

SKILLS TRAINING IN A COVID WORLD: Communication Skills

Faculty adapts to new ways of teaching clinical skills when safety is the No. 1 priority

PART 3 OF A 3-PART SERIES

Despite the massive toll the COVID-19 pandemic has taken on so many people, some silver linings have emerged. One of them is the way people are leveraging video conferencing technology, allowing them to connect more frequently with loved ones, work more effectively from a remote location and even seek medical advice. For our faculty, teaching communication skills using video conferencing technology in many ways is superior to in-person training, at least in the current pandemic environment because of the precautions necessary for in-person sessions. The transition from in-person to virtual training was not only smooth, but also swift, upon request of the students.

continued >>

SKILLS TRAINING IN A COVID WORLD: Communication Skills

Faculty adapts to new ways of teaching clinical skills when safety is the No. 1 priority

PART 3 OF A 3-PART SERIES

“The students were largely interested in going virtual after Thanksgiving break, but because they’re worried about COVID and wish to be good stewards, they asked if we could switch earlier,” says Julie Rish, PhD, Assistant Professor of Medicine and Co-director of Communication Skills 1 and 2, along with Timothy Gilligan, MD. “We moved quickly to do so.”

Learning communication skills virtually feels surprisingly similar to learning in person, except the students and standardized patient are seeing one another via a computer screen. So long as there are no hiccups during a videoconference — there’s no interruption in service and the users are skilled and comfortable using the technology — the experience is remarkably natural and engaging.

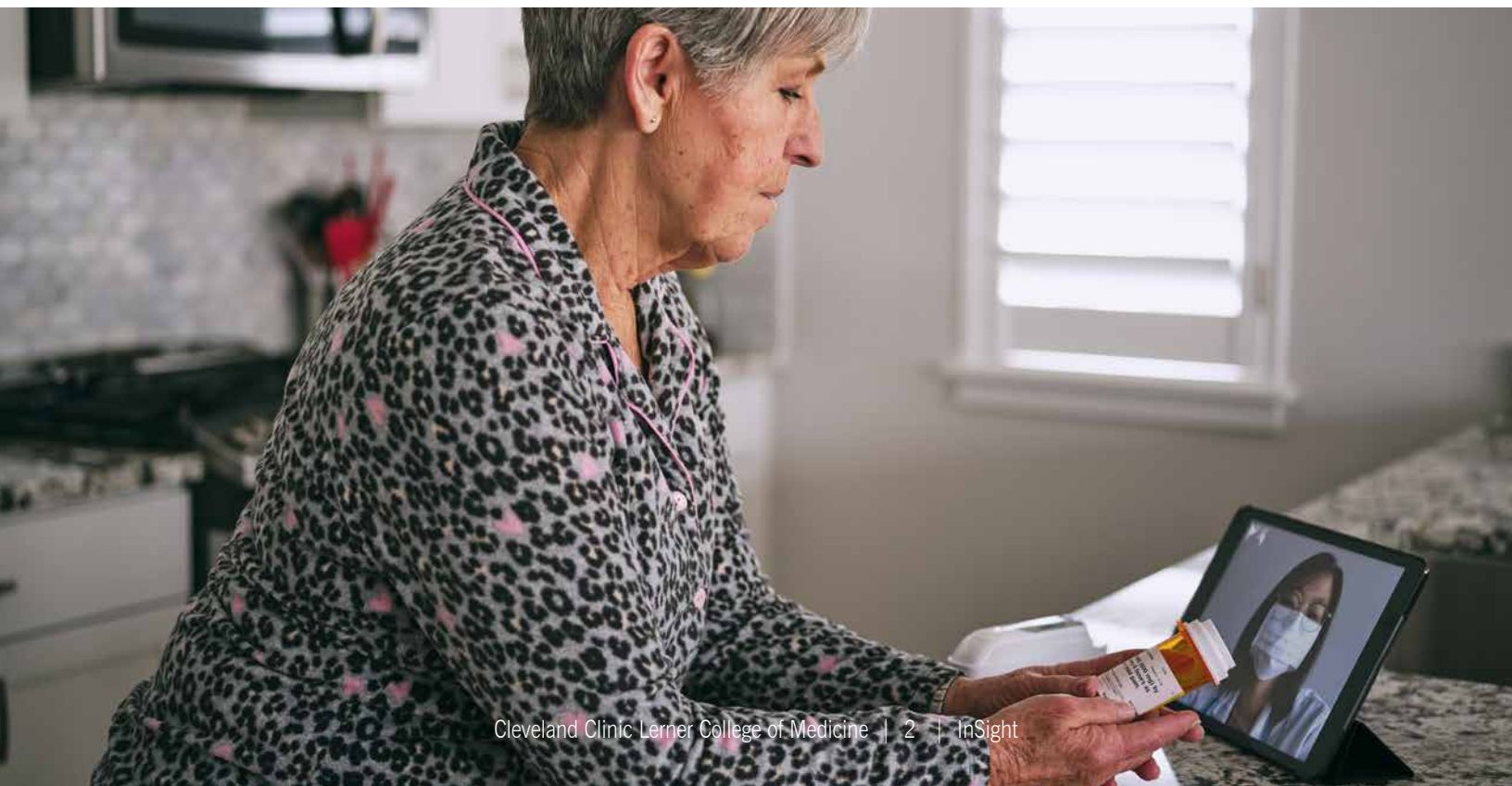
To create the small group learning environment, two preceptors lead a group of four students, each person being in their own space and at their own computer. “The fact that the preceptors are practicing clinicians who are used to seeing patients virtually because of the pandemic helps. They are

well-equipped to teach communication skills virtually. If not for the pandemic, we might hear some apprehension, but everyone is comfortable with the technology at this point,” says Dr. Gilligan, Associate Professor of Medicine.

The students are taught to use the technology skillfully, from knowing when to have the camera on and off, to learning how to project their best self using proper lighting and framing. They also are taught how to connect with patients, build rapport, and show concern and compassion in a virtual environment, paying special attention to non-verbal cues, an important skill that translates into the non-virtual world, particularly now when patients’ faces are obstructed by masks and the students are wearing full personal protective equipment.

The biggest challenge in the virtual environment is supporting a learner who is struggling, says Dr. Gilligan. “During in-person training, the preceptor can support the student by sitting next to them and whispering a helpful suggestion in their ear if needed. During virtual training, we worry that the students

continued >>



SKILLS TRAINING IN A COVID WORLD: Communication Skills

Faculty adapts to new ways of teaching clinical skills when safety is the No. 1 priority

PART 3 OF A 3-PART SERIES

feel alone. We can use the chat feature to help them out, but that sometimes feels like a distraction because it's happening on the side," he says.

Of course, students do need to practice — and preserve — their in-person skills, which they do when they're in longitudinal clinic, seeing patients face to face.

Patient enthusiasm for virtual appointments reinforces the importance of learning these skills. Patients appreciate the convenience of not having to leave their home, especially in inclement weather, drive a long distance and sometimes pay for parking. Physicians, too, have discovered unique advantages to these virtual "house calls."

"The ability to see a patient in their home environment is valuable," says Dr. Rish. "You feel you get to know the person for who they are. If needed, they can show you how their rooms are set up, how they perform certain skills. These are the things you miss in an exam room. Seeing them in their

home adds a nice dimension, and I feel I can be more helpful to them."

Looking forward, it appears almost certain that virtual appointments are here to stay and will be a regular and expected part of medical practice in the years ahead. That medical students are being trained to create meaningful, personal relationships with patients virtually gives them a decided advantage.

"I think that's the silver lining in this," says Dr. Gilligan.



Dr. Timothy Gilligan



Dr. Julie Rish

continued >>



SKILLS TRAINING IN A COVID WORLD: Communication Skills

Faculty adapts to new ways of teaching clinical skills when safety is the No. 1 priority

PART 3 OF A 3-PART SERIES

Communication Skills Preceptors

YEAR 1 PRECEPTORS

Julie Rish, PhD, Co-director

Hasnie Afiah, PsyD

Silvia Cardenas, MD

Richard Cartabuke, MD

Lisa Diard, MD

Kasey Goodpaster, PhD

Richard Harlan, MD

Kaitlin Keister, PsyD

Dupre Marks, LISW

Metabel Markwei, student preceptor

Deborah Park, student preceptor

Sarah Ris Pinto, PhD

Matt Sacco, PhD

Renato Ramon Samala, MD

Ron Sobecks, MD

Melissa Walt, PsyD

YEAR 2 PRECEPTORS

Tim Gilligan, MD, Co-director

Jackie Bjelac, MD

Dana Brendza, PsyD

Aaron Brzezinski, MD

Allyson Diggins, PhD

David Harris, MD

Deborah Hornacek, MD

Amir Jassani, PhD

Duane Kirksey, MD

Shu Ling, PhD

Shreya Louis, student preceptor

Ken Mehta, MD

Nini Peterson, PhD

Taylor Rush, PhD

Megan Sheehan, student preceptor

Rachel Taliercio, DO



THREE QUESTIONS

Judy Morgan

Clinical Education Coordinator



Judy Morgan



Judy is the Clinical Education Coordinator for Years 1 and 2 CCLCM students. She manages the objective structured clinical experiences (OSCEs), physical diagnosis and communication skills training for students, working closely with the respective course directors and preceptors. Her expert planning and organizational skills ensure the clinical education courses run smoothly and efficiently.

Q: What do you enjoy most about working with CCLCM preceptors?

I enjoy being part of the planning process with the course directors and enjoy the interaction with the preceptors. Getting to know course directors, preceptors and deans on a more personal level has been enlightening to me to see their true dedication to education and their desire to give the CCLCM students the best education possible. I am very appreciative to work with such wonderful people.

Q: How about the students?

I enjoy watching the students grow, from the time they enter the HEC as a Year 1 medical student with little or no medical knowledge until they enter their third year clinical clerkships. It never ceases to amaze me how much they learn over their first two years. I am glad that I can play a very small part in that process.

Q: Would you share a little-known fact about yourself?

One of my main bucket list items is to go ziplining.

FROM THE DEAN'S DESK



J. Harry (Bud) Isaacson, MD

Continue to be that North Star

“The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own,” said Benjamin Disraeli. Isn’t this what being a true educator is all about – not only imparting information to learners and sharing one’s knowledge with them, but also serving as their North Star, guiding learners toward the discovery of their own talents and abilities? I believe it is, and I believe our faculty members are uniquely committed to encouraging and challenging our students to become the best physician investigators they can be, and for that I’m deeply appreciative.

In every issue of *InSight* including this one, you’ll find examples that highlight how our faculty members as well as other Cleveland Clinic caregivers go the extra mile to serve our students. For example, on page 12, you can read about the Excellence in Teaching award given to 57 of our residents and fellows for their efforts in teaching our students. This month’s student spotlight focuses on Alice Tzeng (’21), who, under the mentorship of Charis Eng, MD, PhD, Professor of Molecular Medicine, and Chair of the Genomic Medicine Institute, played a key role in drafting a research proposal for BRCA-related cancer research that garnered more than \$1.6 million in grants. You’ll also read about the tremendous scholarship that three CCLCM students are involved in under the guidance of faculty member Michael Phelan, MD.

To serve as a North Star is to give hope, to help others realize their potential. This notion is particularly meaningful as we commemorate Black History Month, when we celebrate the many contributions of African Americans, while recognizing that for all the forward steps we as a people have made toward an equitable and just society, we have not progressed nearly far enough.

CCLCM student Anthony Onuzuruike (’23) this month had a piece of artwork published in the *AMA Journal of Ethics*, as part of the journal’s series called Racial and Ethnic Health Equity in the US. Anthony’s artwork, which you can see on page 15, is entitled “Black Determinants of Health,” and it makes a powerful statement about racial inequities, past and present, juxtaposed against phrases of hope and promise. I encourage you to explore the complex meanings behind Anthony’s artwork by clicking on the link in the article.

I also encourage you to continue to be that North Star, guiding, giving hope and leading others toward their potential, particularly those who have been historically disenfranchised. At CCLCM, we’re making progress toward our diversity and inclusion goals, and we have more work to do. We must continue to do our part to lift others, and although the road may be long, we make it shorter by walking it together.

Bud Isaacson, MD

Executive Dean

CCLCM students benefit from faculty mentorship, career advice

Students at the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine of Case Western Reserve University (CCLCM) are not only gaining clinical and diagnostic skills, they are also getting a head start on academic and research endeavors, thanks to the mentorship provided by CCLCM faculty. Three of those students, who plan to enter the field of emergency medicine, are benefiting from the guidance of Michael Phelan, MD, of the Cleveland Clinic Center for Emergency Medicine.

Phil Wang ('24) is one of these students. Phil took part in a summer research project with the Cleveland Clinic Emergency Services Institute, and also had an abstract accepted by the Midwest Society for Academic Emergency Medicine (SAEM) Meeting 2020 and Cleveland Clinic Research Day 2020. The abstract won "Best of the Best" and third place clinical abstract, respectively, and was recently published in the [American Journal of Emergency Medicine](#).

"I attribute all of my academic success to the faculty mentors I have been lucky to have at CCLCM," Phil says. "Dr. Phelan has helped me establish and clarify research questions, target conferences and journals for submission, and identify other faculty and staff who may be good collaborators on the project."

Thanks to help from Dr. Phelan, Sidra Speaker ('21) was able to exhibit a poster at the SAEM meeting in May and gave a presentation at the Midwest Regional SAEM meeting in September, both of which were held virtually. "When I first reached out to Dr. Phelan about wanting to work with him on a research project, he called and talked to me not just about possible projects, but also about my goals for myself, career interests, where I thought I wanted to go for residency," she says.

Sidra notes that Dr. Phelan provided her with support and encouragement about her choice of specialty, as well. "He was one of the few people who really reinforced that I would be able to pursue academia from within emergency medicine, which helped me to choose it as a field. He also gave me a lot of great advice about how to pursue next steps."

Spencer Seballos ('22) has already done extensive publishing in the field of emergency medicine, including several journal articles, abstracts and poster presentations, as well as some oral presentations. He lauds his mentor with offering some perspective on his future career. "Dr. Phelan has provided advice about multiple aspects of being a physician scientist: exploring areas of current research within the field of emergency medicine, staying patient-oriented in my research and thinking about work/life balance as an academic physician. He's also given me a lot of feedback about different directions to bring my research and colleagues in other fields to collaborate with."

For his part, Dr. Phelan was inspired by the enthusiasm exhibited by the students. "These students did all of the work. I was just sort of their North star!" he says. "I really felt I was there to guide them in the right direction, tease out the right questions to ask and make connections with the right people and resources."

The students have words of advice for students who are seeking the counsel of a mentor. "Identify a mentor whose mentorship style matches what you are looking for—whether it's weekly check-ins or more independence—and don't compromise on that," says Phil. "Also, upperclassmen can help identify mentors who match your needs."

Spencer says there is no shortage of help available. "There are a wealth of mentors at Cleveland Clinic looking to connect with students, as they realize that we are the future of those fields. Also, mentorship can look very different for different people, so setting goals and expectations can be useful in developing a mutually beneficial mentorship relationship."



Spencer Seballos



Sidra Speaker



Phil Wang



Dr. Michael Phelan

THREE QUESTIONS

Michael Phelan, MD

Cleveland Clinic Center for
Emergency Medicine



Dr. Michael Phelan



Q: What inspires you to mentor CCLCM students?

I am passionate about emergency medicine, especially the quality of care we provide, as well as patient safety, so I have focused my research around performance improvement in emergency medicine. We can and should strive to always do better. I am dedicated to improving the care of the individual patient, as well as the community we care for. When I see that type of passion and interest in clinical questions, especially in medical students interested in research, it renews my commitment.

Q: What's one lesson you wish you had learned in college/medical school?

To pull more people into a team and be more collaborative. Cleveland Clinic is the epitome of collaboration and teamwork. When I was working with the students on their projects, we reached out to other departments, such as Nursing and Quantitative Health Services, and they were enormously helpful. Their work reminded me an old Harry S. Truman quote: "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."

Q: If I weren't a physician at Cleveland Clinic and a faculty member at CCLCM, I would be ...

A family or emergency physician in a rural community. I worked in some rural emergency departments early in my career. I saw the commitment and dedication of the family physicians in those communities and it was inspirational. You have to be a jack-of-all-trades—kind of like you do in emergency medicine—and I found that to be very challenging and rewarding.

Save the dates for these virtual events

MARCH 9

Implementation Science: A Conversation with David Chambers, DPhil,
noon - 1:30 p.m.

Engage in enlightening conversation and a case discussion. Dr. Chambers is Deputy Director for Implementation Science in the Office of the Director in the Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences (DCCPS) at the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

MARCH 10

Climate Crisis: Addressing Impacts on Clinical Practice in the Great Lakes Region, **8 a.m. to noon.**

Join us for this free virtual, interactive symposium focused on how climate change affects our clinical practice and what we can do to address this reality. The symposium is offered in collaboration between Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals and the MetroHealth System. Topics will include:

- Concrete examples of climate change impacts on clinical practice
- Climate-smart healthcare delivery
- Inter-relationship between climate change and addressing health disparities
- Integrating climate change and health content into health professional education.

The symposium will combine plenary discussions by national and local experts on the four topics with breakout discussion sessions, drawing on the wisdom of the group to create an output that will be shared with conference participants.

MARCH 30

Creating an Effective Learning Environment, noon to 1 p.m.

This session is the first in a new series of faculty development offerings, the aim of which is to support and provide professional development for faculty who teach third-year students during their clerkship year. This first session will allow faculty to explore the elements of an effective learning environment from the learners' and the teacher's perspective. The Faculty Development Series comprises 10 sessions and is open to all faculty who seek support in developing, using and assessing effective instructional strategies. We hope that the program will provide a forum for exploration and foster a teaching community of practice. Registration information is forthcoming.

Get your CCLCM Faculty Affairs questions answered!

The easiest way to get your questions answered is to join us for our new virtual Faculty Affairs Q&A Hour:

- TUESDAYS, 7-8 A.M.
- WEDNESDAYS, NOON-1 P.M.
- THURSDAYS, 5-6 P.M.

To reserve your spot and to get the link to the virtual Q&A session, email facultyaffairsCCLCM@ccf.org. If you cannot make it during the days/times listed, you can always contact facultyaffairsCCLCM@ccf.org.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Alice Tzeng



Alice Tzeng ('21) has dedicated her postdoctoral research at CCLCM to the rapidly growing field of cancer immunotherapy. During her third year of medical school, she played a major role in drafting a research proposal – among the first of its kind – that examines potential contributions of the human microbiome to breast cancer. This proposal was developed under the mentorship of Charis Eng, MD, PhD, Professor of Molecular Medicine, and Chair of the Genomic Medicine Institute.

Based on the premise that over half of breast cancer cases are unrelated to known genetic and environmental risk factors, the project studies how the microbiome, a community of viruses and bacteria that coexist in human bodies, may play a role in the disease's development, progression and treatment. "Our hypothesis for this project is that the microbes living in the breast could interact in specific ways with people's immune systems – and that could represent either a predisposing or protective factor for breast cancer," says Alice.

continued >>



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT Alice Tzeng *continued*

As she approaches graduation in May, Alice sees this work as a gateway for a new era of breast cancer research. Professionals from the Gray Foundation and VeloSano seem to agree, having committed a combined \$1.7 million in research grants and pilot funding to the Eng lab for the project.

Outside of her research pursuits, Alice serves as an Editor-in-Chief for *Stethos*, CCLCM's medical humanities journal, a position she has held for the past two years. In this role, she solicits and reviews submissions from departments across Cleveland Clinic and also contributes a few articles each year.

Prior to moving to the Cleveland area, the Lafayette, La., native graduated summa cum laude from Harvard University with a Bachelor of Arts in chemical and physical biology. She then earned her PhD in biological engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Alice's career goal is to become an academic oncologist, balancing both research and clinical care. During her time in medical school, she has been inspired not only by oncologists in the field, but also by her experiences with patients.

"I've found that I really enjoy working with the cancer patient population – it's humbling to see how these folks approach their diagnoses," says Alice, who lost her maternal grandmother to cancer at an early age. "You get to have a lot of very meaningful conversations with people, and you have the privilege of building longitudinal relationships with them and their families."

Outside of work, Alice's hobbies include traveling and herpetology (the study of reptiles and amphibians). One of her earliest introductions to the world of science was through a middle school Science Olympiad club, where she competed in a herpetology event with a peer named Kenneth Danton, winning a first-place medal at the national tournament. Today, the former teammates are married and have since traveled the world together!

"We've been able to visit quite a few places during medical school, and I think our favorite was probably the Galapagos Islands," Alice says. "We're both really into wildlife and nature, and it was spectacular there."

While her travel opportunities have been limited to the Cleveland area for the past year, Alice enjoys hiking at the local Metroparks and nature preserves.





Dr. Kamila Bledzka

Faculty member earns certificate of achievement

Congratulations to Kamila Bledzka, PhD, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Molecular Medicine and PBL facilitator, who earned a Certificate of Achievement in the Distinguished Educator Level II: Feedback program, offered by the Office of Educator & Scholar Development within the Center for Educational Resources.

This certificate acknowledges the new skills, expertise and deepened understanding of written feedback acquired through the program.

“We are privileged to work with Dr. Bledzka as she refines her skills as an educator. Our interprofessional colleagues have benefited from her thoughtful observations and specific, actionable written feedback,” says Colleen Y. Colbert, PhD, Associate Professor of Medicine and Director of the Office of Educator & Scholar Development and the Distinguished Educator Level I and II Programs.

Learn more about faculty development programs offered through the [Office of Educator & Scholar Development](#).

Residents/fellows earn Excellence in Teaching Award

Congratulations to the following residents and fellows, some of whom are CCLCM alumni, who earned a Teaching Excellence Award during the third quarter of 2020:

Wael Al-Yaman, MD, Hepatology

Swathi Appachi, MD (CCLCM '14; now appointed to staff), Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery

Nicholas Arnold, MD, Orthopaedic Surgery

Rachael Baird, MD (CCLCM '19), Obstetrics and Gynecology

Diana Basali, MD, Internal Medicine

Karolis Bauza, MD, Thoracic Surgery Integrated

Daniel Bianchi, MD (two awards), Internal Medicine

continued >>

Residents/fellows earn Excellence in Teaching Award *continued*

Alise Carlson, MD, Neurology

Frank Cikach, MD (CCLCM '18), Thoracic Surgery Integrated

Christian Cuvillier Padilla, MD, Internal Medicine

Michael Erossy, MD, Orthopaedic Surgery

Katherine Falloon, MD, Gastroenterology

Patrick Flanagan, MD, Internal Medicine

Christopher Fleming, MD, Radiation Oncology

Andrew Ford, MD, Internal Medicine

Brendan Frainey, MD, Urology

Mohamed Gad, MB, BCh (two awards), Internal Medicine

Austin Griffin, MD, Internal Medicine

Essa Hariri, MD, Internal Medicine

Logan Harper, MD, Pulmonary Diseases/Critical Care

Kevin Hodges, MD, Thoracic Surgery Integrated

Ingrid Hsiung, MD, Internal Medicine

Khalid Jazieh, MBBS, Internal Medicine

Sonya Joshi, DO, Internal Medicine

Melanie Katz, MD, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Michael Klingler, MD, General Surgery

Satya Kurada, MD, Gastroenterology

Sara Liu, MD, Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery

Natalia Llarena, MD, Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility

Maeve Macmurdo, MD, Pulmonary Diseases/Critical Care

Ahmad Mahadeen, MD (two awards), Neurology

Sania Mahmood, MD, Orthopaedic Surgery

John McAfee, MD (CCLCM '20), Anatomic & Clinical Pathology

Joseph Meleca, MD, Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery

Annalisa Morgan, MD, Neurology

continued >>

Residents/fellows earn Excellence in Teaching Award *continued*

Malika Mukhamedova, MD, Internal Medicine

Robert Naples, MD, General Surgery

Paul Oh, MD, Urology

Rujul Parikh, MD, Internal Medicine

Viral Patel, MD, Thoracic Surgery Integrated

Nicole Pristera, MD, Cardiovascular Disease

Prem Ramkumar, MD, Orthopaedic Surgery

Jesse Rappaport, MD, General Surgery Research

Samer Riaz, MD, Clinical Neurophysiology, EEG and Epilepsy

Jessica Robertson-Patera, MD, Anatomic & Clinical Pathology

Zarina Sharalaya, MD, Interventional Cardiology

Sindhu Shetty, MD, Anatomic & Clinical Pathology

Sarah Sittenfeld, MD, Radiation Oncology

Sean Steenberge, MD (CCLCM '16; two awards), Vascular Surgery Integrated

Carol Swetlik, MD (CCLCM '19), Neurology

Andrew Swiergosz, MD, Orthopaedic Surgery

Inyang Udo-Inyang, MD, Orthopaedic Surgery

Josephine Volovetz, MD (CCLCM '19), Neurological Surgery

Andrea Welborn, MD, Epilepsy

James Witten, MD (CCLCM '19), Thoracic Surgery Integrated

Chen Yan, MD (CCLCM '16), Neuroimmunology (Multiple Sclerosis)

Anthony Zaki, MD, Thoracic Surgery Integrated

The participation of residents and fellows in the education of our Lerner College of Medicine students, health sciences students and other residents within Cleveland Clinic exemplifies the importance of our mission of “educating those who serve.” The mentorship and support of their teaching activities they receive from their respective graduate medical education program directors play a significant role in their success.

Congratulations again to these fine teachers-in-training for their exceptional teaching skills, enthusiasm for teaching and contributions toward ensuring a positive learning environment at Cleveland Clinic.

Student artwork featured in *AMA Journal of Ethics*



Anthony Onuzuruike

Congratulations to Anthony Onuzuruike ('23) whose artwork, called "Black Determinants of Health," is included in the *AMA Journal of Ethics* in the first of its two-part series on [Racial and Ethnic Health Equity in the US](#).

Featured in the journal's Art of Medicine section, Anthony's work is a multi-themed mosaic and contrasts a sense of hope for the future with cynicism based on the legacies of slavery and discrimination as well as the multitude of present-day racial inequities.

[View the entire abstract to learn more about "Black Determinants of Health,"](#) and [learn more about Anthony in this student spotlight.](#)





Dr. Lauren Nephew

Dr. Lauren Nephew explores her hesitancy to receive the COVID-19 vaccine

Lauren (Moore) Nephew, MD ('10), recently published a Commentary in *EClinicalMedicine* entitled "[Systemic racism and overcoming my COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy](#)." In the Commentary, she writes of her experience deliberating whether or not to receive the COVID-19 vaccine because, although she is medically trained, she knows first-hand the consequences of systemic racism and the role racism plays in healthcare.

Dr. Nephew currently is serving as an Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at Indiana University School of Medicine, Indianapolis. She is a transplant hepatologist, and her research focuses on access to liver transplant for vulnerable populations and social and structural determinants of health.

On a personal note, she's married with two children: Olivia, 19 months, and Xavier, 5 years old.

Of her commentary, Dr. Nephew says, "I hope that I can help move some to take this important step!"

Advancing Our Mission

The Education Institute welcomes donations to advance its mission of educating those who serve. Individuals, families, foundations and corporations that believe in the value of education are making a difference in the future of patient care with their generosity. To learn how you can help, please contact Theresa Holthaus at 216.444.1839 or at holthat@ccf.org.

Alumni: Share Your News

We'd like to hear about what you've been doing since graduation. If you have news to share (maybe you're involved in an interesting research project or you recently returned from a global health mission), please email Laura Greenwald at greenwl@ccf.org.

InSight

Laura R. Greenwald, MBA,
Managing Editor

Flannery Jewell, Writer

Alex Koleszar, Writer

Mary Reagan, Art Director

21-EDU-2049931