

SKILLS TRAINING IN A COVID WORLD: Physical Diagnosis Skills

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

PART 2 OF A 3-PART SERIES

Medical students generally learn physical diagnosis skills by practicing on standardized and real patients, up close and personal. They learn how to inspect a patient visually and with other physical diagnosis techniques; auscultate using a stethoscope to hear heart, lung and bowel sounds; palpate an abdomen for tenderness; and percuss an area for abnormalities. These techniques require the students to touch the patient. In the era of COVID, learning these skills without touching another person creates a bona fide barrier.

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“It has definitely been challenging,” says Venkatesh Kambhampati, MD, Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine and Director of Physical Diagnosis 1 and 2 for CCLCM. “Prior to COVID, we taught physical diagnosis with four preceptors, four students and a standardized patient. The preceptor would demonstrate on the standardized patient and then the four students would practice on the standardized patient.

“Since the pandemic, we’ve used the same set up but instead of a standardized patient, we used a manikin and instead of having four students in the room, we allowed just two inside, with the other two students observing from outside the room to maintain physical distance. We’ve also followed all PPE protocols,” says Dr. Kambhampati.

In this scenario, the challenge has been that it’s impossible to replicate certain diagnostic skills, such as percussing on a lung or examining an eardrum, using a manikin. In addition, the students lose the ability to interact when a standardized patient is replaced with a manikin. To make up for that lack

of interaction, students sometimes will practice on one another, which is a common practice among medical students in the absence of standardized patients and when they simply wish to practice newly learned physical diagnosis skills.

According to Dr. Kambhampati, the students realize that these are strange and awkward times, and they’ve remained flexible as faculty members continue to adapt to new ways of teaching. Unfortunately, learning physical diagnosis skills requires contact with another human being. One cannot effectively self-examine. Some examination skills are possible, such as listening to a heartbeat and checking for a pulse and reflexes, but most require a physical touch, which, when done to oneself, generates double feedback (i.e., sensations are felt by both the body part and the hand) and is less accurate.

“For the second half of the physical diagnosis curriculum, which includes neurologic and musculoskeletal examinations, the students need to practice on a live person because they’re measuring strength and need the person to cooperate,” says

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Dr. Kambhampati. In these instances, one student might examine a standardized patient and the other students might observe and then examine one another. However, because of the rising cases of COVID-19, the physical diagnosis curriculum is now fully virtual.

The virtual version looks like this: The students review commercially produced Web-based physical diagnosis videos prior to the session. Then the preceptor demonstrates the exam using a manikin and can offer tips for dealing with unique patients. Extra time is built into the session so the exam can be demonstrated twice and questions can be addressed. On the plus side, a virtual approach is conducive to taking a patient's medical history, helps build students' communication skills and introduces students to telemedicine, which is becoming more popular now than ever before because of the pandemic.

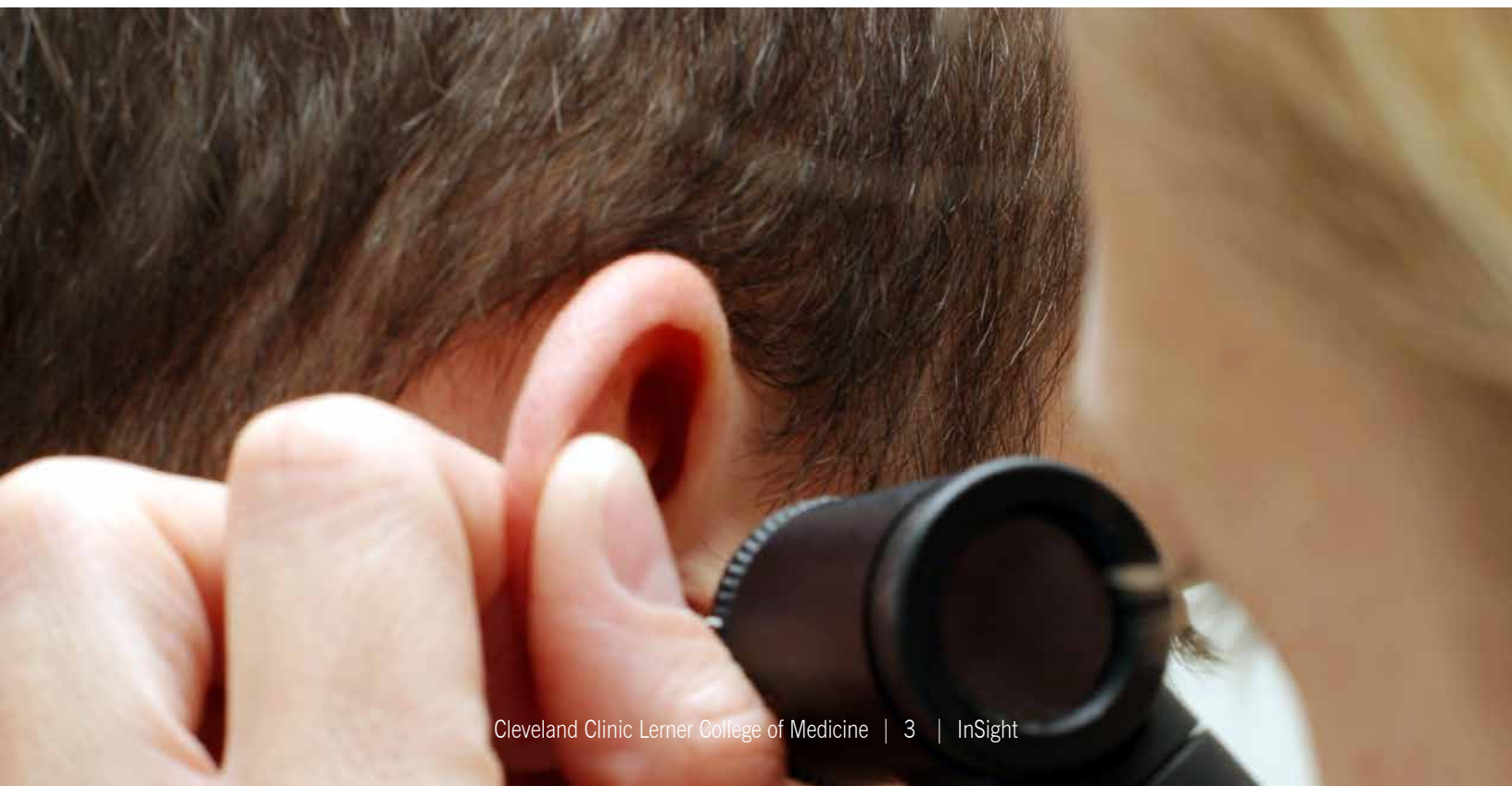
The preceptors have shown remarkable agility in quickly recreating their lesson plans and adapting course content

to a virtual platform, always keeping in mind the best interest of the students.

Although they teach basic examination skills, the physical diagnosis preceptors represent a range of clinical areas including emergency medicine, hematology/oncology, internal medicine, pediatrics, rheumatology and vascular medicine. They provide the students with verbal formative feedback right away and then record it in the students' assessment portfolio. The preceptors also make sure that the students continue to practice the skills they've learned on real patients during their longitudinal clinic sessions.

"The preceptors are really interested in doing this. They often rearrange their schedule so that they can teach. Everyone is so busy, but they are really passionate about education," says Dr. Kambhampati. "Many times the preceptors are teaching on their days off. They really are enthusiastic and dedicated faculty members."

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MEET OUR PHYSICAL DIAGNOSIS PRECEPTORS

Venkatesh Kambhampati, MD, Director

Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine



Dr. Venkatesh
Kambhampati

Q: What is your clinical specialty?

Emergency Medicine

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting CCLCM students?

The physical diagnosis course is one of the non-book learning activities of students' first year. In clinical medicine, the exam serves to elicit details about a patient's condition. However, understanding and performing the exam also serve to help students visualize themselves as actual physicians. As students make progress through their first year, their medical knowledge as well as the ability to question and examine patients start to build the foundation of their careers. It is a privilege to help lay this foundation and to teach wonderful, enthusiastic new medical students every year.

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

I was born in Hyderabad, India, and at the age of 3, moved to the West African nation of Niger. I grew up in Niamey, Niger, until I was 14 years old, at which point I came to the US to finish high school. Growing up as an expatriate was a very interesting experience (similar to other "third culture kids"). I attended the American School of Niamey, so I was an Indian kid living in French-speaking Niger attending an American school.

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Saurin Bhatt, MD

Instructor of Medicine



Dr. Saurin Bhatt

Q: What is your clinical specialty?

Emergency Medicine

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting CCLCM students?

I enjoy teaching things that are new to folks and then getting interesting questions regarding those subjects.

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

I used to be a DJ while in college!

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Danielle Hoover, DO



Dr. Danielle Hoover

Q: What is your clinical specialty?

Emergency Medicine

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting CCLCM students?

I look forward to sharing my passion for medicine with each new class.

Q: What you know now that you wish you had known when you were in medical school?

Take care of your mind, body and spirit so you can give your patients your BEST!

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Ruth Imrie, MD

Clinical Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics



Dr. Ruth Imrie

Q: What is your clinical specialty?

Pediatrics

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting CCLCM students?

I remember — from all those years ago (more than 50) — how much I enjoyed learning how to examine patients — allowing me to feel more like a “real doctor” — and how exciting it was to hear heart sounds, breath sounds and even bowel sounds! So it is fun to share these moments of enlightenment with our first-year students. I have been helping with the Physical Diagnosis classes since CCLCM came into being and have enjoyed the privilege and pleasure of following the progress of the students in our group over those first somewhat challenging months.

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

I grew up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom and ruled by Queen Elizabeth — separate politically from the Republic of Ireland (Eire). My husband, who is a pediatric orthopaedic physician, and I both graduated from Queen’s University in Belfast and are very grateful for our six-year training period there, starting straight from high school. We came to Cleveland Clinic way back in 1976.

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Nauman Khan, MD

Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine



Dr. Nauman Khan

Q: What is your clinical specialty?

Hospital Medicine

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting CCLCM students?

I value the diversity that I see among the trainees. It's interesting to learn about and from all the different experiences and backgrounds that are present in one room (whether physical or virtual).

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

In the past year I have picked up pencil sketching as a hobby. I have always felt I was a terrible artist, and I'm quite proud of myself for learning a skill that is entirely new and didn't really come naturally to me.

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Natalia Fendrikova Mahlay, MD

Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine



Dr. Natalia
Fendrikova Mahlay

Q: What is your clinical specialty?

I am an internal medicine physician specializing in the field of vascular medicine, which encompasses a wide spectrum of vascular disorders including arterial, venous and lymphatic conditions. My special interests include fibromuscular dysplasia and non-atherosclerotic arteriopathies, and non-invasive testing in the Vascular Laboratory.

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting CCLCM students?

I regard medical school years as a fascinating time of making many discoveries and building a solid foundation for the future physicians. This is the time to ask questions, to challenge yourself and not be afraid of making mistakes.

I am a preceptor for the Year 1 Physical Diagnosis Course. During my medical school years, I was fortunate to have had outstanding mentors who required solid physical exam skills and their integration into clinical judgments. It helped me to become a good clinician. Years later, with all the use of advanced laboratory and imaging tests, my initial clinical judgment always begins the moment I walk into an exam room, take a history and do a physical exam. It is very special and gratifying for me to share my experience and knowledge with the students and help them to develop the foundation of their future growth.

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

I was born in the capital of Ukraine, in the beautiful fifteen hundred-plus years old city of Kyiv. During my early school years, I was inspired to develop diverse interests. I played piano and was even encouraged to continue into the music conservatory. I enjoyed and still do enjoy sports and hiking, and appreciate the arts. Years later, being a busy practicing physician, I am convinced these other skills have helped me to understand the patients I treat and enriched my life experience.

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David Peereboom, MD

Professor of Medicine



Dr. David Peereboom

Q: What is your clinical specialty?

Neuro-oncology

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting CCLCM students?

Their enthusiasm, interest, engagement in the learning process. I learn from them all the time!

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

I love tennis and bike riding — my wife and I ride a tandem, which is a blast!

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Mathilde (Mattie) Piro, MD

Associate Professor of Medicine



Dr. Mathilde (Mattie) Piro

Q: What is your clinical specialty?

Rheumatology

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting CCLCM students?

I enjoy teaching the pearls of physical examination and passing on the torch to the next generation.

Q: What you know now that you wish you had known when you were in medical school?

When examining a body part for subtle tenderness, look at the patient's face for a reaction, especially the eyes. (Bonus: This tip even works with masks on!)

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Thomas Tallman, DO

The MetroHealth System
Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine



Dr. Thomas Tallman

Q: What is your clinical specialty?

Emergency Medicine. My focus for the past seven years has been correctional health, and I am a Certified Correctional Health Physician (CCHP-P) through the National Commission on Correctional Health Care.

Q: What do you enjoy most about precepting CCLCM students?

These are very bright students, and this is a time when the learning curve for medicine is essentially vertical. Physical Diagnosis is a fundamental skill set that we call upon every day as physicians, and my role as a preceptor is such a great opportunity to introduce this clinical skill. There is no substitute for laying hands on a patient, which must be kept in mind even during these times of Zoom interfaces and expanding roles for telemedicine. Patients are always most satisfied when we listen to them, examine them with our hands and ears and eyes, and involve them in decision making around the care path we choose for them.

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

Emergency medicine was a passion I've had since early in my medical education. I graduated from medical school as a Naval Lieutenant, completed my internship at the Naval Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida, and was assigned as the junior medical officer aboard the USS Iowa, a battleship stationed in Norfolk, Virginia. During a training exercise in 1989, I experienced a tragic event that will forever live in my mind and my soul. As turret 2 was preparing to initiate a shooting exercise, a tremendous explosion came from inside the turret and smoke came pouring into our medical department. We had to evacuate immediately and prepare to respond to unknown casualties. Unfortunately, of the 47 sailors inside, there were no survivors. I was still six months away from beginning my emergency medicine residency, so I had to count on the clinical skills I had at the time to provide the most effective mass casualty response. My corpsmen responded brilliantly as we had to sort out the bodies of our shipmates. "Train like you fight, and fight like you train" — that's the truth. I felt as though I had been thrown into the fire, but I was never surer about my decision to become an emergency medicine physician.

NEWS

Save the date: 2021 virtual Education Retreat

Save the date for the annual CWRU Education Retreat: **April 29, 2021, 12:30 – 6 pm.** This year's theme is Diversity and Inclusion in Education, and here's the tentative agenda:

- 12:30 p.m. Meet and Greet
- 1 p.m. Welcoming Remarks
- 1:15 p.m. Plenary Speaker
- 2:20 p.m. Skill Development Workshops and Poster Session with Oral Presentations
- 3:20 p.m. Networking
- 3:30 p.m. Skill Development Workshops and Poster Session with Oral Presentations
- 4:40 p.m. Speed Mentoring and Presentations
- 5:40 p.m. Awards Ceremony and Closing Remarks
- 6 p.m. Adjourn

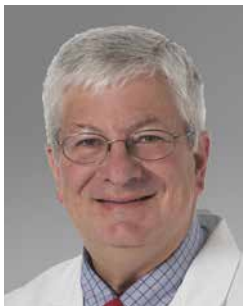
Please stay tuned for details. We look forward to seeing you there!



Class of 2025 students show off school colors

Each year, Bret Lashner, MD, Professor of Medicine, encourages his first-year “kids” to wear their school colors on the last day of class before the Ohio State vs. Michigan football game. Although the football game was cancelled because of the pandemic, the annual display of school colors was a bright reminder that, despite the distance between us, we can still have some fun.

Dr. Lashner and Christina Lindenmeyer, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine, co-direct the Gastroenterology Systems 1 and 2 Courses.



Dr. Bret Lashner



Dr. Christina Lindenmeyer

Submit your creative work for *Stethos*

Submissions are now open for the 11th issue of *Stethos*, the medical humanities journal of the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine. *Stethos* provides a wonderful forum to showcase the incredible diversity and creativity of our students, faculty and colleagues, and the editors hope to continue this tradition in the 11th issue. They are seeking submissions of **short fiction, reflective writing, poetry, personal narrative, essays, artwork and photography.**

Submissions may be about any medicine-related topic or reflection; if you have a question about a specific topic, please reach out and ask.

This tumultuous year has inevitably changed the way we interact with others. For this year's issue, the editors are also seeking pieces for a feature that speaks to **the human connection** and welcome submissions that reflect on unexpected connections made during COVID-19 (i.e., during social distancing or as a result of new patient care practices), as well as how people may be making more conscious efforts to understand and connect with patients, colleagues and mentors of diverse backgrounds and identities.

[Please view previous issues of *Stethos*](#) to see examples of pieces that were published in the past.

The deadline for submissions is **Monday, March 8, 2021.** [View the submission guidelines.](#)

Please contact Ellen Brinza at brinzae@ccf.org, Maleeha Ahmad at ahmadm@ccf.org or any of the *Stethos* editors with questions.

***Stethos* Editorial Team**

Maleeha Ahmad, Editor-in-Chief

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Madeleine Blazel

Lynn Daboul

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Lauren Heusinkveld

Daniel Moussa

Matthew Nagy

Anthony Onuzuruike

Chineme Onwubueke

Deborah Park

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Abhilash Suresh

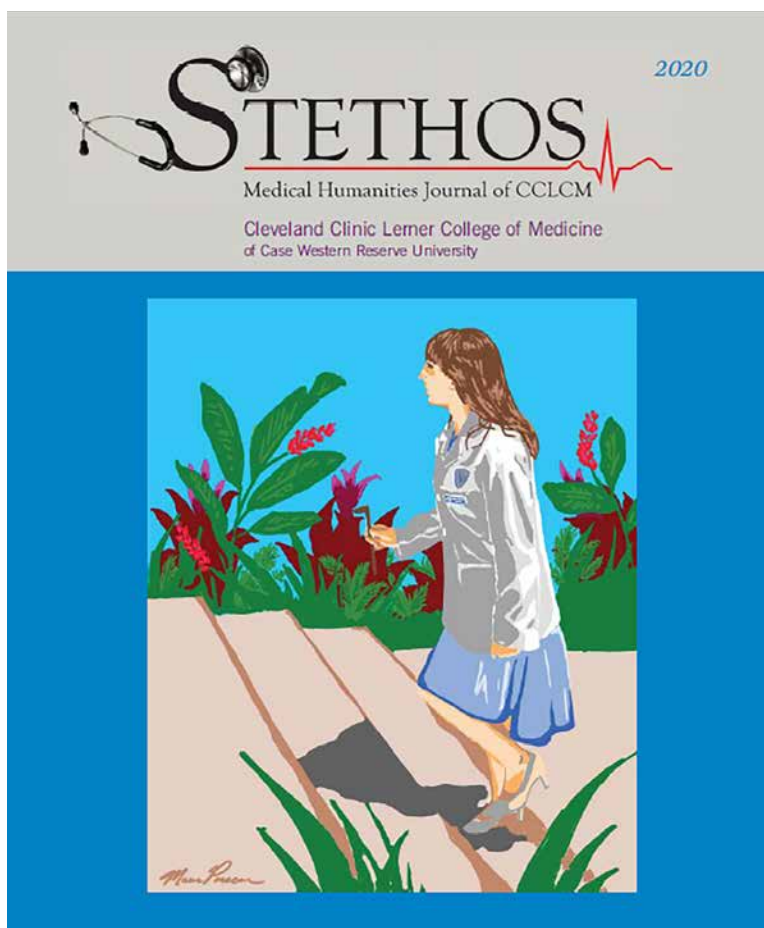
Mihika Thapliyal

Alice Tzeng

Sarita Walvekar

Angela Wei

Sasha White



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Jenny Shao



When Jenny Shao ('21) found that her oven was too hot to incubate bacteria for her middle school science fair project, she took matters into her own hands. To her mother's surprise, the 13-year-old Chicagoan decided to cold call the first biology professor she could find on Northwestern University's website. When Jenny asked to use the school's laboratory to complete her research, she recalls, "The professor just burst out laughing, but she said yes!"

Last November, Jenny completed an even larger science project: She successfully defended her thesis — a culmination of research on patient frailty, specifically post-operative outcomes of adult spinal deformity surgery. As she enters her final semester of medical school at CCLCM and prepares for neurosurgery residency, she is grateful for the supportive mentors she has encountered throughout her life.

Jenny's interest in the medical field started at an early age. She spent her first seven years in China, where she was raised by her great-grandmother. "She was my hero," Jenny says. "She would sneak ice cream for me when my mom wasn't looking, she would bring in snow for me to play with when it was negative three degrees outside, she was the most amazing lady."

One year after Jenny moved to the Chicago area, her great-grandmother passed away from lung cancer. "That was the first time I encountered death and disease. It really made a lasting impression on me," she says.

Early on, Jenny's sights were set on cancer research. After being accepted to attend Columbia University as an I.I. Rabi Scholar, a distinction with less than a 1% selection rate, a freshman year social psychology course changed her focus to the human brain. "I realized that the brain is the essence of who we are. Every decision we make, our character, it's all determined by our experiences, our memory – essentially, the vat of chemicals in your head," she says.

During her undergraduate studies at Columbia, Jenny double majored in biochemistry, and neuroscience and behavior. She studied memory at the New York Psychiatric Institute for three years, under the leadership of Nobel Laureate Eric Kandel, MD. Around that time, she shadowed her first neurosurgeon. "I remember seeing the brain for the first time, and it pulsates," she says. "I didn't know that before, and I was in love."

continued >>

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT Jenny Shao *continued*

After graduation, with research pursuits and writing experience for the *Columbia Science Review* and *Journal of Global Health* under her belt, Jenny relocated to the Boston area to work under the direction of Harvard University professionals, where she conducted nervous system-related research at Boston Children’s Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital.

At CCLCM, Jenny continues to immerse herself in research opportunities related to neurosurgery. Outside of her clinical rotations, she spends time volunteering in Cleveland Clinic operating rooms. As she enters her final semester, one of the most important lessons she’s learned is the value of persistence.

“In terms of what I am most proud of, I don’t think of a specific paper or a lesson or anything,” she says. “It’s that I’ve learned to keep on going regardless of the challenges, to never lose sight of why I started. I always choose to move forward, because I remember that this was my choice.”

Today, Jenny thanks the people and experiences that have helped shape her decision to pursue neurosurgery. “I’ve always thought that there are two great loves that anybody can have, and that I, too, would love to have, if I were lucky enough,” she says. “The one I’m focused on now is my career, it’s neurosurgery. It’s what makes you want to jump out of bed every morning. It makes every sacrifice, every late night, every moment of doubt worth it.”

In her spare time, Jenny enjoys reading and spending time with her dogs. Before the pandemic, she would frequently host game nights with her friends — some of her favorites are social deduction games such as *Perudo* and *Codenames*. She admits she can get a bit competitive at times, but she loves the company!



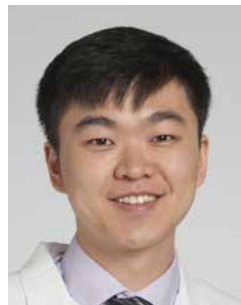
Students publish as first authors in major journal

Congratulations to Scott Anjewierden ('21) and Zheyi Han ('21), who are the first authors for "[Risk factors for *Clostridioides difficile* colonization among hospitalized adults: A meta-analysis and systematic review.](#)" published in *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*, the journal of the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America.

Scott and Zheyi's research mentor, Abhishek Deshpande, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Medicine, is among the co-authors of the paper.



Scott Anjewierden



Zheyi Han



Dr. Abhishek Deshpande

Congratulations to Excellence Award winners

Kudos to these CCLCM teams, staff and students who earned a Cleveland Clinic Caregiver Celebrations Excellence Award. The Excellence Award recognizes individuals and teams that demonstrate an exceptional achievement or initiative, or outstanding behaviors resulting in significant positive impact to the Cleveland Clinic experience through patient care or business operations, leadership, financial or other areas important to Cleveland Clinic's success in support of our mission, vision and values.



Traci Brandt

Traci Brandt, Basic Science Courses Coordinator

Until last month, the CCLCM Basic Science courses had been without a second coordinator since January 2020. Traci, a fairly new coordinator herself, stepped up to take on that additional role. Over the course of last year, she helped convert courses for both years 1 and 2 to virtual platforms because of the COVID-19 pandemic. She has gone above and beyond to ensure that students and faculty had what they needed to continue with their classes. After serving solo in her role for nine months, she is now training a new Basic Science coordinator who will work with her. Despite the constraints of the pandemic, she has provided the best possible onboarding and training experience for the new coordinator, all while continuing to assist students and faculty with ongoing classes. Traci has truly demonstrated teamwork and determination in providing the best possible care and assistance to our students and faculty.

Darlene Gray, Liz Myers, MEd, and Karen Wright

The CCLCM Admissions and Student Affairs team has worked hard this year to continue its customary pursuit of providing excellent service to students. The team has faced multiple personal afflictions and sorrows, some attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the adversities that this small team has faced, they collectively have continued to provide excellent care and communications to our students, successfully hosting a hybrid orientation to the new incoming class, working with new candidates applying to the CCLCM program, conducting virtual interview sessions and supporting one another the entire time.



Darlene Gray



Liz Myers



Karen Wright



Debra Shirley

Debra Shirley, Web Designer

Debra developed a [microsite](#) that memorializes the many ways in which CCLCM students and faculty responded to the challenges of the pandemic, from transitioning courses to a virtual platform and helping community members access much-needed resources to developing an emergency ventilator. The microsite also includes a timeline that juxtaposes the CCLCM response with major national and local news about the pandemic.

Jacob Knorr, Daniel Santana and Megan Sheehan, fourth-year students

The student team built an open-source prototype ventilator for just \$300, with parts from Amazon and from parts that were 3D printed with the help of the Cleveland Clinic Biomedical Engineering Department. The cross-enterprise team was led by Pulmonologist Neal Chaisson, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine and Director of the Critical Care Medicine Fellowship, and Robert Chatburn, MHHS, RRT-NPS, Adjunct Professor of Medicine, and included professionals from Clinical Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, Pediatrics, CCLCM and the Respiratory Institute. The team published their work in the *Canadian Journal of Respiratory Therapy*. Read [“Design and performance testing of a novel emergency ventilator for in-hospital use.”](#)



Jacob Knorr



Daniel Santana



Megan Sheehan

continued >>



Bethany Bruno

Bethany Bruno, fifth-year student

Bethany led a team of more than 50 students to triage potential COVID-19 patients and return test results via telemedicine platforms from mid-March through May 2020. With guidance from Cleveland Clinic Medical Operations, Bethany also coordinated a team to set up a hotline to transfer patients from rural hospitals to a higher level of care in Cleveland.

Congratulations, all, on this well-deserved recognition of your outstanding achievement during a most uncertain and chaotic year.

Case Med Pride wins Chapter of the Year award

Congratulations to the many students involved in [Case Med Pride](#), the LGBTQ+ student organization of Case Western Reserve University Medical School, for winning Chapter of the Year from the Medical Student Pride Alliance (MSPA), an activist and social organization committed to addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ people through research, advocacy, education and service.

Some of Case Med Pride’s successes during its first year include offering an LGBTQ+ health elective, increasing LGBTQ+ diversity in the pre-clerkship curriculum and providing for the health needs of intersex members of the community.

Board member Gus Roversi ('24) passed the torch to Brady Greene ('25) and Will Patterson ('25), who have assumed leadership roles in Case Med Pride for 2021 and will be working with the University Program students to continue the chapter’s initiatives and programming.

Students, if you’re interested in getting involved in LGBTQ+ initiatives, Case Med Pride is a great place to start. Please reach out to Brady at greeneb3@ccf.org or Will at patterw@ccf.org, or [sign up to be added to the chapter’s confidential listserv](#).



Gus Roversi



Brady Greene



Will Patterson



Photo courtesy of Dr. Vincent Cruz

Dr. Vincent Cruz joins DDC Clinic to focus on genetic diseases

Vincent Cruz, MD ('16), has joined DDC Clinic in Middlefield, Ohio, to focus on research and helping families whose children are affected by rare genetic conditions, while he finishes his training in internal medicine and genetics. He was introduced to DDC Clinic by its medical director, Heng Wang, MD, PhD, with whom he has consulted about complex patients over the years.

"I'm terribly excited to join the team at DDC Clinic. The uniqueness in my training immediately caught their attention. CCLCM has provided me the strong foundation I needed to become the consummate 'physician investigator,' preparing me well for this next challenge in my career," says Dr. Cruz. "I look forward to directly caring for patients while simultaneously researching their underlying genetic diseases right here in Northeast Ohio!"

DDC Clinic is a not-for-profit, independent medical home and research facility for children with special needs. The clinic specializes in dozens of rare genetic disorders, serving not only the local Amish community, but also families across the United States and around the world.

While enrolled at CCLCM, Dr. Cruz was a recipient of the KeyBank Minority Medical Student Scholarship.

Read more about Dr. Cruz's involvement with DDC Clinic and introduction to the Amish community in the [DDC Clinic's fall 2020 newsletter](#).

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

Mary Reagan, Art Director

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