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Dean's Update, June 2021

Jerry Nadler

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Dear Members of the New York Medical College (NYMC) Community:

As this academic year draws to a close, we have much to celebrate in the NYMC School of Medicine (SOM). Medical school and residency offer many challenges and opportunities to grow as true healers—that is a given. Yet this year's graduates endured the peak of the pandemic in New York and prevailed—they are stronger for it.

In May, we celebrated the SOM Class of 2021 as they graduated NYMC fully prepared to go on to make a tremendous impact in health care as outstanding physicians, despite having their clinical rotations halted and their residency interviews conducted virtually. You can read more about the SOM hooding, awards and military pinning ceremonies, where we recognized the graduates for their accomplishments and enjoyed celebrating together in person on campus once again, later in this newsletter.

Congratulations to our resident graduates at our many affiliates, and in particular at our major affiliate clinical sites—Westchester Medical Center and New York Health + Hospitals/ Metropolitan (MET). The relationship between MET and NYMC, which dates back to 1875, is

particularly notable as the longest partnership between a public hospital and private medical college in the history of the United States. The residency programs at MET are also unique in that they are directly sponsored by the NYMC SOM.

Congratulations also to our first-, second- and third-year students, as they transition to the next level of their medical education at NYMC.

2022-2027 SOM Strategic Plan

Building on the goals of the NYMC 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, the SOM began the process to develop our 2022-2027 SOM Strategic Plan. During the next several months, we will undertake a school-wide collaborative-planning process to engage stakeholders and solicit input from across the NYMC community. Creating a comprehensive plan that aligns with the M.D. program accreditation will provide the SOM with a framework to achieve our goals and direction over the next five years.

As we plan for the future of the SOM, the input of the entire NYMC community will be vital to our success. To complete this important work, we have formed an SOM executive team to oversee the process and will be forming working groups to focus on several key areas that both provide a framework to efficiently organize our strategic planning efforts and effectively align identified priorities with accreditation criteria (more information on these areas of focus can be found later in this newsletter). These working groups, which will include basic and clinical faculty, staff and students, will recommend to the executive team the major goals to advance the SOM that will form the backbone of the plan, as well as the tactics to help us achieve those goals.

One of the initial tasks for the working groups will be to perform a comprehensive review of the [College's](#) and [SOM's](#) current strategic plans to evaluate the status of current goals and objectives as well as identify future priorities. We anticipate the working groups to be formed in the next few weeks. I thank you in advance for your willingness to participate should you be called upon.

I also want to emphasize that these plans are meant to be dynamic documents that guide our actions. I strongly encourage the SOM community to familiarize themselves with the current plans and share their feedback with the working groups in the coming months.

A school-wide survey of the SOM mission and vision statements will be distributed soon, which I encourage you to complete. By identifying opportunities for collaboration and strategic investments in academic programs, technology, research and facilities, the SOM will continue its success in effectively preparing our students for their future careers and contributing to advances in medicine and clinical care.

Addressing Health Care Disparities

The COVID-19 pandemic put a spotlight on various weaknesses in our health care system, including the health care disparities that continue to exist and the need for us as physicians to continue to channel our energy to push for changes that will address the fundamental problems that have led to these continued inequalities and suffering.

I am greatly encouraged by the role NYMC continues to play in this regard as we integrate anti-racism and anti-bias training into our medical school curriculum and student programming. This was evident most recently by the SOM being recognized with a 2021 Medical Student Service Leadership Project Grant from Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society to support the creation of an [educational leadership program](#), led by SOM students, to combat systemic racism and implicit bias in medical education.

Through the program, “Transformative Education Leadership Program (TELP): Combating Systemic Racism and Implicit Bias through Medical Education,” selected medical students will undergo an intensive training aimed at developing the leadership skills to address bias and racism in medicine. The training will be led by Pamela Ludmer, M.D., M.M.E.L., SOM associate dean for curriculum integration and chair of the NYMC Anti-racism, Anti-bias and Health Inequities Steering Committee, together with Mill Etienne, M.D. '02, M.P.H., vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion and SOM associate dean of student affairs. The students selected will then in turn train the next generation of student leaders, creating a legacy of continued progress at NYMC.

On a personal note, I am very pleased to have been a co-author and contributor to a [new study](#) published in *Nature Genetics*, which illustrates the importance of having population diversity when studying the causes of important diseases, such as Type 2 diabetes. Up to now, nearly 87 percent of genomic research of this type has been conducted on those of European descent.

Looking Forward to a Return to Normalcy

Thankfully, as the pandemic finally recedes with fewer cases and deaths reported and millions now vaccinated, we are grateful to also see the easing of some of the restrictions regarding masks and social distancing. As of now, New York State has not yet fully lifted its guidelines regarding colleges and universities, so in the interim we will continue to adhere to the current guidelines to keep our campus community safe. However, as we go to press, there are updates in process, so please continue to visit our website for the latest information and the mandatory student vaccination policy.

I hope that you will have an opportunity for some well-deserved rest and relaxation over the summer.

Sincerely,

Jerry L. Nadler, M.D., MACP, FAHA, FACE

Dean of the School of Medicine

Professor of Medicine and Pharmacology

SOM Strategic Planning Working Group Areas of Focus

The working group areas of focus for the 2022-2027 SOM Strategic Plan incorporate the goals and priorities associated with the current [College Strategic Plan \(2021-2026\)](#) and [SOM Strategic Plan \(2020-2021\)](#), NYMC's Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) dashboard, and accreditation criteria associated with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).

Faculty Focus, encompassing faculty-related matters, including recruitment, retention, promotion, professional development and evaluation to ensure faculty provide and receive the leadership and support necessary to attain the SOM's educational, research and service goals.

Student Focus, encompassing student-related matters, including medical student selection, assignment, progress, educational records, as well as student services to assist students in achieving the program objectives, pursuing their career goals and promoting their health and wellness.

Organizational Leadership, encompassing SOM mission, goals, ongoing planning, leadership, organizational structure, governance processes, strategic partnerships and integrity in conduct of all internal and external activities.

Education and Assessment, encompassing curricular management (objectives, content, design, delivery) of the medical education program and the supervision and assessment of students to ensure program quality is maintained and enhanced and that students are adequately prepared for educational activities, entry into residency and subsequent contemporary practice of medicine.

Academic/Learning Environments and Diversity, encompassing SOM academic and clinical environments to ensure they are professional, respectful and intellectually stimulating, that the benefits of diversity are recognized and that students' attainment of competencies is promoted.

Organizational and Educational Resources, encompassing SOM personnel, financial resources, physical facilities, equipment and clinical, instructional, informational, technological and other resources to ensure sufficient resources are readily available and accessible across all locations.

Research, Scholarship, and Community Service, encompassing community service opportunities, instruction in scientific method, grants and research support services to help the SOM foster the intellectual challenge and spirit of inquiry appropriate to a community of scholars.

School of Medicine Celebrates Class of 2021 at Hooding, Awards and Military Pinning Ceremonies

Graduates of the SOM Class of 2021 were celebrated during the annual Hooding and Awards Ceremony and the Military Pinning Ceremony both held on May 24. With some New York State COVID-19 safety guidelines regarding large events relaxed, many graduates chose to attend in person to receive their hood from SOM faculty, while some students opted to attend virtually, with the bestowal of their hoods by family and friends shared via live video. (View the [video](#) and [photos](#) of the Hooding and Awards Ceremony.)

During the event, College leadership, including Alan Kadish, M.D., president of NYMC and Touro College and University System, and Jerry L. Nadler, M.D., SOM dean, offered congratulatory remarks to the Class of 2021.

"Virtual communication and an increased reliance on technology will characterize your lives, personally and professionally," said Dr. Kadish. "This last year has already spawned changes in society and tremendous changes in education which you as medical students have experienced firsthand. Telemedicine is here to stay. Artificial intelligence will be increasingly important. You are emerging at a time of an exciting new frontier. As physicians, you are going to be tasked with not only helping cure your patients' disease but also helping them personally. You will have the challenge of how to take advantage of all the power that scientific advances bring to you, while maintaining a personal and holistic relationship with your patients. Please remember that the doctor-patient relationship has been sacred for millennia and remains sacred no matter what else you bring to the table."

"We are so proud of you and how hard you worked to reach this day, especially during the challenges of the COVID pandemic," said Dr. Nadler. "Medical school offers many challenges and opportunities to grow as true healers. That is a given. However, your class endured the peak of the pandemic in New York, which halted your clinical rotations and forced your residency interviews to be held virtually. However, you prevailed, achieving wonderful residency matches, while also demonstrating compassion, humanism, a strong sense of volunteerism and resiliency. All these characteristics, while difficult at the time, will help you move ahead into your residencies and careers. We need caring, dedicated, humanistic, bright leaders like you to discover the next best ways to treat our patients to reduce suffering."

Following the hooding portion of the ceremony, awards were presented to students to recognize their academic achievement and service to the NYMC community. Members of the faculty and staff were also recognized for their dedication to the Class of 2021.

Cydney Nichols, M.D., SOM Class of 2021, was chosen to speak on behalf of her class at the hooding ceremony.

"Collectively, we have created a community underscored by hard work, compassion, achievement and even fun," said Dr. Nichols. "You only graduate from medical school once, so soak in this moment. You and your support system worked for a

decade to get here, and we're looking at years more of hard work to achieve the goals we've set out for ourselves and the future of health care."

"You are all going to be such amazing doctors to your patients, colleagues to your peers, mentors to those following you, lifelong learners and contributors to medicine and society. As a whole, it's been such a joy learning alongside you and I can't wait to see what's next in store for all of us."

The festive day concluded with the Military Pinning Ceremony held at the United States Military Academy at West Point (pictured at left), where two

military graduates of the Class of 2021, who will leave NYMC to fulfill their dual roles as military officers and physicians, were administered the military oath of office by Mill Etienne, M.D. '02, M.P.H., vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion, SOM associate dean for student affairs and a Captain in the U.S. Navy. The military custom commemorated the promotion of both graduates from second lieutenant to captain in the U.S. Army. The newly minted officers also had their new rank insignia (pinning) placed on their uniforms by loved ones during the ceremony.



DEAN'S UPDATE

Dr. Tracey Milligan Named Chair of Department of Neurology



Tracey A. Milligan, M.D., has been named chair of the Department of Neurology at NYMC and as director of neurology at Westchester Medical Center.

Dr. Milligan, an expert in epilepsy treatment, joins NYMC from serving as associate professor at Harvard Medical School and distinguished clinician and vice chair for education in the Department of Neurology at Brigham and Women's Hospital. She will officially join the campus community in August.

Dr. Milligan brings more than two decades of experience to NYMC. During her time at Harvard Medical School, she was the recipient of the Barbara J. McNeil Faculty Award for Exceptional Institutional Service—the highest award for institutional service at Harvard Medical School and/or Harvard School of Dental Medicine. At Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH), she created the neurology volunteerism program with the Brigham and Women's Outreach Program

Indian Health Service (IHS). [Read full story about Dr. Milligan.](#)

Dr. Mark Hurwitz Named Chair of Department of Radiation Medicine



Mark D. Hurwitz, M.D., has been named the chair of the Department of Radiation Medicine at NYMC and director of radiation medicine at Westchester Medical Center.

Dr. Hurwitz is a widely recognized leader in the fields of genitourinary oncology and thermal medicine. He comes to NYMC from the Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he was the enterprise quality and safety officer for the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center - Jefferson Health and professor and vice chair for quality, safety and performance excellence for the Department of Radiation Oncology, as well as the director of thermal medicine and the medical residency program.

Dr. Hurwitz played a central role in the development of the first national radiation oncology patient safety organization and, on national and international levels, has directed efforts on advancing the translation of biology and technology into clinical practice. He has led several

ground-breaking trials for National Cancer Institute sponsored cooperative research groups, including Cancer and Leukemia Group B, Radiation Therapy Oncology Group and Neuregulin Oncology. [Read full story about Dr. Hurwitz.](#)

Faculty in the News

Leslie L. Citrome, M.D., M.P.H., clinical professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, on [novel drug that offers rapid relief from agitation in serious mental illness](#)—*Medscape*, May 5, 2021

Stephen Ferrando, M.D., Har Esh Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, on [COVID-related suicide 'crisis' among young](#)—*Patch*, May 27, 2021

Masashi Kai, M.D., assistant professor of surgery, on [new technology that helps save more lives by preserving donated hearts longer](#)—*ABC7NY*, May 12, 2021

Nadav Traeger, M.D., associate professor of clinical pediatrics, on [newborn sleep schedule between birth and three months](#)—*Parents*, April 15, 2021

Gary P. Wormser, M.D., professor of medicine, pathology, microbiology and immunology and of pharmacology on [Lyme Disease](#)—*Patch*, June 24, 2021 and on [Babesiosis, a dangerous tick-borne infection that attacks red blood cells](#)—*The Washington Post*, May 29, 2021

Craig H. Zalvan, M.D., clinical professor of otolaryngology, on [why your tonsils are more important than you think](#)—*Health Digest*, June 15, 2021

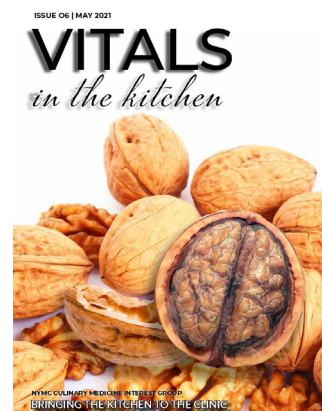
Nutrition and Culinary Medicine Area of Concentration Launched

A new Area of Concentration (AOC) in Nutrition and Culinary Medicine has been introduced into the medical education curriculum that aims to increase the number of future physicians graduating from the NYMC SOM with a foundation, understanding and the necessary skills to deliver nutrition-integrated care to their patients that is both evidence-based and culturally competent, regardless of specialty. The concentration provides students with a broad background in the principles of nutrition and culinary medicine, an introduction to weight management, portion control and the principal biological, physiological and environmental factors that alter nutritional needs and influence dietary intake at each stage of the life cycle.

The AOC will commence this summer with a six-week foundation course open to rising second-year medical students. As part of the summer programming, virtual culinary instruction will be conducted over zoom on Wednesdays (June 23, June 30, July 7, July 14, July 21) at 6 p.m.

Each session will run for approximately two hours and will consist of culinary instruction with recipes varying for each session, work on case studies and a clinical discussion on the case studies, the dishes prepared and their nutritional importance and clinical relevance and how to present the dishes for patients.

Interested faculty are invited to attend just the sections on culinary instruction, case studies or the clinical discussions, or the entirety of the session. Those interested in attending any of the sessions should contact Jessy Rosen, SOM Class of 2024, president of the Culinary Medicine Interest Group, at jrosen11@student.nymc.edu.



La Casita de la Salud Expands Services to Offer Medical and Dental Care in Westchester



Since 2005, La Casita de la Salud, the NYMC student-run clinic located in the East Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, has been bridging the gap in health care disparities by providing quality, culturally competent care regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality or ability to pay. That gap just got a bit smaller with the opening of a second student-run clinic. The new La Casita de la Salud, located at 19 Skyline Drive on the NYMC campus, is a joint venture between NYMC's Family Health Center and Touro Dental Health, the state-of-the-art, 115-chair dental health facility of the Touro College of Dental Medicine (TCDM) at

NYMC, and will offer free medical and dental care to uninsured adults.

The new La Casita de la Salud — which is Spanish for 'the little house of health' — held its official opening on May 6. Patients will receive longitudinal care, while students will get valuable clinical experience under the supervision of faculty advisors Lori Solomon, M.D. '99, M.P.H. '09, chair and clinical associate professor of the Department of Family and Community Medicine and director of the Family Health Center, and Raquel M. Rozdolski, D.M.D., clinical assistant professor of dental medicine.

Billed as a one-stop-shop for medical and dental care, a typical patient visit will begin with a physical exam at the Family Health Center, followed by a warm handoff to Touro Dental Health for a dental exam and care.

"I am very proud of the medical and dental students for working together to launch a student-run free clinic in Westchester County," said Dr. Solomon. "They have been working through this academic year to set this clinic up and it is thrilling to see it launch. The students are learning a lot from each other and giving back to the community."

"This program is an incredible experience for our students and the development of their interprofessional education," said Dr. Rozdolski. "Dental students and medical students are working side-by-side as part of the patient's health care team in order to deliver coordinated and comprehensive care to the patients of our community."

Roxanna Nahvi, M.D./Ph.D. candidate Class of 2023, and Benjamin Yee, TCDM Class of 2021, are spearheading the student initiative and more than 100 students each from NYMC and TCDM have applied to volunteer at La Casita. In addition to clinical experience, student volunteers will also gain valuable operational and management experience.

"It has been truly amazing to see La Casita evolve during my four years as part of its student leadership," Ms. Nahvi said. "My hope is that this clinic can make a difference in our community in its own small way." [Read full story about the new La Casita de la Salud clinic opening.](#)

Faculty Appointments *(March 27, 2021 through June 17, 2021)*

Welcome to our new faculty from across our affiliate sites.

Sarah E. Andiman, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
CareMount Medical

Navdeep K. Bhatti, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine
NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan

Arundhati Biswas, M.B.B.S.

Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery
Westchester Medical Center

Stephen F. Carolan, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
WestMed Medical Group

Samantha D'Annunzio, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine
Westmed Medical Group

Leonid Frenkel, D.O.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine
CareMount Medical

Matthew F. Garofalo, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
Westchester Medical Center

Alyson S. Helmandollar, M.D., M.P.H.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Westchester Medical Center

Amanda M. Jacobs, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Westchester Medical Center

Devon G. John, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Surgery
Westchester Medical Center

Elaine B. Josephson, M.D.

Adjunct Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine
NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln

Harriet Kang, M.D.

Adjunct Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
New York Medical College

Omar Karim, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Surgery
Good Samaritan Hospital

Victor Khabie, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery
Northern Westchester Hospital

Seymour Kushnir, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and
Behavioral Sciences
Good Samaritan Hospital

Premila M. Mathews, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine
CareMount Medical

Morcos F. Morcos, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Radiology
NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan

Ayo I. Moses, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine
CareMount Medical

Shinae M. Namkoong, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology
Westchester Medical Center

Sandeep S. Nayak, M.D., M.S.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine
NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan

Katherine C. Pehlivan, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Westchester Medical Center

Maria Pence, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Cell Biology and Anatomy
New York Medical College

Xin Quan, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine
Westchester Medical Center

Pragya Ranjan, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine
Westchester Medical Center

Jacob M. Reinkraut, D.P.M.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine
Saint Michael's Medical Center

Alexandra Schieber, D.O.

Assistant Professor of Family and Community Medicine
New York Medical College

Shivani S. Shah, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan

Alla Spivak, D.O.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology
Westchester Medical Center

Natoushka Trenard, M.D., M.P.H.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine
NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan

Keila Veiga, M.D.

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Westchester Medical Center

Anrew Villion, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Anesthesiology
Westchester Medical Center

Michael P. White, M.D., Ph.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan

Yachao Zhang, M.D.

Clinical Assistant Professor of Radiology
NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan

Dr. Heather Brumberg Co-Lead Authors American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement on Effects of Ambient Air Pollution on Children's Health

Heather L. Brumberg, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP, professor of pediatrics and of clinical public health, was a co-lead author of a [new policy statement](#) by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Council on Environmental Health on the effects of ambient air pollution on children's health and recommendations for lessening its impact. The policy statement, which was published in the June 2021 issue of *Pediatrics*, draws on considerably expanded research since AAP's last statement in 2004.

"We know that infants and children are uniquely sensitive to air pollution because their bodies are developing. They also breathe in more air in relation to their body weight than adults do," said Dr. Brumberg. "We have seen that in 'natural experiments' where efforts to decrease traffic during the 1996 and 2008 Olympics, for instance, both air quality and resultant community health improved. We must continue to more consciously work toward improving air quality."



Air pollution has been shown to worsen chronic diseases such as asthma and is associated with preterm births, abnormal lung and neurodevelopment, pediatric cancer, obesity and cardiovascular disease risk.

"Air quality is something we take for granted. We don't always realize how much it affects our health, climate and thus the life of the planet," said Dr. Brumberg. "Pediatricians can help make changes, small and big, with education and advocacy on behalf of children."

Alpha Omega Alpha Iota Chapter Celebrates Academic Distinction during Annual Induction Ceremony



Donald S. Chen, M.D., delivered the keynote address

The NYMC Iota Chapter of Alpha Omega Alpha, the national medical honor society, hosted its 65th Annual Professor Lecture and Induction Ceremony virtually on April 27, when they recognized and honored more than 50 NYMC students, residents, faculty and alumni, for their academic distinction. **Donald S. Chen, M.D.**, assistant professor of medicine at NYMC and chief medical safety officer and hospital epidemiologist at Westchester Medical Center (WMC), delivered this year's keynote address.

As one of the leading clinicians, educators and researchers in the areas of infectious diseases, hospital epidemiology and tropical medicine, Dr. Chen played a critical role as WMC grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic. During his thought-provoking lecture, Dr. Chen traced the course of the pandemic during the past year, as well as the origins of coronaviruses in general and how infectious diseases spread from wildlife. Looking ahead, Dr. Chen shared his insight into vaccines and variants and the importance of achieving herd immunity to prevent COVID-19 from becoming an endemic infection, similar to the flu and cold viruses.

This year's alumni inductees into Alpha Omega Alpha included NYMC alumni **Peter Bentivegna, M.D. '85**; **Noreen Ferrante, M.D. '84**; and **Martin Katzenstein, M.D. '78**, associate professor of pediatrics, assistant dean for clinical affiliations and chair of the Board of Advisors at NYMC. In addition to Dr. Chen, several members of the NYMC faculty were inducted, including **Apolonia E. Abramowicz, M.D.**, clinical professor of anesthesiology; **Gabriella Dauer, M.D.**, assistant professor of pediatrics; **Nisha Lakhi, M.D.**, associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology, and **Yehudit Pollack, M.D.**, assistant professor of pediatrics.

The AOA Volunteer Clinical Faculty Award was presented to **Adrienne Wasserman, M.D.**, clinical assistant professor of emergency medicine, and AOA Resident Teaching Awards were presented to **David Ambinder, M.D.**, urology resident; **Matthew Garofalo, M.D.**, psychiatry chief resident and now assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences; **Michael Kim, M.D.**, neurosurgery resident, and **Maria Pollack, M.D.**, obstetrics and gynecology resident. [Read full story on AOA induction event, which includes the lists of students inducted.](#)

School of Medicine Hosts Gold Humanism Honor Society Induction Ceremony for the Class of 2022



Mathias Palmer, M.D.



Mill Etienne, M.D., M.P.H.

Thirty-two students from the SOM Class of 2022 were inducted into the Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS) on April 28, when they pledged their dedication to prioritize humanistic approaches in their future in medicine. The GHHS honors senior medical students, residents, role-model physician teachers and others who have “demonstrated excellence in clinical care, leadership, compassion and dedication to service” as part of the Arnold P. Gold Foundation.

“The selection committee got it right,” said Jerry L. Nadler, M.D., SOM dean, referring to the impressive group of inductees who were selected by a panel of faculty and their peers. In his opening remarks, Dr. Nadler also spoke about the importance of humanism in health care, especially during times where people of color are discriminated against as patients.

The Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine student award was presented to **Mathias Palmer, SOM Class of 2021**. Mr. Palmer’s kindness and empathy was praised by fellow classmate Naveena Sunkara, GHHS co-president, who presented the award to Mr. Palmer. “Mathias is the best of our class,” Ms. Sunkara said.

The faculty award was presented to **Mill Etienne, M.D. '02, M.P.H.**, vice chancellor for diversity and inclusion, SOM associate dean for student affairs and associate professor of neurology and of medicine. “Dr. Etienne’s infectious compassion and diligence will affect students for years to come,” Ms. Sunkara said.

The ceremony concluded with the GHHS oath, led by Evan Formosa, GHHS selection chair, and induction remarks by the GHHS Selection Committee Class of 2021, including Naveena Sunkara, Danika Dorelien, Harrison Smith, Chelsea Banks and Teryn Igawa.

We thank Jennifer Koestler, M.D., senior associate dean for undergraduate medical education, for acting as faculty advisor to GHHS. [Read full story about Gold Humanism Society event.](#)

NYMC Students Honor First Patients at 33rd Annual Convocation of Thanks

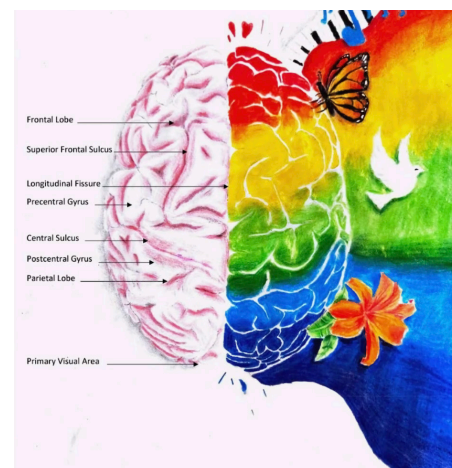
Students from the SOM Class of 2024 and the School of Health Sciences and Practice (SHSP) Speech-Language Pathology Class of 2022 held an emotional virtual ceremony for the 33rd annual Convocation of Thanks, with students finding creative ways to show gratitude to the families of loved ones whose bodies were graciously donated for medical research. Whether it was through song, speeches or poems, students virtually expressed their appreciation to their “first patients,” which they called the cadavers who were donated by the families in attendance. This year’s Convocation of Thanks also honored the donors from last year and welcomed their families since the event was canceled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We would not be here without your family’s tremendous gift,” said Moses Bibi, SOM Class of 2024, who was part of a rendition of “Wind Beneath My Wings,” a song by artist Bette Midler, which he sang with fellow classmate Lily Spelman.

The convocation also featured artwork by Asim Ahmed, SOM Class of 2024 (pictured at right) which portrays a visual representation of what the brain can hold, with the different sections on one side and bright and colorful artwork on the other side. “I will carry the lessons I learned with them throughout my career,” Mr. Ahmed said.

SOM Class of 2024 Student Yazan Al-Aljouni read a piece called “Selfless Virtue,” which was developed from a journal he kept during his time in the anatomy course. Calling the opportunity to study the body, thanks to the donors, “beyond thoughtfulness” he shared that it was an experience marked by intimacy and appreciation. “It taught me humanity,” Mr. Al-Aljouni said.

The students concluded by playing a video of the planting of the Class of 2024 tree, dedicated in remembrance and gratitude toward the “first patients” and their families. We thank the SOM students who organized and hosted this important event.



Faculty and Student Publications and Updates

This listing represents just a small sample of recent highlights.

Four NYMC faculty members were among 16 Healthcare Heroes selected by *Westchester Magazine* for 2021 -- **Traci Furbert Gardner, M.D.** '98, clinical assistant professor of pediatrics; **Renee Garrick, M.D.**, vice dean for clinical affairs and professor of clinical medicine at NYMC and medical director at Westchester Medical Center; **Sheila Nolan, M.D.**, assistant professor of pediatrics; and **Ammir R. Rabadí, M.D.**, instructor of family and community medicine — during a virtual ceremony that honored those in the health care industry who succeeded in the pandemic response or excelled despite the pandemic and its crippling effects on daily life.

Only Avitzur, M.D., M.B.A., clinical assistant professor of neurology, was elected the 37th president of the American Academy of Neurology, the world's largest professional association of neurologists and neuroscience professionals.

Under the leadership of **Shetal Shah, M.D.**, clinical professor of pediatrics, who serves as president of New York Chapter 2 of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the chapter received the 2020 Outstanding Chapter Award in the large chapter category. Dr. Shah led the chapter in its local response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter was noted for its advocacy for Medicaid coverage for children and a statewide ban on the sale of flavored nicotine products, as well as addressing food insecurity, media outreach and providing more than 10,000 pieces of personal protective equipment to small group, private practice pediatricians.

Christian D. Becker, M.D., Ph.D., former associate professor of medicine; **Leanne M. Forman, M.D.**, associate professor of medicine; and **Corey Scurlock, M.D., M.B.A.**, clinical professor of anesthesiology; published "[Rapid implementation and adaptation of a telehospitalist service to coordinate and optimize care for COVID-19 patients](#)" in *Telemedicine and e-Health*.

Michael H. Gewitz, M.D., professor of pediatrics, published "[Prevention of Viridans Group Streptococcal Infective Endocarditis: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association](#)" in *Circulation*.

Sean Lynch, M.D., SOM Class of 2021; **Sivan Shahar, SOM Class of 2022**; **Lidia Klepacz, M.D.**, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences; and **Stephen J. Ferrando, M.D.**, Har Esh Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences; published "[Olfactory Hallucinations in the Context of COVID-19](#)" in the *Journal of the Academy of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry*. Ms. Shahar, Dr. Lynch, Dr. Klepacz and Dr. Ferrando, also published "[Relapsing Opioid Use Disorder in the Context of COVID-19](#)" in the *Annals of Case Reports*.

Anish R. Maskey, Ph.D. candidate in the Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences; **Weihua Huang, Ph.D.**, associate professor of pathology, microbiology and immunology; **Nan Yang, Ph.D.**, research assistant professor of pathology, microbiology and immunology; **Kamal Srivastava, Ph.D.**, research assistant professor of pathology, microbiology and immunology; **Jan Geliebter, Ph.D.**, professor of pathology, microbiology and immunology; **Raj K. Tiwari, Ph.D.**, professor of pathology, microbiology and immunology; and **Xiu-Min Li, M.D., M.S.**, professor of pathology, microbiology and immunology; published "[A small molecule compound berberine as an orally active therapeutic candidate against COVID-19 and SARS: A computational and mechanistic study](#)" in the *Faseb Journal*.

Yanling Liao, Ph.D., clinical assistant professor of pediatrics; **George M. Kleinman, M.D.**, associate professor of pathology, microbiology and immunology and of neurology; **Shetal Shah, M.D.**, professor of pediatrics; **Carl Thompson, Ph.D.**, professor of physiology; **Joseph D. Etlinger, Ph.D.**, professor and chair of Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy; **Michael S. Wolin, Ph.D.**, professor of physiology; **Mitchell S. Cairo, M.D.**, professor of pediatrics, pathology, microbiology and immunology, medicine and of cell biology and anatomy; **Edmund F. La Gamma, M.D.**, professor of pediatrics, and of biochemistry and molecular biology; and **Govindaiah Vinukonda, Ph.D.**, assistant professor of pediatrics and of cell biology and anatomy; published "[Human Cord Blood Derived Unrestricted Somatic Stem Cells Restore Aquaporin Channel Expression, Reduce Inflammation and Inhibit the Development of Hydrocephalus After Experimentally Induced Perinatal Intraventricular Hemorrhage](#)" in *Frontiers in Cellular Neuroscience*.

Jana Veliskova, M.D., Ph.D., professor of cell biology and anatomy, obstetrics and gynecology and of neurology, published "[Erratum: Reduced Hippocampal Dendrite Branching, Spine Density and Neurocognitive Function in Premature Rabbits, and Reversal with Estrogen or TrkB Agonist Treatment](#)" in *Cerebral Cortex*.

Gary P. Wormser, M.D., professor of medicine, pharmacology and of pathology, microbiology and immunology, published "[Are Differences in Presentation of Early Lyme Borreliosis in Europe and North America a Consequence of a More Frequent Spirochetemia in American Patients?](#)" in the *Journal of Clinical Medicine*. Dr. Wormser, along with **Stephen Warshafsky, M.D.**, clinical associate professor of medicine, also published "[Aggregation of data from 4 clinical studies demonstrating efficacy of single-dose doxycycline postexposure for prevention of the spirochetal infections: Lyme disease, syphilis, and tick-borne relapsing fever](#)" in *Diagnostic Microbiology and Infectious Disease*.