

Pediatrics Monthly Newsletter

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May - June 2026

Dear Colleagues,

May is National Cancer Research Month. For those of us who treat children with cancer, the month carries a specific weight: pediatric cancers remain the leading disease-related cause of death in U.S. children, and most cures still come at the cost of long-term toxicity that our patients carry for the rest of their lives. Cancer Research Month is a reminder that incremental progress is not enough; we need better therapies, and we need them faster.

In our laboratory at the Steele Children's Research Center, the central question has stayed the same for more than two decades: how do we stimulate the immune system to attack and kill cancer cells? In my specific specialty, the question is: how do we preserve the graft-versus-leukemia (GvL) effect following allogeneic hematopoietic cell transplantation (allo-HCT) while reducing its most serious complication, graft-versus-host disease (GvHD), where donor immune cells attack the recipient's healthy tissues? GvL is the most powerful cancer-fighting immune therapy we have for high-risk blood cancers, but GvHD is what limits us from using it more aggressively. Our research attempts to widen that therapeutic window.

Recent research from the Katsanis-Simpson laboratory has advanced two promising approaches. The first explores new strategies to make transplants safer and more effective. Publications from our lab this year highlighted methods improving allo-HCT by reducing GvHD, without losing the GvL benefit of the transplant. The second area of focus examines how exercise may enhance cancer-fighting immune cells. Last month, our team received a new five-year NIH R01 grant to further develop exercise-enhanced cell therapies for relapsed leukemia. This work builds on years of research and several recent publications, and it will soon expand into our first-in-human randomized clinical trial testing exercise-mobilized donor lymphocyte infusions, immune cells collected from donors after a bout of exercise, to prevent and treat leukemia relapse after transplant.

Under Dr. Chamberlain's direction, the Steele Children's Research Center is sharpening its focus on translational pediatric cancer science. Our piece of that mission is unchanged: to conduct the experiments that will allow the next child to receive a safer transplant and achieve a more durable remission. That is what National Cancer Research Month means to us.

With respect,

Emmanuel Katsanis, MD
Professor of Pediatrics, Immunobiology, and Medicine
Chief, Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology
Director, Hematopoietic Cellular Therapy and Transplant Program, UA Cancer Center
Associate Chair for Research, Department of Pediatrics





Celebrating Our Graduates & Future Leaders

Congratulations to our graduating fellow Dr. Ali, Chief Residents, and PGY3 graduating residents as they reach this exciting milestone in their training journey.

We celebrate their dedication, perseverance, and commitment to caring for children and families, and look forward to all they will accomplish in the next chapter of their careers!

Association of Pediatric Program Directors

Members of our ACGME team recently attended the Association of Pediatric Program Directors (APPD) conference, a national gathering of leaders and educators dedicated to advancing pediatric medical education. The conference brings together program directors, coordinators, and trainees from across the country to share innovative approaches, scholarly work, and best practices in graduate medical education.

Throughout the meeting, our team participated in educational sessions, poster presentations, and collaborative discussions focused on topics such as curriculum innovation, learner development, and fostering inclusive training environments. The conference also provided valuable opportunities to network with peers and gain insights into emerging trends impacting pediatric residency and fellowship programs.

We are excited to bring these ideas and strategies back to our institution to continue enhancing our training programs and supporting the success of our learners.



Left to right:

Jessica Black, Courtney Andersen, Emilie No, Camille Leblanc, Kareem Shehab, Rachel Cramton, Christine Zarraga

Congratulations to Dr. Christina Zarraga on receiving an Academy of Medical Education Scholars (AMES) Development Grant and attending APPD.

The AMES program supports excellence and innovation in medical education, helping faculty advance educational leadership, scholarship, and professional development.

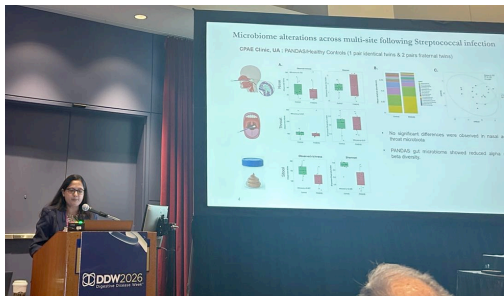
New Findings on Treating Wheezing in Young Children - Published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*

Congratulations to Fernando Martinez, MD, and collaborators on the publication of their latest research in [The New England Journal of Medicine](#), one of the world's leading medical journals. The study, released this month, examined treatment approaches for preschool-aged children experiencing severe wheezing episodes treated in emergency departments.

The nationwide clinical trial found that the antibiotic azithromycin did not improve wheezing symptoms in young children, helping provide clearer guidance for clinicians and supporting efforts to reduce unnecessary antibiotic use. The findings also reinforce growing evidence that viral infections, rather than bacteria, play a major role in many childhood wheezing episodes.

This important work advances understanding of pediatric respiratory care and highlights continued leadership in improving outcomes for children through evidence-based research. Congratulations to the team on this significant achievement and contribution to pediatric medicine.

PANDAS Research Featured at DDW 2026



Left to right:

Monica Kiela, Faye K. Ghishan, Shabana Shaik, Pawel Kiela

Our team recently traveled to Chicago, Illinois to participate in Digestive Disease Week (DDW) 2026, one of the world's leading conferences focused on digestive health, bringing together researchers and clinicians to share discoveries that advance patient care.

During the conference, our researchers presented their work titled:

[“Altered Gut Microbiome in Children with Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections \(PANDAS\) Affects Brain Gene Expression in Ex-GF Mice.”](#)

The study explores how changes in the gut microbiome in children with PANDAS may influence brain function, further contributing to our understanding of the important connection between gut health and neurological outcomes. Growing evidence continues to highlight the relationship between the gut microbiome and brain health, making this an exciting and rapidly evolving area of research.

Adding to this achievement, the team's work was recently published in the scientific journal *Microorganisms*, highlighting the continued impact of their research and commitment to advancing pediatric health.

Congratulations to our investigators for representing our institution at an international scientific meeting and contributing meaningful discoveries to the future of pediatric medicine.

Congratulations!



Congratulations to Dimitrios Filioglou, postdoctoral research associate in Dr. Katsanis's lab, on matching into the University of Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson Internal Medicine Residency Program. We celebrate this exciting milestone and wish him continued success.

Congratulations to Dr. Kenneth Liechty and the team on a generous gift awarded to Banner Health Foundation from the Bert W. Martin Foundation, designated to support the Fetal Care Center. This impactful investment will help strengthen resources and advance care for patients and families, further supporting the mission of improving pediatric health outcomes.

Congratulations to the Neonatology Division on receiving approval for the Pediatric Neonatology Fellowship Program. This achievement represents an important step forward in expanding educational opportunities and supporting excellence in neonatal care.

Congratulations to our 2025–2026 promoted faculty on reaching this important career milestone. This year, our department celebrated 9 faculty promotions — representing 11% of our faculty — among 77 total promotion submissions across the College of Medicine-Tucson, showcasing the strength and impact of our department.

	Promoted	% of FT Faculty
Pathology	4	22%
Otolaryngology	3	21%
Anesthesiology	6	15%
Obstetrics & Gynecology	2	14%
Orthopedic Surgery	3	12%
Pediatrics	9	11%
Immunobiology	1	11%
Neurosurgery	1	11%
Surgery	7	11%
Medicine	25	10%

2025-2026 Promotions

- 77 total promotion and/or tenure dossiers approved
- 5 tenure track
- 21 clinical scholar
- 4 educator scholar
- 47 clinical series

11% increase from 2024-2025; 100% approved by C

Happy Milestone Work Anniversary

Cheers to 30 Years!



This year, we proudly celebrate Dr. Scott Klewer and his remarkable 30 years of service to pediatric cardiology, education, research, and patient care.

Throughout his career, Dr. Klewer has helped advance the field of congenital heart disease through groundbreaking research, statewide initiatives, innovative telemedicine programs, and unwavering dedication to children and families across Arizona and beyond. His contributions have improved access to specialty care, expanded our understanding of congenital heart defects, and helped shape the future of pediatric cardiology.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Klewer on this incredible milestone and thanking him for three decades of excellence, leadership, and commitment to improving the lives of children with heart disease.

Those being promoted effective 7/1/26:

- Rachael Charles to Associate Professor
- Cindy Chin to Professor
- Walaa Elfar to Associate Professor
- Helene Felman to Professor
- Rees Chip Lee to Professor
- Jeffrey Rein to Associate Professor
- Sunil Sinha to Associate Professor
- Loanne Tran to Associate Professor
- Laurel Truscott to Associate Professor

Shared Success: Promotion Resources

A special thank you to Dr. Nancy Chen for contributing her candidate statement framework to support faculty preparing promotion materials. Resources like these, developed by colleagues who have recently navigated the process, help make promotion preparation more impactful and collaborative across our department and College of Medicine!

Access the resources in [BOX here!](#)

ICONS in our midst

Doctors Monica Davini and Pablo Angulo serve as site leads for the Immune Thrombocytopenia Consortium of North America (ICON), a collaborative network dedicated to advancing research and improving care for children with Immune Thrombocytopenia (ITP). Since 2020, Dr. Davini and Dr. Pablo Angulo have represented one of only two Arizona sites participating in the consortium.

Through their leadership and research contributions, Arizona patients and families gain access to the latest evidence-based care, clinical research opportunities, and specialized expertise in pediatric hematology. Their work with ICON continues to help shape the future of pediatric ITP care across North America.

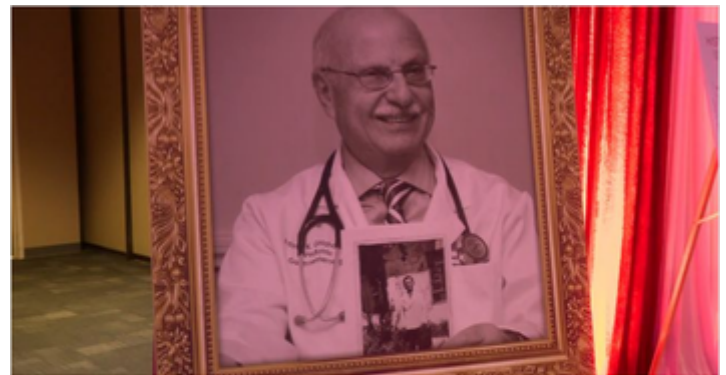
Pediatrics in the news

Big news for families across Arizona: Banner Children's at Thunderbird is now an affiliate member of Children's Oncology Group.

This milestone means all three Banner Children's facilities are now connected through the world's largest pediatric cancer research network.

For families, that can mean greater access to advanced treatments, clinical trials and expert pediatric cancer care closer to home.

When your child needs specialized care, you want trusted experts nearby. Banner Children's is proud to continue expanding care for the communities we serve.



Tucson doctor's 31-year legacy in children's health celebrated

TUCSON, Ariz. (KVOA) - The University of Arizona College of Medicine-Tucson honored a doctor who has helped shape pediatric care in Southern Arizona for more than three decades.

KVOA





Thanks a Bunch

Kids of Steele (KOS):

Catalina Hills Preschool & Kindergarten and KOS for arranging partnership. They prepped snack packs for peds patients visiting clinics.



Ventana Vista Elementary School Service project during Love of Reading Week
KOS nonprofit chosen Made bracelets and cards for peds patient

Lemonade stand

Teens of Steele 5/6 T1D - Thank you Dr. Green



Katelyn and The Views Golf Club - and Dr. Monica Davini and Dan Davini, Research Specialist, for representing our Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Department

Arizona Elks Major Projects:

Tempe #2251 Kentucky Derby Fundraiser



Jewelry clinics for mother's day

Convention 5/9 weekend - Thank you to Dr. Ghishan & Harijith for sharing impactful peds research & vision for the future of pediatric care



The Fullers & their contuned support



Thank you, Provost Prelock

A heartfelt thank you to Provost Patricia A. Prelock for visiting the Department of Pediatrics on May 29. During her tour of the PANDA Core for Genomics and Microbiome Laboratory, Drs. Ghishan and Chamberlain showcased the innovative research advancing children's health. We were also honored to have Provost Prelock attend and speak at Dr. Ghishan's Legacy Celebration.

We appreciate her support of our faculty, research, and educational mission

KICKBALL

RESIDENTS VS. FACULTY

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Residents vs. Faculty Kickball Game! It was a great opportunity to step away from our daily work, enjoy some friendly competition, and connect with colleagues across the department. We appreciate everyone who played, cheered, organized, and helped make the event such a fun success.



HIKE MEET UP
SUNDAYS 6 AM
NORTH MOUNTAIN VISITORS CENTER

Join us on Sundays for a free community meet-up focused on movement, connection, and the outdoors. Whether you enjoy hiking, walking, or simply getting outside, this is a great way to meet new people, stay active, and connect with others in the hiking community.

Together, we'll be taking steps for Jazmine that she didn't get to while building friendships and enjoying Arizona trails one step at a time.

Location Meet Up: North Mountain Visitor Center
www.jazminesjourney.com

602-717-9758 | amber@jazminesjourney.com | 12950 N 7th St in Phoenix, Arizona

hello

SAVE THE DATE
for Breakfast at Tiffany's
Saturday, July 18, 2026
7 in the evening

ANDRA HEART FOUNDATION
www.andraheart.org

Andra Heart Foundation
2114 W Grant Rd. PMB 53
Tucson, AZ 85745

Andra Heart Movie night is July 18!

Comp tickets just need to email jenine@andraheart.org with a ticket count and names for the door!

We are beyond grateful every day for your support. Please join us for one of our favorite nights of the year. Sponsorships and tickets available online.



Andra Heart
Movie Night
JULY 18, 2026
doors open at 6
movie starts at 7

Fox Tucson Theatre
17 W Congress Street, Tucson Arizona

Improving Youth Engagement in Pediatric-Adult Healthcare Transition through Game-Based Learning...



DO YOU MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA?

- Have a child 12-14 or 16-18 long-term health condition that requires special care
- Willing to complete child and parent surveys and potential interview
- Can read, write and speak English

GAMIFY!!!

FULLY VIRTUAL STUDY!

SCAN THE QR CODE TO GET STARTED



HELP US TEST A COMIC BOOK ABOUT MOVING FROM PEDIATRIC CARE TO ADULT HEALTH CARE!

Call for participants! The Gamify Study has been redesigned and we are recruiting! We are looking for kids (ages 12-14 and 16-18) and their parents to participate in our latest research. Sign up now [HERE!](#)

Don't forget / Upcoming action items:

University PCard Changes Are Coming

- Current PCard use will be paused from June 15–30 as the University transitions to the new card program.
- New University Cards will be activated on July 1.
- The new program includes three card types based on employee and business needs.
- Contact your Division Chief for guidance on which card type may be appropriate for you (applicable to UA employees only).

Traveling on University or CME Funds?

If you are planning to travel using University or CME funds, please notify both your UA Administrator and Banner OC as early as possible to ensure appropriate approvals and arrangements are completed.

What's Up, Doc?

To help streamline communication, department updates will follow a consistent monthly schedule:

- 1st Tuesday: Rotating Faculty / All Department Meeting
- 2nd Tuesday: "What's Up, Doc?" email update
- 3rd Tuesday: Department Newsletter
- 4th Tuesday: "What's Up, Doc?" email update

Please continue reviewing department communications so you don't miss important updates and opportunities.

Recognize a Colleague

Has a faculty member, staff member, resident, fellow, or colleague gone above and beyond?

- We encourage you to recognize outstanding work and contributions. Submit your recognition to the individual's direct supervisor, who can then forward it to Casey Nelson at caseycastle@arizona.edu for department-wide recognition.


Upcoming Conferences

June <u>ENDO</u> <u>SLEEP</u> <u>T2IRS</u> <u>PIRR</u>	July <u>NDSC</u>	Aug. <u>ADCES</u>	Sept. <u>LEAD</u>	Oct. <u>NASPGHAN</u> <u>ID Week</u>
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Operational reminders:

- Planning to travel? Don't forget to notify your Banner Coordinators and UA Admins.



Open positions in Pediatrics:

Banner:
[Click here!](#)

UA:
[Click here!](#)



save the date

Faculty -
 Save the date for our upcoming faculty retreat
 September 25th & 26th
 at Starr Pass