

# Southern Society for Clinical Investigation

Official Journal - *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*



Dana Rizk, MD – President  
Victor Thannickal, MD – President-Elect  
Leslie Gewin, MD – Secretary-Treasurer  
S. Calvin Thigpen, MD – Past President  
Jesse Roman, MD – Editor, *AJMS*  
Christina Halcomb – Managing Editor, *AJMS*

Website - [www.ssciweb.org](http://www.ssciweb.org)

Executive Director  
Joan G. Kemp  
Southern Society for Clinical Investigation  
6359 Tribute Lane  
Dora, AL 35062  
205-648-8429 (ph); 205-566-6090 (cell)  
Jkemp5@tulane.edu

February 8, 2026

Dear SSCI Members and Fellows,

Hope you had a great start to your new year! SRM is right around the corner on February 26-28 at the Intercontinental Hotel in New Orleans. There is much to share about the meeting in this newsletter, and we hope that all of you will be joining us for outstanding science, mentorship, and education and above all collegiality and professional connections.

This is promising to be a great meeting with ~900 attendees and 778 abstracts submitted in 18 categories.

There are many things to celebrate during the meeting. This is a special year as we commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organization. A celebration is planned on Friday evening from 6:30-9:00 at the Audubon Aquarium with access to the aquarium during the reception followed by dinner. Transportation to and from the hotel will be provided. Tickets are required so be sure and purchase yours during registration.

### **Southern Regional Meeting Plenary Sessions:**

Every year SRM features two outstanding plenaries each featuring two outstanding speakers. The SSCI Presidential Symposium is entitled "Cutting Edge Science Pushing the Boundaries of Healthcare." Dr Brad Rovin from The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center will be speaking on B Cell Therapies in Lupus: Can We Cure LN? His talk will be followed by Dr. Vineeta Kumar from the University of Alabama at Birmingham speaking on "From Lab to Clinic: The Inauguration of Human Xeno-Transplant Trials". The SRM Joint Plenary is entitled "Generative AI In Medicine: Transforming Care, Research and Education." Dr. Ryan McAdams from the University of Wisconsin will be speaking on "Beyond Human Intuition: What AI Sees that We Miss in Newborn Medicine". Our second speaker is Dr. Rubin Pillay from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. His talk is entitled "Faster, Better, Cheaper: AI and the Future of Biomedical Research. We hope everyone will make an effort to attend these sessions.

### **Tinsley Harrison Scholars Program:**

Our Tinsley Harrison Scholars Program is going strong, and we are excited to announce our nine Tinsley Harrison Scholars for 2026 and three returning Scholars from 2024 and 2025.

Flor Alvarado, MD, MHS, MPH, *Tulane University*

ZeNan Chang, MD, PhD, *Washington University in St. Louis*

Jessica English, MD, MSCR, *Medical University of South Carolina*

Sean Jones, MD, PhD, *Medical University of South Carolina*

Ignacio Portales Castillo, MD, *Washington University in St. Louis*

Michael Sciaudone, MD, MPH, *Tulane University*

Jeffrey Singer, MD, PhD, *Vanderbilt University Medical Center*

Eli Wilber, MD, *Emory University*

Crystal Zheng, MD, *Tulane University*

Kale Bongers, MD, PhD, *University of Iowa* – 2025 Returning Scholar

Karen Cyndari, MD, PhD, MS, *University of Iowa* – 2024 Returning Scholar

Clarissa Tio, MD, MPH, *University of Mississippi Medical Center* – 2025 Returning Scholar

The Tinsley Harrison Scholars Program recognizes MD or MD/PhD investigators at the level of postdoctoral fellow, instructor, and assistant professor. Scholars will present their original research and will receive focused mentorship and ongoing career development advice from senior leaders and scientists in our society. Please visit the [Tinsley Harrison Scholars](#) portion of our website to learn more about the program, which we plan to continue well into the future, and be thinking about scholars at your institution who would be good candidates in the years to come. I am also excited to announce the expansion of our Tinsley Harrison leadership team as we welcome Drs Gregory Payne and Yash Choksi. Both are physician-scientists. Dr. Payne is an Associate Professor of Medicine in the Division of Cardiovascular Disease at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Dr. Choksi is an Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition. The SSCI is extremely fortunate to have Drs. Payne and Choksi take on leadership roles in this program.

Throughout the meeting, we will celebrate the scientific achievements of students, trainees and faculty through the SSCI/SSPR Richard D. and Gloria J. deShazo Showcase of Science, the Michael S. and Kathy J. Bronze Young Investigator Awards, the SSCI Early Career Awards in the Research Investigator and Clinician Educator categories, the Nathan Solomon and Irene Oransky-Solomon Medical Student Awards, the SSCI Mentor of the Year Awards, and the SSCI Student, Trainee, and Junior Faculty Research Awards.

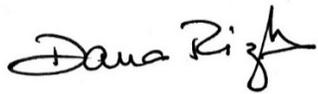
The SSCI Founders' Medal is a lifetime achievement award bestowed on one of our colleagues whose dedication and commitment to the SSCI over the years has made the success of this organization possible. This year's medal will be awarded to Dr. Kenneth Nugent from Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. Dr. Nugent has been a Fellow of the SSCI for 37 years and has served as a Councilor and President and is currently a member of the Executive Advisory Committee. He has been a major contributor to *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences* and has been responsible for many, many abstract submissions and bringing trainees and junior faculty to SRM and into the SSCI.

I hope the above highlights give you a glimpse of all the exceptional events we have planned for this year's SRM. There are many more in store!

*Be sure to follow our account - @ssciweb - on X prior to the meeting and to post with the hashtag #SRM2026 while in attendance as well as Bluesky @ssciweb.bsky.social with the hashtag #SRM2026.*

I look forward to seeing you in a few weeks in New Orleans and ask that you encourage your colleagues to join the organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana Rizk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dana Rizk, MD, FSSCI  
President, Southern Society for Clinical Investigation  
Anupam Agarwal, MD Endowed Professor in Nephrology  
Associate Dean for Clinical Trials, Heersink School of Medicine  
Director of UAB Glomerular Kidney Disease Clinic  
Director of Clinical Trials Research, Nephrology Division