

In Ignotis “Into the Unknown”

Message from the Chair

Dear Colleagues, This past month has been full of growth, momentum, and new beginnings for our Department of Medicine. We are delighted to welcome Dr. Judette Louis, who joins us this week as the new Dean of EVMS, bringing energy and vision to our community. We also welcome Dr. Saiful Anuar Bin Singar, Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Endocrine and Metabolism, and congratulate Dr. Matt Slief on his new role as Junior Medicine Clerkship Director, working closely with Dr. Aaron Mills. Clinically, I want to thank you all for your flexibility during the Epic implementation—your leadership and feedback have already shaped meaningful workflow improvements. I also want to recognize Dr. Maliakal and Dr. Al-Allawi, whose commitment to multidisciplinary weight management care is expanding opportunities for our patients, learners, and researchers. On the research front, congratulations to Dr. Salvatore Carbone for his new grant evaluating extra-virgin olive oil in patients with HFREF, and to Dr. Okigbo, who has begun enrolling participants in her PCOS study—please consider referring eligible patients. Our department continues to shine at conferences with multiple abstracts accepted regionally, and I am thrilled that our Annual Research Bootcamp was a great success—thank you to all who made it possible. Looking ahead, I encourage everyone to submit abstracts for EVMS Research Day (deadline September 2) and to mark your calendars for the event on November 21. Please also note the ENRICHe Grant opportunity for collaborative work with ODU and NSU (LOIs due September 20). Finally, I invite you to join us in community and scholarship at the Walk to End Alzheimer’s on September 20 and at Updates in Nephrology the same day, and to consider engaging with our new partnership with ODU computer sciences as we responsibly integrate artificial intelligence into education, research, and clinical care. Together, your dedication continues to advance patient care, scholarship, and innovation—we are building something truly special.

Peer Reviewed Publications

- Huang AV, Kong Y, Wang K, **Brown ML**, Mu D. Protein Marker-Dependent Drug Discovery Targeting Breast Cancer Stem Cells. *Int J Mol Sci.* 2025;26:7935. PMID: 40869256
- Ismail A**, Jani C, Jahan N, Midhun M, Basu A, Gupta G, El-Rayes B, Bae S, Mattox T, Hawkins C, Arend RC, Akce M, Bumber Y, Desai A. HER2 Alterations across Solid Tumors: Implications for Comprehensive Testing. *Oncologist.* 2025 Aug 19:oyaf258. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 40828885.
- Lu Y, Liu Y, Totojani T, Kim C, Khera R, Xu H, **Brush JE Jr**, Krumholz HM, Abaluck J. Changes in Cardiovascular Risk Factors and Health Care Expenditures Among Patients Prescribed Semaglutide. *JAMA Netw Open.* 2025;8:e2526013. PMID: 40779264
- Carbone S**, Alonso WW. The Need for Speed: Improving Muscle Power for Longevity. *Mayo Clin Proc.* 2025;100:1281-1284. PMID: 40754395.
- Moore LL, Jaboin J, **Brown ML**, Houchen CW. Balancing regeneration and resistance: targeting DCLK1 to mitigate gastrointestinal radiation injury and oncogenesis. *Cancers.* 2025;17(12):2050.
- Fuentes-Mendoza JM, Concepción-Zavaleta MJ, **Muñoz-Moreno J** et al. Cardiovascular aging: from molecular mechanisms to targeted therapies. *Mol Diagn Ther.* 2025 Aug 26.

Highlights of Annual Research Bootcamp 2025



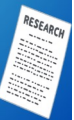
DOM is Introducing Medicine Research Lab Meeting

(formerly Research Office Hours)

Every Friday | 2:00-4:00 PM | Hybrid Format

- One-on-one research mentoring and troubleshooting
- IRB submission guidance and protocol development
- Data analysis support and statistical consultation
- Manuscript writing and publication assistance
- Networking with fellow researchers across various specialties

JOIN THE LAB EXPERIENCE!



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Researcher Spotlight — Raymond Benza, MD, FACC, FAHA, FACP

Please tell us about yourself: I am Professor of Medicine and Chief of Cardiology at Eastern Virginia Medical School, also serving as the George and Linda Kaufman Academic Chair of Cardiology at Sentara Health. Previously, I held leadership positions at Ohio State University, Mount Sinai, and Allegheny Health Network. I'm a fellow of multiple professional societies and hold administrative positions in the Pulmonary Vascular Research Institute and International Society of Heart and Lung Transplantation. I was honored to serve on President Obama's Advisory Committee on Organ Transplantation and was knighted in 2015 for philanthropic work in pulmonary arterial hypertension. My clinical focus centers on advanced heart failure, cardiac transplantation, and pulmonary arterial hypertension.



Describe the studies you are currently working on: I'm developing PHORA (Pulmonary Hypertension Outcomes Risk Assessment), a multi-platform clinical decision support system for physicians treating pulmonary arterial hypertension in adults and children. This system will guide therapeutic decisions and optimize clinical trial design using machine learning and large clinical databases. I'm also working on innovative catheter-based support systems for patients with pulmonary hypertension and right heart failure, potentially serving as a bridge to transplantation. Additionally, I lead a research workgroup that meets bimonthly to develop projects from several large datasets, including FDA clinical trial data, genomics data from 1,200 patients, and imaging datasets from over 2,000 patients.

Can medical students and residents get involved in your research? If so, how will they be involved? Absolutely. I currently mentor students and residents from multiple institutions including Carnegie Mellon University, Ohio State University, and Mount Sinai.

What were your research interests, and what have you learned from them? My research focuses on advanced heart failure, cardiac transplantation, and pulmonary arterial hypertension, with NIH funding for risk stratification, pharmacogenomics, and device therapies. Research is a "team sport" requiring active mentoring, partnerships, relationships, resource awareness, and healthy doses of passion and persistence.

Published Abstracts, Posters, & Presentations

- Gadgeel S, Nabavizadeh N, Kurbegov D, McDonnell C, Lillard JW Jr, **Tahhan S**, et al. Baseline participant characteristics from PATHFINDER 2, a prospective interventional study of a multi-cancer early detection test in a population setting. Presented at: Early Detection of Cancer Conference; 2025 Oct; Portland, OR.
- Jung J, **Sadaieva D**, Carnell B, King C, Kwak A, Tahhan S. Hypervirulent Klebsiella pneumoniae. Presented at: NMPRA National Conference; 2025 Sep 27-28; Denver, CO.
- Gadgeel S, Nabavizadeh N, Kurbegov D, McDonnell C, Lillard JW Jr, Matrana M, et al. PATHFINDER 2 baseline demographics. Poster presented at: AACR Cancer Health Disparities Conference
- Tasha T, Tahhan S** Recurrent follicular lymphoma unmasking common variable immunodeficiency: a case report and review of immunologic links. Oral presentation at: ACP Virginia Chapter's 2025 Annual Residents' Meeting; 2025 Sep 27

Media Highlights, Awards, Services, Announcements

- Salvatore Carbone** received funding approval from the Cardiovascular Executive Research Committee at Sentara for his project evaluating the effects of extra-virgin olive oil supplementation in patients with HFrEF participating in cardiac rehabilitation.
- Johnson DA.** Ehlers-Danlos syndrome overlaps: moving beyond the 'zebra' diagnosis. Medscape. 2025 Aug. [Link to read](#)
- Johnson DA appeared on The Scope podcast discussing "What We Know (and What We Suspect) About Microplastics and GI Health" featured in Gastroenterology & Endoscopy News. [Listen here](#)
- ENRICHe** Grant now accepting collaborative research proposals between VHS at ODU and Norfolk State University for cancer, mental health, and violence prevention projects. Letter of Intent due September 20, 2025, 5:00 PM EST.
- 37th Annual Research Day** will be held in-person Friday, November 21, 2025. All abstracts due September 2, 2025.
- VCU Wright Center Translational Science Pilot Grant** deadline November 3, 2025. Register for upcoming webinar to learn more about funding opportunities.
- Our **Annual Research Bootcamp** attracted 50 participants for intensive training in IRB navigation, AI research tools, systematic reviews, and big data analytics, receiving overwhelming positive feedback and generating strong interest in ongoing research collaborations.
- Department launches the Medicine Research Lab**, replacing weekly research hours. Join us Fridays 2-3:30 PM for collaborative sessions where ideas evolve, projects launch, and discoveries shape in real-time.

WEDNESDAYS
12:00 - 1:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 3
Scleroderma - A review of Manifestations and Treatments



Ruhani Desai, MD



Elias S. Siraj, MD, FACP, FACE

SEPTEMBER 10
Globalization of Diabetes: Focus on Africa



SEPTEMBER 17
The Public Health Impact of Practice-Based Research Networks: The Virginia Ambulatory Care Outcomes Research Network (JACORN)

Alex H. Krist, MD, MPH, FAAP



Jeremy Walker, MD

SEPTEMBER 24
Pulmonary Infections in Immune-compromised

Research Events:

Hybrid: 5:00-6:00 p.m.

5th Floor Large Conference Room & Zoom

9/9/25 - Research Workshop, Basic Stats-1 Using SPSS

9/23/25 - Research Journal Club

Contact: [Atiq Bhatti, MD](#)

Email: abhatti@odu.edu

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