

UT Southwestern Medical Center

Ralph DeBerardinis Elected to the National Academy of Medicine

Oct. 19, 2020

To the UT Southwestern Community:

I am pleased to be able to inform you that our colleague **Ralph DeBerardinis, M.D., Ph.D.**, Professor of Pediatrics and Chief of the Division of Pediatric Genetics and Metabolism, whose primary appointment is Professor at the Children's Medical Center Research Institute at UT Southwestern (CRI), has been elected to the National Academy of Medicine (NAM). Election into NAM is one of the highest honors in the fields of health and medicine.

Dr. DeBerardinis holds the Joel B. Steinberg, M.D. Chair in Pediatrics, and is a Sowell Family Scholar in Medical Research. At CRI, he is the Robert L. Moody, Sr., Faculty Scholar and Director of the Genetic and Metabolic Disease Program. Dr. DeBerardinis is also affiliated with the Eugene McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development/Center for Human Genetics and the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center and is a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator.

From demonstrating the importance of mitochondrial function to using intraoperative isotope tracing in humans, Dr. DeBerardinis has changed the methods we use and advanced our understanding of cancer metabolism, particularly in children. Dr. DeBerardinis is also known for his significant discoveries in cancer metabolism and research into childhood conditions known as inborn errors of metabolism.

Among his many notable achievements, Dr. DeBerardinis has also helped to pioneer a new way to study altered metabolism in cancer patients. This has allowed his team to uncover the mechanisms by which tumors use nutrients to produce energy and to identify metabolic pathways that allow tumors to grow and spread. The approach provides researchers with insights impossible to obtain in the laboratory and is now being used to study metabolism in nearly a dozen forms of human cancer.

Recently, the DeBerardinis laboratory discovered that lactate is metabolized by human tumors growing in the lung, a finding that challenges a nearly century-old observation known as the Warburg effect that considered lactate to be a waste product of tumor metabolism. The finding opens new avenues for the study of potential therapeutics as well as new imaging techniques in lung cancer – the world's leading cause of cancer deaths.

With the election of Dr. DeBerardinis, UT Southwestern now has 17 NAM members among its faculty. Dr. DeBerardinis is the second member of CRI to be elected to NAM, along with Sean Morrison, Ph.D., Director of CRI.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. DeBerardinis on this achievement.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center