

INSIDE *Medicine*

Summer 2021

The Newsletter of the Department of Medicine



The Why of Medicine and Care

*A message from the chair, Steve Abramson
To Our New Housestaff*

First, I want to let you know how pleased we all are that you have chosen to do your residency here at NYU. Internship is one of the great challenges in your journey toward becoming physicians, so we have focused this Newsletter on advice as you begin your residency training. The sage insights from our faculty that follow emphasize the importance of maintaining confidence in yourselves and valuing as dear your relationship with each of your patients. All crucial and wise!

What I want to add is the importance of remembering the *Why of Medicine* in providing the highest level of care. Under the pressure of caring for multiple patients on a busy service it is tempting to focus on *throughput* at the expense of deeper thinking about the patient. What I refer to as the four “W” words, reflecting the daily churn of patient admissions and discharges, dominate the inpatient experience: *What* is

the diagnosis; *What* is the treatment; *When* will the patient be discharged; *Where* will the patient go? Too often we overlook the other “W” word: Why. *Why* is the patient sick now? *Why* these medications? *Why* is the organ failing? *Why* do we not have better therapies for this disease?

Why ask the Why questions? As noted by the Six Sigma process, the main benefits are that the answers can identify problems that were not very clear or obvious—and it permits us to rethink assumptions made about the patient. The majority of diagnostic and treatment failures result from anchoring on another’s diagnosis, inadequate knowledge, faulty data gathering, and/or faulty verification, that is, failing to ask the Why questions.

So, my advice, as you become more comfortable with your skills in managing patients, is to periodically pause and ask the *Why* questions. By doing so you will develop a deeper understanding of the patient’s condition, avoid anchoring to the admission diagnosis, reject assumptions made by others and contribute to an environment of inquiry about disease. You will soon appreciate how little we really know about the causes and cures for most diseases we treat, and in some cases you will develop new interests for scholarly pursuits in your career.

That said, as has been the case for generations of residents who preceded you, you will all learn to be outstanding physicians and the best advice will come not from this Newsletter, but from your continued immersion in patient care with colleagues who excel.

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Proud to be
#8 IN THE NATION.



Congratulations to the Divisions of Medicine

NYU Langone Hospitals rank went up from #9 to #8 for Best Hospitals in the nation. The performance of the Divisions of Medicine, reflecting the quality of care provided, was extraordinary and was a major factor in the national ranking:

- **Cardiology & Heart Surgery** rose to **No. 5** from No. 11
- **Diabetes & Endocrinology** rose to **No. 4** from No. 16
- **Gastroenterology & GI Surgery** rose to **No. 5** from No. 10
- **Geriatrics** rose to **No. 5** from No. 10
- **Pulmonology & Lung Surgery** rose to **No. 6** from No. 11
- **Rheumatology** maintained its Top 10 ranking at **No. 8**

We note that **Nephrology**, **Infectious Diseases**, and **Hospital Medicine** are not included in the *USNWR* rankings, but these divisions contributed mightily to the quality of care delivered, which is the primary metric reflected in the *USNWR* rankings.

THE ADVISOR IS IN

Words of Wisdom for New Housestaff

- As a new house officer, there is only one mistake you can make: not asking for help. We are all here to help you become your best!
- A patient's greatest ally is hope. Never take that away.
- At the core of what we do as physicians is to improve the health of others when they are most vulnerable. What an incredible way to dedicate one's self to a profession that is all about helping others.
- Listen to your patients: they will tell you what is wrong with them. (adapted from Osler)
- Talk to your patients. Find out about them. Enjoy them.
- Sometimes just being present and saying "we are here to help" is what is most comforting.
- Don't be afraid to ask, "How can I do better?"
- Gratitude and focusing on the difference we make in our patients lives are antidotes to burnout.
- There are only two outcomes for any new endeavor: Success and Learning. The only time you fail with when you stop trying and stop learning.



Mark Pochapin, MD

Director, Division of Gastroenterology and
Hepatology

Vice-Chair Clinical Affairs, Dept of Medicine
Sholtz-Leeds Professor of Gastroenterology

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Your responsibility is to your patient. Do everything you can to treat your patient in their best interest, and if you are not sure on why a diagnosis/diagnostic or treatment plan is being considered or not considered, don't hesitate to ask. This is your time to

learn as much as possible and, you never know, your question may have your attending rethink the differential or plan. Do not hesitate to advocate for your patient!

Be respectful to your colleagues. If you are requested to provide a consultation, you are entitled to have the basic history and data presented to you but other than that, you must remember that the requester is unsure and looking for your input (even if they are not sure of what the exact question is) so that they may treat their patient the best way possible. We've all been in a position of just not knowing what to do next or unsure of having missed something important—this is your time to pay it forward.

Finally, look out for each other. Training can be tough with many high-stress situations, and the team you train with is who will help you get through it. However, also know that leadership at NYU also has your back, and we have resources you may access 24/7 as needed to help you through the tough times. Sometimes you just need to talk to someone—we're here to listen.



**Binita Shah, MD**

Associate Director of Research, Cardiac  
Catheterization Laboratory  
Director of Research, Internal Medicine  
Residency Program



While we live in the hospital, our patients are usually totally disoriented to all the people coming and going. Most of them think they will have one doctor for all their care. Take a moment to tell them about the teaching team structure, so they will know how we work together to care for them.



**David Stern, MD**

Vice Chair for Education and Faculty Affairs,  
Department of Medicine  
Chief, Medicine Service, VA NY Harbor  
Healthcare System

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Breathe. Before each presentation on rounds, before that first procedure, before heading to bed after a long shift, just take a deep breath. Give your mind a moment of rest. Remember you are entrusted with being a doctor not simply because of your accomplishments, but because of who you are as a person.

Community. Find your colleagues and mentors who you can go to with questions, and who can provide support and compassion. That doesn't just mean other doctors, but nurses and respiratory therapists and janitorial staff and everyone who works together to care for patients. Know there are always people around rooting for you to succeed and willing to help. In turn, reach out and help others.

Purpose. You won't find it immediately, but each day is building towards deeper realization of the unique contribution you can make in medicine. Remember, you are needed. In what capacity? We're all excited to find out. That's the fun part.



Ofole Mgbako, MD

Assistant Professor of Medicine and Population Health
Division of Infectious Diseases and Immunology

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No one expects you to know it all... or really much at all! What impresses me is the intern who shows curiosity and compassion; the house officer who remains humble enough to say, "You know, I don't know!" and is then motivated enough to say, "...but I'll find out."

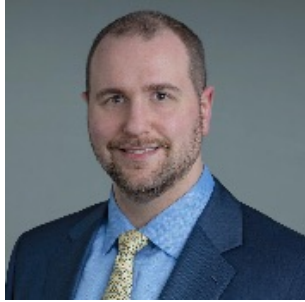


**Ann Garment, MD**

Co-Director, Addiction Medicine Fellowship Program  
Section Chief, General Internal Medicine, Bellevue Hospital Center

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Create habits that allow for continuous improvement. One great habit is to keep track of patients that you have discharged from the hospital. This is an opportunity to see how your treatment decisions changed a patient's clinical outcome. If they need a PCP, try to see them in your clinic if possible. Also, make this more than just a reflective practice. Think about what you could have changed in your clinical care for the patient, if anything, and do it next time.



David Kudlowitz, MD

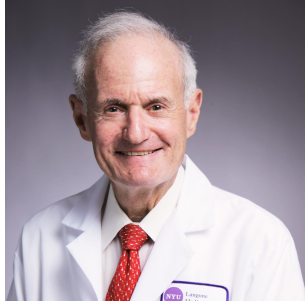
POM II Module Director

Merrin Master Clinician Fellow

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Welcome and congratulations to the newly appointed members of the house staff. The faculty of the Department of Medicine looks forward to meeting you and working with you. I make these recommendations, not only for your becoming a highly regarded physician, but also for achieving life-long personal satisfaction from your career:

- Establish a personal caring bond with each patient and each family member you encounter.
- Go the extra mile for your patients and your colleagues. Look for opportunities to be further supportive of your patients and the team.
- Seek complexity in each patient encounter, even if the problem seems routine. Each patient should prompt a question and an exploration of the current literature or standard texts. Share the results of your reading and be an active educator on rounds and in conference.



### **Martin Kahn, MD**

Associate Chair for Academic Affairs, Department of Medicine

Joel E. and Joan L. Smilow Professor of Cardiology

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## **Meet Patricia Gaeta, Our New Administrator**

It is a pleasure to welcome Patricia Gaeta, MBA, as the administrator of the Department of Medicine, replacing Katy Wesnousky, who retired in June. Patricia comes to us from the Departments of Neurology and Ophthalmology, with the singular distinction of having served as administrator for two departments at NYU Langone simultaneously. Prior to joining NYU Langone, she spent eighteen years working at Bellevue in various administrative positions. She brings extensive experience and proven leadership to our department, and we're thrilled to have her join us.

### **Tell us a bit about your background.**

I grew up in New Jersey and studied nutrition at Montclair State for my undergraduate degree. My first job was at Bellevue Hospital in the 1990s, working as the dietician with AIDS patients. It was during the height of the epidemic, a tough time, and being able to actually sit and talk with patients and learn more about their lives was very rewarding.



However, even though I liked the clinical work, I found myself gravitating towards the management aspects of the job. Even though I had to wear a lab coat for some of my early positions, I used to show up more often in a suit!

### **How did you come to NYU Langone?**

Over the years, I worked at various leadership and administrative positions at Bellevue, and met great colleagues and mentors. Then in 2012, there was an opportunity to come to NYU Langone as the administrator of the Department of Neurology, which at that time was also bringing on a new chair, Steve Galetta. He and I worked together to build up the department—we brought on more faculty group practices, expanded the research, improved the education.

Then about three years ago, I had the opportunity to do the same with the Department of Ophthalmology. I felt as though I had organized Neurology well, so I offered to help with Ophthalmology until they hired a new administrator. They asked me to stay on, and that was actually the first time that an administrator was offered the opportunity to oversee two departments. I did that for three years.

As an administrator, I really enjoy overseeing the different mission areas—finance, research, education, clinical—as well as having the opportunity to mentor staff and work with the doctors. I can't even say it's the “best of both worlds,” because it's the best of *all* the worlds. So when I heard that Katy was retiring, I didn't hesitate to apply. I feel so fortunate to have this opportunity.

### **Can you give us some insight into your views on teamwork and collaboration?**

I like to know exactly who is responsible for what, and I think people like to know that as well. I try to ensure that everyone is clear on what their responsibilities are and to give them that ownership, as individuals and as team members.

Right now I'm working with each of my team members to better understand what their structure looks like and what their needs are. I'm very collaborative. Having team meetings and one-to-ones on a regular basis is very important to me.

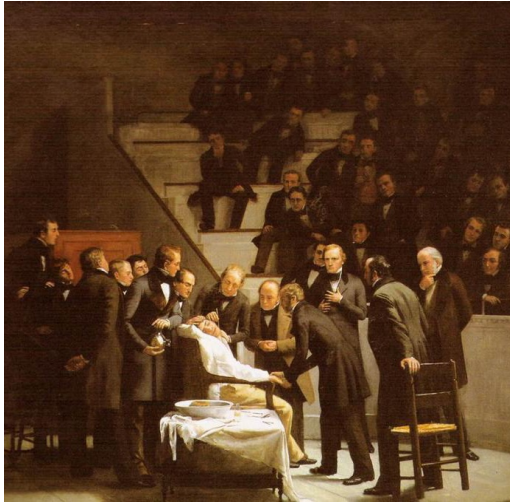
I've been fortunate to have mentors and coaches throughout my career, and I try to give back in that respect. I want to make sure that the staff are being asked on a regular basis about their goals and aspirations, where they see themselves, and how we can help you get there.

### **In a previous newsletter, we asked members of the department to share their “silver linings” after such a difficult 2020. Is there something that helped get you through last year?**

The work ethic of the doctors and staff that were coming in to treat our patients was

quite impressive. As the administrator, I just felt like I had to be there for them, so that got me up every day and into the office. Everyone had so much perseverance. It was heartening to see such amazing teamwork.

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## The Historian Is In: Anesthesia and Art

Painted over a decade by Robert Cutler Hinckley, *The First Operation Under Ether* ranks among the most iconic scenes in medical history. David Oshinsky, PhD, gives us the story behind the painting, and describes how the advent of anesthesia changed surgery forever.

[Continue reading](#)



## Featured Student Piece: "The Six-Word Story"

Devon Zander's "The Six-Word Story," winner of The Clerkship Award For Outstanding Essay In Philosophy of Medicine, explores the idea that the one-liners used to concisely describe a patient are "medicine's own version of the six-word story: a way to encapsulate a sentiment, an idea, and a complete narrative in an efficient manner."

[Continue reading](#)

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# NEWS & AWARDS

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## Meet New Faculty

### Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology

**Aasma Shaukat, MD, MPH**, a renowned leader in the field of gastroenterology, has joined NYU Langone Health as the director of outcomes research in the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology. In addition to her role within the division, she will serve as co-director of translational research education and careers in the Clinical and Translational Science Institute at NYU Langone. Dr. Shaukat will have dual appointments as the endowed Robert M. and Mary H. Glickman Professor of Medicine and Gastroenterology in the Department of Medicine and professor in the Department of Population Health. [Learn more about Dr. Shaukat.](#)



**Tamas Gonda, MD**, is the Chief of Endoscopy at NYU-Tisch Hospital and the Director of the Pancreas Disease Program. His clinical practice is focused on therapeutic endoscopy with a primary interest in treatment and prevention of pancreatobiliary diseases and advanced endoscopic therapies. He has lead investigator-initiated and collaborative clinical trials in the treatment of pancreatic cancer, pancreatitis, prevention and treatment of pancreatic and other gastrointestinal precursors and novel endoscopic technologies or therapies. As a clinician-scientist, his translational research laboratory is focused on epigenetics and epigenetic therapies in the early detection and treatment of pancreatic cancer.



### Division of General Internal Medicine & Clinical Innovation

**Masha Slavin, MD**, obtained her undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania with a major in Health and Societies and spent the following year working at a community health center in Massachusetts and volunteering in Guatemala. She earned her medical degree in 2016 from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, where she was co-chair of the East Harlem Health Outreach Partnership, Mount Sinai's student-run free clinic. Dr. Slavin completed residency at New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell,



serving as Ambulatory Chief Resident from 2019-2020. While in her role as Ambulatory Chief, Dr. Slavin enhanced the ambulatory curriculum and introduced changes to improve clinic flow.

Dr. Slavin was thrilled to join NYU as faculty at Bellevue Hospital in January 2021. She is passionate about providing care for the diverse community that Bellevue serves, as well as her work with residents and medical students. Dr. Slavin values her role providing primary care through Bellevue's Program for Survivors of Torture.

**Christian Torres, MD**, obtained his medical degree from the University of California, San Diego in 2016 and his undergraduate degree from Stanford University. He completed his residency in internal medicine at NYU Grossman School of Medicine, distinguishing himself as a Chief Resident for the 2019-2020 year. During his time here, he was Chief of the NYU DIMOND Program and a SEED Program Mentor. Dr. Torres stayed on at NYU, joining the faculty at Bellevue Hospital where he has found his passion in caring for its diverse community. Dr. Torres had an initial career in health and science journalism, writing for publications including *The Washington Post*, *Politico*, and *NPR*. This provides him a unique perspective in communication, which he utilizes in his medical education practices.



As a faculty member in the Division of General Internal Medicine and Clinical Innovation, Dr. Torres is dedicated to growing the diversity of students, faculty and leaders at NYUGSOM. He was appointed Director of Diversity Training and Housestaff Mentoring in the Office of Diversity Affairs, overseeing the development of programs that address bias and discrimination in medicine, as well as recruitment, retention, and support of diverse housestaff.

**Shanna Tucker, MD**, is completing her obesity medicine fellowship this August. She completed her internal medicine residency in the Primary Care Track at New York Presbyterian-Weill Cornell in 2020, and obtained her medical degree from Harvard Medical School in 2017. Early on in her medical career journey, Dr. Tucker developed a strong passion for preventative medicine, primary care, and lifestyle medicine, and promotes healthy living for all of her patients. She engages in scholarship and has given oral/poster presentations at regional and national conferences, has two peer reviewed publications, and is currently working on a chart review study.



## Division of Geriatric Medicine and Palliative Care

**Annette Georgia, MD**, joined our faculty in July, and will be dividing her time between the NYU Langone Palliative Care inpatient service, the Bellevue Palliative Care inpatient service & outpatient clinic, and the Bellevue Hospitalist service. Dr. Georgia attended medical school at Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons, and completed residency in Primary Care/Social Internal Medicine at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx. After residency, Dr. Georgia came to NYU for a fellowship in Hospice and Palliative Medicine and graduated this June. Her interests include the intersection of palliative care and addiction medicine, caring for underserved patients, and teaching communication.



**Berkay Otkur, MD**, joined our faculty this August. He will be splitting his time between the NYU Langone Geriatrics Inpatient Consult Service and the NYU Langone Hospital Medicine Service. Dr. Otkur completed medical school and his internal medicine residency at the University of Florida College of Medicine, after which he completed his geriatric medicine fellowship here at NYU. He will have appointments in the Department of Medicine, Divisions of Geriatrics & Palliative Care, and Hospital Medicine.



## Division of Nephrology

**Eric P. Cohen, MD**, is a clinician-investigator whose work has focused on normal tissue radiation injury that can complicate hematopoietic stem cell transplants and is also a risk of accidental or belligerent radiation exposures. A graduate of the Université de Liège, in Belgium, Dr. Cohen's training in medicine and nephrology was at Tulane and the University of Chicago. He comes to NYU from the University of Maryland, where he has worked for the past six years.



Dr. Cohen will have a hybrid role, at the Manhattan VAMC and at NYU Langone

hospitals and clinics. His outpatient practice at NYU will concentrate on oncology, a field that addresses renal disease that can occur in patients who have cancer, and also cancer management in patients with renal disease. This interest developed in part from his research focus on radiation nephropathy, experimental and clinical. At the VAMC, Dr. Cohen will be part of the Renal Section, and will have a substantial role as director of the VISN 2 Specialty Clinical Resources Hub.

### **Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine**

**Maria Sunseri, MD**, attends at Bellevue Hospital in the Medical Intensive Care Unit, the inpatient Chest Service, and the Critical Care and Pulmonary Consult Services. She completed her residency and fellowship training at NYU. Her research interests include acute lung injury, ARDS and COVID-19 survivorship, quality improvement in the ICU, and point-of-care ultrasound teaching. Current projects include the Post-Acute COVID Syndrome and CLABSI/CAUTI education and prevention in the ICU.



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### **Upcoming CME Activities**

#### **NYU Langone Health's Annual Focus On Men's Health 2021**

October 15, 7:45am - 4:35pm

Course Directors: Steven Lamm, MD; David Poppers, MD, PhD

Virtual Webinar ~ [Learn more](#)

#### **The NYU Langone Critical Care Cardiology Symposium**

November 5, 7:45am - 5:10pm

Course Directors: Carlos Alviar, MD; Christopher Barnett, MD; Samuel Bernard, MD; James Horowitz, MD; Jason Katz, MD, MHS; Eugene Yuriditsky, MD

Virtual Webinar ~ [Learn more](#)

#### **Imaging in Adult Congenital Heart Disease**

November 19, 7:45am - 3:15pm

Course Directors: Dan Halpern, MD; Adam Small, MD

Virtual Webinar ~ [Learn more](#)

**Big Gut Seminars: Focus on Complex Liver Disease**

November 19, 8:45am - 4:30pm

Course Directors: Nabil Dagher, MD; Ira Jacobson, MD; Sonja Olsen, MD;

James Park, MD

Virtual Webinar ~ [Learn more](#)

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We welcome your announcements of awards, honors, publications, presentations, new programs, and events. Email us at [DOMcommunications@nyulangone.org](mailto:DOMcommunications@nyulangone.org).

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