Dear OHSU School of Medicine Community:

Promoting tolerance and acceptance helps us build an inclusive culture. I invite you to read the featured stories and explore the resources being shared with you this month.

As physicians, researchers, administrators, staff and learners we must be aware of the diverse community members that make up the school and the communities we serve. During March, fasting may be more prominent as part of the spiritual, religious and cultural practices within our communities.

Knowing and respecting the practices of our co-workers and our patients is important as we deliver service, health care, programming, community outreach and more. Improving our holistic understanding of practices is important in advancing our mission. Please ensure you are familiar with the interfaith calendar and AAEO religious accommodations at the bottom of this newsletter.

Sincerely,

Leslie Garcia, M.P.A., Ed.D.
Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
OHSU School of Medicine
In most religions, fasting may be associated with the introspection of life. Traditionally, fasting is coupled with meditation, prayer or other cultural practices. Others may fast for non-religious reasons too. While the duration, practice and specific reasons differ, all fasts have meaning. OHSU offers spaces for prayer, meditation and quiet reflection. The meditation room is located at Doernbecher Children's Hospital, 10th floor, room 10301. The interfaith sanctuary is located at Kohler Pavillion, 9th floor, room 9c05 across from the surgery waiting room.

Fasting by major faith groups is practiced as follows:

- Bahá'í: this year, from the evening of February 29 to March 19.
- Buddhism: generally from noon to dawn of the following day.
- Christianism: (most groups including Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Methodists, Anglicans and Lutherans) during Lent, which is the 40 days before Easter. This year, Lent is from February 14 to March 28.
- Hinduism: on new moon days and during festivals.
- Islam: daily during Ramadan from dawn to dusk. This year, Ramadan is from March 10 to April 9.
- Judaism: mainly during six days divided into two “Major fasts” and “Minor fasts.” This year, Purim is observed from the evening of March 23 until the evening of March 24.
- Mormonism: on the first Sunday of each month.

*This is not an exhaustive list nor an endorsed list. Sources: AP News, NCBI

---

**March Observances**

**WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH**
Women's History Month

March is Women's History Month, an annual celebration of the contributions of women. This year's theme is "Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion." Do you know a woman in the School of Medicine that we should celebrate? Send us your nominations and self-nominations too! Send a picture and a short narrative by March 15 to somdei@ohsu.edu

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Recognized annually in March, through presidential proclamation, as an opportunity to celebrate the inclusion of people with disabilities in civic and social life, creating strong and diverse communities.

Irish-American Heritage Month

First designated by the U.S. Congress in 1991 to recognize the contributions that Irish immigrants and their descendants have made to American society, every president since has issued a proclamation to mark the occasion.

March 1 | Zero Discrimination Day

This is a day that calls for the elimination of all discrimination across the world. First initiated by the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS to address the stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV/AIDS, the 2024 theme is "to protect everyone's health, protect everyone's rights."

March 3 | World Hearing Day

Hearing loss is often referred to as an invisible disability. World Hearing Day seeks to counter common misconceptions related to ear and hearing problems in communities and among health care providers.

March 12 | National Working Moms Day

Recognizing the mothers who juggle careers and parenting. Hats off to moms who showcase resilience, ambition and balancing acts that redefine success in multitasking.

March 18 | Neurodiversity Celebration Week

This global initiative celebrates neurodiversity and challenges stereotypes and misconceptions about neurodevelopmental disorders and learning disabilities.

March 31 | International Transgender Day of Visibility

A day of empowerment for transgender and gender-diverse people. It is recognized as both a celebration of accomplishments and an opportunity to raise awareness of ongoing struggles faced by the community.

March 31 | Cesar Chavez Day

This U.S. federal commemorative holiday was proclaimed by President Barack Obama in 2014. The holiday celebrates the birth and legacy of civil rights and labor movement activist Cesar Chavez who fought for a dignified healthy life for exploited workers. He recognized the serious health hazards of agricultural pesticides to both consumers and farmworkers, achieved the first health benefits for farmworkers and their families and understood the need for pesticide-free food.
Enrichment

All events are listed in Pacific Time, even those hosted in other time zones.

**Friday, March 1, noon | The Pathway to Transformative Education: Connecting Relationships with Our Students**

Scott Finnie, Ph.D. will lead a discussion the dynamics of cultural humility, the major pillars of prejudice and discrimination, the trauma of Eurocentrism and the invisible role of perspective. The event will take place at RLSB 3A001.

**Saturday, March 2, 9 a.m. | “A Day in the Life of an OHSU Student”**

The SoM OASIS Student Advisors are hosting an outreach event for high school and community college students to experience what it would be like to pursue a career in health care. The event will be hosted at RLSB for a day of learning stations, networking and Q&A panels. We invite school members to participate. If you are interested in volunteering contact chomina@ohsu.edu

**Tuesday, March 12, noon | Health Care and Homes for All: How Houselessness Impacts Health**

Join this webinar to uncover the truth behind common myths about people experiencing houselessness and explore the link between housing and health. It is a Timely Topics webinar presented by Ruchard Bruno, M.D. ’13, M.P.H.

**Thursday, March 14, noon | Structural and Interpersonal Barriers to Accessing Health Services for Latino Populations**

Join this webinar to discuss the role that primary care providers have in fostering trust and improving health care outcomes among Latino populations. This is part of the Latino Health Services Research Seminar Series.

**Thursday, March 21, 9 a.m. | Enhancing Productivity in Population Health Science**

This session aims to equip participants with tools to improve academic time management and align their time with their research priorities, increasing their impact on population health science.

**Friday, March 22, 7 a.m. | Retention Summit for GME**

The Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee (DISC) of the Graduate Medical Education Committee (GMEC) is hosting a retention summit aimed at program directors, program coordinators, faculty and staff involved in programmatic retention. Please register before March 15th.
Knight Cardiovascular Institute Director Joaquin Cigarroa, M.D., welcomes around 70 fourth-graders for lessons in cardiovascular health. Dr. Cigarroa caught the attention of some of the Spanish-speaking students by switching between languages throughout.

Dr. Cigarroa role-modeled the need for Spanish-speaking physicians to demonstrate that Spanish speakers belong in academic medicine and that it is an important skill to communicate with Spanish-speaking patients. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that people who identify as Latino/Hispanic will comprise nearly 25% of the U.S. population by 2045. Yet nationwide, the proportion of physicians who identify themselves as Spanish-speaking is less than 6%.

According to 2021 data, only 5% of active cardiovascular physicians identify as Hispanic in the U.S. The numbers are clear, we need to increase the number of Spanish-speaking learners in medical schools - in particular cardiovascular health.

These efforts are aligned with the school's DEI Strategic Plan. Objective 2.1.Tactic A - Expand pathways that focus on diverse students in K-12 students.

What Structural Racism Is (or Is Not) and How to Measure It: Clarity for Public Health and Medical Researchers
Interest in studying structural racism’s impacts on health has grown exponentially in recent years. Across these studies, there is much heterogeneity in the definition and measurement of structural racism, leading to mixed interpretations of structural racism’s impact on health. A precise definition of structural racism can offer conceptual clarity to inform what mechanisms to investigate and is imperative for conducting high-quality research on it and dismantling it. In this commentary, we trace the evolution of the definitions of structural racism and suggest ways in which the measurement of structural racism should move forward given these definitions. Read here.

Multiple stakeholders must partner to create systems, processes, regulations, incentives, standards, and policies to mitigate and prevent algorithmic bias. Reforms should implement guiding principles that support the promotion of health and health care equity in all phases of the algorithm life cycle as well as transparency and explainability, authentic community engagement and ethical partnerships, explicit identification of fairness issues and trade-offs, and accountability for equity and fairness. Read here.

Medical students who are the first in their families to graduate from college bring unique strengths to medical school. They often possess a track record of highly desirable traits for a physician, such as grit, self-
OHSU Mobile Health Coalition brings care to communities

During its first event with teams across OHSU in Beaverton, OHSU students, staff and faculty provided such services as vision exams, mammograms, cancer screenings, mental health consultations, dental care, blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol screenings to 200 people at no charge. Read here.
Congratulations!

The Gender Equity in Academic Health and Medicine Leadership Conference celebrates exemplary individuals who support the success of women and gender-diverse individuals in academic health care. Awards were presented in the following categories: Mentoring, Discovery in Science, Professional In-Training, Emerging Leader and Clinical Excellence. Pictured above are the School of Medicine awardees. Read more.

---

On the pulse

- [Advocacy Toolkit for Physicians in Training](#)
- [Four new lactation pods coming to Marquam Hill](#)
- [AAMC Center for Health Justice call for research proposals, March 4](#)
- [Gold Foundation accepting submissions for Humanism in Healthcare Essay Contest, March 13](#)
- [Leadership Development Institute 2024-25 cohort, apply by March 29](#)
- [Graduate Studies: Nominate for Honors and Awards by April 1](#)
- [Training: Accessible and Adaptive Communication](#)
- [Training: Providing Health Care andScreenings to Individuals with Disabilities](#)
- [Training: Communication Strategies and Approaches to Providing Disability-Competent Care](#)
Funding Opportunities

- The Hope Foundation for Cancer Research Dr. Charles A. Coltman Jr. Fellowship, apply by March 15

Spotlight: Bahareh Ajami, Ph.D.

Bahareh Ajami, Ph.D., assistant professor of molecular biology and immunology and behavioral science, OHSU School of Medicine has been selected as an inaugural awardee of the Tambourine ALS Breakthrough Research Fund. The goal of the ALS Breakthrough Research Fund is to accelerate innovative basic and discovery-focused ALS research by supporting scientific proposals that display creativity and tremendous potential for impact. Read more.

Dr. Ajami speaks three languages and shares, "Women struggle in this field when they do not see many mothers; this field is very tough on mothers. I am also a mother to a daughter who I gave birth to in my second year of Ph.D."

From Iran to Australia to Canada
Dr. Ajami earned her Master’s degree in Molecular Biotechnology from the University of Sydney, Australia. She subsequently obtained her Ph.D. in Experimental Medicine from the University of British Columbia, Canada. Her thesis focused on identifying the origin of myeloid cells in neurodegenerative conditions such as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and nerve damage.

Two influential studies

During her time as a doctoral student, she was the lead author of two highly influential studies in the journal *Nature Neuroscience*: in 2007, she was the first to prove that microglial cells, until then considered just another type of specialized macrophages, are in fact, a completely independent cell type with a unique origin. To date, this publication has been cited over 1,000 times. Then, in 2011 she demonstrated that in neuroinflammatory diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis (MS), the entry of peripheral blood-derived myeloid cells in the central nervous system not only correlates with disease progression but can also play a causative role in disease initiation.

Important discoveries in the U.S.

She went on to perform her postdoctoral training at Stanford University. In one highly-cited, first-author paper to emerge from her postdoctoral research, she dissected, for the first time, the heterogeneity of myeloid cell populations in different neurological diseases, revealing a therapeutic target in a subset of immune cells which, when blocked, ameliorated the neuroinflammatory condition. As a result of these discoveries, Dr. Ajami was an invited keynote speaker at the 2018 Advances in Neurodegenerative Disease Research and Therapy Keystone meeting.

Distinguished Awards

Dr. Ajami’s postdoctoral work has also resulted in the discovery of a new therapeutic target for Multiple Sclerosis and ALS disease and has recently been licensed by a biotech company for further development. Dr. Ajami has been the recipient of several national and international awards and scholarships, including being the two-time recipient of the Marlene Reimer Brain Star of the Year award for the most influential neuroscience paper of the year.