



# CMS NEWS

The Chicago Medical School Newsletter

WINTER 2025 | ISSUE 35



# Dean's Message

## CMS News

Winter 2025

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**Cover Image:** Students pose with Xena the two-toed sloth during a Wellness Week visit from the "Scales and Tales" traveling exotic animal zoo.

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Greetings from the Dean's Office!

I hope each of you had a chance to relax and spend time with friends and family over our winter break, and I hope your New Year has been off to a good start so far. As we all try to stay warm in this cold weather, I look forward to the Spring — not only for some milder weather, but for the many exciting events that will be happening on campus.

On March 21, we'll celebrate Match Day with our fourth-year students as they discover where they'll

be heading to complete their residencies. This is always one of my favorite days of the year as I witness the joy on the faces of our students and their loved ones, and join them in celebrating the culmination of years of hard work. Three members of the Class of 2025 have already successfully matched, and I congratulate the two students who matched into Ophthalmology and the one student who matched into Urology. The CMS community is very proud of our students who have matched into these competitive specialties, and I look forward to finding out where our remaining 200+ students will match in March.

As our fourth-year students await Match Day and continue to prepare for their upcoming residencies, our third-year students have been busy with their clinical rotations. In order to make sure our students and residents have appropriate learning experiences and our clinical partners get the support they need, CMS leadership organizes regular site visits with learners and faculty at our affiliates. Dr. Frank Maldonado recently led a group of CMS faculty on a visit to Pleasant Prairie, WI, to meet with our partners at one of our newest clinical sites, Froedtert South. We're excited about the future of our partnership with Froedtert South and the new clinical and research opportunities that this affiliation will bring for our students.

Next month, I will be traveling to Los Angeles to meet with our other new site, Palmdale Regional Medical Center. We finalized an affiliation agreement with Palmdale last year, and I will continue to work with them to provide enriching clinical experiences for our students while also supporting the needs of the desert communities in the area. On the same trip, I will also be visiting City of Hope, a nonprofit cancer treatment and research center in the Los Angeles area. We are considering City of Hope as a potential clinical partner, and in future newsletters, I hope to bring you news of possible new clinical and research opportunities at this NIH-designated comprehensive cancer center.

While in California, I will also be meeting with CMS alumni in the Los Angeles area. I always enjoy catching up with our alumni, meeting their families, and hearing about their lives and careers. In recent months, I've had the pleasure of visiting alumni in Washington, DC, where I had dinner with Barry H. Epstein, MD Class of '64, and his wife Evelyn; Robert V. Veiga, MD Class of '73; David W.

Schopfer, MD Class of '04; Wesley Dickerson, MD Class of '05; and Maneesh R. Jain, MD Class of '05. I had a wonderful time with these East Coast alumni, and I look forward to seeing some of our West Coast alumni in a few weeks. Accompanying me on my travels, members of the RFU Alumni Office will also soon be visiting CMS alumni in Rhode Island, New Orleans, Boston, and Philadelphia.

One thing I appreciate about our alumni is how many of them are willing to spend their time and resources to support and mentor our students. Earlier this month, Kimberley Dary, MD Class of '04; Amy Swift-Johnson, MD Class of '06; John Monu, MD Class of '14; and Joyce Jones King, MD Class of '19, participated in a Black History Month panel event organized by the CMS chapter of the Student National Medical Association. Our four alumni shared their challenges and triumphs with students in keeping with the event's theme "radiance through resilience."

Our students also benefit from, and greatly appreciate, the financial support provided by alumni in the form of scholarship funds. The latest in our list of alumni-funded scholarships is the "CMS Forward — Rania Agha, MD '02 — Endowed Matriculation (BMS to CMS) Scholarship" which was established by Dr. Agha and her husband to assist students' matriculation from the Biomedical Sciences (BMS) program into CMS. Dr. Agha is a graduate of the BMS program, graduated from CMS in 2002, and is now a board-certified dermatologist and cosmetic surgeon. The first award from this new scholarship fund will be distributed during the 2025-2026 academic year.

Speaking of scholarships, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Michael Reese Foundation for Education and Research for their generous continued support of our medical students through the Michael Reese Research and Education Foundation Scholars Program. By the time you read this message, we will have just hosted representatives of the Foundation on campus for a Feb. 27 dinner thanking them for renewing the Scholars Program for its second year. Our two new CMS Michael Reese Scholars, first-year students Prianka Belancourt and Daniel Gutierrez, were in attendance to express their appreciation, along with Angelica Arzuaga from our inaugural cohort. The Foundation's mission is to carry on the legacy of the Michael Reese Hospital by investing in research, education, and community service in the Chicago area. Both of this year's scholars are already

involved in giving back to the community: Prianka and Daniel both volunteer at the university's student-led Interprofessional Community Clinic and mentor grade school students through CMS' Mini Medical School. The Foundation's support will help them reach their goal of becoming physicians who can continue to serve the community.

As the Spring term begins, we have several events to look forward to, including the annual State of the Medical School address on April 15. We'll hear from CMS leaders as they highlight the accomplishments of their departments and offices from the past year and identify goals for 2025. Also in April, we'll be joined by Dr. Brownsyne Tucker Edmonds, Vice President and Chief Health Equity Officer for Indiana University Health and the Associate Dean for Health Equity Research for Indiana University School of Medicine, who will be spending a week at RFU as my mentee as part of the AAMC Council of Deans Fellowship Program. This is the fourth year I've had the honor of mentoring fellows in this program, which fosters the development of future leaders in academic medicine, and I hope you'll join me in welcoming Dr. Edmonds to campus.

Our next issue will feature more details about these events, as well as our Match Day celebration. Until then, I wish all our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends good health and happiness in 2025.

Sincerely,



Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD  
Dean, Chicago Medical School  
Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs, RFUMS



## CMS First Look

*Premed students visited CMS to learn about the resources available to them as they pursue their aspirations in the medical field.*

In October, Chicago Medical School hosted campus visits for two groups of premedical students and their advisors. Students from **North Carolina A&T University** and **Rutgers University** met with **Dean Archana Chatterjee**; went on a campus tour; learned about RFU's academic programs and the medical school application process; and had opportunities to meet and network with faculty, current students, staff, and administrators.

The purpose of this four-day event (two days for each group of undergraduate students) was to encourage underrepresented students to explore the possibility of medical education and learn about the various pathways in healthcare available at Rosalind Franklin University. In addition to learning about the resources and support

systems available to them at CMS and RFU (including student organizations, academic support, mentorship, and mental health resources), the premed students participated in workshops and discussions providing insights on how to navigate the application process and strengthen their applications, while also gaining firsthand experience of the CMS/RFU environment.

The visiting students returned to their undergraduate institutions armed with knowledge, experiences, and resources meant to empower them as future applicants, support their journey to medical school, and encourage them to pursue their aspirations of a career in medicine or science. ■



Premed students from Rutgers University with Dr. Michael Ellison, CMS Associate Dean for Admissions.



CMS Dean Archana Chatterjee accompanied the premed students on a tour of the RFU campus.



The visiting students were given the opportunity to experience the culture and environment of CMS and get a feel for what it would be like to be a medical student.



The students visited the university's Innovation and Research Park.

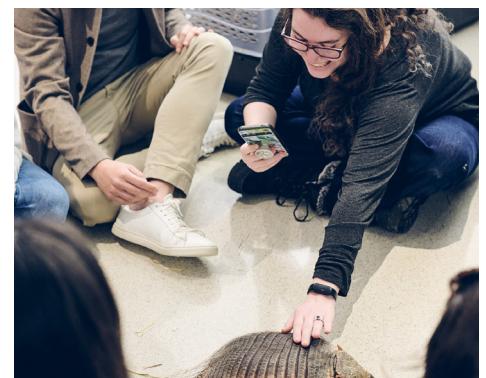
# *A Menagerie of Therapy Animals*

*Students had a hands-on experience with a traveling zoo of exotic animals!*

Therapy dogs are a regular sight on campus as the helpful canines are brought in to help students relax and de-stress during the busy academic year. But in February, students met some more exotic animals during Wellness Weeks as RFU got a visit from "Scales and Tales," a traveling exotic animal petting zoo. Students were able to pet or hold chinchillas, hedgehogs, two-day-old chicks, turtles, tortoises, and an armadillo, and they also interacted with

a tarantula and a talking cockatoo. The star of the event was Xena the two-toed sloth, who hung from a metal cart as she was wheeled around for students to pet and take photos with. This was a wonderful opportunity for students to unwind and make some great memories, while learning about the exotic animals from Scales and Tales' knowledgeable zoologists. ■





# *A Night of One-Act Plays*

*The RFU Performing Arts Club staged two one-act plays, presented for two nights only in Rhoades Auditorium and open to the RFU community and the wider Chicagoland community.*

Following the success of their spring performance of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, students in the RFU Performing Arts Club presented an event on December 13 and 14 titled “A Night of One-Act Plays.” The program featured two performances each night: “The Journal Club,” a medical school themed parody of *The Breakfast Club* authored by three CMS students, and Jean-Paul Sartre’s “No Exit.” Both one-act plays examined the theme of being trapped in a room with others, and both shows were directed by students and featured a cast and crew of students from CMS, CHP, and SGPS.

“The Journal Club” was written by second-year medical students **Elizabeth Donovan**, **Michael Letz**, and **Matthew Zimring**, who reworked the script of *The Breakfast Club* to tell the story of five medical students trapped in a room together as they wait for an exam to begin. The play was directed by **Elizabeth Donovan** and **Charmila Meesala**, a clinical counseling student from the College of Health Professions. “The Journal Club” starred **Michael Letz**, **Matthew Zimring**, **Talia Kahn**, and **Danielle Hawryluk**, all CMS '27, and BMS student **Marissa Karpinski**, CHP '25. It also featured **Krishi Korrapati**, CMS '27, as the Proctor and **Allie Casper**, CMS '27 as the Security Guard.

The performance of Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialist play “No Exit” was directed by **Kyle Labak**, CMS '27, and starred **Elena Karahalios**, **Elizabeth Donovan**, and **Krishi Korrapati**, all CMS '27 (also featuring **Oly Khowash**, PhD student, as the Valet).

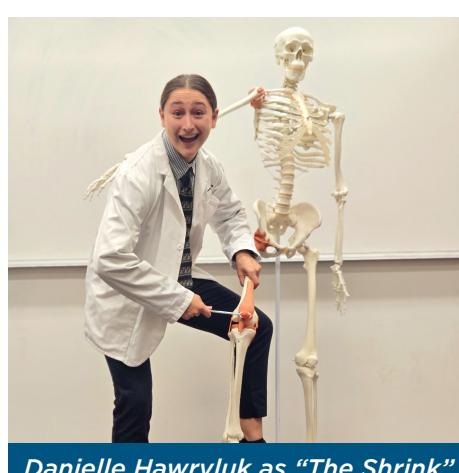
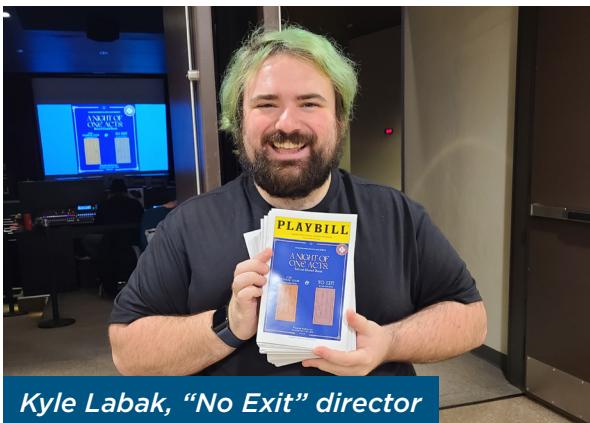
Crew from both plays included Elizabeth Donavan; Allie Casper; Charmila Meesala; **Alexis Lightbourn**, CMS '27; and **Connor Cameron**, CMS '27.

The Performing Arts Club was founded last year by Krishi Korrapati in his first year as a medical student. Krishi appeared in both December plays and was the production manager for the club’s inaugural performance, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, in May 2024. The Performing Arts Club is dedicated to providing a platform for all types of creative pursuits, and one of its stated goals is to “contribute a sense of levity and soul” throughout the RFU community.

Bravo to our talented students on two more wonderful theatrical performances! ■



*The cast of “The Journal Club”*



# CMS Hero/Parent Academy

*A new initiative to support and empower parents and guardians of Black young men interested in a career in medicine*

This winter, Chicago Medical School launched its inaugural Hero/Parent Academy for parents, guardians, and mentors of Black male students in fourth grade and up. Designed to support and empower parents (and any other role models) of Black young men, this free program provides adults with knowledge and skills that can help them support and encourage the children in their life as those youths pursue careers in medicine.

Through a series of two-hour programs, held once a month from January through April, participants will receive resources and information useful in guiding their child's academic and personal growth. The academy will cover a variety of subjects, including an introduction

to science education and careers; how to prepare academically for careers in medicine; educational resources; practical parenting strategies for supporting student learning and academic achievement; and tips on financing college, including how to find and apply for scholarships. The program of workshops, resources, and community events will give adults the tools they need to support student success.

With the Hero/Parent Academy, CMS and RFU will work with community members to build a stronger educational community and support the matriculation and retention of Black young men in medical careers. ■





Matthew Zimring, CMS '27 (on piano) with other members of the RFU Music Club



A multicultural spread provided by Food for Thought



Talia Kahn, CMS '27



Elizabeth Donovan, CMS '27

## RFU Unity Fest

The university hosted its inaugural Unity Fest in January, inviting students, faculty, and staff to join in a multicultural celebration of our campus community. The event featured live music performed by the RFU Music Club; a photo booth; a poetry workshop led by a

local poet; a guided art project; a vision board activity; and a multicultural food spread that included Mexican, Japanese, Filipino, and Jamaican cuisine. It was a day focusing on wellness, community, and an appreciation of the many cultures that make up RFU. ■



## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Umar Rehman, CMS '25

*Umar Rehman, founder of the RFUMS Running Club, finished first in his age group in his final race of medical school.*

In December 2024, fourth-year medical student **Umar Rehman** completed his final race of medical school when he competed in his fifth and final 10K race, securing 8th place overall and 1st place in his age group in Huntington Beach, California. Representing the RFU Run Club, Umar proudly donned RFU's colors, signifying a significant milestone in his personal goal of competing in endurance races during medical school.

Throughout his medical school years, Umar has participated in several notable races, including the Chicago Half Marathon (2021, 2022), the New Orleans Half-Marathon (2022), the Highland Park Half Marathon (2023), and the Chicago Marathon (2023).

Umar founded the RFUMS Running Club in 2022 during his second year and passed on the leadership in 2023 as he embarked on his clinical rotations. His vision and dedication have left a lasting legacy. Today, the RFUMS Running Club thrives, organizing weekly track and road runs, participating in races as a group, and promoting the joy and benefits of running.

Umar hopes to share his passion for running and fitness, inspiring fellow students to strive for balance and excellence in all aspects of life through running. ■



*Umar with his medals.*

# Brain Science Institute Retreat

The Brain Science Institute hosted a retreat on November 18, inviting any RFU community members with an interest in brain research to come spend the day learning about some of the research being done in the institute, in order to increase awareness of current research and promote collaboration. The Brain Science Institute comprises three research centers: the Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, the Stanson Toshok Center for Brain Function and Repair, and the Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders.

The event featured talks from RFU researchers, poster presentations, lunch table topic discussions, elevator pitches, and a keynote lecture by **EunJung Hwang**, PhD, assistant professor of cell biology and anatomy, Stanson Toshok Center for Brain Function and Repair.

The morning session on “Biological and Social Factors in Neuroscience” was presented by **Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience, and **Judy Potashkin**, PhD, professor and chair of cellular and molecular pharmacology, both from the Center for

Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, and **Lise Eliot**, PhD, professor of neuroscience, Stanson Toshok Center for Brain Function and Repair. The afternoon session on “Translational Approaches to Monitor and Improve Neurobehavioral Function” was presented by **Christopher Connaboy**, PhD, director of the Center for Lower Extremity Ambulatory Research (CLEAR) and the Human Performance Laboratory; **Joanna Dabrowska**, PhD, PharmD, associate professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology and neuroscience, Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders; **Janice Urban**, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics and director of the Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders; and **Shawn Flanagan**, PhD, associate professor of podiatric medicine and neuroscience, CLEAR.

Table discussions included topics like sex as a biological variable, the impact of periphery and environment, and tips for navigating graduate school and postdoctoral studies. The evening concluded with an off-campus “Science on Tap” event. ■



▲ Dr. Christopher Connaboy:

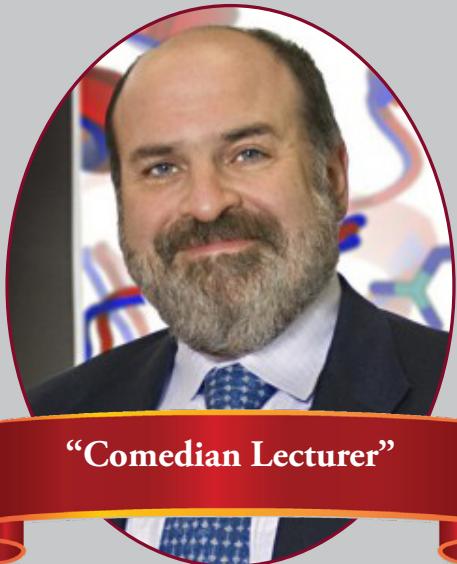
◀ Dr. Janice Urban.

# *Winter Social and Faculty Awards*

CMS students celebrated the new year with the annual Winter Social event! Organized by the Executive House Council, the event featured carnival games, live music, delicious food, and a student-led faculty awards ceremony. The live music performance was provided by students in the RFU Music Club.

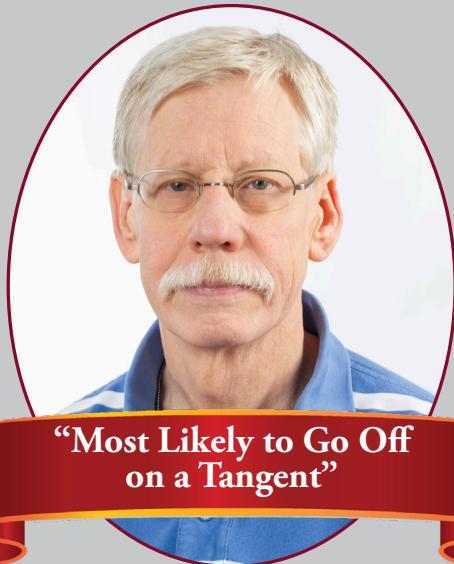
Congratulations to the faculty members who had the following honors bestowed upon them by the CMS student body:

**Dr. Marc Glucksman**



**“Comedian Lecturer”**

**Dr. Jack Garon**



**“Most Likely to Go Off on a Tangent”**

**Dr. Judy Potashkin**



**“Pharmacological Wizard”**

**Dr. Carl Correll**



**“Poll Everywhere Champion”**



From left to right:  
The winter social was  
carnival-themed.  
Students enjoyed  
food and live music.  
Students danced  
to the Music Club's  
rendition of "I'm  
Gonna Be (500  
Miles)".

**Dr. Kimiko Suzue**



**"Most Likely to Run Over  
Class Time"**

**Dr. David Everly**



**"Most Likely to Be Called  
Mom/Dad"**

**Ashwini Mokashi**



**"MVP Admin"**

**Dr. Rosanne Oggioan**



**"GOAT" Award  
(Greatest of All Time)**

# Spreading Holiday Cheer

Chicago Medical School held its annual **Holiday Party** at Mickey Finn's in Libertyville, inviting CMS faculty, staff, and partners to enjoy an evening of food and fun.

Two members of the CMS Dean's Office, **Sarah Schuck** and **Carissa Van Ausdall**, along with some of their RFU colleagues, volunteered at Lambs Farm, a Libertyville non-profit organization that provides vocational and residential services for adults with developmental disabilities. The volunteers helped decorate the Lambs Farm visitors center and café for upcoming holiday events. ■



Drs. Beth Stutzmann, Bharathi Swaminathan, Archana Chatterjee, Nutan Vaidya, Frank Maldonado, and Paul Hung at the CMS Holiday Party.



Carissa at Lambs Farm.



All the RFU volunteers at Lambs Farm.



Sarah at Lambs Farm.

# Holiday Events from the Philippine Medical Association

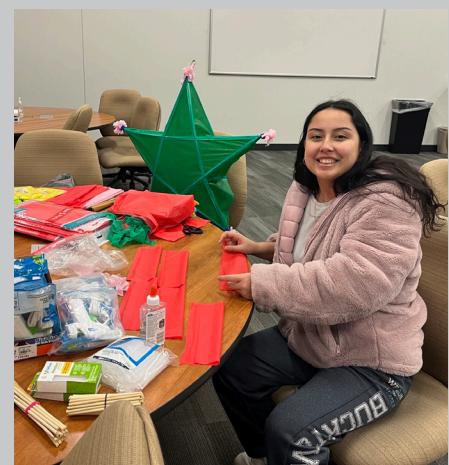
Students in the Philippine Medical Association (PMA) organized two holiday events in December for the campus community. First, they hosted a **Parol Lantern Workshop**, teaching students and faculty to craft the

traditional Filipino parol lantern, which symbolizes hope, blessings, luck, and peace. The PMA also hosted a **Holiday Candlelight Concert**, inviting RFU students, faculty, and staff to perform classic holiday songs. ■

## Holiday Candlelight Concert



## Parol Lantern Workshop



constantly being reviewed by community members to say this onboarding, offboarding does work. It doesn't work, it makes sense, it doesn't make sense. Creating



# RFU Diversity Forum: *Reimagining Community*

RFU hosted its third annual Diversity Forum on January 17, featuring community-led presentations and guest speakers focusing on the theme “Reimagining Community.” During the all-day event, faculty, staff, students, and representatives of the Live Well Lake County Network (LWLC) — a community-led coalition of 60 different organizations and more than 150 partners working to improve the health and well-being of Lake County residents — explored how we can interact with our communities of interest to further the impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

“Today’s presentations are a reflection of who we are and who we inspire to be,” RFU President and CEO **Wendy Rheault**, PT, PhD, FASAHP, FNAP, DipACLM, said during her welcome remarks. “At Rosalind Franklin University, diversity is one of our core values. It’s been part of our history since our founding. Today, it’s a strength and an engine for innovation.” Dr. Rheault went on to emphasize the importance of diverse perspectives in education and health care, noting that it will take diverse teams working

together to achieve goals like improving access to health care.

Four CMS faculty members and four CMS students presented during the forum, participating in five talks and panels. **Amanda Simanek**, PhD, MPH, director of RFU’s Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research (CHER); **Yvette Castañeda**, PhD, MPH, MBA, community engagement core lead, CHER; LWLC co-leaders Angela Baran, Maggie Morales, and Jon Ashworth; and Billy Coleman, LWLC Network Access to Care Team Co-Leader, presented the panel discussion “Reimagining Community Participation in the Live Well Lake County Network.” This presentation provided a brief overview of the history and current activities of the LWLC Network. Since 2011, LWLC has engaged in three iterations of a five-year Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) focused on improving health and health equity in Lake County. The panelists highlighted recent efforts to reimagine community participation in the coalition and CHIP activities via adoption of collective

impact framework principles, use of trust-based philanthropy, launch of a Peers with Lived Expertise Inclusion Workgroup, and through forming a community-academic partnership with CHER at RFU.

Dr. Simanek, a social epidemiologist, talked about the work done by the Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research, which was launched at RFU two years ago. The center's mission is to foster health equity focused research collaborations to address social determinants of health, and design and implement interventions that improve health and health equity in Lake County. Dr. Simanek emphasized the importance of fostering community engagement and collaboration while carrying out the center's mission.

"For me, it was really important that we did this in a community responsive way," said Dr. Simanek, explaining that researchers could study and collect data from a community without any input or engagement from community members, which she described as the "worst-case scenario." "The goal is to build authentic relationships and partnerships with the community, taking the stance that our institution can be a resource to advancing [a community's] efforts instead of trying to come in and do new things without engaging the expertise of our community."

**Jenny Lee**, CMS '27, presented on the topic "Bringing Specialty to Community: Determining the Prevalence of Skin Disorders Among Immigrant/Refugee Nail Salon

Workers." Jenny talked about the growing prevalence of Vietnamese women working in nail salons, starting in the late 1970s as refugees from the Vietnam War came to the U.S. and new inventions like acrylic nails made manicures easier to perform. Often working for low wages and without the resources to advocate for healthy working conditions, these refugees and immigrants were exposed to toxic chemicals used in the industry, like acetone, toluene, and formaldehyde. Jenny noted that while exposure to those chemicals were known to cause neurologic, reproductive, and endocrine issues, few studies had been done on the effects on the first point of contact: salon workers' skin. Her literature review on the subject revealed the necessity of more research on dermatological needs among Vietnamese nail salon workers and interventions to address those needs, such as workplace safety policies. "At the community level, these policies will shape the Vietnamese nail salon industry from a story of survival to fulfilling the American dream," Jenny said.

**Shivani Sharma**, CMS '27; **Melissa Chen**, MD, CMS assistant dean for diversity, equity and inclusion and clinical director of the Interprofessional Community Clinic;

**Below, left:** Brianna Lau and Crystal Banh during their presentation.

**Below, right:** The 2024 P2H2 "Meet the Community" event, which Dr. Melissa Chen described in her presentation.

**Opposite page:** Dr. Amanda Simanek in a panel with LWLC leaders.



and Susanna Calkins, PhD, director of RFU's Nexus for Faculty Success, presented "Community Engagement in Medical Education: Inviting the Community In." The group described the "Meet the Community" event for first-year medical students in CMS' Principles of Professionalism, Health Care, and Health Equity (P2H2) course, a required four-year course that engages students in conversations about health equity throughout their time at CMS. As students prepare for a career of service in the healthcare field, it is important for them to learn about the communities RFU serves.

"This learning is not textbook learning," Dr. Chen said. "It requires community collaboration." Because it would be logistically challenging to take 200+ medical students out into the community for this lesson, the school "brings the community in" with the Meet the Community event, which takes place near the start of medical students' first year and introduces them to 30-40 Lake County leaders and community members. In table discussions with students, the community members share their stories and highlight topics that are important to them. Students are able to interact with community representatives, gain an understanding of their perspectives and the challenges they face, and learn how to become more involved in community organizations.

**Crystal Banh** and **Brianna Lau**, both CMS '27, presented "Reimagining Health Equity: Empowering Asian American Communities for Lasting Change." Crystal and Brianna talked about the structural racism that can result from aggregating data about Asian Americans and viewing the Asian American population as a monolith. For example, while Asian Americans as an aggregate have the lowest cancer rates in the U.S., Korean Americans have the highest rate of stomach cancer in the U.S. and Chinese Americans have the highest rate of nasopharyngeal cancers. The students also discussed the generational trauma and mistrust that may impact the health of some subsets of the Asian population (for example, native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have a comparatively high mistrust of medical radiation, due in part to the nuclear testing done in the Pacific Islands by the U.S. and other nations during the Cold War, and this sometimes leads to them refusing medical radiation treatments). All of these factors point to the necessity of breaking data on Asian populations down into subgroups.

"It's a crucial part of empowering Asian American communities," Brianna said of data disaggregation. "They

not only see themselves represented in the U.S. Census data, but also it allows us to recognize the heterogeneity of the many populations that are grouped under the umbrella of AANHPI [Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander]."

For the final CMS-affiliated presentation, Drs. Amanda Simanek, Yvette Castañeda, and Melissa Chen took part in a second discussion, accompanied by **Antwoine Haywood**, PhD, CMS associate dean for student affairs, and Kristin Schneider, PhD, professor and chair of psychology and associate dean of research, College of Health Professions. They presented on the topic "Redefining Science: Community-Based Participatory Principles as a Transformative Approach to Addressing Health Inequities at a Health Professions University." This presentation explored the key principles of community-based participatory research and demonstrated their effectiveness in promoting health equity via three projects currently being conducted at RFU and in Lake County. By highlighting these initiatives, the presenters aimed to illustrate how these principles foster meaningful partnerships between researchers and community members that ultimately lead to sustainable health improvements and a deeper understanding of local health inequities.

The Diversity Forum was presented by the RFU Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. CMS thanks everyone who participated in or attended this inspiring day of connection, learning, and empowerment ■



Dr. Yvette Castañeda.

# State of the Interprofessional Community Clinic



**Shiza Jeewa, Delaney Griffiths, Lana Trautman, and Alexandra Zanowick-Marr**

In February, student leadership from the Interprofessional Clinic Initiative (ICI) presented the 2024 State of the Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC). Second-year medical students **Delaney Griffiths** and **Shiza Jeewa**, president and vice president, respectively, of the ICI, celebrated the accomplishments of the ICC from the last year and shared some of the goals for the coming year.

Founded in 2013 by four CMS students, the ICC is a student-led free clinic that aims to provide accessible, quality healthcare for the uninsured and underserved community. The clinic also provides valuable educational opportunities to RFU students, who expand their clinical experiences while learning to work in interprofessional teams. Students are also able to gain understanding and experience with working with underserved populations, which sometimes encourages them to pursue a career working with vulnerable populations after graduation.

The ICC operates through collaboration among students, faculty, and community leaders. The clinic is led by 45 students from all of RFU's programs who serve as executive officers, with the support of 281 student panel members (including 155 CMS students), 27 faculty advisors, 45 clinician volunteers, and 326 other volunteers from within RFU and from the external community. Working together, all those student, faculty, and community volunteers helped provide four core services (medicine, podiatry, physical therapy, and behavioral health) and five specialty services (ophthalmology, dermatology, pediatrics, pelvic health, and psychiatry) to the Lake County community, evaluating and treating patients during 890 total appointments — a 30% increase from the previous year.

The clinic also performed 404 lab tests, administered 127 vaccines, and provided 2,326 pounds of food through the ICC food pantry.

“These achievements would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our community and partners,” Delaney wrote in the ICC’s 2024 annual report. “We are deeply grateful for your contributions, which enable us to provide compassionate, comprehensive care to underserved populations.”

During their presentation, Delaney and Shiza also highlighted some of the ICC’s new initiatives, including an expansion of interpretation services for non-English speaking patients; a partnership with Good Pill, a mail-order pharmacy, to provide free medications delivered straight to ICC patients’ homes; and participation in the Roadmap to Health Equity initiative, a data repository for free clinics across the country. They also discussed the ICC’s collaborations with community partners including PADS Lake County, the Northern Illinois Food Bank, Mano a Mano, and the Waukegan Public Library, and summarized some of the research conducted by ICC students.

Delaney and Shiza concluded their presentation by welcoming the new leadership of the ICI: **Lana Trautman**, CMS ’28, the incoming president, and **Alexandra Zanowick-Marr**, CMS ’28, the incoming vice president. Lana and Alexandra will lead the efforts of the ICC’s many students, physicians, and volunteers as they continue their mission of providing holistic, interprofessional care to meet the healthcare needs of our community. ■



# Student Dean Corner

**Student dean Rikki Makwana addresses the CMS student body.**

Dear Chicago Medical School,

Happy New Year! I hope it's not too late to say that!

I feel privileged to be standing here with you all, upon the shoulders of giants. As a California boy through and through, I can't say I love layering up with two jackets and a sweatshirt on my daily commute. But I'd be lying if I said watching the snowfall on early surgery mornings didn't make the lack of sleep worth it. I hope you're all staying warm and taking moments to slow down and enjoy the snow.

To the class of 2025, how does it feel to be approaching the finish line? As residency interviews slowly wind down and you transition towards preparing for internship, what do you feel your greatest takeaways have been? Do intermittent trips back to campus bring nostalgia? Or have you not yet had the time to reflect on your journey? I know my class is eager to learn from all your experiences to gain insight into how to finish medical school strongly.

To my class, the class of 2026, does anyone else feel things are moving too quickly? It feels as if only yesterday we were just stepping onto campus, listening to Dean Chatterjee's speech on the first day of orientation. Now, more than halfway done with rotations, we are surprising residents and attendings alike with our clinical acumen and gearing up for the next stage of our journey. If you're anything like me, choosing a specialty was a grueling process, especially after enjoying so many rotations! Ultimately, I think that if you go with your gut, your instincts will never steer you wrong.

To the class of 2027, you are almost finished with your pre-clinical education! You are a few steps away from applying all of the knowledge you have accumulated over the course of the past two years for the benefit of those you will care for. This will be a nerve-wracking but exciting first step into what it is like to practice, and I can't wait to hear about your all's first experiences in the hospital. However, before that happens, you will have Step 1. Now this may seem like a scary test, but trust in yourselves and your advisors. My advice is to study hard, a little bit every day, increasing the amount of work you do every day. There is a lot of content and the test is long — don't neglect training your test-taking stamina while training your brain. I am sure you will all do great. If you would like advice, please reach out! I can talk for hours.

Last but not least, to the class of 2028, I believe you are in the realm of finishing GI and starting CPR? I may have my courses off by a few weeks, I apologize — it has been a couple of years at this point! How has the transition to organ system blocks been for everyone? Do you feel that it is easier to learn when focusing on only a single system? My advice to you all is to try and continue studying the information from previous blocks as much as you can. It will make your eventual Step 1 studying a lot more manageable. The work that your class and class council have been doing to improve the school and student experience is commendable! I am very proud of you all and what you have been accomplishing. I am eager to hear more about all of your projects.

As an aside, for better or worse, it appears that we are currently entering a very tumultuous time in medicine. Trust in science is eroding. NIH funding and safety net

programs are facing cuts. And across the country, physician leaders seem less willing to defend the core values of medicine. It's hard not to feel disheartened and angry when everyday news headlines read like "Monkey's Paw" wishes gone wrong.

But frustration can be fuel. One thing many of you may not know about me is that I run a nonprofit organization that donates scientific equipment to schools that serve students who are traditionally underrepresented in the STEM fields. It was born out of anger at inequity — frustration that turned into action. I share this because I know many of you feel the same way about the challenges ahead, and I hope you channel that energy into something meaningful.

Conversely, I also understand the weight of our current situations. We're at the bottom of a totem pole that erodes slowly at the top, resistant to change. But I urge you to not lose hope. To recognize the power that each and every one of us holds in our hands — to be a force for good, for each other and our patients. Call a loved one. Sing a song. Rip through some Anki cards. Do whatever you need to feel whole. As always, my ears and my inbox are open. If you ever need to vent or want advice on moving forward, reach out. Let us keep our chins held high and push forward together.

Respectfully,



Rikhil Makwana  
Student Dean 2024-25  
Chicago Medical School c/o 2026  
rikhil.makwana@my.rfums.org

# CMS Student Leadership Retreat

In December, CMS student leaders from the Class Councils, the Executive House Council, and Specialty Interest Groups were invited to attend a leadership retreat designed to empower student leaders and equip them with the skills needed to create impactful change on campus and beyond. Events and topics covered during the five-hour retreat included leadership development workshops, effective communication techniques, student programming strategies, and team bonding. Students were able to build essential leadership skills while learning from their peers and from CMS faculty leaders who shared their expertise, including real-world experiences and strategies. ■





## Celebrating Our Fellowship Matches

Congratulations to all our graduating residents who have matched into a fellowship for the next stage of their training! We are proud to celebrate the following internal medicine residents as they embark on this exciting new chapter of their lives.

### Northwestern Medicine McHenry

- **Dr. Faisal Al-Ali** matched into Hospice and Palliative Medicine at the Mayo Clinic.
- **Dr. Maram Al-Ashoor** matched into Endocrinology at the University of Washington.
- **Dr. Bilal Al Kalaji** matched into Pulmonary Critical Care at the University of Texas Medical Branch.
- **Dr. Hyder Ali** matched into Rheumatology at the University of Tennessee Medical Center.
- **Dr. Amulya Dwararam** matched into Cardiovascular Disease at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital.
- **Dr. Ruba Ghalayni** matched into Pulmonary Critical Care at the University of Illinois.
- **Dr. Ahmad Harb** matched into Cardiovascular Disease at the University of Texas Medical Branch.

- **Dr. Saad Khan** matched into Pulmonary Critical Care at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- **Dr. Yuliana Petryshyn** matched into Pulmonary Critical Care at New York Medical College/St. Michael's Medical Center.
- **Dr. Abdelraouf Salah** matched into Cardiovascular Disease at Creighton University.

### Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center

- **Dr. Azka Ali** matched into Hematology/Oncology at RFUMS/Chicago Medical School.
- **Dr. Anahita Ghazi** matched into Endocrinology at UCLA Medical Center.
- **Dr. Hekmat Khoukaz** matched into Cardiovascular Disease at the University Hospital of Columbia, MO. ■

*Pictured above: Dr. Hekmat Khoukaz celebrates his fellowship match on campus after matching into Cardiovascular Disease at the University Hospital of Columbia. Thank you to Dr. Khoukaz for sharing the photos with us!*

## Dr. Boluwaduro Adeyemi Named Outstanding Resident of the Year

**Boluwaduro Adeyemi**, MD, second-year internal medicine resident, was named a 2024 Outstanding Resident of the Year by the Illinois chapter of the American College of Physicians, in honor of his outstanding dedication, expertise, and commitment to the field of Internal Medicine. **Dr. Prashant Sura**, associate program director of the CMS internal medicine residency program at Northwestern Medicine McHenry Hospital, presented the award to Dr. Adeyemi at an ACP ceremony held on November 20. ■



#IMProud  
Dr. Boluwaduro Adeyemi.



Dr. Boluwaduro Adeyemi (center) with fellow residents Dr. Harin Shah and Dr. Vishal Garimella.

## Other GME News



**Michael Botros**, MD, CMS internal medicine resident, recently co-authored an article titled "Impact of Moderate or Severe Mitral and Tricuspid Valves Regurgitation After Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement," published in the *American Heart Journal*.

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**Janice Gilden**, MD, MS, FCP, FACE, FAAS, director of the CMS endocrinology fellowship program, CMS professor of medicine, and chief of endocrinology at the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center (FHCC), gave a presentation at the American Heart Association Scientific Sessions in November titled "VA Lipid Optimization Reimagined (VALOR) Quality Improvement Program." The VALOR program is an ongoing initiative at the FHCC and other VA centers to develop and implement a novel lipid optimization program focused on veterans at high risk of cardiovascular events. ■



Congratulations to **Harin Shah**, MD, internal medicine resident, for his award-winning performance at the American College of Physicians (ACP) Illinois Northern Region's 2024 Resident and Medical Students Day! Dr. Shah won first place in the Clinical Vignette Poster category. With this accomplishment,

Dr. Shah won automatic acceptance of his poster to the 2025 ACP Internal Medicine Meeting, to be held in April in New Orleans.



Dr. Janice Gilden (left), with David Peña, the FHCC's assigned project manager for the study, and Erica Noel, MS, health care coach.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Arthur Levine, MD '64

*Dr. Levine, CMS Class of 1964, executive director of the University of Pittsburgh's Brain Institute, reflects on a career that includes 31 years at the NIH and 22 years of leadership at the University of Pittsburgh, spanning research in cancer, human embryo development, and Alzheimer's disease.*

## His Journey to CMS

Dr. Arthur Levine hadn't initially planned to go to medical school. A Russian literature major, he had graduated from Columbia University without the necessary pre-med credits. He had spent his time at Columbia studying comparative literature, serving as editor of the university's *Columbia Review*, frequenting Manhattan art galleries, and even acting on the Off-Broadway stage. But once he had decided on medical school, intrigued by the idea of becoming a psychoanalyst — an occupation he described as seeming "vaguely literary" — he spent two years completing the necessary science courses and arrived at CMS in 1960.

"I'm grateful to CMS for having admitted me," Dr. Levine said, "because I was struggling to gain admission to any

American medical school." In addition to being a non-traditional applicant — a literature major and published author who was married and had a child — he had to face the quotas in place at some medical schools at the time to limit the number of Jewish students. Dr. Levine recalled that during one interview at another medical school, he was told that he was too late: the school had already met their quota for Jewish students that year.

But CMS welcomed him. During his time at CMS, Dr. Levine's plan to go into psychoanalysis changed as he found himself drawn to molecular biology and medical research. As a second-year medical student, he saw the photographs that Dr. Rosalind Franklin had made of the crystal structure of DNA — published in *Nature* less than a decade earlier. "I thought that was extraordinary," he said. "I became intrigued with the basic science of medicine."

Shortly afterward, during a rotation at the Veterans Administration West Side Medical Center (now the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center), Dr. Levine conducted a small research project under the supervision and mentorship of Dr. Clifford Pilz. While studying the metabolites in the





Dr. Levine received the CMS Honor Medallion from Chicago Medical School in 2023 for his extraordinary accomplishments in his career at the NIH and the University of Pittsburgh.

urine of patients with schizophrenia, he became interested in the potential of a career in research. "I became excited about the idea of learning something that others had not known and that might be applicable to the care of human beings," he said.

### An Impressive Career at the NIH

Following his graduation from CMS in 1964, Dr. Levine began his career as a physician-scientist at the University of Minnesota, completing a residency in pediatrics (where he was named Intern of the Year) and a fellowship in hematology and biochemical genetics. But his career trajectory was interrupted in 1967 when he was drafted for the Vietnam War. Balancing his civic duties with his family responsibilities (he had a wife and three young daughters), Dr. Levine applied to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as a U.S. Public Health Service officer, planning to serve the two years needed to fulfill his draft mandate.

This proved to be a serendipitous decision: following his acceptance as a clinical associate in the NIH's National Cancer Institute (NCI), Dr. Levine remained at the NIH for 31 years. His career there spanned leadership positions including Chief of the Pediatric Oncology

Branch at the NCI and then Scientific Director, for 16 years, of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). He also served on search committees for NIH directors and scientific directors, playing an important role in shaping the direction of the NIH.

When he first joined the NCI in 1967, Dr. Levine trained as a pediatric oncologist, treating patients with leukemia, lymphomas, and sarcomas while also training in a molecular biology laboratory, conducting research on the mechanisms that influence the development of tumors. One research project involved mapping the genomic structure and function of a DNA-based virus called the simian vacuolating virus (SV40). In nature, SV40 can be found

as a latent infection in monkeys, where the virus remains dormant and asymptomatic. But when it is injected into rodents, the virus can cause tumors. Dr. Levine and his colleagues identified several of the SV40 genes engaged in tumorigenesis. This breakthrough led Dr. Levine and his colleagues to be in the forefront of research that illuminated how viral genes could cause cancer, and it also led to the NIH's conferral of tenure for Dr. Levine — still early in his career.

After 15 years at the NCI, Dr. Levine was offered the position of Scientific Director at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). To him, the shift from studying tumors to studying embryonic

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**"I became excited about the idea of learning something that others had not known and that might be applicable to the care of human beings."**

**- DR. ARTHUR LEVINE**

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development seemed like a logical move. "I was convinced that the more I understood about how embryos are formed, the more I would understand how tumors are formed, because tumors and embryos are parallel in many ways," Dr. Levine said, noting that both entities involve the same fundamental biologic processes of cell division, migration, and differentiation or dedifferentiation.

As Scientific Director of the NICHD, Dr. Levine was able to shape the future of the institute in ways beyond the research he conducted, by means of the people he recruited. Mindful of his own start as a nontraditional medical student, he was willing to take risks on candidates when he thought he saw potential in a prospective scientist.

One example that Dr. Levine related occurred when he was sitting by his Bethesda pool one hot August day. A dusty, disheveled-looking young man showed up at the gate, explaining that he had just moved in next door. Hot and tired from the physical labor of moving in, he asked if he could do a lap in Dr. Levine's pool to cool off. Dr. Levine agreed, and he soon learned that his visitor was a postdoctoral fellow in another NIH institute.

"We began to talk, and I think we spent four hours together standing in the pool and discussing scientific ideas," Dr. Levine recalled. "And at the end of that time I asked him how he'd like to become chief of a cell biology laboratory in my institute at the NIH." This man was Dr. Richard Klausner, who would later go on to become Director of the National Cancer Institute and executive director of global health for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, among many other accomplishments in the fields of cell and molecular biology, as well as biotechnology. Laboratories at the NIH are like departments in universities, Dr. Levine explained, and his appointment of Dr. Klausner as an NICHD lab chief, while Klausner was still a fellow in the NCI, was unprecedented — much to the concern of NIH leadership at the time!

## The University of Pittsburgh and Alzheimer's Research

After more than three decades at the NIH, Dr. Levine accepted a position in 1998 at the University of Pittsburgh as dean of the School of Medicine and senior vice chancellor for the health sciences. During the next twenty-



Dr. Levine (front row, left) with his fellow graduates from the CMS Class of 1964, during his 60th class reunion.

two years, he further shaped the medical education and medical research programs at the university, establishing ten new departments and ten new centers and institutes, as well as appointing all of the medical school department chairs and the five other health science school deans (public health, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, and rehabilitation). On Dr. Levine's watch, the University of Pittsburgh rose to fifth in NIH funding nationally, and he also played a key role in helping the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) to become the largest university-associated clinical system in the U.S.

In 2020, after more than two decades as dean and senior vice chancellor, Dr. Levine stepped down from these leadership roles. But he remained at the University of Pittsburgh, transforming his cancer biology lab to a molecular neurobiology laboratory in the university's Brain Institute, and also supporting the development of a broad basic research program focused on Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Levine had become intrigued by the disease during his time as dean of the medical school. During the process of appointing a new chair of neurobiology, Dr. Levine had found himself reading about diseases and disorders of the brain.

"I began to think about Alzheimer's disease because of its huge impact on public health," he said. He wanted to

develop a program of basic science research that might lead to "really understanding the biology of this horrible disease, and how we might be able to treat it, or better yet, prevent it."

As was often the case throughout his career, Dr. Levine was prepared to take a risk. "It was a gamble," he admitted. "Nobody ever heard of somebody who had spent decades as a tumor biologist trying to become a brain biologist. But I thought, why not give it a shot?"

So far, his gamble has been paying off. Dr. Levine and his team published their first paper on Alzheimer's last year, with another publication in the works. Last September, he visited the RFU campus to give a medical grand rounds presentation on the latest advances in Alzheimer's disease research, the day before he attended his 60th class reunion during the 2024 CMS Reunion Weekend.

## Advice for Medical Students and Aspiring Scientists

When asked what advice he would give to current medical students or residents, Dr. Levine emphasized the importance of a broad education that includes the arts and humanities as well as science. "History, literature, art, music — I think that if one hasn't had that kind of formal education, one should try to achieve it in some way, even during the grueling challenges of internship and residency," he said, noting that having a breadth of cultural and social interest and knowledge can help a physician evaluate and treat a patient who may live in a complex environment, especially a patient with a diagnostic and therapeutic challenge. "I think it makes them better physicians," he said, "and I certainly think it makes them better and more creative scientists." ■

## Alumni Visits

Dean Archana Chatterjee and university representatives have traveled in recent months to catch up with CMS alumni in Philadelphia, PA and Washington, DC.



◀ Dinner with the Dean in Washington, DC. Clockwise around the table: Robert V. Veiga, MD '73 (in red jacket); Sam Gogoi; Dr. Archana Chatterjee, dean of CMS; David W. Schopfer, MD '04; Maneesh R. Jain, MD '05; Wesley Dickerson, MD '05; George Rattin; Evelyn Epstein; and Barry H. Epstein, MD '64.



◀ Dr. Archana Chatterjee and George Rattin in Washington, DC with Joyce K. Joseph, MD '10 (center).



◀ A visit to CMS alumni in Philadelphia. From left to right: George Rattin, RFU Executive Director of Development; Matthew Connor, MD '18; Saman Sizdahkhani, MD '17; and Leslie Renbaum, MD '96. ■

# Alumni Mentoring and Supporting Students

## Black Professionals Panel: *Radiance Through Resilience*

On February 12, four CMS alumni participated in a Black Professionals Panel hosted by Chicago Medical School's Student National Medical Association (SNMA) in honor of Black History Month. This year's theme was *Radiance Through Resilience: A Century of Black Brilliance*. SNMA invited Black professionals excelling across various industries to share stories of their journeys, challenges, and triumphs in order to highlight the power of resilience and inspire future generations.

CMS alumni panelists included **Kimberley Dary**, MD '04, CPE, FACOG, RFU Board of Trustees vice chair and president of Elmhurst Hospital; **Joyce Jones King**, MD '19, a family medicine physician and an instructor at Northwestern's Feinberg School of Medicine; **Amy Swift-Johnson**, MD '06, CPE, FAAFP, a family medicine physician who is also a CMS associate professor of family medicine; and **John Monu**, MD '14, a thoracic surgeon at Kaiser Permanente in Los Angeles. The four alumni were joined by **Antwione Haywood**, PhD, CMS associate dean of student affairs; Karona Mason, DPM, MA, vice dean of RFU's Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine; and Yaa Tiwaa Offei Darko, PsyD, MA, a life coach and mental health professional. Although the event had to be moved to Zoom due to a severe snowstorm that closed the RFU campus, the student attendees benefited from the experiences, advice, and mentorship of the panelists. ■



Dr. Cheryl Kraff-Cooper with Dean Emeritus Ted Booden, PhD, at the 2023 Chicago Medical School Reunion.

support — money for tuition and living expenses — while also providing advice and mentorship to the scholarship recipients. She also welcomes students for shadowing and mentoring opportunities at her Chicago-based practice.

## Cheryl Kraff-Cooper, MD '83

One of our alumni was featured in RFU's 2024 Annual Report, detailing how **Cheryl Kraff-Cooper**, MD '83, RFU trustee emerita, established the Clara Rosenstein Kraff Memorial Scholarship in honor of her grandmother. Clara Rosenstein Kraff was born in Chicago in 1907 and survived a trolley car accident at three years old. After a below-the-knee amputation, she went on to raise a family and run two thriving businesses.

"It's because of Clara that I am the woman I am today," said Dr. Kraff-Cooper. "She was this tough woman who worked her whole life when most women didn't work. She represents 'Nothing's impossible.'"

Both Clara and Dr. Kraff-Cooper proved to be patrons for women who choose hard work and a life of service. Dr. Kraff-Cooper established the memorial scholarship in 2011, helping make medical school possible through financial

Through the financial aid and other support she provides, Dr. Kraff-Cooper is honoring her grandmother's memory while helping to shape the next generation of physicians. ■



### Emily Reisenbigler

Senior Research Specialist, Peterson Lab

Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics

Time at CMS: 12 years

Originally from Perth, Australia, Emily Reisenbigler got her bachelor's degree in Biology from Curtin University of Technology in Australia. After graduating, she backpacked around the U.S. and Europe before getting her first "real" science job in molecular biology in the U.K. While in the U.K., she met her husband, who is from Illinois. After moving to the U.S. and spending some time working in Connecticut, Emily and her husband moved to the Chicago area, where she started working in Dr. Daniel Peterson's lab at RFU. Emily originally worked in the Department of Neuroscience, and when the university's research centers were formed, she moved with Dr. Peterson to the Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics.

With her background in molecular biology, Emily was originally hired in the lab to work on a forensic project using laser micro-dissection to increase the likelihood of obtaining a full DNA profile on perpetrators of sexual assault. Over the years, her skill set has expanded into cell culture and microscopy, and she now holds dual roles in the lab, conducting research but also managing the lab to keep it running smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

The Peterson lab is focused on reprogramming endogenous stem cells in the brain into neurons. One of the things they're currently investigating is the ability to deliver reprogramming instructions to a targeted cell population and deliver subsequent instructions only to this same cell population. The lab team frequently uses viral vectors as "tools" in their work, and Emily is typically responsible for designing and cloning them to meet specific research objectives (determined by Dr. Peterson) as well as making the virus to use in the lab's experiments. Emily also conducts cell culture experiments, using live cell imaging with a confocal microscope to monitor target cells infected with the team's viral vectors and undergoing reprogramming. In her lab manager role, Emily is also responsible for implementing and writing lab protocols, training other staff and students on various techniques, and investigating new technologies and techniques to bring to the lab.

First- and second-year medical students sometimes work in the Peterson lab, spending the summer or a quarter contributing to the lab's research. Depending on what the students work on, Emily may be involved in training them and working with them. "I really enjoy learning about their passions and future plans," Emily said of the students who come through the lab. "It's exciting seeing them move forward to rotations and seeing where they go on Match Day."

Emily enjoys the work she does and the people she works with. "I love working at CMS because I feel like I'm making a positive impact on people's lives," she said. "The research we do in our lab and in other labs here is contributing to improved health outcomes and making the world a better place. I love meeting the future doctors that come to our lab and I also think it's a great place to work for a healthy work-life balance."

Outside of work, Emily loves reading, gardening, and traveling, and she also has two teen children who keep her busy. She's recently gotten into birding, and she's currently working on adding lots of native plants to her garden with the goal to make her backyard "a bird oasis." ■

## Awards & Accomplishments



**Neha Basti**, CMS '25, was selected as the CMS official nominee for the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Excellence in Public Health Award. This award is given to medical students who demonstrate commitment to public health in their communities.

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**Nicole Ferrara**, PhD, assistant professor of physiology and biophysics, Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders, received the Research Corporation for Science Advancement's 2024 Scialog



Collaborative Innovation Award for her work on the project "The (Im)Mutability of Emotional-Motivational Modularity: Neurofeedback for the Reorganization of Valence." The awards were made to six multidisciplinary teams of early career scientists in the third and final year of the Scialog: Molecular Basis of Cognition initiative.

Scialog is short for "science + dialog" and supports research by inviting researchers to engage in team discussions that are geared toward developing novel and innovative projects revolving around a scientific topic that is deemed to be of global importance. Dr. Ferrara will be working with collaborators from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and Tulane University.

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Dr. Gazmuri



Dr. Mendelson

November 16, **Raúl Gazmuri**, MD, PhD, FCCM, director of RFU's Resuscitation Institute and professor of physiology and biophysics, was honored as an AHA

During the annual reception of the American Heart Association (AHA) Council on Cardiopulmonary Critical Care, Perioperative and Resuscitation, held

Fellow. CMS also congratulates **Jenna Mendelson**, PhD, for winning the prestigious Cournand & Comroe Early Career Investigator Prize. Dr. Mendelson was a research technician in the RFU Resuscitation Institute from 2017-2021 before joining a PhD program at the University of Minnesota.

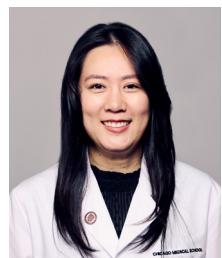
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**Isabella Han** was chosen to represent CMS for the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) 2025 Carolyn L. Kuckein Research Fellowship. Her excellent application, titled "Co-Targeting of DNA Methylation and Secondary DNA Structures in TET Loss-of-Function Driven Hematological Cancers," has been submitted to the AOA fellowship this year.

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**Jenny Hong**, CMS '28, has been accepted into the Medical Students Summer in Oncology at Anderson Research (Med Students SOAR) program at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. The SOAR program is funded by the National Cancer Institute



and supports participation of 25 first-year medical students in a rigorous, hands-on research experience for 8 to 10 weeks during the summer. During the program, Jenny will participate in lectures, workshops, clinical observations, simulation trainings, and hands-on investigative scientific research directed by MD Anderson faculty. The program aims to promote and support the long-term pursuit of careers in basic, translational, and clinical cancer research.

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Congratulations to two of our retired faculty members who were recently recognized with Emeritus status:

**Ronald Kaplan**, PhD, former RFU executive vice president for research, CMS vice dean for research, and professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, and

# School & Department News

**Monica Oblinger**, PhD, former professor of cell biology and anatomy, were each awarded the honorary title of Professor Emeritus. This prestigious honor is a testament to Dr. Kaplan and Dr. Oblinger's remarkable contributions and exceptional service during their time on the Chicago Medical School faculty.



Dr. Ronald Kaplan



Dr. Monica Oblinger

**Rikhil Makwana**, CMS '26, won the Stroke Interdisciplinary Special Interest Group Early Career Investigatory award at the annual American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine conference for his poster titled "Community Delivered Self-Management Programs Mostly Do Not Address Key Domains and Health Determinants: A Call to Action for Improving Chronic Disease Self-Management Intervention Design." Rikhil identified several key components proven to improve coping and function in stroke survivors that were missing from over 100 published interventions aimed at stroke rehabilitation. This finding will help guide the development of new interventions to aid persons with stroke in their recovery.



Rikhil with his mentor, Dr. Julie Schwertfeger, whom he would like to acknowledge and thank for her constant encouragement and tutelage.

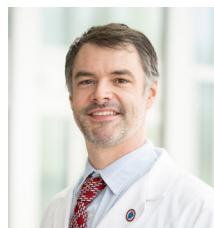


**Roxane Rohani**, PharmD, MSc, BCACP, assistant professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, was elected as the next president of the Northern

Illinois Society of Health-System Pharmacists, an affiliate chapter of the Illinois Council of Health-System Pharmacists.

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**Joseph Rumenapp**, PhD, CMS '25, received a grant from Aequitas Health for his project proposal "Mini-Medical School Family Engagement Program." The grant recognizes innovative approaches to addressing health equity in communities across the country. Joseph's project will expand the university's Mini Medical School (MMS) program. The MMS program, which launched during the 2021-22 academic year, provides hands-on medical education to underrepresented elementary school students to encourage and support children's interest in healthcare careers.



Dr. Joseph Rumenapp



Neha Basti



Jessica Moreno

**Neha Basti** and **Jessica Moreno**, both CMS '25, were named distinguished finalists for the project grant for their project proposal "Student-Run Clinic Food Pantry." All three students are members of the CMS chapter of the Aequitas Health Equity Medical Honor Society.



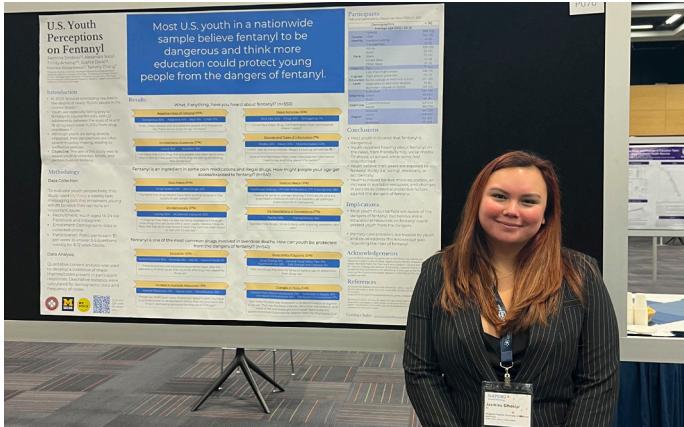
**Neelam Sharma-Walia**, PhD, associate professor of microbiology and immunology, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, was awarded a \$67,000 grant from the RFU-DePaul Pilot Grant program for her project titled

# School & Department News

"Identifying G-Quadruplex Binding Proteins with Roles in Gene Regulation Using AI." Dr. Sharma-Walia will be collaborating with Dr. Alexandru Orhean and Dr. Jacob Furst of DePaul University.

**Jasmine Sindelar**, CMS '27, was awarded second place for the Distinguished Trainee Award at the North American Primary Care Research Group (NAPCRG) Annual Conference in Quebec City, Canada.

Over the summer, Jasmine worked on a research project with Dr. Tammy Chang from the University of Michigan titled "U.S. Youth Perceptions on Fentanyl." She presented her work at the NAPCRG conference as a poster presentation, and her abstract was nominated for the Distinguished Trainee Award. Jasmine prepared a 4-minute oral presentation on her project, competing against other medical students, residents, and post-docs. Congratulations to Jasmine on her award!



Jasmine with her poster.

Congratulations to **Steffy Thomas**, CMS '26, who won second place in the Student Oral Clinical Vignette category at the American College of Physicians Illinois Northern Region's 2024 Resident and Medical Students Day!



Steffy has been selected to present her abstract, titled "Acute Renal Failure in a 34-Year-Old Hispanic Male with

Mantle Cell Lymphoma: Case Report" during the poster competition at the 2025 ACP Internal Medicine Meeting, to be held in April in New Orleans.

**Chicago Medical School** has achieved bronze-tier certification in the American College of Lifestyle Medicine's Undergraduate Medical Education Lifestyle Medicine Curriculum Certification program. This honor recognizes an institution's dedication to equipping future healthcare providers with a comprehensive understanding of the critical role of lifestyle factors in patient health.

## **Presentations & Publications**



A professional headshot of Valerie Chai, PhD. She is a middle-aged woman with short, dark hair, wearing glasses and a light-colored button-down shirt. She is smiling and looking directly at the camera. To the right of the image is a block of text describing her seminar.

**Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, dean of CMS and senior vice president for medical affairs for RFU, was a featured panelist in a November 25 session titled “The Need for Precision Medicine in Infectious Diseases, Public Health, and Vaccines,” presented by the American Society for Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics.



**Yasmine Choroomi, MD '24; Farhana Ikmal Hisham, CMS '25; Melissa Chen, MD, CMS assistant dean for diversity,**

# School & Department News

equity and inclusion and clinical director of RFU's Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC); and Meredith Fils, MS, PA-C, director of didactic education and CHP assistant professor of physician assistant practice, co-authored "Greater Connection Stability with Zoom Over Doxy.me in a Student-Led Free Clinic," published in the *Journal of Student-Run Clinics*. The publication described the ICC's experiences with telemedicine during the COVID-19 pandemic, comparing two platforms utilized for telemedicine visits with patients.



Dr. Yasmine Choroomi



Farhana Ikmal Hisham



Dr. Melissa Chen

Neural Networks," was published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The second article, titled "Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses Reveal No Gender Difference in Neonatal Social Perception," was published in *Social Development*. Dr. Eliot co-authored this paper with five recent CMS graduates: **Lindsay Karson**, MD '22; **Hersimren Minhas**, MD '20; **Manraj Dhesi**, MD '20; **Jeffrey Davies**, MD '23, and **Julie Patel**, MD '21.



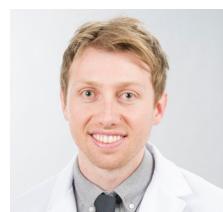
Dr. Lindsay Karson



Dr. Hersimren Minhas



Dr. Manraj Dhesi



Dr. Jeffrey Davies



Dr. Julie Patel

**Alayna Dieter**, CMS '26; **Marie Nunez Duarte**, CMS '25; and **Rebecca Silver**, CMS '26, authored an article titled "Intestinal Duplication in an Adult Presenting as Acute Small Bowel Obstruction with Malrotation and Volvulus: Case Report and Updated Review of the Literature," published in the *Journal of Case Reports and Images in Surgery*.



Alayna Dieter



Marie Nunez Duarte



Rebecca Silver

**Eliza Hofman**, MFA, and **Nandita Gupta**, both CMS '25, co-authored an article titled "Breakfast with the APA President," published in *Mind Matters*, the official publication of the Illinois Psychiatric Society (IPS). Eliza and Nandita are co-chairs of the IPS Medical Student Committee. After they were invited to have breakfast with the American Psychiatric Association (APA) President, Dr. Ramaswamy Viswanathan, on the morning of the IPS annual meeting in October, they decided to write an article to share some of their conversation with him and the advice he offered.



Eliza and Nandita with APA President Dr. Ramaswamy Viswanathan.



**Lise Eliot**, PhD, professor of neuroscience, Stanson Toshok Center for Brain Function and Repair, published two papers in January. The first article, titled "Not So Binary or Generalizable: Brain Sex Differences with Artificial

**Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease

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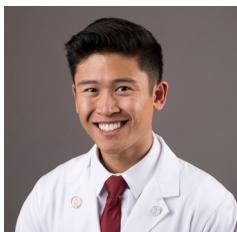
and Therapeutics, presented a poster titled “Using Psilocybin to Treat Alzheimer’s Disease Neuropsychiatric Symptoms and Cognitive Decline” at the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology Conference, held December 8-11 in Phoenix, Arizona.

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**Elliot Levine, MD '78**, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology, has authored two papers: “Enhancing Diagnostic Accuracy: Three-Dimensional Sonographic Diagnosis of Hydrosalpinx in Pelvic Inflammatory Disease,” published in the *Journal of Diagnostic Medical Sonography*, and “Racism as Modifiable Risk Factor,” published in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*.



Dr. Levine also presented “A Functional MRI Method to Characterize Uterine Contractility and Menstrual Pain” at the Central Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, IN.



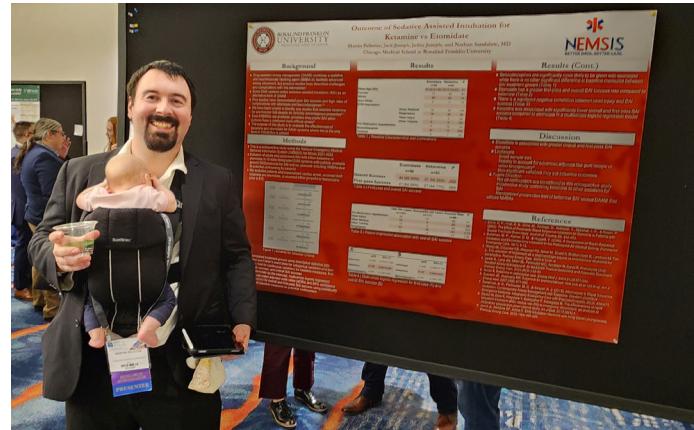
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**Richard Moraga, CMS '27**, authored an article titled “Elucidating the Need for Inclusion of Burn in Graduate and Continuing Dermatologic Medical Education,” published in the *Archives of Dermatological Research*.

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**Martin Pelletier, CMS '26**, presented two posters at the National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP) Annual Meeting, held January 6-11 in San Diego. His first presentation was a collaborative poster titled “From Conference Presentation to Publication: An Analysis of Abstracts Presented at NAEMSP Annual Meetings from 2018 to 2022.” His second presentation was a

retrospective cohort study titled “Outcome of Sedative Assisted Intubation for Ketamine vs Etomidate.”



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*Martin (with his daughter Eva in tow) presenting his poster at the NAEMSP conference.*

**Nathan Sandalow, MD**, clerkship director and associate professor of emergency medicine, co-authored the article “Supporting Medical Students in Coping with Traumatic Events,” published in *SAEM Pulse*, the newsletter of the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine.



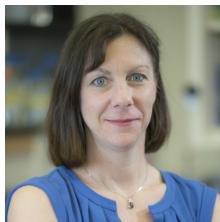
*Dr. Edwin Simon*



*Dr. Daven Morrison*

Two CMS faculty recently delivered Psychiatry Grand Rounds presentation at Elgin Mental Health Center. **Edwin Simon, MD**, associate professor of medicine and psychiatry and behavioral science, presented “Endocannabinoid System and its Clinical Application in Sleep” on December 17, and **Daven Morrison, MD**, clinical assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral science, presented “Narcissists, Psychopaths and Bullies: Oh My! — A Practitioner’s Guide to Dealing with Jerks” on February 11.

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**Beth Stutzmann**, PhD, director of the Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics and professor and discipline chair of neuroscience, co-authored an article titled “Down Syndrome Frontal Cortex Layer III and Layer V

Pyramidal Neurons Exhibit Lamina Specific Degeneration in Aged Individuals," published in *Acta Neuropathologica Communications*.

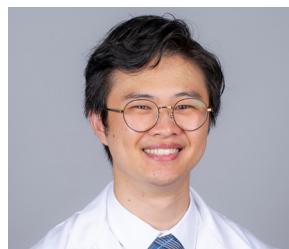
**Nutan Vaidya**, MD, vice dean for faculty affairs and equity, presented at The University of Texas Medical Branch's Faculty Leadership Collaborative Early Career-Bootcamp on January 14-16. The three-day bootcamp was designed for early-career faculty (instructors or assistant professors with less than five years at rank) and provided overviews of key leadership competency areas, delivered by faculty members in academic health.

A professional headshot of Nutan Vaidya, MD. She is a woman with dark hair, smiling, wearing a dark blazer over a patterned scarf and a blue top. The background is a solid grey.



The second paper, titled “Optical Detection of Basilar Membrane Damage,” featured preliminary data for using quantitative birefringence as a means to evaluate the health of the cochlea during cochlear implantation. Both projects were presented by Jordan’s collaborators at Northwestern University.

**Alan Wang** and **Neha Basti**, both CMS '25 and members of the CMS chapter of the Aequitas Health Equity Medical Honor Society, presented at Chicago Medical School's Health Equity Journal Club, discussing the article "The Menstrual Health Equity Initiative — Access to Menstrual Products for People Experiencing Homelessness."



Alan Wang



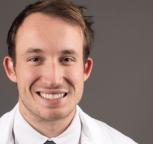
Neha Basti

## Events and Other News

Content by **Neil Bradbury**, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics, Center for Genetic Diseases, was featured in a TED-Ed Animation video titled “The Dark History of Arsenic,” which has already amassed more than 420,000 views. Dr. Bradbury explored the history of arsenic, the so-called “king of poisons,” and how it became such a popular poison. TED-Ed Animation videos are produced through the collaboration of a knowledgeable educator or expert, the TED-Ed team, and a professional animator.

A portrait photograph of Neil Bradbury, PhD. He is a middle-aged man with light brown hair and a full, well-groomed beard and mustache. He is wearing a light-colored, collared shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an indoor setting with warm lighting.



A head-and-shoulders portrait of a young man with short brown hair, smiling. He is wearing a white lab coat over a dark tie and a light-colored shirt. A small circular emblem is visible on the left side of his chest. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**Jordan Villa**, an MD/PhD student in Dr. Beth Stutzmann's lab, participated in two projects that were presented at the SPIE West Conference (a conference of the International Society for Optics and Photonics), held January 28-30 in San Francisco. Jordan was co-author on two proceedings papers that were orally presented to a group of biomedical clinicians and professionals.

The first paper, titled “Optical Method of Diagnosing Middle Ear Effusions,” was based on a large part of Jordan’s PhD thesis that uses speckle patterns from lasers alongside machine learning to take a step toward a device for at-home detection of ear infections. A poster on the same project was presented at the Association for Research in Otolaryngology conference, held February 22-26 in Orlando, FL.

**Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, dean of CMS and senior vice president for medical affairs for RFU, was one of three healthcare leaders interviewed for the article “The Global Burden of Infectious Respiratory Diseases

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in Adults: Interview with Three Key Opinion Leaders," published in the *European Medical Journal*. Dr. Chatterjee discussed the impact of infectious viral respiratory diseases — including COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and influenza — on the older adult population, as well as strategies to address this burden.



**Catherine Deamant**, MD, FAAHPM, FACP, clinical professor of medicine and palliative care education faculty lead, was interviewed for the *Inspired to Heal* podcast. In her episode, titled "Creating a Palliative Care Program," Dr. Deamant talked about her successful

mission to create a palliative care program for Chicago's government-run safety net health system. The *Inspired to Heal* podcast documents the stories of clinicians, educators, and innovators who built or led impactful programs of excellence in government health institutions.

**Caroline Madigan**, CMS '26, was interviewed for a *U.S. News & World Report* article about the importance of volunteering while in medical school. Caroline talked about her experiences as president of the university's Interprofessional Community Clinic.



**Héctor Rasgado-Flores**, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics, was instrumental in securing a \$82,150 per year grant for a four-year subcontract with the University Center of Lake County (UCLC) to develop a new mini-medical school for the Diamond School District's middle school. The funds are provided by a UCLC "El Centro" grant from the Department of Education.

In October, fourth-year medical students **Fahed Alrafati**, **Annabel Clodius**, and **Argineh Shahbandari** were chosen to represent Chicago Medical School at the inaugural Illinois State Neurological Society (ISNS) Trainee Roundtable at the ISNS annual meeting. The roundtable was composed of Illinois neurology residents and fellows, and medical students interested in neurology.



Fahed Alrafati



Annabel Clodius



Argineh Shahbandari

**Valerie Chai**, PhD, director of the Center for Genetic Diseases and professor of microbiology and immunology, gave a presentation during the December 17 BioInnovations Speaker Series program, titled "Are We Winning the War on Cancer?" After Dr. Chai's presentation, she and **Erin Howe**, PhD, assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular biology in the Center for Proteomics and Molecular Therapeutics and the Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology and Infection, participated in a panel discussion along with industry experts. The panelists discussed leading trends in cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.



Dr. Valerie Chai (right) during the panel discussion.

The CMS Office of Faculty Affairs and Equity presented a new series titled "My Life in Academia," which gives the RFU community a chance to learn more about the lives and careers of CMS faculty members. So far, two

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CMS faculty members have sat down in conversation with **Neil Bradbury**, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics and director of senior faculty engagement. First was **Héctor Rasgado-Flores**, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics, who was motivated to study human physiology because of his experience with severe childhood asthma, and was inspired by his father to pursue both science and music. Next, **Judy Potashkin**, PhD, professor and chair of cellular and molecular pharmacology, was featured in February. A member of the CMS faculty since 1990, Dr. Potashkin talked about her early career at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York, her passion for art, and her love of rabbits.



Dr. Potashkin in conversation with Dr. Bradbury.

As a part of the Schweitzer fellowship program, **Binita Pandya**, CMS '27, collaborated with the Student National Podiatric Medical Association and the Diabetic Foot Surgery & Podiatry Association to complete diabetic foot screenings, blood sugar testing, and diabetic health education at Roberti Community House. This interprofessional collaboration consisted of first- and second-year medical and podiatry students overseen by Dr. Leland Jaffe (SCPM) and **Dr. Brian Varghese** (CMS).



**Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, dean of CMS and senior vice president for medical affairs for RFU, attended Learn Serve Lead: The AAMC Annual Meeting, held November 8-12 in Atlanta, GA.



Dr. Chatterjee (third from left) pictured with the rest of the Council of Deans (COD) Administrative Board.

The entire **CMS Class of 2028** (204 students) completed the 4-hour **ecoAmerica Ambassador training** and received “Climate for Health Ambassador Training” certificates of completion. This training teaches medical students communication skills for talking to different groups (including policymakers, professional colleagues, and patients) about climate and health topics. The training culminated in a workshop titled “Climate Advocacy and Communication for Health Professionals,” featuring interactive presentations from CMS faculty (**Myrtis Sullivan**, MD, MPH, professor of pediatrics, and **Regina de Leon Gomez**, MD, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology) and representatives from ecoAmerica.

To date, through our partnership with ecoAmerica, Chicago Medical School has trained about 500 medical students in climate advocacy! ■



First-year medical students during the climate workshop.



Medical students in the Women's Health Interest Group held a "Women in Medicine" mixer on campus in February, bringing together medical students and healthcare professionals to network, share experiences, and support one another in their journeys. Participants celebrated women in the medical field while also enjoying some trivia.

**We want to hear from you!**

To submit information or news for upcoming issues, contact Candice Kosanke at [candice.kosanke@rosalindfranklin.edu](mailto:candice.kosanke@rosalindfranklin.edu).



**ROSALIND FRANKLIN  
UNIVERSITY**  
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**CHICAGO MEDICAL SCHOOL**