship, an endowed award established by Priscilla Saunders, PhD, in memory of her husband and beloved MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School faculty member, Grady F. Saunders, PhD. The scholarship helps advance the work of students who are conducting vital research with the potential to advance the field of biomedical science by providing financial assistance to enable them to pursue their dreams.

“Earning this scholarship was a defining moment of my time at the school, and it reinforced my belief that anything is possible through hard work,” says Yanhong. “With a child at home, it provided much-needed financial assistance to help me commit to my research.”

Doctorate students at MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School receive graduate research assistantships, which cover tuition, fees, and benefits, for 16 months. Afterward, students earn support from their faculty advisors through traineeships and fellowships. Scholarships help supplement these stipends and provide students with the financial freedom to cover other expenses or pursue interests or opportunities they otherwise could not afford.

With support from the Investing in Student Futures Scholarship, Yanhong pursued her dream of improving lives in her village in Guizhou. Using a portion of the funds, she distributed her own scholarships to more than 20 schoolchildren in her home village who showed academic promise and needed financial assistance.

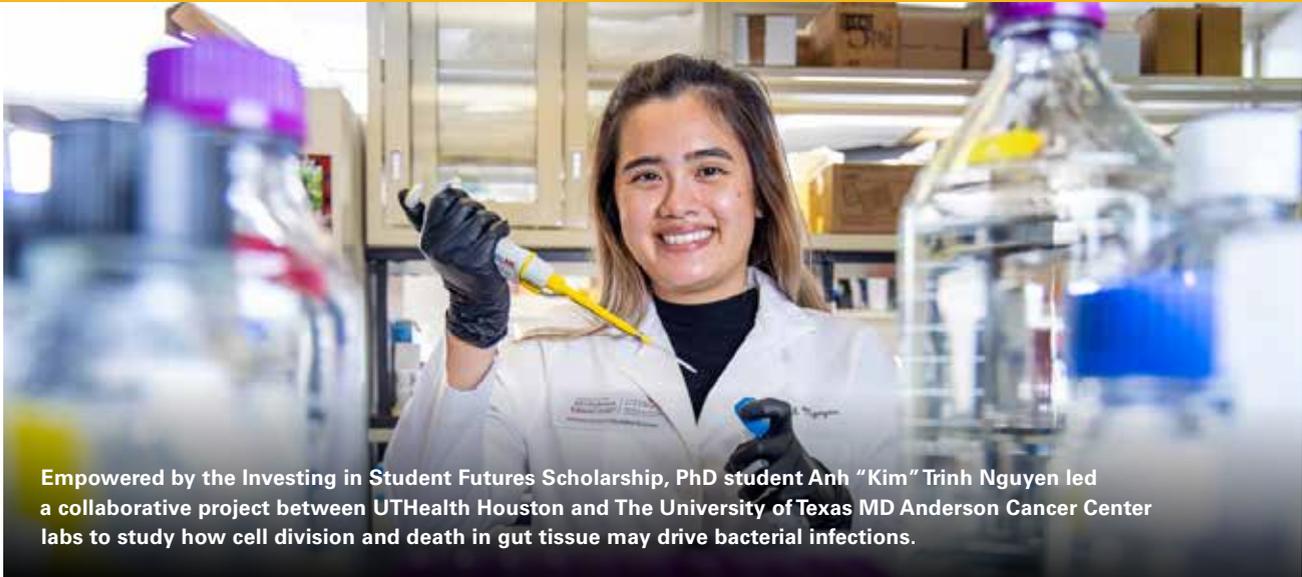
“I know the challenges these children face, and I wanted to encourage them to continue pursuing their dreams,” says Yanhong. “Seeing the impact the Investing in Student Futures Scholarship made on me, and in turn, the impact it made on those children, taught me the power of giving.”

In 2021, Yanhong launched her career designing clinical trials for new cancer therapies. Thankful for her experiences at MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School and the support she received through the scholarship, she decided to establish her own endowed scholarship at the school with help from her company’s matching gift program.

“I hope my gift makes a difference in someone’s life the way donors to the Investing in Student Futures Scholarship made a difference in my life,” she says.

Guizhou, where Yanhong grew up, is a mountainous province in southwest China. The region has experienced rapid development in recent years, becoming a hub for big data and transportation.





Empowered by the Investing in Student Futures Scholarship, PhD student Anh “Kim” Trinh Nguyen led a collaborative project between UTHealth Houston and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center labs to study how cell division and death in gut tissue may drive bacterial infections.

Since 2013, the Investing in Student Futures Scholarship has been awarded to 14 graduate students like Yanhong, with as many as three recipients per year.

The 2021 recipient, Anh “Kim” Trinh Nguyen, a PhD student in the lab of Anne-Marie Krachler, PhD, at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston, is researching how bacteria adhere to tissues in the gut and infect their hosts, which could lead to new ways to prevent and treat bacterial infections and chronic conditions like inflammatory bowel disease.

“Scholarships inspire students to be innovative and pursue excellence,” says Kim. “By helping me to focus more on research and less on finances, the Investing in Student Futures Scholarship has created new opportunities for me and enabled me to think outside the box.”

One of Kim’s proudest accomplishments at MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School is sparking a collaborative project between the Krachler Lab at UTHealth Houston and a lab at MD Anderson. Together, the teams are investigating how cell division and death in epithelial tissue in the gut may drive bacterial infections like *E. coli*.

The ripple effect of the Investing in Student Futures Scholarship has only grown since the beginning of *Many Faces. One Mission.* in 2015, with 31 gifts from 19 donors, including a significant commitment from alumna Dianne K. Hammond, PhD ‘89, and her husband Jim.

Like Dianne, many supporters of the scholarship are alumni who want to honor the memory of an esteemed faculty member and support the next generation of biomedical scientists. “Contributing to this endowment each year is a way for me to extend Dr. Saunders’ legacy and give thanks for the opportunities he gave me,” says Stephen Hewitt, MD ‘96, PhD ‘95.

Just as corn sprouts from the mountains of Guizhou, opportunities often bloom where seeds are planted. Gifts in support of the Investing in Student Futures Scholarship or other scholarships enable MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School to attract extraordinary students like Yanhong and Kim and empower them to branch out in pursuit of their dreams.



Anne-Marie Krachler, PhD

Associate Professor, Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics

McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston

—

Member, Microbiology and Infectious Diseases

MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School



“Scholarships at MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School create opportunities for our graduate students to acquire the passion to demystify the unknown and the ability to transform discovery into lifesaving solutions. This sends a ripple through our communities, as our students go on to make major impacts on the treatment of diseases and improve lives.”



Michael R. Blackburn, PhD

Dean

John P. McGovern Graduate School
of Biomedical Sciences
Endowed Distinguished Professor

MD Anderson UTHealth
Graduate School

Dean of Research, *ad interim*

William S. Kilroy, Sr. Distinguished
University Chair in Pulmonary Disease

Professor, Department of Biochemistry
and Molecular Biology

McGovern Medical School
at UTHealth Houston

Executive Vice President and Chief
Academic Officer

UTHealth Houston

PAVING PATHS TO EUREKA

UTHEALTH HOUSTON LECTURE SERIES MUSTER
MAGNIFICENT MINDS TO DRIVE INNOVATION

The principle of buoyancy was supposedly uncovered by Greek mathematician Archimedes when he noticed his bathtub water rise as he stepped in. Nearly two millennia later, Sir Isaac Newton famously formulated his gravitational theory after watching an apple fall from a tree. While these legendary eureka moments, or bursts of insight, may have helped sparked some of humankind's greatest findings, the primary ingredients of revolutionary scientific discoveries include a mingling of brilliant minds and years of research.

UTHealth Houston sets the stage for these eureka moments through lecture series. By exposing our community—from first-year students to tenured faculty and occasionally the public—to new ideas and new research opportunities, lecture series drive innovations and breakthroughs.

The James H. Steele Lecture Series at UTHealth School of Public Health and the John J. Kopchick Research Symposium at MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School exemplify how these events, and the donors who support them, make an indelible impact.

It wasn't until Edward Jenner developed the smallpox vaccine in 1796 that humans found a way to prevent diseases that pass from animals to people. Two centuries later, James H. Steele, DVM, introduced the idea that government could provide a systematic approach to fighting these diseases to protect people—something that has gained prominence due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Standing at six feet, seven inches, Steele was a larger-than-life figure who made a colossal impact on the field of public health through his work with the federal government to establish mass vaccination and prevention programs for diseases like rabies and bovine brucellosis. His pioneering efforts earned him the title "Father of veterinary public health."

Steele became a faculty member at the School of Public Health in 1971, serving as Professor until 1983. To commemorate his tremendous achievements, Herbert L. DuPont, MD, and the late R. Palmer Beasley, MD, then Dean of the school, created the James H. Steele Lecture Series in 1992.



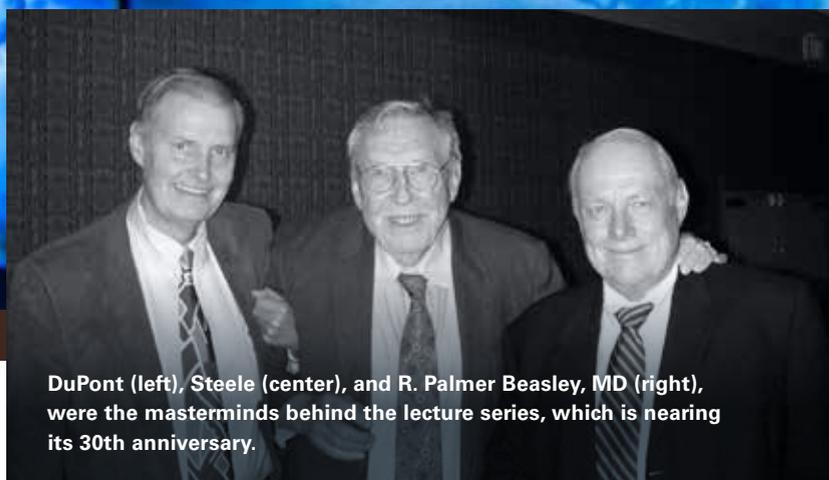
Herbert L. DuPont, MD

Professor, Department of
Epidemiology, Human Genetics, and
Environmental Sciences

UTHealth School of Public Health

Member
MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School

The James H. Steele Lecture Series has brought some of world's brightest public health leaders to UTHouston to discuss the most difficult infectious diseases. Herbert L. DuPont, MD, has attended each lecture, introducing the speakers and keeping alive the memory of James H. Steele, DVM, and his accomplishments.



DuPont (left), Steele (center), and R. Palmer Beasley, MD (right), were the masterminds behind the lecture series, which is nearing its 30th anniversary.

“Establishing this lecture series was a way to honor a luminary in public health by bringing other visionaries to our school to share their expertise,” says DuPont. “The annual lecture provides an opportunity for our UTHouston community to learn from and network with some of the world’s brightest minds.”

The first lecture was held in April 1993, coinciding with Steele’s 80th birthday. He attended each lecture until his passing in 2013, when he was 100 years old.

Past lecturers represent a who’s who of public health leaders, including a Nobel laureate and directors of domestic and international public health programs. Hosted by the Center for Infectious Diseases at the School of Public Health, topics focus on efforts to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

“We especially want to inspire students who aspire to change the world, and fighting infectious diseases is among the best ways to do that,” says DuPont, who founded the Center for Infectious

Diseases in 1989. “This lecture series helps us encourage our students to be influencers and leaders, just like the Steele lecturers.”

Since the beginning of *Many Faces. One Mission.* in 2015, seven donors have enhanced the endowment. Thanks to these extra resources, the series now hosts two lectures each year. As the series approaches its 30th anniversary, further support will enable the event to continue attracting extraordinary speakers multiple times each year.



The Dr. John J. Kopchick Research Symposium gives Kopchick fellows like Tristen Tellman (far left) the unique opportunity to organize a lecture series—something that usually only seasoned faculty members get to do.

While lecture series are often organized by experienced faculty members, that is not the case for the biennial John J. Kopchick Research Symposium at MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School, which is run by the students for the students.

John J. Kopchick, PhD '80, and his wife, Charlene, established the symposium, along with several fellowships and research awards, through a generous endowment. The symposium stands out because Kopchick fellows run the show, planning each aspect of the full-day event, which includes presentations, panels, a keynote lecture, and a networking lunch for students and speakers.

“The experience of organizing the symposium is truly one-of-a-kind and one that I will take with me into my future career,” says Tristen Tellman, a sixth-year PhD candidate and 2019 and 2020 Dr. John J. Kopchick Fellow.

“I normally would not have an opportunity to do this until I’m a faculty member running my own research program,” she adds.

In addition to leading marketing efforts for the inaugural symposium in 2019, Tristen, along with other Kopchick fellows, helped organize the November 2021 symposium by securing the keynote speaker, Maria A. Croyle, RPh, PhD, Professor of Molecular Pharmaceutics and Drug Delivery at The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy. Tristen also helped choose the symposium’s theme of perseverance and failure.

“As scientists, experiments don’t always go as planned,” she says. “You have to endure failure and innovate to answer the challenging questions. It is incredibly helpful to hear scientists we look up to, like Dr. Croyle, recount how they have persevered through failed experiments and career obstacles.”

Failure is a part of science and a part of life. Lecture series, such as the John J. Kopchick Research Symposium, provide our students and faculty with the tools and knowledge to persevere through adversity to reach eureka moments that transform health care.



The scholarship Ashley Edgar, RN, received not only goes toward her education as she pursues specialized training; it also touches each patient she will treat as a nurse practitioner in the future.

CARRYING THE LIGHT

ASPIRING NURSE PURSUES HER DREAMS
THANKS TO SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT

When war broke out in Crimea in 1853 between England and Russia over the Ottoman Empire, the people of England became outraged by the neglect of their ill and injured soldiers, who lacked sufficient medical attention and languished in appalling unsanitary conditions. Florence Nightingale, perhaps the most well-known nurse in history, organized a corps of nurses and sailed to Crimea.

She tended to the sick and injured through the wee hours of the night, long after the medical officers had retired for the evening, earning her the nickname “the Lady with the Lamp.” Her compassionate care coupled with her determination to address unsanitary conditions reduced the hospital’s death rate by two-thirds, and upon her return to England, she funded the establishment of the Nightingale Training School for Nurses—the first nursing school.

Fast forward nearly two centuries, and this same dedication, determination, and intelligence that saved countless lives distinguishes the students and graduates of Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston.

“In high school, I started volunteering at a hospital nearby and really loved the nurses because I felt like they knew the patients on a deeper level,” Ashley Edgar, RN, recounts of her own story. “I love this aspect of being a nurse, having this unmatched relationship with patients and their families.”



Nurses are central to the health care team, shouldering more and more responsibility as the landscape of health care evolves to meet the diverse needs of a growing population. Many times, they are the very last touch of compassion in someone's life.

"As an ICU nurse, sometimes by the time I'm taking care of patients, they are dying from preventable chronic conditions that they didn't even know they had, or no one educated them on how to treat it," explains Ashley. "I want to become a family nurse practitioner so that I can educate these people and help them manage their conditions so they don't end up like that in the ICU."

With a looming nursing shortage that will only grow more pressing as 25% of nurses in the workforce reach retirement age within the next 10 years, nursing education at all levels—from undergraduate to advanced practitioners—is integral to ensuring the health of our communities over the coming decades.

"Exacerbating the nursing shortage is a scarcity of nurse faculty, which has been intensified by the pandemic," says Diane M. Santa Maria, DrPH, RN. "Advanced degrees play an important role in preparing nurse faculty to educate students.

Without an investment in growing our faculty, we will perpetuate the nursing shortage and have growing gaps in health care."

Wanting to be a part of developing the health care plan for her patients, Ashley applied to numerous programs, but only one had her heart from the beginning.

"UTHealth Houston was always my first choice," she says. "I work at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center, which is staffed by UTHealth Houston employees. I have been really impressed with the quality of practitioners, nurses, and doctors from there. And just being here in the heart of the Texas Medical Center, you are where the cutting-edge medicine and technology is."

Yet many students struggle to afford the expenses of school, leaving aspiring nurses without the means to pursue their dreams and current nurses without the funds to obtain specialized training.

Ashley feels fortunate to have received a scholarship from the Crawford and Hattie Jackson Foundation. She is now completing her second year in the Family Nurse Practitioner program.

"The day that I got the letter that I was chosen to receive the scholarship, I was so excited and all my hesitations about school subsided," remembers Ashley. "Any time I'm getting stressed or down on myself, this scholarship reminds me that there are people behind me, and it gives me that extra boost of encouragement."

That scholarship helps Ashley persevere through the mental challenges of navigating a full-time job, didactic lectures, and exam weeks.

"If I need to work less to focus on school for that week, I can because my tuition is partially paid for with this scholarship," says Ashley. "It gives me that extra comfort knowing I can spend more time studying rather than forcing myself to work to pay my tuition."

As she enters her final 18 months of clinical rotations, the scholarship will take on even greater importance when it allows her to drop down to part-time work. "I wouldn't be able to do that without this scholarship," she says. "It's comforting knowing that I'm not spreading myself too thin, and I was super worried about that when considering getting an advanced degree."

Throughout the *Many Faces. One Mission.* campaign, undergraduate and graduate students at Cizik School of Nursing have received annual scholarship support from organizations including The Albert and Ethel Herzstein Charitable Foundation, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™, and the John P. McGovern Foundation.

Some donors, like Sheri Henriksen, have used their far-seeing generosity to make estate commitments to endow scholarships, and others, including Jane and the late Robert Cizik, have given generously to various programs that support students. Commitments like this equip our nursing graduates to carry forward a light that helps patients persevere during their darkest days—just like Nightingale did so many decades before.

"When you support nursing education, you're not just contributing or investing in one nurse," says Ashley.

"That scholarship will go toward all the future patients that I will treat as a nurse practitioner. Scholarships make a difference in the community for years and years to come."

Diane M. Santa Maria, DrPH, RN

Dean

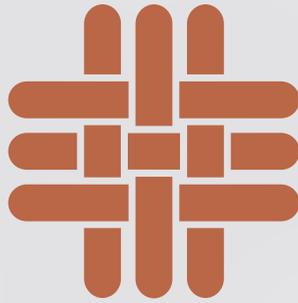
The Jane and Robert Cizik
Distinguished Chair

Huffington Foundation Endowed Chair in
Nursing Education Leadership

Associate Professor,
Department of Research

Cizik School of Nursing
at UTHealth Houston





IMPROVING HOUSTON'S HEALTH

A sprawling metropolis with an unbreakable spirit, Houston is home to a vibrant and rapidly growing community of people from around the world. While the city boasts world-renowned medical resources, its residents face a unique host of evolving health challenges—from heart disease to cancer to COVID-19.

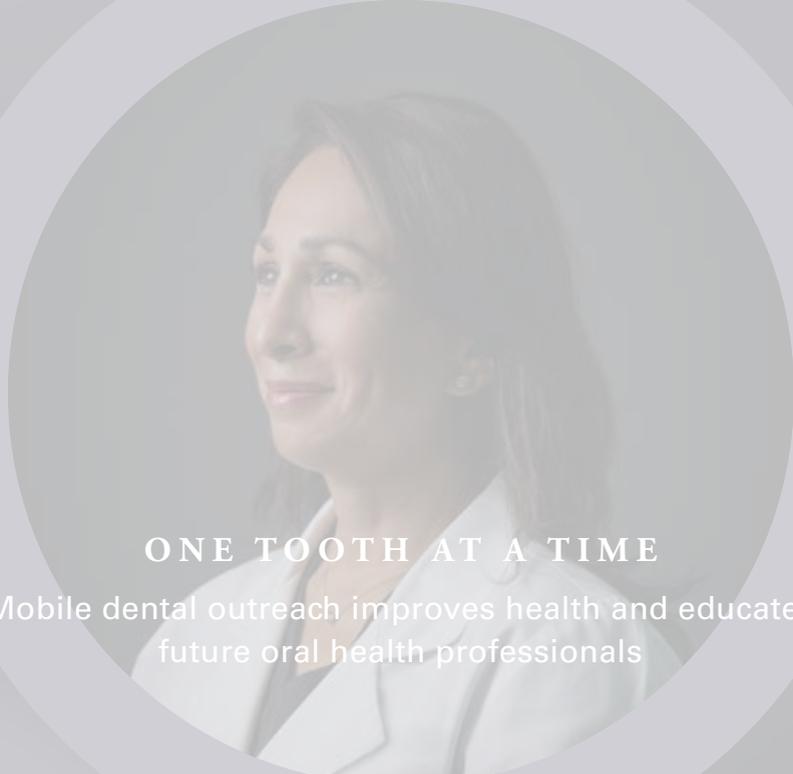
UTHealth Houston has stood at the forefront of safeguarding Houston's health for nearly 50 years. From improving geriatric care for the most vulnerable older adults to connecting underserved populations to much-needed dental care, we are improving health for people throughout Houston and beyond.

*Scan the QR code with
your mobile device.*





A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION
UTHealth Houston reimagines geriatric education



ONE TOOTH AT A TIME
Mobile dental outreach improves health and educates future oral health professionals





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A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

UTHEALTH HOUSTON REIMAGINES GERIATRIC EDUCATION

Long before they set foot in McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston, Rachel Obimah and Monica Cheng, MD, had something in common: They had early life experiences that inspired a passion for geriatric medicine. For Rachel, a job in the medical field always felt like a natural fit. She drew inspiration from her mother, a home health nurse who helped older patients live independently across the Greater Houston area.

“When I was five years old, my mother was teaching me about taking care of other people and the importance of compassion,” Rachel says. “I have been thinking about medicine for as long as I can remember, but I was never quite sure where to go with it until I learned about geriatrics and internal medicine.”

Monica had not really considered her future specialty until her grandfather became ill while she was in college. After shadowing several physicians to learn more about careers in health care, she went on to pursue her medical degree and residency at McGovern Medical School, where she has focused on learning to care for patients like her grandfather.

“I really started walking in the direction of geriatric medicine when I met some of the faculty at UTHealth Houston,” Monica says. “Their passion for helping older adults inspired me, and they encouraged me to participate in different learning opportunities so that I could experience every aspect of the field.”

Today, both women are gaining expertise in addressing the unique needs of older patients. With people living longer than ever before—and a growing shortage of physicians trained to care for older adults—Rachel and Monica embody UTHealth Houston’s commitment to improving Houston’s health.





Support from the philanthropic community bolsters the geriatric education and research program at UTHealth Houston, helping to train medical students like Rachel Obimah (left, with a faculty member) in the unique needs of older adults.



Only 2% of practicing physicians in the United States qualify as geriatricians, and more than half of all medical schools lack a structured geriatric curriculum.

“McGovern Medical School is among those leading the way in advocating for better geriatric education,” says Rachel Jantea, MD, Director of Education at the UTHealth Houston Consortium on Aging. “We offer a required geriatric clerkship to ensure that every graduate gains experience, and we provide specialized clinical and research opportunities for students who want to learn more.”

Older adults have specific health needs that often differ from younger patients. From experiencing multiple chronic conditions to having limited mobility, their care requires advanced skills and knowledge to balance treatments, medications, and quality of life. Maintaining an older patient’s health and wellness over time can also take more than medicine—it can require attending to a variety of social and emotional needs as well.

A fourth-year medical student, Rachel is completing the concentration track in geriatric and palliative medicine as part of her medical degree. While the COVID-19 pandemic affected her third year of medical school, she gained valuable experience in a virtual environment through online lectures and activities.

“I like forming long-term relationships with patients,” she says. “I love their stories, their wisdom, and their humor. These experiences have given me a deep appreciation for the complex challenges that they can face.”

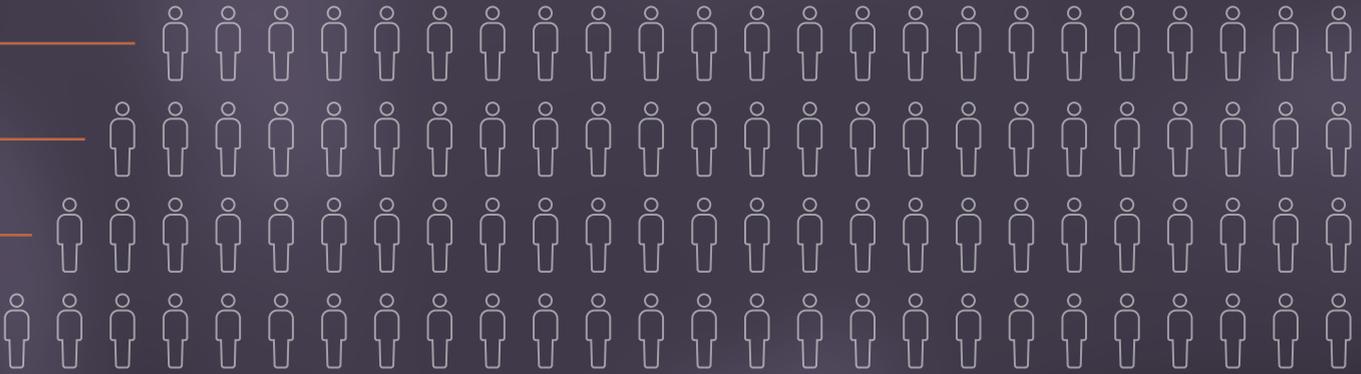
Monica, a third-year resident in internal medicine, aims to pursue a fellowship next year to gain advanced training in geriatrics. With a wealth of clinical and research experience, she hopes to one day follow in the footsteps of UTHealth Houston geriatric experts.

“The geriatrics faculty have been so supportive and encouraging of my journey in this field,” Monica says. “I feel very lucky and privileged to have been able to experience so much in geriatrics as both a medical student and a resident because of them.”

With the growing need for health professionals in Houston who can provide quality care for people as they age, scholarships and education funds help dedicated students like Monica and Rachel pursue their medical education at McGovern Medical School and learn about this vital field.

Since the *Many Faces. One Mission.* campaign launched, philanthropy is already making a difference for students and faculty who have a passion for geriatric medicine. Through a significant commitment to the geriatric program at UTHealth Houston, Joan and Stanford Alexander provided powerful support to help faculty and students continue to research and learn about the health needs of older adults. In recognition of their generosity, the division was renamed the Joan and Stanford Alexander Division of Geriatric and Palliative Medicine.

Only 2% of practicing physicians
in the United States qualify as geriatricians.



“Philanthropy is absolutely essential for growing the pipeline of geriatric experts throughout Houston and beyond,” says Holly M. Holmes, MD, Director of the Joan and Stanford Alexander Division of Geriatric and Palliative Medicine. “We are deeply grateful to donors like the Alexanders for helping to ensure that older patients in our communities receive the best possible care.”

Beyond the integration of geriatric medicine into the standard curriculum of McGovern Medical School, additional opportunities abound for students to explore the field and develop as emerging geriatric experts. Thanks to generous philanthropic support, initiatives like the House Call Program offer educational experiences while providing exceptional patient care across the Greater Houston area.

Through the House Call Program, which is operated by Harris Health System, UTHealth Houston physicians treat patients at their homes, coordinating care with a multidisciplinary team of providers to ensure every health need is met. McGovern Medical School students travel with the team, shadowing the experts and learning how to assist older adults in maintaining a healthy quality of life while they continue living at home.

“It was incredibly rewarding to meet with patients in their homes,” Rachel says. “We were able to address some of their challenging health issues while also identifying opportunities to improve their lives.”

“I had never experienced anything like the House Call Program before,” Monica says. “We really got to see how patients live and what barriers they may encounter when trying to access care.”



Rachel Jantea, MD

Assistant Professor,
Joan and Stanford Alexander Division
of Geriatric and Palliative Medicine

Department of Internal Medicine

McGovern Medical School
at UTHealth Houston

—
Director of Education

UTHealth Houston
Consortium on Aging



Additionally, programs like the Geriatric Interprofessional Education Program help students gain greater appreciation for the power of collaborative medical care when addressing the needs of older adults. The program brings together students from McGovern Medical School, Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston, and the social work programs at Texas Southern University and University of Houston-Downtown to discuss a geriatric patient's case.

Working together in multidisciplinary teams, the students develop a comprehensive interprofessional care plan and convene with geriatrics faculty from each school to discuss their plan and the experience of working as part of a larger care team.

"This program shows our students how geriatricians work in real life. We engage with larger teams of social workers, nurses, therapists, and other professionals to treat our patients, and this experience teaches them how to succeed in that type of interprofessional environment," Jantea says.

With the support of donors like the Alexanders and the Wyatt Ranches Foundation, the Geriatric Interprofessional Education Program successfully completed its pilot year in 2020. The experience was so successful that the program expanded in 2021 to include more students from Cizik School of Nursing as well as future dental health professionals from UTHealth Houston School of Dentistry.

"Philanthropy has allowed us to develop a wealth of educational programs that enable us to reach other health professionals," says Holmes. "As our programs continue to evolve, it will allow even more students to get involved in geriatric care."

Commitments from donors including the Alexanders; the Harry E. Bovay, Jr. Foundation; the Wyatt Ranches Foundation; Lynn Wyatt; and Nancy P. Guinee have also provided support for experts in geriatric and palliative medicine to conduct innovative research. From helping older adults age safely at home to developing more effective ways to address chronic diseases, this philanthropy makes a big impact on health across Houston.

"The sky is the limit for geriatric research and education programs, and we need more of them," Jantea says. "They lay the foundation for future geriatric experts to begin gaining expertise so that our families and friends can access expert care for generations to come."



Holly M. Holmes, MD

**Joan and Stanford Alexander Chair
in Gerontology**

Associate Professor and Director

**Joan and Stanford Alexander Division
of Geriatric and Palliative Medicine**

Department of Internal Medicine

**McGovern Medical School
at UTHealth Houston**

Carmel B. Dyer, MD

In loving memory

Among the many faces of UTHealth Houston who have worked to create new opportunities in geriatric and palliative medicine, the late Carmel Bitondo Dyer, MD, dedicated her career to training geriatricians and revolutionizing access to specialized care for older adults. Dyer joined McGovern Medical School in 2007 as the first Director of the Joan and Stanford Alexander Division of Geriatric and Palliative Medicine, setting the stage for tremendous growth in geriatric research, education, and clinical opportunities at UTHealth Houston.

“Through her passion for her patients and her inspiring commitment to teaching others, Dr. Dyer influenced so many health care professionals to pursue a life’s work in geriatric medicine,” says Holmes. “Her impact can be seen through the expansion of our programs dedicated to healthy aging and the successful careers of her many mentees.”

Dyer went on to found and lead the UTHealth Houston Consortium on Aging, inspiring collaboration among all six UTHealth Houston schools. Exemplifying her extraordinary gift for bringing people together to work on behalf of older patients, she helped grow membership to more than 200 professionals from various disciplines and community partners. She also served as the first medical director of UT Physicians Center for Healthy Aging, which provides comprehensive care tailored to the specific needs of older adults.

In honor of Dyer’s deep commitment to her patients, students, and colleagues, Nancy P. Guinee made a lead gift to establish the Aging to Perfection Lecture Series in Memory of Carmel Bitondo Dyer, MD. The lectureship will commemorate Dyer’s extraordinary legacy by bringing luminaries of her caliber to UTHealth Houston to share their expertise in geriatric and palliative medicine, elder mistreatment, and home health care.

“Dr. Dyer touched the lives of so many throughout her career,” Holmes says. “It is an honor and a privilege to continue her efforts championing the needs of older adults throughout our communities.”





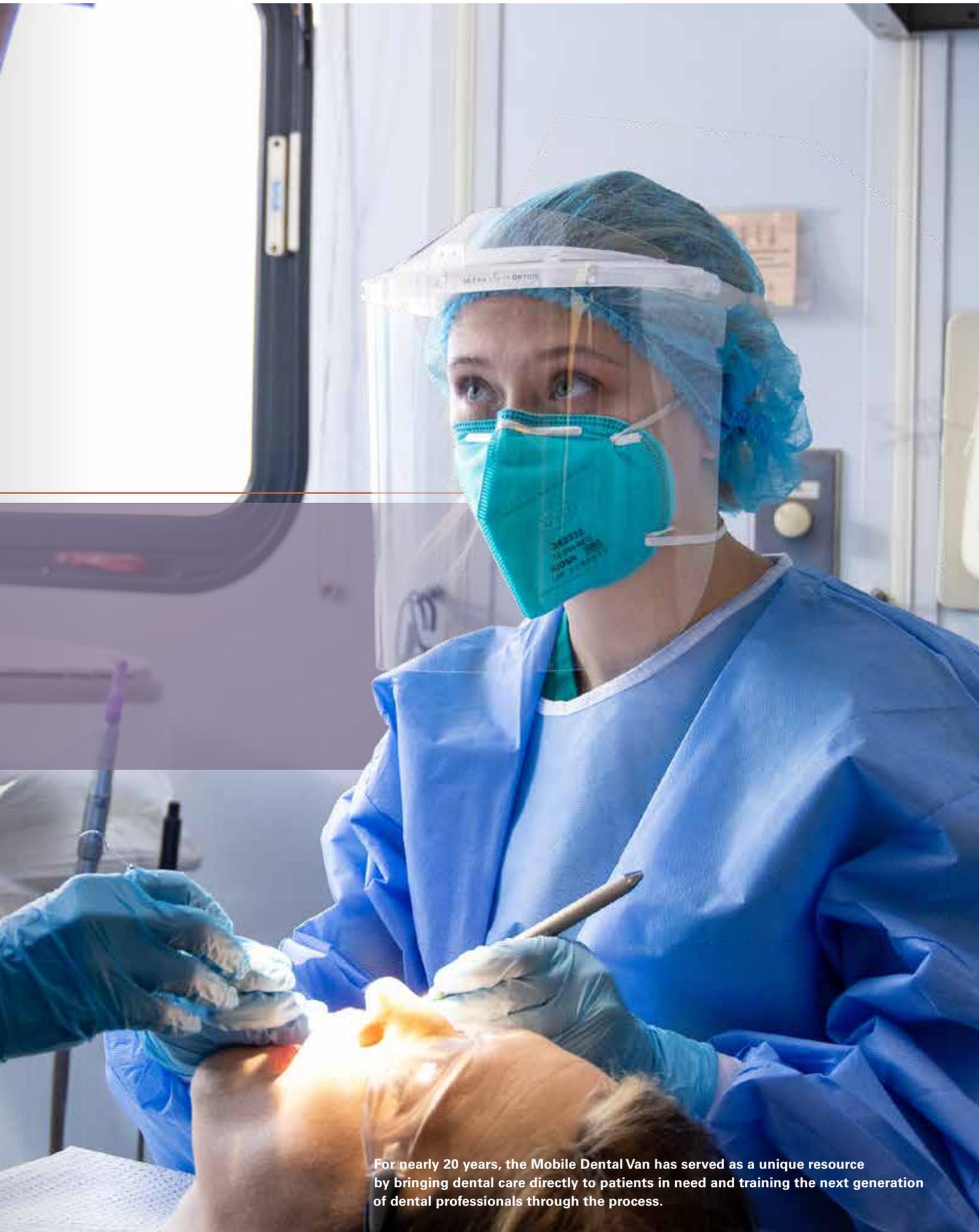
ONE TOOTH AT A TIME

MOBILE DENTAL OUTREACH IMPROVES HEALTH
AND EDUCATES FUTURE ORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

For many low-income families, underserved individuals, and medically compromised people in Houston and East Texas, the UTHealth Houston School of Dentistry Mobile Dental Van heralds brighter smiles and pain relief. A number of the patients seen by the Mobile Dental Van team have not been to a dentist in months or years. In fact, many have never been to a dentist at all.

Inconsistent or no oral care means more than bad teeth or bad breath; it can lead to gum disease, widespread bacterial infections, and even cancer. Lurking inside the crevices of the mouth can also be markers of other illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis. The ever-widening gap in dental care in our nation results from a socioeconomic barrier dividing those who can afford care from those who have no means or access, particularly in rural communities.

“Many of these dental patients do not have the money or financial support that others have,” says Sarely Hinojosa, DDS '21, who was a fourth-year dental student when she completed a clinical rotation on the Mobile Dental Van in 2021. She adds that the lack of education on oral health can cause significant issues. “It isn’t necessarily their fault. It is growing up without the knowledge of taking care of their teeth and how it impacts their overall health.”



For nearly 20 years, the Mobile Dental Van has served as a unique resource by bringing dental care directly to patients in need and training the next generation of dental professionals through the process.



Since the campaign's launch, the Mobile Dental Van program has served **1,500 patients**, providing nearly **\$1.5 million** in unsponsored care.

THIS INCLUDES



CLEANINGS



EXTRACTIONS



DENTAL EDUCATION

In Houston, the Mobile Dental Van provides services at the Mission of Yahweh, caring for women who are often survivors of domestic violence or enduring economic hardship, and Epiphany Community Health Outreach Services, helping immigrants and people who are uninsured. The van takes extended trips alternating between Jasper and Orange Counties in East Texas, providing services through Jasper Newton County Public Health District and Orange Christian Services.

"In Jasper and Orange Counties, our goal is to provide as much comprehensive care to their patients as possible," explains Margo Y. Melchor, EdD, RDH, who leads the community outreach programs at the School of Dentistry. "It could be that the patient comes in for dental pain, and we will take care of the immediate issue. Maybe it's a tooth that's broken or they don't have many teeth left in their mouth, so they need to come back to get either remaining extractions or restorative teeth, and we provide them care with a temporary partial denture."

"A lot of patients have told us that they couldn't go to dental offices because they didn't have money to pay," adds Sarely. "The majority of the population is low-income, and a lot of them have less education on all health issues—not just on dental health. That results in chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension, and they would rather spend money on trying to control that than going to a dentist. That's one of the reasons their teeth get so bad."

In addition to improving health in Houston and other Texas communities, the Mobile Dental Van plays an important educational opportunity to the next generation of dental professionals.

"I think what I really enjoyed was that I felt like I was a dentist there and not just a student providing dental treatment," says Sarely. "We are responsible for their treatment from start to finish."

Each year, approximately 44 dental students complete a three-week rotation seeing four to five patients a day under the direction of Debra Stewart, DDS. In traditional years, both dental students and dental hygiene students provide care to patients. However, to limit exposure due to COVID-19, only dental students are currently serving on the van.

If a patient's teeth get so bad that they need multiple teeth removed, the case becomes more complicated. "Long-term, there's a lot of bone loss, and if you don't get that taken care of in a timely manner, it can affect restoring their smile with prosthetic work," explains Sarely. "It just keeps getting more and more expensive as the problem progresses."

Since the launch of the *Many Faces. One Mission.* campaign, the Mobile Dental Van program has provided almost 1,500 patients with nearly \$1.5 million in unsponsored care, including teeth extractions, cleanings, and dental education.

“Some of our patients mentioned that, because of their unaesthetic teeth and smile, they could not find decent work,” explains Sarely, adding that it contributes to the cycle of poverty. “And of course, one of the main concerns is overall health. Without teeth and good function, they aren’t able to eat healthy or get good nutrition.”

“The arrival of the Mobile Dental Van is both greatly anticipated and much needed,” says Judy K. Jensen, Executive Director of Orange Christian Services. “We see the patients come in with extreme pain and discomfort and leave with relief and the beginnings of good oral health. It is our fervent hope and prayer that the dental clinics can continue their outreach of serving the unmet dental needs of Orange County.”

After hundreds of thousands of miles and nearly 20 years of service, the Mobile Dental Van program was sorely in need of a new set of wheels. Mounting maintenance costs started imposing significant financial strain, causing lost days of community care and education opportunities.

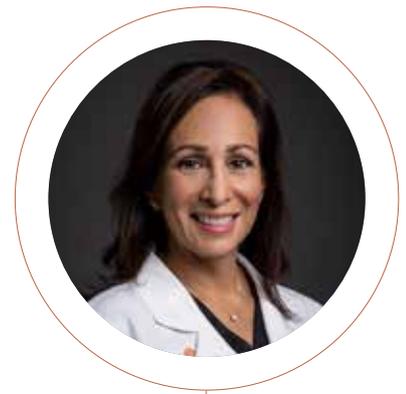
Recognizing the inherent value of this service, community supporters made significant contributions, including the TLL Temple Foundation, Delta Dental Community Care Foundation, and H.H. & Edna Houseman Charitable Foundation, as well as dental equipment donations from A-dec Inc., to purchase and fully outfit a new vehicle.

Additional support was garnered through a crowdfunding campaign, which relies on the collective power of a large number of small gifts to make a sizeable contribution. Some donors have also given generously of their time, such as Nina Lefeiste, DDS ‘88, who serves as an adjunct faculty once a week in Orange County.

“We all go into dentistry to help our patients and provide them with the best type of treatment we can,” says Sarely. “If we had additional philanthropy, maybe we could give our patients more options like root canals to help preserve their teeth and smiles. That in turn helps students like me have more hands-on experience and feel more confident in our skills.”

The new Mobile Dental Van is anticipated to start clinical services in mid- to late 2022. The van will have three fully outfitted operatories and a wheelchair lift. Melchor looks forward to the opportunity to add additional days of service to provide access to care to reduce oral health disparities.

“The new van will allow us to expand our services to patients, adding additional days of community outreach services and providing our students with valuable clinical experience,” says Melchor. “Our donors have always shown a dedication to helping those in need, and their continued support will allow us to take the Mobile Dental Van program even further.”



Margo Melchor, EdD, RDH

Associate Professor, Department of Periodontics and Dental Hygiene

Director, Community Outreach

UTHealth Houston School of Dentistry

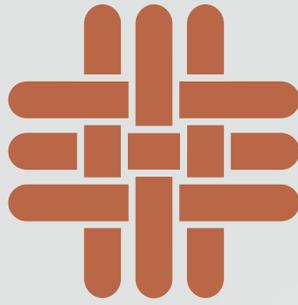


Debra Stewart, DDS

Assistant Professor, Department of General Practice and Dental Public Health

Clinical Coordinator, Mobile Dental Van Program

UTHealth Houston School of Dentistry



ADVANCING BRAIN AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

The ripple effects of brain and behavioral health conditions extend beyond individual patients. They can rob people of their memories, identities, and enthusiasm for life, impacting the families and communities who provide love and support.

That's why UTHealth Houston puts our experts to work exploring how the brain works and delivering new treatment options for patients everywhere. From making rapid stroke diagnosis and care a reality to helping people with substance use disorders overcome addiction, our experts are pushing the frontiers of brain and behavioral health every day.

*Scan the QR code with
your mobile device.*





MEETING THE MOMENT

UTHealth Houston stroke experts harness ingenuity and philanthropy to save lives



WEATHERING THE STORM

HEROES of the opioid epidemic adapt to COVID-19





ADVANCING BRAIN AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

The ripple effects of brain and behavioral health conditions extend beyond individual patients. They can rob people of their memories, identities, and enthusiasm for life, impacting the families and communities who provide love and support.

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MEETING THE MOMENT

UTHEALTH HOUSTON STROKE EXPERTS
HARNESS INGENUITY AND PHILANTHROPY
TO SAVE LIVES

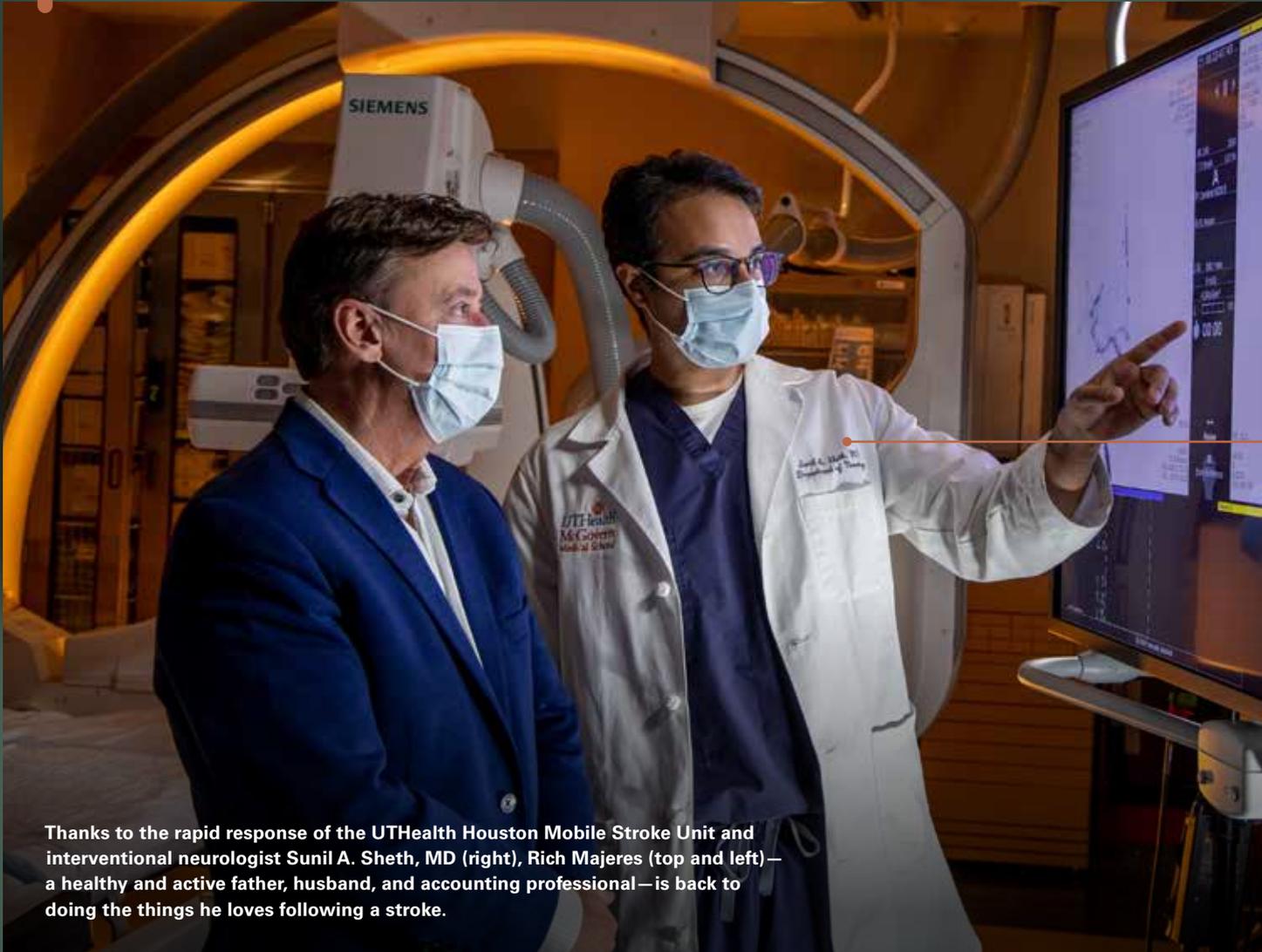
In stroke care, the difference between life and death can be the blink of an eye. Without access to prompt diagnosis and treatment, a stroke victim can lose up to two million brain cells per minute. The second-leading cause of death worldwide and one of the leading causes of disability, strokes continue to grow more common as our population ages and more people develop chronic conditions.

Across UTHealth Houston, clinicians and researchers are working together to build a deeper understanding of how to prevent, diagnose, and treat stroke, but time is of the essence. The likelihood of suffering a stroke continues to

increase, and our communities need better access to elite stroke care. Fueled by philanthropy, UTHealth Houston stroke experts are meeting this moment by harnessing new technologies and data to save and restore lives.

Students like Yashee Munshi (right) run the BioRepository of Neurological Disorders Registry and Tissue Repository under the mentorship of Louise D. McCullough, MD, PhD (left). This one-of-a-kind resource stores patient samples to spark innovative research projects across UTHealth Houston.





Thanks to the rapid response of the UTHouston Mobile Stroke Unit and interventional neurologist Sunil A. Sheth, MD (right), Rich Majeres (top and left)—a healthy and active father, husband, and accounting professional—is back to doing the things he loves following a stroke.

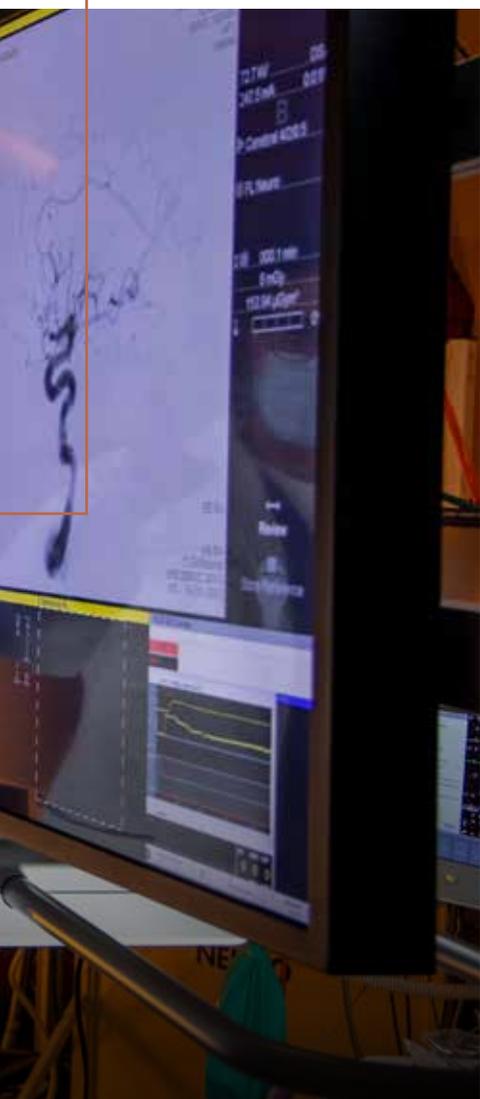
As soon as Rich Majeres started losing vision—a hallmark of the migraines he has endured since childhood—he reached for the medication in his office desk. One quick dose could always clear things up and prevent a blitz of head-splitting pain that could blot out his day. But this time, the drum in his brain only pounded stronger as his surroundings blurred.

Sunil A. Sheth, MD

Associate Professor, Department
of Neurology

Director, Stroke Division

McGovern Medical School at
UTHealth Houston



“I think I need to go home and sleep this one off,” he told his wife, Kasi, who worked part-time at his accounting firm. It was an unusual comment; Rich often amassed 80 hours per week building business at his new firm, and he rarely missed time, with or without a migraine.

While Kasi drove Rich home, their daughter called from college. Not wanting to miss a chance to talk, Rich held a conversation between the pulses of pain until they arrived home. At the end of the call, he repeatedly tried to hang up the phone in the car door.

“I just remember staring at the phone in my hand and thinking something isn’t right,” he says. “I tried to get out of the car and couldn’t lift my legs. From there, things get cloudy.”

Kasi recognized Rich was suffering a stroke and called 911. Responders dispatched the UTHealth Houston Mobile Stroke Unit, which arrived in five minutes. Thanks to the unit’s onboard CT scanner, the UTHealth Houston care team quickly learned Rich was having an ischemic stroke—one caused by a clot blocking blood flow in the brain—and administered the clot-dissolving drug, tissue plasminogen activator (tPA).

Once Rich arrived at the hospital, Sunil A. Sheth, MD, vascular and interventional neurologist at UTHealth Neurosciences and McGovern Medical School at

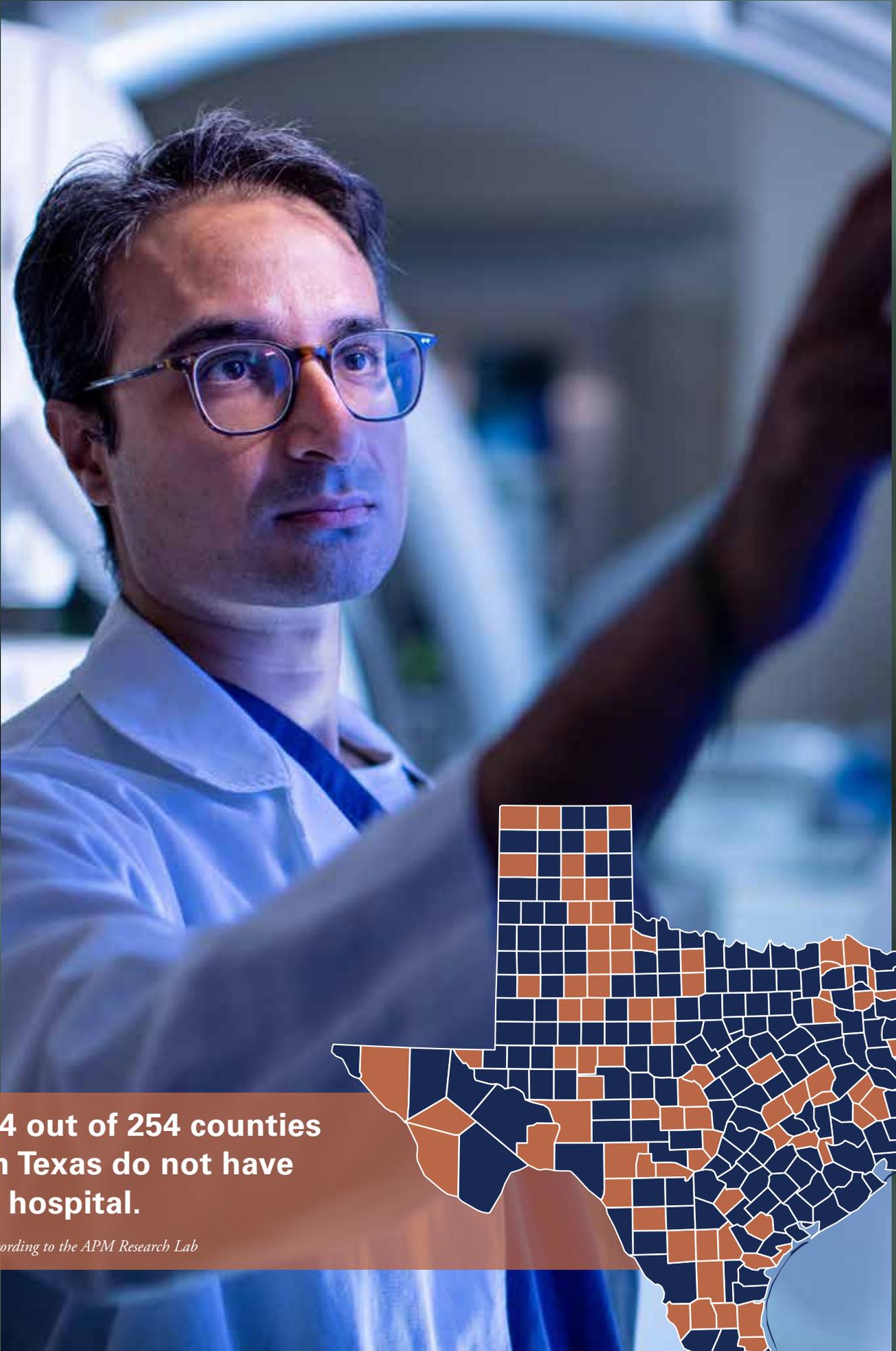
UTHealth Houston, discovered the clot still blocked precious oxygen from reaching Rich’s brain. With time running out, he needed surgery to remove the clot in order to survive.

Rich learned he had a stroke when nurses removed his breathing tubes after the 4.5-hour surgery. He remembers thinking it farfetched that this could happen to him: a healthy, active 53-year-old who lacked most of the associated risk factors like obesity, smoking, and diabetes.

“I grew up working long days on my family’s dairy farm, and I’m accustomed to hard work and leading an active lifestyle,” he says. “While my job was demanding and frequently required late nights, I managed the stress by exercising and playing in a weekly softball league. Having a stroke was like being struck by lightning.”

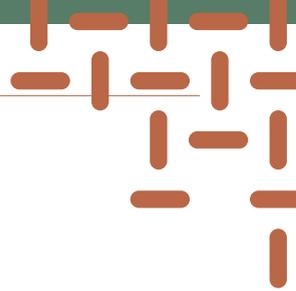
A stroke can strike anyone at any time, and response time often means the difference between life and death. The quick reactions from Kasi, the UTHealth Houston Mobile Stroke Unit, and Sheth led to a nearly full recovery for Rich, aside from some weakness and pain in his left arm.

“Everything fell into place the day of my stroke, and I received the best possible care as fast as possible,” says Rich. “I wouldn’t be here without the fast response from the Mobile Stroke Unit and the surgical expertise of Dr. Sheth.”



**84 out of 254 counties
in Texas do not have
a hospital.**

According to the APM Research Lab



Although rapid diagnosis and intervention saved Rich’s life, many patients live in areas that lack immediate access to elite stroke response and care. In fact, 84 out of 254 counties in Texas do not have a hospital.

Across UTHealth Houston, researchers are pursuing innovative studies to make a meaningful difference in the lives of stroke patients and survivors—whether they live in cities or rural communities. Sheth works with Luca Giancardo, PhD, and researchers at UTHealth Houston School of Biomedical Informatics to speed up the diagnosis and treatment of stroke through artificial intelligence.

They developed an algorithm that uses a dye injected into the body and CT imaging—readily available at smaller hospitals—to rapidly identify a common type of ischemic stroke similar to the one Rich suffered. The team is also investigating an alternative way to diagnose stroke using common retinal cameras placed in ambulances to photograph the inside of the eye.

“Behind all our work, our goal is to make elite stroke response and care more accessible for everyone,” says Sheth. “We want people to be able to receive the best quality screening and treatment, no matter who they are or where they are.”

Experts like Sheth and Giancardo are part of the UTHealth Houston Institute for Stroke and Cerebrovascular Disease. “UTHealth Houston, with Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center, was one of the world’s first stroke centers and leads the Gulf Regional Area Stroke Program, one of the nation’s largest National Institutes of Health-funded stroke networks. Working in concert with the Stroke Institute, clinicians and researchers from UTHealth Houston, Memorial Hermann Health System, and the Texas Medical Center work together to better understand and treat stroke and other cerebrovascular diseases.

Luca Giancardo, PhD

Assistant Professor, Center for Precision Health

UTHealth Houston School of Biomedical Informatics



Together, Sheth and Luca Giancardo, PhD, are using artificial intelligence to improve outcomes for stroke patients—no matter where they are.

■ In stroke research—just like in stroke treatment—time proves crucial. Philanthropy can ignite collaborations like those at the Institute for Stroke and Cerebrovascular Disease and spark innovative research programs that lead the way for comprehensive stroke care across the full spectrum—from prevention to rapid response and recovery.

For instance, philanthropy is helping researchers freeze moments during and after a stroke to study the tiniest details—like capturing bolts of lightning in jars.

In December 2017, a substantial contribution from the Huffington Foundation enabled Louise D. McCullough, MD, PhD, to launch the BioRepository of Neurological Disorders Registry and Tissue Repository. The BioRepository stores genetic information, blood samples, urine, cerebrospinal fluid, and brain biopsy tissue from patients who suffer stroke or other neurological conditions, enabling researchers across the university to launch innovative projects to discover molecular pathways of diseases and develop new treatments.

The BioRepository stands out not only because of the samples it holds, but also because of who runs it: medical students and gap-year students—those between undergraduate studies and graduate or medical school.

“The students who run the BioRepository represent the future of neurology,” says McCullough. “Exposing young scientists to clinical and discovery research provides unparalleled experience and helps shape their future careers.”

For Yashee Munshi, a second-year student at McGovern Medical School, working at the BioRepository during a gap year was a way to learn more about a condition that impacted her family. It also solidified her decision to pursue a career in medicine.

“After my father suffered a stroke, I wanted to learn more about it and make a difference for other families,” she says. “The BioRepository showed me how research can improve care for patients. We see areas at the patient bedside that need improvement, and we turn those things into research projects.”

In addition to serving as a launch pad for neurological research, the BioRepository also contributes to UTHealth Houston’s COVID-19 response efforts. At the onset of the pandemic, McCullough rapidly converted the BioRepository to collect samples from patients hospitalized for COVID-19 after a positive test. It now holds samples from more than 700 patients that researchers from around the world can study.

“The generosity of donors allows us to scatter seeds and see what grows,” says McCullough. “Philanthropy is the key to innovation, whether allowing us to jumpstart high-risk, high-reward projects or helping us to recruit the brightest students and trainees.”



Louise D. McCullough, MD, PhD

**Roy M. and Phyllis Gough Huffington
Distinguished Chair**

**Professor and Chair, Department
of Neurology**

Co-Director, UTHealth Neurosciences

**McGovern Medical School at
UTHealth Houston**

**Member, Immunology
and Neuroscience**

**MD Anderson UTHealth
Graduate School**

**Associate Vice President
UTHealth Neurosciences**



In addition to providing unparalleled research experience, working at the BioRepository of Neurological Disorders Registry and Tissue Repository has allowed Yashee to learn about a condition that personally impacted her family: stroke.

WEATHERING THE STORM

HEROES OF THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC
ADAPT TO COVID-19

As the world confronted COVID-19 and its ripple effects, a quiet epidemic was growing in communities across the United States, hidden by the virus' overwhelming impact: opioid use disorder. Between clinic closures, extreme social isolation, and the stress of living in a global health crisis, the pandemic stripped away the tools many people use to overcome their addiction.

"Before COVID-19, we thought we had a handle on illicit opioid use and that overdose deaths would decrease moving forward," James R. Langabeer II, PhD, EdD, says. "But the pandemic changed everything."

In 2018, Langabeer created the Houston Emergency Opioid Engagement System (HEROES) to directly connect people in need to recovery and treatment services. Combining the resources and expertise of McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston and UTHealth Houston School of Biomedical Informatics, the HEROES team receives data on opioid overdoses from the Houston Police Department and Houston Fire Department, and they dispatch recovery specialists to perform individualized outreach.

"When people are caught in the cycle of addiction, they don't often seek help on their own. That is where HEROES steps in," Langabeer explains.

James R. Langabeer II, PhD, EdD

Professor, Department of
Emergency Medicine

McGovern Medical School
at UTHealth Houston

Robert H. Graham Professor
in Entrepreneurial Biomedical
Informatics and Bioengineering

UTHealth Houston School
of Biomedical Informatics



While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted recovery and treatment services in Houston, James R. Langabeer II, PhD, EdD, and Ashley Mackie are helping people escape the cycle of addiction through HEROES.



Each week, Ashley Mackie, a paramedic and firefighter with the Houston Fire Department, travels with specially trained peer recovery coaches to visit people who have recently experienced an overdose. Going door to door, they speak to survivors about assistance and the opportunity to enter recovery through HEROES.

“A lot of people are surprised to hear about the program,” Ashley says. “We have also seen tears of happiness from individuals who feel trapped in their addiction and are looking for a way out.”

HEROES connects people interested in recovery to medication-assisted treatment on the same day through Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center—something that other treatment programs often struggle to provide. With medications to ease cravings and withdrawal, patients also attend behavioral counseling and peer coaching to learn how to sustain long-term recovery.

In the past, people with opioid use disorder often fell through the cracks in the health care system. While first responders and emergency departments could reverse the immediate effects of an overdose—and while recovery programs did exist—no program bridged the gap between the two. It often fell to individuals combating addiction to find and initiate recovery, and barriers like long waitlists, high costs, and lack of transportation often prevented access.

By leveraging community partnerships and contacting overdose survivors directly, HEROES helps to fill these gaps and bring new hope to people experiencing opioid addiction. In collaboration with the Houston Recovery Center, peer recovery coaches—people who have experienced addiction firsthand and overcome it—work with HEROES to conduct outreach and answer calls around the clock, providing support and mentoring to people in the program.

“HEROES is unique because it sets up a clear pathway for individuals to go from an overdose to a recovery program,” says Leonard Kincaid, MBA, Executive Director of the Houston Recovery Center. “An overdose itself is not enough to change someone’s behavior. People need the therapeutic intervention that HEROES provides.”

The program has also benefited from private philanthropy and the collective generosity of the public. Crowdfunding campaigns have driven new support for HEROES, helping to provide everything from medication and safe housing to training for individuals in recovery who are interested in becoming peer coaches themselves.

“Nearly 90% of individuals with opioid use disorder who need treatment are not currently receiving it,” says Langabeer. “Every contribution toward HEROES—no matter the size—helps us reach more of these people and grow our program.”

TOOLS FOR LONG-TERM RECOVERY



MEDICATIONS



BEHAVIORAL COUNSELING



PEER COACHING

Few have witnessed the pandemic's impact on the recovery community like Ashley, who has worked alongside HEROES for nearly three years. An experienced nurse before she joined the fire department, Mackie changed careers to become a firefighter and paramedic.

"I felt restless staying in one place, and I wanted to do more with my skills," she says. "Now, I get to bring help to the people who need it most."

When the pandemic hit, Ashley and the HEROES team had to adapt to a rapidly changing public health landscape. Like so many other services, HEROES shifted to a virtual environment for peer meetings so that participants could retain access to the supportive community that makes recovery possible.



"In some cases, we were able to reach even more people in an online format since they did not have to worry about transportation," says Langabeer.

As the pandemic's impact wanes, HEROES has returned to in-person operations, helping to break the isolation that has challenged so many people in recovery and driven others to start using harmful substances.

"Building personal connections is critical for people on their sobriety journey," says Langabeer. "The ability to see people, give them a hug, and share stories face to face is invaluable."

Since 2018, HEROES has served more than 5,000 people across Houston, and many more continue to need help in the wake of COVID-19.

"So many people have this disease," Langabeer says. "We are seeing more and more people publicly address mental health issues, but advocacy and support for addiction programs still have a stigma."

Philanthropic commitments to HEROES help the program fund critical services that most grants do not cover. Thanks to this generosity, people with opioid use disorder can access the vital resources needed to begin their path to recovery and start rebuilding their lives. Continued support can further help expand educational opportunities in addiction medicine and ensure that more people can access the care they need to achieve long-term recovery.



Jordan E. Lake, MD

Associate Professor, Division of Infectious Diseases

Department of Internal Medicine

McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston

The HEROES team is further collaborating with other mobile health initiatives throughout Houston. For instance, Langabeer serves as a co-investigator with Jordan E. Lake, MD, the local leader of Project Integra, a study that provides mobile access to HIV prevention and treatment services for people with opioid use disorder who use illicit intravenous drugs.

Additionally, the HEROES team has created a 24-hour toll-free hotline exclusively for Texas first responders to address their own substance use disorders.

"In our peer recovery meetings, we always ask, 'What is your why? What is your purpose?'" Langabeer says. "For HEROES, our why is the people in our programs: the people working hard to overcome addiction and turn their lives around."

ILLUMINATE THE PATH FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

When Sheri Henriksen's son was hospitalized with a life-threatening illness, an army of nurses kept vigil over him day and night. From providing world-class medical care to building sheet tents over his hospital bed, nurses stood by Sheri and her family at every step of her son's illness and recovery.

In honor of their compassion and dedication, Sheri is illuminating the path for future generations of nurses by making an estate commitment to Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston.

Read her story at
go.uth.edu/Sheri.



uthealth.planmygift.org

 **UTHealth** Houston[®]
Estate and Gift Planning

The many faces of UTHealth Houston provide world-class care across the Greater Houston area through clinical practices and affiliated hospitals that meet our community's preventive, chronic, and urgent medical needs. By offering leading-edge treatments and patient-centered care—and training students to follow in their footsteps—our experts work each day to keep our families, friends, and neighbors healthy.

UT★Physicians

UT Physicians, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, is the clinical practice of McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston. Through more than 80 specialties that include neurosciences, orthopedics, heart and vascular health, and women's and children's health, our faculty offer urgent, highly specialized, or complex care to individuals and families in Houston and across Harris County and surrounding areas. Our experts also provide high-quality, wellness-oriented primary care for routine illnesses and maintenance of good health.

utphysicians.com



UT★Dentists



UT Dentists is the multidisciplinary faculty practice of UTHealth Houston School of Dentistry. Specialists and faculty dentists treat patients with every type of dental problem to improve oral health, which is essential to improving overall wellness.

UT★Health Services



UT Health Services is a nationally recognized nurse-managed primary care center through Cizik School of Nursing at UTHealth Houston. Nurse practitioners provide patient care in collaboration with a McGovern Medical School physician.

PRIMARY TEACHING AND AFFILIATED HOSPITALS

Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital
Harris Health Lyndon B. Johnson Hospital
Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center

TIRR Memorial Hermann
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
UTHealth Houston Harris County Psychiatric Center



The UTHealth Houston story has always been one of quality care and innovation. With each discovery we make and every patient we heal, we strive to improve health for all people throughout our communities. Thanks to you, our closest friends and supporters, their future—and ours—is brighter than ever.

Your generosity and dedication deliver new hope to patients facing challenging health conditions. Your commitment brings new research and educational opportunities to life. It is truly inspiring to see how you empower our students and faculty—and to imagine what we will achieve together in the coming years.

Thank you for being one of the many faces of UTHealth Houston.

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MANY FACES. ONE MISSION.

The Campaign for UTHealth Houston

To learn more about how we are discovering breakthrough advances in the prevention and treatment of disease, please contact:

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uth.edu/many-faces-one-mission

By supporting UTHealth Houston, you help to push the frontiers of discovery to improve health in our communities.



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