



SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL FOUNDATION | UT SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE CARY COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS EVIDENCED-BASED CULINARY MEDICINE PROGRAM AT UT SOUTHWESTERN THROUGH VIRTUAL COOKING EVENT

DALLAS – Dec. 23, 2020 - In 2017, [UT Southwestern Medical Center](#) launched curriculum for its medical students focused on a new field of research in preventive medicine: food. The [Culinary Medicine program](#) is aligned with UT Southwestern's mission to educate, heal, and discover by focusing on the complex relationship between food, health, and disease. In collaboration with [Southwestern Medical Foundation](#) and UT Southwestern, the Cary Council took this timely opportunity to host a virtual holiday cooking lesson highlighting the latest findings from research in culinary medicine.

UT Southwestern's nationally recognized Culinary Medicine program was founded and is directed by Jaclyn Albin, M.D., CCMS, Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine and Pediatrics. Dr. Albin is committed to educating UT Southwestern medical students and other health professional trainees through evidence-based information on diet which they can pass on to patients.

"The tragedy of food-related chronic disease is in part due to its highly preventable nature," said Dr. Albin. "The triumph is the opportunity to intervene with one of life's most basic actions – eating."

Essential to the program's success, founding partner Milette Siler, RD, LD, CCMS, serves as the Senior Program Coordinator and Culinary Medicine Lead Instructor. Ms. Siler has extensive experience teaching culinary medicine directly to patients in a community setting, an area with great potential for growth.

Your Kitchen as a Lab

Dr. Albin and Ms. Siler led the virtual event entitled "Your Kitchen as a Lab: Healthy Holiday Recipes." The venue provided a safe holiday get-together for participating Cary Council members. In advance of the event, a panel of experts provided participants with healthy recipes and ingredients.

The dishes focused largely on aspects of the Mediterranean diet which emphasize nuts, whole grains, vegetables, legumes, and fruit.

"Diet is a driving factor of prediction for illness in nearly all patients. It's one thing as a physician to tell a patient to eat more fruits and vegetables and to consume less salt," said Ms. Siler. "It's another thing to take someone down to the kitchen and show them, practically, how they can make something delicious with their own hands."

The Cary Council Supports Diet-based Wellness through Research at UT Southwestern

Southwestern Medical Foundation and UT Southwestern partnered in supporting formation of the Cary Council in 2015.

This inspiring group is the next generation of emerging community leaders who are dedicated to creating a greater awareness of the mission of Southwestern Medical Foundation and UT Southwestern among young professionals in the greater Dallas area.

Through their fundraising efforts, the Cary Council makes annual grants providing crucial seed funding for early-stage research at UT Southwestern. These young investigators demonstrate great promise for continued discovery in their fields. Grants have been made for early stage research in breast cancer, brain cancer, genomic technologies, and infectious diseases.

"In directing fundraising to early career investigators, the Cary Council increases the promise for life-altering breakthroughs in new medical research," said Cary Council Chair Amanda Eagle George. "Dr. Albin's Culinary Medicine program is just one cutting-edge segment among many areas of science-backed research changing the landscape of medical innovation in Dallas."

The Culinary Medicine program instructs medical school students on the ways in which nutrition, lifestyle choices, diet, and environmental factors contribute heavily to chronic disease. Diet is increasingly linked to mental health and cognitive outcomes and plays a role in dementia and depression. The health care industry is beginning to unravel the impact food has on health. There is also a great opportunity to continue to learn and inform the public at the local, state, and national level.

Traditional medicine and health care education has not thoroughly emphasized the link between diet and health, despite this widespread public health issue. Nutrition has not historically been a focus in medical school, but UT Southwestern has long endeavored in the field. In the early 1980s, philanthropist Peter O'Donnell Jr., brought the Center for Human Nutrition to life in an effort to create a "firm scientific footing" for human nutrition. UT Southwestern was only the second medical center in the nation to begin such a program.

In recent years, the Culinary Medicine team has created hands-on courses that bring medicine, culinary art, and nutrition therapy together to teach the role of food in health in the place where it happens – a kitchen. Culinary medicine is making a direct impact on communities, and is improving the health of individuals battling diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

In partnership with Dr. Sandi Pruitt and the Food as Medicine (FAME) project, Dr. Albin has previously led education in the community at local food pantry sites. Through a grant from the W. W. Caruth, Jr. Fund at Communities Foundation of Texas, Dr. Albin and Dr. Michael Bowen are also leading research that studies culinary medicine as an intervention for patients with diabetes.

Statistics and the Science of Culinary Medicine

The Culinary Medicine program's response to patient needs resulted from a number of alarming statistics:

- Dietary factors are the number one risk factor for early death, ahead of tobacco use and high blood pressure.
- Dietary factors are the top three risk factors for disability.
- Approximately 75 percent of US health care spending goes towards chronic, lifestyle-related conditions including heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and obesity management.
- Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and dementia are all linked to dietary behaviors.

"Of all preventable risk factors for early death, food is number one," said Dr. Albin. "It's not just about dying early, it's about how we live. If you think about what a poor diet looks like in the US—it's the top driver for all disease conditions that we're trying to avoid, including cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, and many cancers. The good news is that research suggests it is not as much the foods that we need to eat less of, that we tend to beat ourselves up about, and create shame about, but it is about the good stuff that we don't get enough of."

It's not just diet that plays a role in public health when it comes to food. "North Texas has food insecurity that exceeds the national average by nearly 50 percent and according to the Tarrant Area Food Bank more than one in four are living as food insecure," says Dr. Albin. "It's imperative to the success of future generations that these disparities are addressed."

Dr. Albin was recognized with a Rising Star Award at UT Southwestern in 2019 for her work in providing compassionate care to patients of all ages, especially vulnerable communities and those in the foster care system.

Culinary medicine is merely one aspect of the many ways UT Southwestern is using leading-edge research to build a healthier community. It is a necessary step forward with an approach that seeks to shift from treating illness to preemptive action through awareness and prevention.

For more information, go [here](#) and [here](#). Photographs are available upon request.

ABOUT THE CARY COUNCIL

The Cary Council is dedicated to carrying on Dr. Edward H. Cary's legacy to "inspire a great citizenship to greater deeds." In September 2015, Southwestern Medical Foundation and UT Southwestern launched The Cary Council, a group of emerging community leaders, whose mission is to support and strengthen the work of the Foundation and Medical Center. The Council was created to educate the next generation about the critical role medical research, education, and patient care plays in improving our health and making Dallas a world-class city.

ABOUT SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL FOUNDATION

Southwestern Medical Foundation, founded in 1939, is a public charitable corporation and registered 501(c)(3) organization inspiring and advancing progress in medicine. The Foundation connects the vision of donors with innovative programs and serves as a sustainable funding source for leading-edge research, medical education, and patient care. In leading the health care mission forward, the Foundation is guided by four building standards: Service to Community, Vision of Excellence, Mindful Stewardship, and Best Outcomes. Each principle is a promise to donors, beneficiaries, and generations to come, assuring that the Foundation is positioned to provide sustained funding for medical progress in our community and the world beyond. Southwestern Medical Foundation's significant financial health and dedication to transparency have earned the Guidestar Platinum Seal and a Charity Navigator 100/100 Encompass Rating.

ABOUT UT SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER

UT Southwestern, one of the premier academic medical centers in the nation, integrates pioneering biomedical research with exceptional clinical care and education. The institution's faculty has received six Nobel Prizes, and includes 23 members of the National Academy of Sciences, 17 members of the National Academy of Medicine, and 13 Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigators. The full-time faculty of more than 2,500 is responsible for groundbreaking medical advances and is committed to translating science-driven research quickly to new clinical treatments. UT Southwestern physicians provide care in about 80 specialties to more than 105,000 hospitalized patients, nearly 370,000 emergency room cases, and oversee approximately 3 million outpatient visits a year.