

DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS

GOOD NEWS BULLETIN

**Volume 5, Issue 6
June 2025**

In this issue, we highlight several impressive faculty and trainee achievements, additions of new faculty and staff members to our UM/HCH family, publications, and platform and poster presentations at major meetings. Kudos to all!

AWARDS AND HONORS



The basic, translational, and clinical research of **Tiffany Field, PhD**, and her colleague Saul Shanberg of Duke University, was featured as one of nine examples of NIH-funded research that have resulted in far-reaching changes for our society. This recognition appeared in a *New York Times* article on May 16, 2025, titled ["9 Federally Funded Scientific Breakthroughs That Changed Everything" by authors Alan Burdick and Emily Anthes.](#)

Dr. Field and Dr. Shanberg demonstrated that massaging infant rat pups with a paintbrush (to imitate a mother's gentle licking) led to faster growth in the pups. This finding was later translated into an infant massage study in the NICU at Holtz Children's Hospital, which showed similar growth benefits in human infants, as well as earlier discharge from the NICU.

This research was highlighted alongside breakthroughs that led to Global Positioning Systems (GPS), diabetes and obesity drugs, quantum dots, the sign language dictionary, the Completely Automated Public Turing Test to Tell Computers and Humans Apart (CAPTCHA), life without screwworms, bladeless LASIK surgery, and the DustBuster.

Congratulations to Dr. Field for having her internationally impactful work recognized as a powerful example of the benefits of science to our society.



Alan M. Delamater, PhD, Director of the Division of Clinical Psychology, was selected by the Society of Pediatric Psychology, Division 54 of the American Psychological Association, to be the liaison to and member of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, effective July 1, 2025.



Congratulations to **Walter Lambert, MD**, for being honored as Kristi House's third "Crusader of the Year" at their 30th anniversary gala event. In a press release, Dr. Lambert was recognized for "revolutionizing and transforming how we look at children who have been abused." Daniel Armstrong, PhD, also shared a few words, stating, "Walter is so deserving of being recognized in our community. There are literally thousands, tens of thousands of children, who have benefitted from what he's done, what his team has done, and our community is a better place because Walter has spent his time here and has taken on the most difficult challenges and has done it day-in and day-out, always with the passion of trying to prevent, and if you can't prevent, make it better after it happens."



Meghan McCormick, MD, has accepted the role of Associate Program Director (APD) for the Pediatric Hematology-Oncology Fellowship Program.

In this new role, Dr. McCormick will work alongside **Fernando Corrales-Medina, MD, FAAP**, to continue strengthening the academic foundation and ensuring a robust curriculum for our fellows. She will also remain actively involved in the development of the educational curriculum and related activities for our general pediatrics residents.



Asumthia "Simi" Jeyapalan, DO, received the UM-Jackson Health System Graduate Medical Education 2025 Quality and Safety Champion Award on May 20, 2025.

Dr. Jeyapalan has served as Chief Quality and Safety Officer for Holtz Children's for over two years, leading hospital policies and safety efforts. She collaborates with Risk Management, engages frontline staff, and conducts safety rounds to enhance systems. Her leadership in root-cause analysis drives improvements in workflow, process, and overall hospital safety.

WELCOME, NEW FACULTY AND STAFF!



Nathalie Luiza da Silva Marinho, MA, joined us as a Pediatric Psychology Resident at the Mailman Center. Nathalie was born in Brasilia, Brazil. She completed her B.A. in Psychology at Spring Arbor University, and MA in School Psychology from Michigan State University, and will earn her PhD in School Psychology at the end of summer 2025. Nathalie is the recipient of several research fellowships and has published scholarly articles on topics related to English learners and guidance for practitioners on therapy with undocumented Latin Americans in the US. She will complete her post-doctoral fellowship at Jackson Behavioral Health Hospital in the coming year, where she will specialize in Dialectical Behavior Therapy for adolescents. In her free time, she enjoys being part of her American and Brazilian church communities.



Marie J. L. Nathalie Theard Valme, MD, joined us as a Patient Navigator in the Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology. She is a pediatrician born and raised in Haiti. From an early age, she was instilled with strong values of resilience, compassion, and hard work, shaped by a deep sense of community and a lifelong commitment to service. She earned her MD from the Faculté de Médecine de l'Université d'État d'Haïti and completed her residency in pediatrics at the Hôpital de l'Université d'État d'Haïti. Over the past 16 years, Dr. Valme provided critical medical care and support to children in Haitian orphanages while raising three children of her own. In response to escalating instability in her home country, she relocated to Miami to ensure her family's safety and pursue new opportunities. Dr. Valme remains deeply committed to rebuilding herself, empowering others, and staying true to the values that have guided her career. Her mission is to support vulnerable communities through medicine and mentorship, and to inspire others to persevere and never give up on their dreams.



Mirlene Celestin, BSW, joined us as a Case Worker in the Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology. Mirlene earned her BA in social work from FIU. She is currently working towards an MSW. With over 18 years of experience as a Mental Health Technician, Mirlene has built a meaningful career centered on client well-being and advocacy. Her work in hospital settings as a Behavioral Health Technician, along with her time as a Case Worker Intern in nonprofit organizations, has given her broad hands-on experience in behavioral care and community outreach. Outside of her professional life, she finds joy spending time with family and gardening, a hobby that keeps her grounded and connected to nature.



Daylen Diaz, LPN, joined us as a Licensed Practical Nurse for The Mailman Peds Specialty Clinic. Daylen has been a nurse for the last 16 years. She has a background in home health, Allergy and Immunology, Patient Care Manager for med-surge and oncology, Patient Care Remote monitoring for CHF patients, and COVID team patient-care monitoring. She has her Lean Six Sigma certification. In her free time, Daylen loves to read, go fishing, spend time with her family and dogs and cats, and go to the beach.



Melissa Carr, MS, joined us as Senior Practice Manager for the Section of General Pediatrics. She is a healthcare operations leader with over 20 years of experience optimizing administrative and business functions across inpatient and outpatient care settings. She holds an MS in Health Information and Management Systems from FIU and a BS in Health Service Administration from Barry University. Melissa led business operations in both the Neurology and Cardiology departments at Baptist Health South Florida. She has experience in systems such as Cerner, Tiger Connect, and QGenda, along with a strong foundation in Lean Six Sigma principles. A proud bilingual fluent in English and Spanish, Melissa was born in Miami, and her family roots are from Bluefields, Nicaragua, and the Cayman Islands. She is the proud mother of three, two sons, ages 23 and 21, and a daughter, age 19. Melissa is excited to bring her passion for operational excellence and innovation to the field of pediatrics at UHealth. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her family, staying active, supporting her church, visiting Disney frequently, and following football and basketball.

Holtz Children's Hospital/Jackson Memorial Medical Center
The University of Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine
Incoming Pediatric and Med-Peds Housestaff: 2025 - 2026



Rising Pediatric Chiefs



Rebecca
Arocha, MD



Amber Henry,
MD

Rising Medicine/Pediatric Chiefs



Maria Khan,
MD



Gabrielle
Thorpe, MD

Pediatric Class of 2028



Anjali
Agrawal, MD



Samantha
Arrizabalo Seir, MD



Sabrina
Benitez, MD



Samuel Cherem
Zaga, MD



Van Hung
Dang, MD



Alejandra
Gonzalez-Santiago, MD



Laura
Hernandez, MD



Kayla Irons, DO



Aditi Islam, DO



Luz Maria
Almonte, MD



Nicole Marte
Pena, MD



Laura Medina
Andara, MD



Oluwatobi
Olaomi, MD



Maria Ortiz, DO



Lilian Pimental
Gonzalez, MD



Mischael Saint-
Sume, MD



Valeriya
Shapороva, DO



Surabhi Sheshidhar
Madhyastha, MD



Farrah Stone, MD



Ananthakrishnan
Sureh, MD



Janell Taylor, MD



Brandon Tran, DO



Parvathi Vannathan
Kandiyil, MD



Alexia Vignau, MD

Medicine/Pediatrics Class of 2029



Quincy Akaba, MD



Hamid Bangura, MD



Frantzia Jeanty, MD



Seim Michael, MD



Nedeke Ntekim, MD

EVENTS

ArtAbilities Award Ceremony



On May 8, 2025, the Mailman Center for Child Development hosted the ArtAbilities Award Ceremony honoring the artworks of children with disabilities in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

The evening featured an exhibition of the art pieces; entertainment by Alex and Friends, Inc., face painting; and dinner. The evening culminated with an award ceremony in which the talented 15 artists received an art medal and gift, among other prizes and accolades. The children and their families were visibly happy and proud. One family member said; “We enjoyed the evening a lot, and thank you for your support of our kids.”; another one said; “I’m so proud that my daughter’s work was selected; I have been encouraging her drawing.”

Through a partnership with Miami-Dade County Public School’s Art Department, the ArtAbilities program was launched in 1995, and since then, each year, new art works created by children in special-education programs between the ages of 5 and 21 years old, are selected. Teachers throughout the county select the best students’ work, which is then juried by the ArtAbilities committee.

“Through their participation in ArtAbilities, children with disabilities discover their talents, experience successful competition, and contribute to the enrichment of our visual environments,” said **Daniel Armstrong, PhD**, Director of the Mailman Center for Child Development.

As the ArtAbilities Collection celebrates its 18-year anniversary, it continues to serve as a mechanism to reveal and highlight the artistic abilities of children who are so often singled out for their limitations. In 2012, The ArtAbilities Art Collection was exhibited at Miami International Airport along the walls from Concourse D to Concourse E. By promoting their artistry, ArtAbilities helps to overturn negative stereotypes of disability and create a new vision of independence and full access to community life.

2025 GRADUATION
Congratulations to our graduates!
Your hard work and dedication have culminated in this significant achievement.



Class of 2025 Pediatric and Medicine-Pediatrics Residents



Pegelow + Egbo Family Scholarship Recipient,
Abigail Cueto-Dominguez.



Fawcett Hospitalist Winner, **Jheison Giraldo.**



Audrey Ofir Excellence in Outpatient Award,
Malaika Woody.



PGY-3 Resident of the Year, **Laurent King** (photographed
 with 25-26 Chief Residents Rebeca Arocha and Amber
 Henry)



KUDOS



Amanda Alladin, MD, HEC-C, has passed the Healthcare Ethics Consultant-Certified (HEC-C) examination. HEC-C program is the first-ever certification program that identifies and assesses a national standard for the professional practice of clinical healthcare ethics consulting. Established by the HCEC Certification Commission, the HEC-C credential endorses your knowledge of key concepts and underlying knowledge necessary for core skills in healthcare ethics, affirming basic competence. The HCEC Certification Commission is a body created and funded by the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities that has autonomous decision-making control over essential elements of the certification program. Congratulations, Dr. Alladin.



Rubi Romero Garcia, MD "A Quality Improvement Project to Implement a Standardized Feeding Protocol in the Level IV NICU at Holtz Children's Hospital"

Congratulations to **Rubi Romero, MD**, Teresa Del Moral, MD, Cristina Navarrete, MD, and Julia Velazquez, MD, for their 3rd place in the oral competition at the 2025 Quality and Safety Showcase!

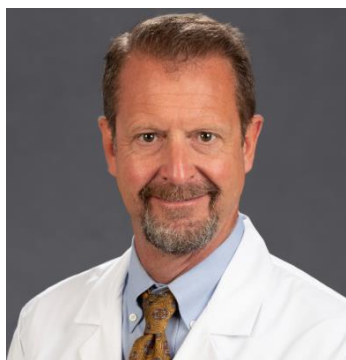


Grace A. Alvarez A. FMD, MPH, MSCTI, CCRP, received special recognition from the Human Subject Research Office (HSRO) during the IRB Member Retreat on May 15, 2025. Kudos, Grace!

MEDIA APPEARANCES



Pankaj Agrawal, MD, MMSc, was featured in *InventUM*: [The Genetic Cause of a Rare, Neurodevelopmental Disorder - InventUM](#)



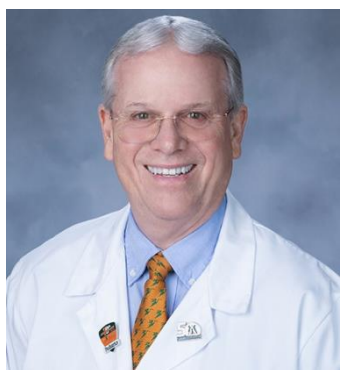
David Crawford, MD, PhD, was featured in the *Miami Herald*: [New tech helps treat cancer, sickle disease in Miami | Miami Herald](#)

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

1. **Luo S**, Gailus-Durner V, McGivern B, Li Q, Kottmeier J, Ho ML, Mor-Shaked H, Elpeleg O, Aref-Eshghi E, Brodeur AC, **Schmitz-Abe K**, Genetti CA, Picker J, Shi J, Bux RI, Ben-Omran T, Fuchs H, Harel T, de Angelis MH; German Mouse Clinic Consortium; **Agrawal PB**. Recessive variants in WSB2 encoding a substrate receptor of E3 ubiquitin ligase underlie a neurodevelopmental syndrome. *European Journal of Human Genetics*. May 15, 2025. PMID: 40374945 DOI: [10.1038/s41431-025-01863-4](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41431-025-01863-4)
2. Makkoukdji N, de Almeida AX, Wyke M, Kim I, Satnarine T, Kleiner G, **Gans MD**. Inborn errors of immunity in apoptosis. *Frontiers in Bioscience Landmark*. May 202, 2025. PMID: 40464495 DOI: [10.31083/FBL27231](https://doi.org/10.31083/FBL27231)
3. Groen J, Gordon M, Chogle A, Benninga M, Borlack R, Borrelli O, Darbari A, Dolinsek J, Khlevner J, Di Lorenzo C, Person H, Sanghavi R, Snyder J, Thapar N, Vlieger A, Sinopoulou V, Tabbers M, **Saps M**. ESPGHAN/NASPGHAN guidelines for treatment of irritable bowel syndrome and functional abdominal pain-not otherwise specified in children aged 4-18 years. *Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition*. May 30, 2025. PMID: 40444524 DOI: [10.1002/jpn3.70070](https://doi.org/10.1002/jpn3.70070)
4. Iacono L, Filigrana PI, Batalha M, Perreira KM, Gallo LC, Thyagarajan B, Daviglus M, Pirzada A, **Delamater AM**, Penedo FJ, Evenson KR, Isasi CR. Differences across four major US urban areas in metabolic syndrome in the Hispanic Community Children's Health Study/Study of Latino Youth (SOL Youth). *Pediatric Obesity*. May 19, 2025. PMID: 40384050 DOI: [10.1111/ijpo.70027](https://doi.org/10.1111/ijpo.70027)

5. Mullins C, Ullery M A, Mallar C, Bulotsky-Shearer R, **Hernandez J, Berkovits M, Jent JF, Delamater AM, Natale R**. The longitudinal psychological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on caregivers with young children. June 9, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.13202>
6. Wojcik MH, Clark RD, Elias AF, Genetti CA, Madden JA, Simpson D, Golkar L, Zalusky MP, Miller AL, Rodriguez A, Goffena J, Dash CA, Damaraju N, Gibson SB, Storz SH, Anderson ZB, Gustafson JA, Thiffault I, Farrow EG, Pastinen T, Lin J, Huang J, Beggs AH, **Agrawal PB**. Long-read sequencing is required for precision diagnosis of incontinentia pigmenti. *Human Genetics and Genomics Advances*. June 12, 2025. PMID: 40515401 DOI: [10.1016/j.xhgg.2025.100468](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xhgg.2025.100468)
7. Lyons KA, Ashworth R, Rissman L, Henderson N, Certo M, Palumbo K, Dickerman M, Cohn M, **Alladin A, DeCoursey D**. Pediatric palliative care subcompetencies for pediatric critical care medicine fellowship trainees. *Pediatric Critical Care Medicine*. June 16, 2025. PMID: 40522004 DOI: [10.1097/PCC.0000000000003773](https://doi.org/10.1097/PCC.0000000000003773)

PRESENTATIONS



On May 9, 2025, **Daniel Armstrong, PhD**, Director of the Mailman Center, and Dr. Rodney Samaco, a senior staff member at the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), presented a webinar entitled “*Engaging Individuals with Disabilities in the Research Process*.” The webinar was designed to “inform and inspire” participation of individuals with disabilities as part of research teams and is a collaboration between the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) network, funded by NCATS, and the AUCD.

It was open to faculty, staff, trainees, and individuals with disabilities at more than 100 universities across the US that have a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center (IDDRC), and/or CTSA.

The webinar is one component of a CTSA Working Group, led by Dr. Armstrong, that is developing a toolkit to assist investigators and individuals with lived disability experience in forming collaborations to conduct scientifically impactful research that is meaningful to the disability community. The Working Group originated from a project at the Mailman Center and Miami CTSL, and has since evolved into a national initiative.



Krisia Banegas, MD, second-year pediatric gastroenterology resident, delivered an oral presentation titled, “Impact of menstrual pain in irritable bowel syndrome in children,” at the Digestive Disease Week 2025 in San Diego from May 4-6, 2025.

IN MEMORIAM
Dr. Susan Dandes



It is with the saddest of hearts that we share the passing of **Susan Dandes, PhD**, a cherished member of our faculty for 35 years and the Clinical Director of the Child Protection Team. Dr. Dandes will be remembered not only for her professional contributions, but also for her kindness, wisdom, and generous spirit. She was a pillar of strength and support, and her presence will be deeply missed.

For donations in her honor:

UM Child Protection Team

Mail Checks to:

University of Miami Division of Development

PO Box 025388

Coral Gables, FL 33102

Paws4You Rescue

Donate via link:

<https://paws4you.networkforgood.com/projects/153234-2022-giving>

Please send your good news to Managing Editor Rosa Tamayo at rxp352@med.miami.edu, so that we may feature it in future *Bulletins*.