



CMS NEWS

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Cover Image: A group of CMS students who serve as volunteer teachers in the Mini Medical School (MMS) program celebrate after the MMS graduation ceremony.

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Dean's Message



Greetings from the Dean's Office!

I want to start this message by wishing everyone a Happy New Year! Since I last wrote to you, many of us observed winter holidays and took the opportunity to spend time with friends and family over our winter break. As we said goodbye to 2025 and began a new year, I hope each of you took a few moments to celebrate your accomplishments of the last year and look forward to the opportunities that the fresh start of a new calendar year will bring us.

We've had a busy start to the year here at CMS, with many exciting events happening on and off campus. On January 31, we held our Mini Medical School (MMS) program's first Career Fair, led by Priya Pradhan and Sofia Ramos de la Cruz, both from the CMS Class of 2028. The students brought in 50+ professionals to represent 30+ careers for our MMS students and their families. The students also organized a Science Fair for the MMS participants, where over 30 elementary and middle schoolers presented posters to their parents and our community partners. I was proud to see our CMS community come together to celebrate everything our MMS students have learned so far, and the Career Fair demonstrated the many opportunities open to them with their newfound scientific knowledge.

February 7 marked another milestone for our budding scientists and future physicians in the MMS program, as we watched 60+ incredible 4th-8th graders graduate from the program. Just as these children began their MMS journey with their own White Coat Ceremony, the year concluded with a graduation ceremony where the students and their parents — as well as the many CMS students, faculty, and partners who make the MMS program a reality — celebrated their accomplishments and the bright futures ahead of them.

There are many other wonderful accomplishments that our CMS community has achieved in recent months, of which I will quickly summarize a few here. First, all of our residency and fellowship programs are once again fully accredited by the ACGME. I want to thank our Office of Graduate Medical Education, led by Dr. Subhasis Misra, for their tireless work toward this goal.

Dr. Hongkyun Kim, from the Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, was awarded a 5-year, \$1.9 million grant from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke to fund his research on molecular and cellular regulation of CaV2 voltage-gated calcium channels. His research addresses the dysregulation of human proteins linked to a wide range of diseases and will contribute to the identification of the underlying causes of neurological disorders such as epilepsy, migraines, and pain.

Six students from our Class of 2026 have already successfully matched to their future residencies through early matches. Congratulations to the two students

who matched through the Urology Match and the four students who matched through the Military Match. More details about those six students and where they'll be heading after graduation can be found within the pages of this newsletter.

Last month I had the pleasure of visiting the Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC)'s pediatrics clinic at The Heart of the City in Waukegan, at the invitation of the CMS students who volunteer there. I was proud to watch the ICC team in action and see firsthand the care, service, and leadership of our faculty providers and student volunteers as they work to ensure that every patient, regardless of background or income, has access to the health care and services they need.

My trips to see our students and faculty in action have also included several recent clinical site visits to our affiliate partners. In November I visited our geographically closest site — the neighboring Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center — and two future sites: Temecula Valley Hospital and Corona Regional Medical Center, both in southern California. I also visited McHenry Hospital in December and the Lake County Health Department (LCHD) earlier this month with other leaders from CMS and RFU. In addition, we welcomed leaders from the LCHD to our campus last November, as part of our ongoing efforts to find more ways to work together for the benefit of the Lake County community. These collaborative visits with our community partners are an ongoing process, and they are an important step in fulfilling our school's mission of training future physicians while also working to improve the health of our community.

Before I close this message, I want to take a moment to shine a spotlight on some of our outstanding and generous alumni. We are all aware of the reality of the debt that so many of our nation's future doctors take on during their journey to become healthcare professionals. Our school and our students greatly appreciate the financial support provided by alumni in the form of scholarship funds. These scholarships make a huge difference in our students' lives and future careers. Thank you to Keith Kirby, MD Class of '87, who has established a new endowed scholarship with \$100,000; Alan Rogin, MD Class of '65, who has provided a bequest of \$168,000 for surgical education; and Al Bloch, MD Class of '60, who offered a matching opportunity with a \$20,000 donation — and the RFU Institutional Advancement office raised over \$31,000 in response! Finally, Lee From,

MD Class of '78 and his wife Lillie have established the CMS Primary Care Endowed Scholarship Fund to support M4 students in good academic standing with demonstrated financial need who are pursuing residency training in Family Medicine, Pediatrics, or General Internal Medicine and who have expressed strong career interest in preventive care or chronic disease management. Dr. From's novel desire to dedicate a scholarship to a particular practice area is intended to encourage medical students to pursue a field of such great need in public health, and to inspire like-minded alumni to increase the fund with their donations. We appreciate our alumni who show such generosity in paying it forward for the future doctors who are following in their footsteps.

As the Spring term begins, we have many events to look forward to, including the annual State of the Medical School address on March 9 and a visit from Dr. Heather Prendergast from the University of Illinois College of Medicine, who will be spending a week at RFU as my mentee as part of the AAMC Council of Deans' Fellowship Program. Of course, our biggest event on the horizon is Match Day on March 20, where we'll celebrate our fourth-year students and the culmination of their years of dedication and hard work. For the first time, we'll be holding this event in collaboration with DePaul University, one of our longstanding partners, at their Lincoln Park Campus, and I look forward to joining our hardworking students and their families for this landmark event.

Our next issue will feature more details about these events and the activities that will happen on and off campus throughout the spring. Until then, I wish all our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends good health and happiness in 2026.

Sincerely,



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

ICC Clinic Champions

Several of our outstanding students have been recognized by the university's Interprofessional Community Clinic as "**Clinic Champions**" — students who go above and beyond in service and leadership. Congratulations to the following CMS students who were spotlighted as Clinic Champions in the RFU Health Clinics' monthly newsletter!

Andrew Park and Matthew Alpert, both CMS '28, Executive Officers of Lab Services



Andrew Park



Matthew Alpert

Along with podiatry student Joshua Clark, Andrew and Matthew are responsible for the smooth functioning of laboratory and immunization services at the ICC, and their dedication extends far beyond clinic hours. A recent major contribution was their leadership in implementing a new temperature monitoring system for the ICC's vaccine refrigerator. This critical project involved coordinating with university IT services and setting up the entire system to ensure the safety and viability of the ICC's costly vaccine inventory.

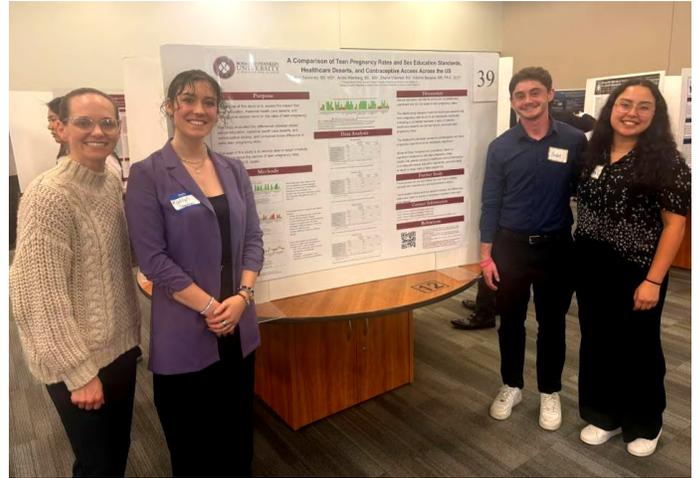
The three students are "an interprofessional team who embody the very best of collaboration and clinical excellence at the ICC... We are proud to recognize the exceptional contributions of the Executive Officers of Lab Services as standout leaders and incredible assets to the ICC community," wrote the ICC Faculty Leadership Team.

Ellaina Villarreal and Kaitlyn Sweeney, both CMS '28, Pelvic Health Clinic Executive Officers

Ellaina and Kaitlyn have spearheaded transformative advancements for the Pelvic Health Clinic over the past year, significantly expanding the quality and range of services offered to patients. Their remarkable achievements include the successful implementation of

the ICC's IUD insertion program and the development of a protocol to make free emergency contraception readily available through the ICC's food pantry.

"Their dedication, leadership, and drive to eliminate barriers to essential pelvic healthcare are truly inspiring. Please join us in thanking them for their immense contributions!" wrote the ICC Faculty Leadership Team.



Kaitlyn Sweeney (second from left) and Ellaina Villarreal (right) at the Summer Research Poster Session, with poster co-authors Kristine Burgess and Andie Weinberg.

Joshua Bilbrey, CMS '28



Josh is the driving force behind the establishment of the ICC Respiratory Clinic, a vital new service that addresses key barriers to respiratory health for ICC patients. Launching this clinic required extensive coordination and planning, and Josh handled every aspect with

exceptional skill, including coordinating donations of inhalers and essential medications and taking the lead in the development of spirometer competency training for ICC clinicians.

"Josh's thorough, thoughtful, and highly methodical approach has not just launched a new service, but has also established robust, reliable procedures that will benefit the ICC and its patients for years to come," wrote the ICC Faculty Leadership Team. ■

Humanism In Practice

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Katalina Kuzanga, M3



In this new quarterly feature from the CMS chapter of the Gold Humanism Honor Society, students, staff, or residents share practical ways they incorporate humanism into patient care. Katalina is a third-year medical student (Class of 2027).



Can you share about a humanistic clinical experience you have had during clerkships?

During my surgery rotation, I had the pleasure of being the only medical student on the colorectal service working with a chief resident and an intern who was new to the service as well. We saw an urgent ED consult who had a very large rectal lesion that caused incontinence requiring placement of an ostomy. When our surgical team went to speak with her about the proposed treatment plan, she did not want us in the room. After rounds, when our team returned to the call room to debrief our patient list, I offered to go back and speak with the patient to empathetically see where she's coming from and what her reservations were, in order to give her the best care possible.

I ended up having a pretty lengthy conversation with the patient, giving her the chance to share her full story and to answer her questions to the best of my ability, within the scope of my expertise. We left the conversation in great spirits, and she was pleased that someone took time to truly listen to her. Eventually, she decided to move forward with the ostomy placement. I connected so deeply with this patient that even after the procedure, she specifically called out my name. To me, this signified that she saw me as a trustworthy person during a difficult time.

What have you learned about humanism in medicine?

1. My interactions with patients shape their acceptance of care.

2. When I connect with my patients, I care for them better.
3. When I care for my patients authentically, I remember why I want to be a doctor, as well as the privilege that exists within this profession.

Share a piece of advice for future medical students about how to cultivate a humanistic environment in medicine.

As a medical student, you will be part of a team. One of the reasons you are integral to the team is because you have the most time to spend with patients. Brush up on your communication skills so you can be that person to build patient trust during what may be one of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. ■



Katalina, CMS 2027 Finkel House Chair, addresses her peers during their M2 Classroom to Clerkship ceremony.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Student National Medical Association (SNMA)

The CMS chapter of the **Student National Medical Association (SNMA)** is committed to supporting current and future underrepresented minority medical students, addressing the needs of underserved communities, and increasing the number of clinically excellent, culturally competent, and socially conscious physicians. SNMA is active on campus and in the local community, organizing engaging programming for the RFU community while also making time for community service and mentorship activities.

Mentorship and Pathway Programs

In addition to supporting current underrepresented medical students, the CMS students in SNMA dedicate their time to teaching, mentoring, and inspiring elementary and middle school students who may be interested in pursuing a career in medicine or science. In December, SNMA worked with several other student organizations (Black Men in White Coats, the Latino Medical Student Association, and the Pediatrics Interest Group) to plan and host a STEMM Fair serving elementary and middle school students and their families from underrepresented groups in the local

community (*see page 16*). The event featured hands-on STEMM activities that promoted early exposure and representation in science and medicine.

SNMA also participates in the school's Mini Medical School (MMS) Pathway Program, a partnership facilitated by Chicago Medical School, North Chicago Community Partnership, and Neal Math and Science Academy. CMS medical students teach 4th, 5th, and 6th graders at Neal Math and Science Academy, giving these children crucial early exposure to medical concepts and giving them and their families an exciting introduction to the world of health sciences and medical professions.

Community Service

In January, SNMA partnered with the RFU Division of Community and Campus Outreach for a day of service in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, providing students with opportunities to serve local organizations, support community needs, and build meaningful relationships. Some students went to Waukegan to volunteer at the African American Museum at England Manor and the Roberti Community House, while other students set up

a base of operations on campus, creating cards with messages of self-love and encouragement for individuals served by A Safe Place. SNMA also had a special opportunity to participate in RFU President Aron Sousa’s virtual Town Hall on January 16. SNMA co-presidents **Tsion Habtamu** and **Agbai Kalu**, both CMS ’28, served as panelists in a discussion, led by Dr. Sousa, on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s legacy in addressing healthcare disparities. Tsion and Agbai also spoke to the campus about upcoming Black History Month programming.

SNMA Programming and Events

SNMA organized an engaging program of events throughout February in observance of Black History Month, with the theme “Black History Through the Eras: Healing Resistance, and Legacy.” The month kicked off with a gallery exhibit and trivia game on February 2 that honored Black contributions to medicine, health care,



Students ran a “Heart Health” station during the STEMM Fair – one of many booths offering interactive workshops, experiments, and activities to kindergarten through 8th grade students interested in science and medicine.



During SNMA’s Black Professionals Panel, panelists shared their stories and advice and answered student questions.

and science — including several RFU alumni! The next event was “The Shop & The Salon: Conversations That Shape Community,” a panel featuring Black professionals in medicine, including two CMS alumni: **Lindiwee-yaa Randall Hayes**, MD ’21, an emergency medicine physician, and **Jennifer Docheé**, MD ’06, a structural interventional cardiologist. The panelists engaged students in a conversation centered on career navigation, leadership, representation, and lived experiences — inspired by the barbershop and salon as spaces of dialogue, mentorship, and community. Then the program of events concluded on February 27 with the annual Black History Month Showcase, a vibrant celebration of culture, music, and special performances. ■

Opposite page: Several of the CMS students who volunteer in the Mini Medical School pathway program.



SNMA members at their 5th Annual “Paint n’ Sip” event, a fundraiser that supports SNMA programming at RFU while inviting the entire campus community to relax and paint.

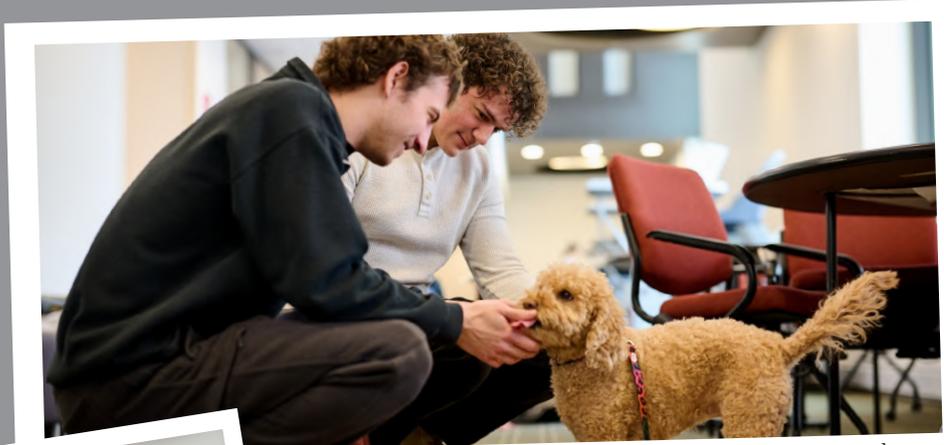


SNMA kicked off their Black History Month programming with an exhibit on “Honoring Black Excellence in Medicine, Healthcare & Science.”

Wellness Weeks

Rosalind Franklin University invited students, faculty, and staff to focus on wellness during a series of activities spanning two weeks in January and February. Activities included visits from therapy dogs, yoga classes, a karaoke night, life-sized chess, art sessions, massage chairs, a wellbeing zine station, a wellness fair, “Super

Surgery” featuring a life-sized Operation game, an improv workshop led by second-year medical student **Jessica Thompson**, and a visit from the animals in traveling exotic zoo “**Scales and Tales**” (see opposite page).



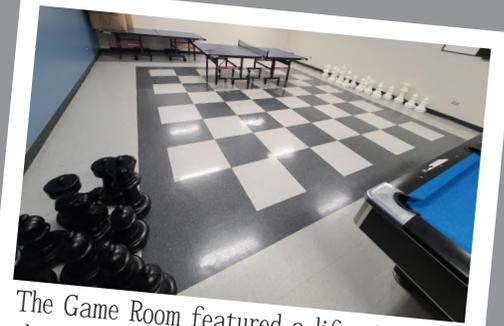
Therapy dogs Daisy (pictured), Coach, and Mabel visited campus to help students relax and decompress.



Jessica Thompson, CMS '28, led her classmates in an improv workshop.



Students shopped at an on-campus “thrift store.”



The Game Room featured a life-sized chess game.



The Boxer Library hosted a “Wellness Zine Station,” inviting students to use collage, drawing, and writing to create individual zine pages inspired by wellness prompts.



Mabel the therapy dog



Students were invited to try “super surgery” on a life-sized Operation game.

A Visit From Some Feathered and Scaly Friends

Students got a chance to experience hands-on interaction with animals including a two-toed sloth, chinchillas, turkeys, baby chicks, crested ducks, pixie

frogs, a bearded dragon, and a hairy armadillo, thanks to Scales and Tales, a traveling exotic zoo which visited RFU for the second year in a row. ■



Emily Ciolak, CMS '28, holds a pixie frog, a type of African bullfrog that can grow to be as large as a person's head!



Pancakes the chinchilla loved to perch on students' heads!



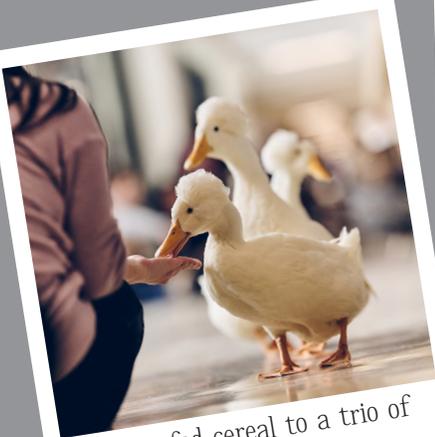
Mahanoor Murtaza and Megha Patel, both CMS '29, with baby chicks



Fiona the hairy armadillo



Students got to pet and take selfies with Xena the sloth as she was wheeled around the room while hanging on a cart.



Students fed cereal to a trio of crested ducks.



Xena the sloth, back in her bed



Marissa Hall, CMS '29, with Mayflower the turkey

Leading the Way:

CMS Projects Sweep 2026 Aequitas Health National Awards

The CMS chapter of the **Aequitas Health Equity Medical Honor Society** was founded in 2023, and our student Aequitas Fellows have been busy ever since in their efforts to champion equity and justice in health care!

Aequitas was formed to recognize and support a society of fellows dedicated to advancing health equity and eradicating health disparities. The inaugural chapter was formed in 2021 at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine, focused on the Native American communities of South Dakota as well as the health disparities that exist in the Black and Hispanic communities of the state. Since that time, chapters at other medical schools have been established to identify, recognize, and develop future physician leaders to address the glaring health inequities that exist in our society today.

Students who are chosen as Fellows must take part in a health equity project during their fourth year of medical school, before being formally inducted into the Aequitas Health Medical Honor Society upon their graduation. For the past three years, students in each class of CMS Fellows have engaged in health equity leadership and service and have demonstrated a commitment to advancing health equity as a future physician.

Congratulations to the following CMS students who have been recognized this year by the national Aequitas Health honor society for their projects and their efforts to reduce disparities in health.

Angélica Arzuaga, CMS '27, and **Gloria Essien**, CMS '26, received the 2025 Aequitas Chapter Project of the Year Award for their "ICC Skin Equity Initiative" in dermatology education. The project was recognized by the committee "for its innovative community-first methodology, strong partnerships with Mano a Mano (serving the immigrant community) and the North Chicago Think Tank, and creative safe harbor approach to reaching the community." As part of the award, Angélica and Gloria will submit an article to the *Aequitas Health Journal* documenting their project and its outcomes.

Additionally, several CMS students, all from the Class of 2026, were named as distinguished finalists for their innovative health equity work. In fact, five of the six finalist awards went to CMS projects!

Distinguished Chapter Project Grant Finalists:

- **Caroline Madigan** and **Manasvi Paudel** — "ICC Vaccine/Screening Program Expansion"
- **Aayush Gupta** and **Kristina Nguyen** — "Chicago Street Medicine for Homeless Care"

Distinguished Fellow Project Grant Finalists:

- **Kayla Talebi** — "Mini Medical School Take-Home Curriculum Expansion"
- **Kristina Nguyen** and **Aayush Gupta** — "Chicago Street Medicine Chapter Development"
- **Tommi Tsao** and **Aroosha Aamir** — "Health Equity Course Research: Community Member Engagement"

"These outstanding medical students represent the next generation of physician leaders in health equity," **Dr. Benson Hsu**, president and chair of Aequitas Health, said in a press release about the awards. "What's particularly inspiring is how each project demonstrates a deep understanding of local community needs and creates sustainable solutions...Their work exemplifies how physician-leaders can be powerful catalysts for reducing health disparities at the local level while developing models that can be adapted nationwide."

Two CMS student teams were also selected as speakers for the 2025-26 Aequitas Health Annual Conference, which was held online in February. Aequitas Health Fellows were invited to submit presentations showcasing their innovative approaches to addressing critical gaps in healthcare equity.

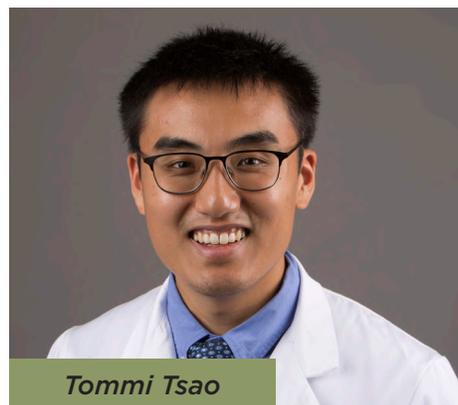
Kayla Talebi, CMS '26, gave a presentation titled "Mini Medical School: Parent Engagement and Take-Home Curriculum," which showcased the CMS Mini Medical School (MMS) program's expanded take-home curriculum for 6th-8th graders. MMS is a healthcare career pipeline program that introduces underserved youth to science and medicine.

Angélica Arzuaga, CMS '27 and **Gloria Essien**, CMS '26, gave a presentation titled "ICC Skin Equity Initiative" which detailed a community-engaged, student-led initiative at the ICC to address dermatological health disparities in the North Chicago/northern Lake County community through a bilingual (Spanish and English) educational podcast series and series of infographics. The series launches in May 2026 (Melanoma Awareness Month) and will feature 15-minute pre-recorded episodes with topics including skin health myths and sun protection.

The student presentations provided valuable insights into successful health equity initiatives and offered

replicable models that other chapter members can use in their communities, strengthening the national impact of Aequitas Health in their pursuit of health equity.

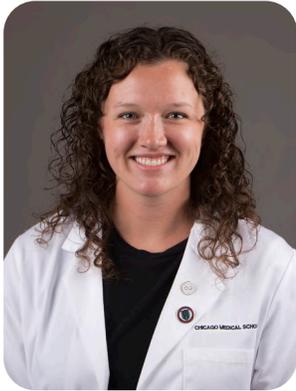
The CMS chapter of Aequitas Health selects its new cohort of M3 students, residents, fellows, and faculty members annually in the early Spring. This prestigious health equity honor society recognizes those dedicated to addressing healthcare disparities and promoting social justice within the medical field. For more information regarding the application process or chapter initiatives, please contact CMS.CommunityHealth@rosalindfranklin.edu. ■



Early Match Results

Congratulations to our CMS 2026 Military and Urology early matches! We're proud of the members of the Class of 2026 who matched into the following programs, and we're excited to see where the rest of our M4s will be heading for their residencies when we celebrate Match Day on March 20.

Military Match:



Sydney Beasley
Emergency Medicine —
Madigan Army Medical
Center in McChord, WA



Maura Devine
Dermatology — Naval
Medical Center in San
Diego, CA



Leanna Keen
General Surgery —
Tripler Army Medical
Center in Honolulu, HI



Kyle Wallenstrom
Internal Medicine —
Walter Reed National
Military Medical Center in
Bethesda, MD

Urology Match:



Jacob Malakismail
Cook County Health
and Hospital Systems
in Chicago, IL



Adam Schwartz
University of Tennessee in
Memphis, TN

Save the Date for CMS 2026 Match Day!

Friday, March 20, 2026

9:45 AM - 12:45 PM CDT

DePaul University — Lincoln Park Campus



Crafting with Care



Students and faculty alike may have seen CMS Dean Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD, working on her crochet projects on campus, whether it's between meetings or during a session with the RFU Stitches student organization. Now Dean Chatterjee is donating several of her crocheted creations to a good cause!

Working with "Care To Knit," a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide hand-knit and crocheted items to those in need, Dr. Chatterjee's handmade blankets and scarves will bring comfort and warmth to people in shelters, hospitals, and nursing homes, including newborns and veterans. ■

Above: Dean Chatterjee on campus with items she crocheted for donation to Care to Knit in 2023.

Left: The collection of crocheted blankets and scarves Dean Chatterjee has made for donation this year.



The Career Fair featured over 30 careers in the fields of medicine and science.

Mini Medical School Career Fair & Science Fair

Chicago Medical School welcomed North Chicago youths and their parents to campus on January 31 for the Mini Medical School (MMS) program's first Career Fair! MMS is a pathway program designed to provide elementary and middle schoolers from underrepresented minority groups with an early exposure to the health sciences and the medical profession. In addition to a curriculum that covers scientific topics like the heart and circulation, lungs and respiratory function, and the musculoskeletal system, the MMS program also includes a career exploration component. During the Career Fair, the 4th - 8th graders enrolled in the MMS program learned about the many career pathways open to them in the fields of science and health care.

Priya Pradhan, CMS '28, led the MMS Career Fair with the help of her co-leader, **Sofia Ramos de la Cruz**, CMS '28. Priya brought in over 50 professionals to represent over 30 careers for our MMS students and families.

All of the schools at RFU were represented at the career fair, with booths for Podiatry, Pharmacy, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Physician Assistant, Pathology Assistant, and Research. Other career paths featured



Lian Stemler CMS '29, who worked as an ER tech before applying to medical school, describes the profession to an MMS student.



Dani Hawryluk, CNA, CMS '27, at the Certified Nursing Assistant booth.



Bella Trancoso, CMS '28, demonstrates suturing techniques at the surgery booth.



Priya Pradhan, CMS '28 (right) co-located the Career Fair.



Kaitlyn Bali, CMS '27, talks to MMS students about the pediatrics field.



Sofia Ramos de la Cruz, CMS '28, helped MMS students prepare for the Science Fair.



CMS assistant professor Dr. Rosanne Oggoian at the Academic Medicine booth.

at the fair included EMT, Professor, ER Scribe, ER Tech, Social Worker, Interpreter, Standardized Patient, Health Administration, and Biomedical Engineer. Representatives for Science Saturday, INSPIRE, CampMed, and CampPod were also present to talk with parents about next steps once their children enter high school.

Thanks to Priya's efforts and great attention to detail, each career had a visually appealing poster with student-friendly vocabulary for the professionals to present at their booths. Over 35 students and over 45 families present were also given a Career Fair Resource Packet that included all the information from the posters and a guide on how to navigate high school, community college, and university.

The MMS students also participated in a Science Fair on the same day. Shortly before the Career Fair, over 30 MMS students presented their Science Fair posters to their parents and community partners. This was a project that the MMS students had worked on with our medical

students. Each middle schooler chose a particular disease or condition and researched the symptoms, causes, and treatments, with posters focused on heart disease, asthma, strep throat, osteoporosis, sunburn, and many more!

Through guidance from Sofia and her team of CMS students, all Mini Med students practiced to the point where they could deliver their presentations without looking at their poster and even had no notecards to use as reference! Being 10-13 years old, that is a huge confidence booster!

Congratulations to all the MMS students who did such a great job with their poster presentations, and thank you to the CMS students, RFU students, faculty, community partners, and professionals who made the Career Fair and the Science Fair possible! ■



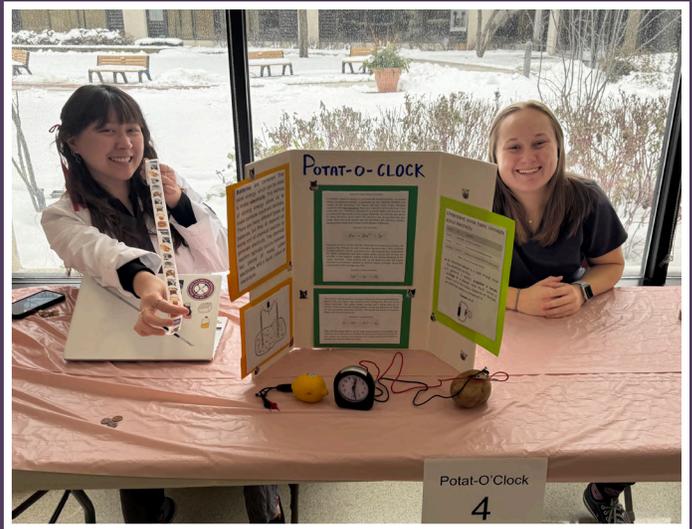
Community STEMM Fair

Chicago Medical School welcomed local school children and their families to the RFU campus on December 6 for a Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM) Community Science Fair designed to spark curiosity, celebrate scientific discovery, and connect local families with the world of STEM and healthcare. The fair created opportunities for young learners, particularly those from historically underserved and underrepresented communities, to explore hands-on science and healthcare activities beyond the traditional classroom setting.

Students in kindergarten through 8th grade from schools in North Chicago, Waukegan, Mundelein, and Zion attended the fair, which featured science and medicine booths offering interactive workshops, experiments, and engaging, STEMM-related activities. The event was a collaboration between several student organizations — the **Latino Medical Student Association**, the **Pediatrics Interest Group**, the

Student National Medical Association, **Black Men In White Coats**, and the Mini Medical School pathway program — whose members planned the fair and ran the activity booths. ■

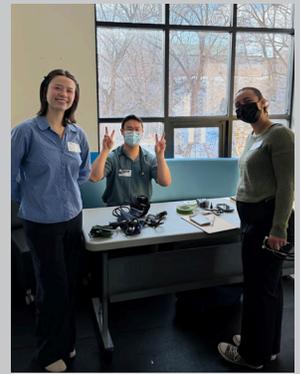




Dean Chatterjee's Visit to the ICC Pediatric Clinic

In January, **Archana Chatterjee**, MD, PhD, dean of CMS and senior vice president for medical affairs, RFU, visited the **Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC)'s pediatrics clinic** at The Heart of the City in Waukegan. Dr. Chatterjee, a pediatric infectious disease specialist, met the ICC providers volunteering at the clinic and observed the ICC team in action as they treated eight patients.

The ICC Pediatrics Clinic provides essential pediatric care to families in the Waukegan community. The students who volunteer there gain interprofessional, hands-on clinical experience while supporting children's health needs, preventive care, and family education. ■





Mini Medical School Graduation

The CMS community and our community partners watched with pride on February 7 as more than 60 elementary and middle school students graduated from the Mini Medical School (MMS) program. The 4th–8th graders walked across the stage in Rhoades Auditorium to receive their certificates — the same stage they had crossed during the MMS White Coat Ceremony last September, when they were welcomed to the program with their very own white coat.

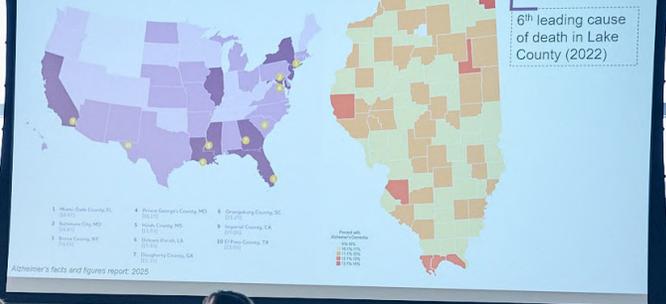
The MMS program invites students from A.J. Katzenmaier Academy and Neal Math and Science Academy in North Chicago to experience a dynamic introduction to the health sciences and the medical profession. Over the past five months, the children have participated in a curriculum that includes lessons, experiments, and real-world demonstrations, all led by CMS students and faculty. The MMS students learned about the human body and how to care for it, with units focused on the musculoskeletal system, brain and mental health, heart and circulation, gastrointestinal system, lungs and respiratory function, and the immune system. They also learned CPR, wrapped mock joint injuries, learned how to use a stethoscope, and even practiced conducting a Weber test to screen for hearing loss.

During the graduation ceremony, the MMS students and their parents delivered moving speeches, expressing what the program means to them and how they benefited from the experience.

“I had no idea what journey I was about to have,” said one fourth grader, recalling when she had learned about the MMS program. “Mini Medical School helped me understand that we can be a positive outcome for those sick people who need help. We can provide support to them when they need it the most. We can make a difference in someone’s life.”

“Mini Medical School was an amazing experience and I’m thankful that I was able to participate in this,” said a sixth grader. “It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It was so cool to learn from actual medical school students. I’m so grateful that this was offered to our school.”

“I love science more than anything,” said another sixth-grader. “This program was a huge step in the right direction, toward my future.” ■



Dr. Amanda Simanek



Dr. Holly Hunsberger



Dr. Beth Stutzmann

Health Equity Breakfast

RFU's second annual Health Equity Breakfast, held on campus in December, brought together community changemakers, leaders and innovators who are spearheading health equity initiatives in Lake County. RFU President **Aron Sousa**, MD, gave welcome remarks at the event, emphasizing the importance of partnerships for healthier communities and expressing gratitude to RFU's partners for their support. **Joseph DiMario**, PhD, executive vice president for research, moderated a panel featuring faculty members **Beth Stutzmann**, PhD, and **Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, from RFU's Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, and **Lori Thuente**, PhD, RN, director of the College of Nursing's Dr.

Scholl Foundation Empathy Lab. The panel discussed neurodegenerative disease research and highlighted the importance of equipping healthcare providers with compassionate strategies for treating patients affected by diseases like Alzheimer's. The annual Health Equity Breakfast serves as a key forum for RFU and its community partners to come together and discuss collaborations that can improve the health of our communities. ■

Top of page: Dr. Holly Hunsberger (left), with fellow panelists Dr. Joseph DiMario, Dr. Lori Thuente, and Dr. Beth Stutzmann

Biomedical Innovation Day

The university held its 4th Annual Biomedical Innovation Day on November 5. The daylong event — on the theme “Advances in Brain Health” — highlighted the current efforts of RFU’s faculty scientists, as well as the latest developments out of early-stage companies in RFU’s Helix 51 bioscience incubator. Panels of CMS faculty speakers and invited guest speakers detailed the novel approaches being developed for diagnosing and treating a wide range of diseases.

Amiel Rosenkranz, PhD, director of the Brain Science Institute and professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology, started the event with an overview of brain disease research at RFU. **Joel Braunstein**, MD, MBA, founder and CEO of C2N Diagnostics, then delivered the keynote address, “A Moment in Medicine: Redefining Clinical Care in Alzheimer’s Disease Through Precision Diagnostics.”

Faculty members from RFU’s research centers took part in panel discussions alongside industry experts from

Helix 51 and several partner institutions, emphasizing the importance of industry-academic collaborations in translating discoveries into desperately-needed diagnostics and therapeutics. CMS speakers included Dr. Rosenkranz; **Vidyadhara D J**, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics; **Joanna Dabrowska**, PhD, PharmD, associate professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology, Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders; **Nicole Ferrara**, PhD, assistant professor of physiology and biophysics, Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders; **Marc Glucksman**, PhD, director of the Center for Proteomics and Molecular Therapeutics and professor and discipline chair of biochemistry and molecular biology; and **EunJung Hwang**, PhD, assistant professor of cell biology and anatomy, Stanson Toshok Center for Brain Function and Repair. The guest speakers included two CMS alumna: **Neelum Aggarwal**, MD ’92, from Rush Medical University, and **Ashley Mulvihill**, MD ’13, from the University of Illinois Chicago. ■



CMS alumna Dr. Neelum Aggarwal, Class of 1992



Dr. Marc Glucksman



Dr. Beth Stutzmann, director of the Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, with panelists Dr. Braunstein, Dr. Oihane Uriarte Huarte from the Alzheimer’s Association, Dr. Aggarwal, and Dr. D J.



Dr. Joanna Dabrowska

Humanism In Practice

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Dr. Monique Jones



In this new quarterly feature from the CMS chapter of the Gold Humanism Honor Society, students, staff, or residents share practical ways they incorporate humanism into patient care. Dr. Jones is a CMS alumna (Class of 1993) and she currently serves as Interim Assistant Dean for Career and Specialty Advising at CMS.

FUN FACT: Dr. Jones is a board-certified OB/GYN who has completed four marathons, and performed the first da Vinci-assisted robotic hysterectomy at Advocate South Suburban Hospital.

What drew you to medicine?

Helping and caring. I just always wanted to do it. I've always been a helper, and medicine felt like a natural way to help. One of the earliest moments I remember was being told in kindergarten that girls are nurses and boys are doctors. Growing up in a house full of boys, that didn't sit well with me.

Do you find reward in the sacrifices you've had to make over the years in your career?

There is reward in knowing that I made a difference in someone's life, and that becomes very apparent when I see my patients years later. The sacrifice of missing family time and events has been worth it. One patient was an intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR) baby born premature at 26 weeks, who is now 31 years old. I still have a close relationship with her and her mom, keeping in touch with them regularly.

Do you see a role of patient education in humanism in medicine?

Helping patients recognize that they deserve to be heard and to medically understand what is going on. Be it an annual exam or a new diagnosis, they should understand their health enough to explain to family. Patients should

feel empowered to be part of the decision-making process, determining whether or not a proposed treatment plan will work for them.

Can you speak to a potential barrier to humanism in medicine that emerging physicians should note?

Time restraints and documentation make it difficult to truly get to know your patient and become a partner in their health. When patients understand their health and treatment plans, they are better equipped to partner with you in their care autonomously. EMRs are great for care continuity, but a lot of time is spent documenting for reimbursement so that physician time is valued. This does not take into account the time spent treating patients as individuals.

How can physicians maintain humanism with the burden of documentation?

At the heart of most physicians is the desire to care for patients as individuals. Humanistic medicine is what we generally strive for, but healthcare has evolved into a litigious environment that will require political action for reform. Private equity needs to be removed from healthcare and autonomy returned to physicians and their patients.



A thought on conscious choices.

For things to change, physicians must prioritize quality over quantity while still documenting their time appropriately. I have made a conscious choice to not be consumed by seeing as many patients as possible. I may only see 3–5 patients, but each of those patients are treated well. I became certified in medical coding to learn how to appropriately justify the time I spend.

Any advice on how to maintain your humanism throughout residency?

Remember your “why” and keep it prominent in your life, especially when times are hard. When I did not want to wake up at 3 AM because I had just finally laid down ten minutes earlier, my “why” was my patient calling me, who also did not want to be in the hospital at 3 AM. My “why” has nothing to do with a price tag or whether or not I may be sued. For me, it has everything to do with the privilege of serving my patients, and in many cases being the first human being to hold their newborn.

How do you find balance, managing all of your roles?

Medicine is about lifelong learning, which includes learning how to recharge and relax. When I reconnect with my “why”, it rejuvenates me. Even when I am tired, remembering why I am tired gives me more energy. I am constantly finding new ways to relax. I used to run, and have now found other outlets such as valuing the time I get to spend with my family and new grandchildren. ■



Above photos: *Dr. Jones addresses first-year medical students at the CMS Class of 2029 White Coat Ceremony.*



CMS Holiday Party and Volunteering

Chicago Medical School held its annual **Holiday Party** at Mickey Finn's in Libertyville, inviting CMS faculty, staff, and community partners to enjoy an evening of food, fun, and gratitude as we celebrated the past year together. Faculty and staff were also invited to participate in a volunteer event to give back to the local community.





Prior to the party, a group of 30 CMS faculty and staff members volunteered at the **Northern Illinois Food Bank**, which works with over 900 food pantries, mobile food truck markets, and soup kitchens across 13 counties. Our group packed a total of 14,000 pounds of onions, providing 11,666 servings to our neighbors across northern Illinois. Access to nutritious food is an important aspect of community health, and we were proud to support the food bank's mission of making sure all of our neighbors have the food they need to thrive. ■



AAMC Learn Serve Lead Conference

Several CMS faculty and students attended the 2025 AAMC Learn Serve Lead Conference in San Antonio, TX, and presented two posters showcasing work being done at Chicago Medical School.

Sabina Kalata and **Katalina Kuzanga**, both CMS '27, presented "The Lee Flipped Anatomy Lab (LFAL): Assessing and Improving the Efficacy of a Novel Pedagogic Method for the Clinical Anatomy Lab," which detailed the innovations made to the Clinical Anatomy curriculum under the leadership of **Anne Lee**, MD '08, PhD '07, associate professor and Clinical Anatomy co-course director. Co-authors on the poster included **Brianna Lau**, CMS '27; **Jefferson Sun**, CMS '27; **Chenni Indiaraj**, MD, clinical anatomy laboratory instructor; **M.R. Jayasanker**, MD, clinical assistant professor of cell biology and anatomy; **Noreen Kelly**, MD, clinical assistant professor of cell biology and anatomy; **Joshua Polanski**, PhD, associate professor of cell biology and anatomy; and Dr. Lee. ■



Nutan Vaidya, MD, vice dean for faculty affairs and engagement and professor of psychiatry, presented "Rethinking Late-Career Faculty Engagement: CMS Academy for Reengagement of Researchers, Educators and Scholars (CARRES) Program." **Lisa Michaluk**, MEd, director of faculty affairs, was a co-author on the poster. ■

In Memoriam: Dr. Adrian Gross



The university came together on December 9 to honor the life and legacy of **Adrian Gross, MD**, who served as colleague, teacher, and friend to many of us here on campus. Several faculty members shared experiences, stories, and favorite memories of Dr. Gross, painting a portrait of a man who was a dedicated scientist, a kind friend, a lover of nature, and a devoted spouse and parent.

In his 13 years at RFU, Dr. Gross made a great impact on the university through his research, teaching, and service. He served as associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, Multisystem course director, and founding member of the Center for Proteomics and Molecular Therapeutics. He also served on the CMS Curriculum Committee and taught in the university's BMS program and graduate school. In addition to teaching students, he took the time to mentor junior faculty, supporting the growth of others with generosity and humility.

"His impact on our community was extraordinary," said Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD. "Adrian was widely known as a brilliant scientist, an admired teacher, a generous collaborator, and a devoted parent. Those who worked alongside him speak of his wit, his warmth, and the ability to bring clarity and insight to every challenge."

"Adrian was a diamond in our rocky world who touched many lives with his brilliance, both in mind and deeds," said Marc J. Glucksman, PhD, director of the Center for Proteomics and Molecular Therapeutics, who spoke about Dr. Gross's contributions to research in the center.

Dr. Gluckman and other colleagues also spoke of Dr. Gross's love of nature, which began as a child as he grew up in the Swiss Alps in Wengen, Switzerland. He was passionate about the environment and sustainability, installing solar panels on his house and driving an electric car before they were popular — and in fact, the rest of us have Dr. Gross to thank for the fact that the university parking lot now has electric vehicle charging stations. Colleagues reminisced about his passion for music, his talent for making pottery, and his enthusiasm for making his own sauerkraut, chocolate, and artisanal cheese.

Adrian's research in our center involved molecular elucidation of ion channels and their role in generating electrical signals in the body. Ion channels are a family of membrane proteins that play many key roles in neuroscience, and disruption or interference with these channels can lead to disorders such as epilepsies and arrhythmias. They are therefore a major target of essential drugs used in clinical medicine, and Dr. Gross's lab focused on structural and functional approaches to studying ion channels.

Although Dr. Gross dedicated his life to studying microscopic structures in the human body, both Dr. Glucksman and Dr. Chatterjee observed that his impact was many orders of magnitude greater. Dr. Chatterjee observed, "Though his research focused on the smallest building blocks of life, his impact on our community was immeasurably large." ■

Fellowship Match!

The psychiatry residency program is happy to announce our Psychiatry Fellowship Match results. We will miss our graduating residents immensely but wish them the very best! ■

Congratulations

2026 PSYCHIATRY FELLOWSHIP MATCH



Ji in Choi, MD

Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
The University of Chicago - IL



Muhammad Nouman, MD

Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Riverside University Health System - CA



Ryan Shu, MD

Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
The University of Washington - WA



Jeremy Wolfe, MD

Consultation Liaison Psychiatry
The Yale New Haven Hospital - CT

McHenry Hospital Holiday Celebration

Our Northwestern Medicine McHenry Hospital internal medicine residents enjoyed their holiday party in December, complete with food, decorations, holiday outfits, and a dessert table! Thank you to **Dr. Erin C. Davis-Delay** and the wellness committee for organizing this festive event! ■



Other GME News



Khaled Ali, MBBCh, internal medicine resident, co-authored “Ferric Carboxymaltose Among Patients with Heart Failure and Iron Deficiency: An Updated Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials,” published in *Cardiovascular Toxicology*.

Manoj Kumar, MD, PGY-3, internal medicine resident, presented a poster titled “A Rare Case of Immune Thrombocytopenia Triggered by Walnut Ingestion” at the American College of Physicians Northern Illinois chapter poster competition, held November 12 in Berwyn, IL.



Dr. Manoj Kumar with his poster



Dr. Sara Oliveira



Dr. Syed Naqvi

Sara Oliveira, MD, CPT, PGY-1, internal medicine resident, co-authored a case titled “Acute Hypoxemic

Respiratory Failure Caused by Nonspecific Interstitial Pneumonia in Mixed Connective Tissue Disease: A Case Report,” in collaboration with **Syed M. Naqvi**, MD, pulmonology fellow; **Amin Ur Rehman Nadeem**, MD, FCCP, assistant professor of medicine; **Jason Liu**, CMS '27; and **Tyler Paul**, CMS '27. The case was published in the *Cureus Journal of Medical Science*. “Another accomplishment for our great Pulmonology Department!”



Yoana Palatianos, MD, internal medicine resident, co-authored “Optimal Timing of Anticoagulation After Ischemic Stroke in Atrial Fibrillation: A Systematic Review and Network Meta-Analysis,” published in *Clinical Research in Cardiology*. ■

Alumni Share Their Expertise



Stephanie Bonne, MD '06, a trauma surgeon at Advocate Health, came to campus on December 2 to meet with students interested in surgery, in an event organized by the CMS chapter of the Association of Women Surgeons. Dr. Bonne discussed her journey to medicine, life as a female surgeon, and how to navigate the path to surgery.



Dr. Hayes



Dr. Docheé

Lindiwee-yaa Randall Hayes, MD '21, an emergency medicine physician, and **Jennifer Docheé**, MD '06, a structural

interventional cardiologist, participated in a panel discussion titled "The Shop & The Salon: Conversations That Shape Community," a Black History Month event hosted by the CMS chapter of the Student National Medical Association and Black Men in White Coats. Dr.

Hayes and Dr. Docheé joined four other panelists in a community-centered discussion on the experiences of Black professionals in medicine, sharing their experiences and giving advice for future healthcare providers.

CMS alumni from various specialties participated in Chicago Medical School's 17th annual **Operation M.E.D.S.** (Medical students Exploring Different Specialties), a virtual networking and mentorship series designed to give medical students first-hand insight into different medical fields. The alumni shared their experiences, career journeys, and practical advice about the specialties they had chosen. The series gave CMS students an opportunity to explore a wide range of specialties and hear directly from those who have experience in those fields. In February, students attended panels with CMS alumni who specialize in anesthesiology, cardiology, emergency medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry, physical medicine and rehabilitation, internal medicine, and general surgery. A panel focused on neurology and neurosurgery is scheduled for March 3. ■

During SNMA's "The Shop & The Salon" event, current medical students learned from the stories and experiences of alumni and other healthcare professionals, and had the opportunity to ask questions of the panelists.





CMS Alumni Brunch



Dr. Chatterjee and her husband Sam, with brunch hosts Dr. Stephanie Mandelman and her husband Shane.

Dean Archana Chatterjee attended an alumni brunch in Calabasas, CA, hosted by **Stephanie Mandelman, MD '95**, and her husband **Shane Damelin**. Attendees included **Arthur Lazik, MD '65, PhD**; **Harvey Kalan, MD '75**; **Franklin Pratt, MD '81**; **David Hoffman, MD '94**; **Roben Ahdoot, MD '95**; **Meredith Glickman, MD '95**; **Lalima Hoq, MD '97, MPH**; **Andrew Fox, MD '98**; **Kathy Gohar, MD '99**; **Marc Kalan, MD '02**; **Sharline Kashfian, MD '11, MS**; **Paul Pantapalangkoor, MD '21, MS**; and **Meghna Yalamanchi, MD '23, MS**.

Dr. Chatterjee also had dinner in Pasadena, CA with CMS alumnus **Elson Lai, MD '07**. Dr. Lai is an eye physician and surgeon at Rosemead Eye Center, in the San Gabriel Valley region. ■



Dr. Arthur Lazik with Dr. Chatterjee.



Dr. Elson Lai, Dr. Chatterjee and her husband Sam, and George Rattin from the RFU alumni office.

Get to know the people who make CMS a great place to study and work!



Crystal Gutierrez

Lead Coordinator, Medical Education,
Department of Foundational Sciences & Humanities
Time at CMS: 12 years

Crystal Gutierrez earned a dual degree in Education and Secondary Education from Loyola University Chicago, and joined RFU straight out of university in 2013. Her first role at the university was Senior Administrative Assistant in the Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology (CMP) department at CMS. She credits Kerstin Ford, Dr. Heinz Steiner, and Dr. Ann Snyder from the CMP department with giving her the “work” foundation that has led her to her current role as the Lead Coordinator of Medical Education. As lead coordinator, Crystal’s work days are spent in various acts of course and curriculum administration and management. Her many duties include collecting, editing, and uploading course content to D2L; editing and uploading assessment

questions to ExamSoft; ushering guest faculty around the university; addressing faculty, staff, and student questions both in the classroom and during virtual sessions; coordinating and monitoring labs, workshops, panels, and events; coordinating schema cases; and administering quizzes or exams every Friday.

Crystal was drawn to RFU by the opportunity to work in education. “I enjoy working in academics and being surrounded by learning. Working in CMS has afforded me that privilege,” she said when asked to name her favorite part of working at CMS. “Specifically, I enjoy working with students and faculty. It comes with its share of joys, difficulties, and rewards.” She also mentioned the influence of the women she has worked with and for. “Upon reflection, I’ve had the immense privilege to work closely with mostly women course directors (Drs. Ann Snyder, Lise Eliot, Barbara Vertel, Jan Urban, Esther Calderon, Melissa Chen, Lalita Prasad-Reddy) and managers (Kerstin Ford and Ashwini Mokashi),” she said. “As someone who joined the university in her early twenties not knowing much, if anything, about work and life, twelve years of observing and learning from smart, kind, driven, genuine, and nurturing women has led to my immense growth as an individual and an employee.”

When asked about her hobbies, Crystal mentioned that she’s in the middle of reading Gabrielle Zevin’s *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow* and was inspired to refer to a “multitude of yesterday’s hobbies and interests”:

- “Yesterday, I was a young child of a father with a green thumb and was climbing mango trees in the Philippines, so I will forever love trees, plants, flowers (orchids) though I didn’t inherit my father’s green thumb.
- “Yesterday, I watched cooking shows and helped my Dad prepare traditional Filipino food, and use these experiences as a pretense at cooking.
- “Yesterday, I listened to music (R&B, pop, rock, hip hop, OPM) and watched movies and shows about art, fashion, design, and travel in different languages (English, Tagalog, Korean, Japanese, Mandarin).
- “Yesterday, I was a reader roaming library shelves for eye-catching book covers and take-me-home summaries and a writer of poems and words that no one ever saw.
- “Reading will inevitably lead me to new ideas, people, and places, and tomorrow I may be one if not all of yesterday’s versions of me, or a different curiosity will take root and I’m off to a new tomorrow/yesterday.” ■

Awards & Accomplishments



Congratulations to **Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD**, dean of CMS and senior vice president for medical affairs, RFU, who was appointed president-elect of the Institute of Medicine of Chicago (IOMC). The IOMC is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving public health in Chicago through advancements in health equity. Dr. Chatterjee has previously served the IOMC in other roles, including vice president and board director.

“It is a true privilege to serve as President-Elect of IOMC at such a transformative time,” said Dr. Chatterjee. “I am inspired by the collective purpose of our Board and leadership team, and I am eager to help shape bold new initiatives that will enrich lives and build healthier communities.”

Joanna Dabrowska, PhD, PharmD, associate professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology, received a five-year, \$1.8 million R01 grant from the National Institute of Mental Health for the research study “The Role of Oxytocin in Modulating Activity of the Supramammillary Nucleus and Social Recognition Memory.” The award is a Multiple Principal Investigators grant with Hala Harony-Nicolas, PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.



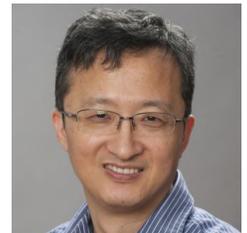
Sonam Khanna, CMS '29, received a formal commendation from Theodore A. Thompson, executive director of the Young Doctors Club of North Lawndale, for her leadership and excellence in community service over the past two years. In his commendation of Sonam, Mr. Thompson highlighted “her exceptional leadership, her long-standing commitment

to the North Lawndale community, and the profound impact she has had on our youth.”

The Young Doctors Club is a community-based health sciences education pipeline designed to introduce students from medically underserved areas to health science careers and to support medical professionals through mentorship and community engagement. The program model consists of curricula designed, developed, and administered by medical students.

“What truly sets Sonam Khanna apart is her genuine love for the children and for the North Lawndale community,” Mr. Thompson wrote. “Her dedication is not just professional; it is personal. She has worked endlessly to ensure our students feel supported and inspired, and her presence has made a profound difference to all of us here.”

Hongkyun Kim, PhD, professor of cell biology and anatomy, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, was awarded a 5-year, \$1.9 million grant from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke to fund his research on molecular and cellular regulation of CaV2 voltage-gated calcium channels.



Dr. Kim’s research addresses the dysregulation of human proteins linked to a wide range of diseases. He is looking at a key protein in synaptic transmission: the voltage-gated calcium channel. These channels at the synapse determine how strongly nerve cells communicate with each other. This research is vital because abnormalities in channel function or abundance are often the underlying cause of neurological disorders, such as epilepsy, migraines, and pain.

Natalie Loveridge, CMS '28, was chosen as the Great Plains Regional Representative for the Emergency Medicine Residents’ Association (EMRA)



Medical Student Council. “This opportunity to serve on EMRA’s national board is one that I’ve dreamed about since discovering EMRA,” Natalie said.

RFU’s **Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research** was awarded two foundation grants:

- The Center was awarded a Leadership and Capacity Building Grant through the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County. This grant is awarded to individuals, organizations, and networks that drive community health improvement and support leadership growth, organizational effectiveness, and coalition or network development. This award will help support the Center’s ongoing collaborations with community partners on co-mentored student projects; joint grant proposals; and co-designed trainings, workshops, and other events in 2026.
- An award from the Michael Reese Research and Education Foundation will enable the Center to administer four small grants of \$10,000 each to support RFU faculty and students in conducting research projects that address health equity in Lake County, IL. This award will also support the Center to hold a week-long summer research institute in June 2026 as part of its student summer research program as well as several other workshops and trainings throughout the year.

Amanda M. Simanek, PhD, MPH, director of the Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research and associate professor of foundational sciences and humanities, was nominated and approved as a Fellow of the Institute of Medicine of Chicago (IOMC). The IOMC is composed of distinguished leaders in the health field who collaborate to improve the health of the public and address critical health issues through a range of interdisciplinary approaches including education, research, communication of trusted information, and community engagement.



Presentations & Publications

Yvette Castañeda, PhD, MPH, MBA, community engagement core lead, Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research (CHER); **Iris Siguenza**, CMS '28; **Yovanna Pomarico**, PhD, MBA, CMA, director, pre-matriculation program; **Chrysee Gorospe**, MS, MED, coordinator of community health engagement programs; **Maria Gomez**, MD, assistant professor of emergency medicine; **Daniela Maciel**, CMS '27; **Sofia Ramos de la Cruz**, CMS '28; **Adriana Fresquez**, MD '22, PhD '20; **Reyna Ayala**, INSPIRE program; **Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, assistant professor, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics; **Perla Arias**, research intern in Dr. Hunsberger’s lab; **Rosa Ayala**, laboratory research assistant, lab of Dr. Neelam Sharma-Walia; **Elvia Manriquez**, research assistant, Center for Genetic Diseases; **Cecilia Pena-Rasgado**, MS, senior research associate, Center for Genetic Diseases; **Melissa Chen**, MD, assistant dean for community health and engagement; and **Hector Rasgado-Flores**, PhD, professor of physiology and biophysics, contributed as co-authors of the chapter “Latinx Women in STEM and Medicine: Resilience, Identity, Strength, and Equity,” for the book *The Role of Women in Research and Innovation*.



Dr. Castañeda



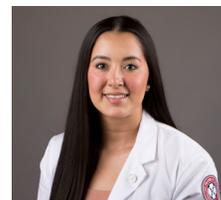
Iris Siguenza



Chrysee Gorospe



Dr. Gomez



Daniela Maciel



Sofia Ramos de la Cruz



Dr. Fresquez



Dr. Hunsberger



Dr. Chen



Dr. Rasgado

School & Department News



Dr. Valerie Chai

Valerie Chai, PhD, professor of microbiology and immunology and director of the Center for Genetic Diseases; **Sara Knowles**, lab manager; and **Fang Wang**, PhD, senior research scientist, co-authored a paper titled “In Vivo Investigation of STN1 Downregulation in Melanoma Formation in Adult Mice Following UV Irradiation,” published in *PLoS One*.

Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD, dean of Chicago Medical School and senior vice president for medical affairs, RFU, was invited as a guest speaker at a community educational event hosted by the Assam Association of Greater Chicago (AAGC). Her presentation, titled “Lifestyle Approaches to Improving Health & Wellbeing,” covered topics including empowering leadership, practical lifestyle strategies, and diet and overall health.



Makena Horne, CMS '29, co-authored an article titled “Axon Loss and Collagen Deposition Confirms Compression Neuropathy in the Ilioinguinal Nerve Resected from Primary Inguinal Herniorrhaphy Patients,” published in the *Journal of Abdominal Wall Surgery*.

Holly Hunsberger, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience, Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, co-authored a publication in collaboration with **Namhee Kim**, PhD, data resource core lead, Michael Reese Foundation Center for Health Equity Research, and **Aidan Butler**, a medical student from the University of Toledo who interned in Dr. Hunsberger’s lab last summer. The article, “Unresolved



Dr. Hunsberger



Dr. Kim

Controversies: The Effect of Benzodiazepines on Cognition and Alzheimer’s Disease,” was published in the *Journal of Dementia and Alzheimer’s Disease*.

Three groups of CMS students presented during the “Challenging Norms” conference, a virtual event held annually by the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai to uplift anti-racist initiatives in the medical education field.

- **Agbai Kalu**, CMS '28; **Charles Bieleu Nkamga**, CMS '28; **Carl Marcelin**, CMS '28; **Lloyd Sealey**, CMS '26; **Corein Eaton Jr.**, CMS '28; **Chrysee Gorospe**, MED, coordinator of community health engagement programs; **Melissa Chen**, MD, assistant dean for community health and engagement; and **Monique Jones**, MD, interim assistant dean for career and specialty advising, co-authored a poster titled “Hero Academy: Parents as Pillars in the Journey of Black Men to Medicine.”
- **Aroosha Aamir**, CMS '26; **Tommi Tsao**, CMS '26; **Susanna Calkins**, PhD, director, Nexus for Faculty Success; **Dr. Melissa Chen**; and **Maria Gomez**, MD, assistant professor of emergency medicine and P2H2 co-course director, co-authored a poster titled “Lifting Community Voices: An Assessment of Community Engagement in Health Equity Coursework.”
- **Jessica Beroukhim**, CMS '27, CHP '26; **Izza Khurram**, CMS '28; **Mary Nellett**, CMS '28; **Abigail Rousseau**, CMS '26; **Jessica Thompson**, CMS '28; **Bailey Vormezele**, CMS '27; and **Regina de Leon Gomez**, MD, FACOG, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology, co-authored a poster titled “Beyond the Books: Expanding Abuse Education in Medical School through Community Collaboration.”



Dr. Kwak-Kim



Dr. Dambaeva

Joanne Kwak-Kim, MD, MPH, FCRI, ASRI, director of the university’s Reproductive Medicine and Immunology program and professor of obstetrics and gynecology,

School & Department News

presented “Endometrial Tissue Analysis: Decidualization Score Test and New Emerging Markers” as featured speaker at the 2025 Congress of the American Society of Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) in San Antonio, Texas. **Svetlana Dambaeva**, MD, PhD, director of RFU’s Clinical Immunology Laboratory and research associate professor of microbiology and immunology, presented four studies, in collaboration with Dr. Kwak-Kim, during the conference’s poster session.

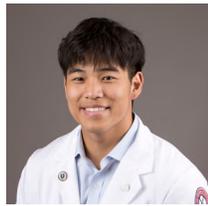
Syed M. Naqvi, MD, pulmonology fellow; **Amin Ur Rehman Nadeem**, MD, FCCP, assistant professor of medicine; **Jason Liu**, CMS ’27; **Tyler Paul**, CMS ’27; and **Sara Oliveira**, MD, CPT, internal medicine resident, co-authored a case titled “Acute Hypoxemic Respiratory Failure Caused by Nonspecific Interstitial Pneumonia in Mixed Connective Tissue Disease: A Case Report,” published in the *Cureus Journal of Medical Science*.



Dr. Syed Naqvi



Dr. Nadeem



Jason Liu



Tyler Paul



Dr. Sara Oliveira

Anisha Pethkar, CMS ’29, was a speaker at “Us vs. HPV Week,” a series of virtual presentations on HPV, sponsored by the American Medical Woman’s Association and the Global Initiative Against HPV and Cervical Cancer.



Judy Potashkin, PhD, professor and discipline chair of cellular and molecular pharmacology; **Vidyadhara D J**, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience; and **Holly Hunsberger**, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience, all from the Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, co-authored a publication titled “The Impact of Lifestyle on Brain Health,” published in the *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*. The article is an analytical review that examines the evidence of how lifestyle modifications help prevent age-related cognitive decline.



Dr. Potashkin



Dr. D J



Dr. Hunsberger



Roxane Rohani, PharmD, MSc, BCACP, associate professor of cellular and molecular pharmacology, Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Immunology, and Infection, co-authored a paper titled “Need for More HIV-Trained Pharmacists Due to Unmet Needs and Expanding Opportunities: An Opinion of the HIV Practice and Research Network of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy,” published in the *Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy*.

Beth Stutzmann, PhD, professor of neuroscience and director of the Center for Neurodegenerative Disease and Therapeutics, contributed to the article “Inactive Ryanodine Receptors Sustain Lysosomal Availability for Autophagy by Promoting ER-Lysosomal Contact Site Formation,” published in *Nature Communications*.



Events and Other News



Janice Urban, PhD, was appointed Interim Executive Vice President for Research, following the retirement of Dr. Joseph DiMario. Dr. Urban's proven record of leadership, research excellence and commitment to collaboration form a solid foundation upon which RFU will continue to support and advance life-changing biomedical and clinical research.

Dr. Urban joined CMS in 1997 as an assistant professor, advancing to professor and chair of physiology and biophysics. She was appointed director of RFU's Center for Neurobiology of Stress Resilience and Psychiatric Disorders in 2019, where she maintains an active research program studying contributions of neural mechanisms in the amygdala involved in the generation of stress resilience and anxiety. Dr. Urban will continue in these roles alongside her interim EVP responsibilities.

In addition to her research, Dr. Urban is a dedicated teacher and strong advocate for graduate training, helping shape the next generation of leaders in biomedical sciences. She is a CMS Distinguished Faculty Award recipient, has served on study sections for the National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation, and was named a Fellow of the American Physiological Society for excellence in science and significant contributions to physiological sciences. She also served as President for the Association of Chairs of the Departments of Physiology.

Shane Farrell joined CMS in January as our new Coordinator of Clinical Affairs. In this role, Shane will provide administrative and operational support to Dr. Michael Allswede, Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs, CMS / Associate Vice President for Medical Affairs, RFU, and will play a key role in advancing clinical partnership initiatives for Chicago Medical School and RFU. We look forward to the contributions he will make



in support of our clinical partnerships and institutional mission.



As president of the International Society for Immunology of Reproduction (ISIR), **Joanne Kwak-Kim, MD, MPH, FCRI, ASRI**, Agnes D. Lattimer MD Professor of obstetrics and gynecology at CMS and director of reproductive medicine and

immunology at RFU, will lead the organization of the 16th annual ISIR Congress, which will be held in Busan, Korea from September 10-13, 2026. This congress will feature a global dialogue on population balance and women's health through reproductive immunology.

Archana Chatterjee, MD, PhD, dean of CMS and senior vice president for medical affairs, RFU, a pediatric infectious disease specialist, was quoted in a *Chicago Health Magazine* article about the Hepatitis B vaccine for infants.



Monique Jones, MD '93, interim assistant dean for career and specialty advising and associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology, was invited to serve as an advisor to a new collaborative AAMC initiative, "Reimagining How We Share Learner

Information: The Future of the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE)." The multi-year initiative seeks to re-envision how information about medical student performance is communicated during the transition from undergraduate medical education (UME) to graduate medical education (GME). As a member of the MSPE Advisory Group, Dr. Jones will provide strategic guidance from a UME and GME perspective and help ensure that transparency, equity, and feasibility remain central throughout the project.

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RFU hosted its inaugural **Scholarship Luncheon** on October 17, celebrating the transformative power of investing in education and advancing healthier communities. Donors from around the country met with scholarship recipients for the first time in a large event setting. **Andy Okhuereigbe**, CMS '29, along with students from RFU's other schools, shared inspiring stories of how scholarship support is helping them achieve their goals of pursuing careers in health care.



Andy Okhuereigbe at the luncheon

On November 17, the university's Interprofessional Community Clinic hosted a **Trauma-Informed Care Workshop** led by **Biana Kotlyar**, MD, education director, discipline chair, and associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral science, and **Venoncia M. Baté-Ambrus**, PhD, MS, MA, executive director of the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County. The session focused on navigating difficult patient conversations, self-care, and secondary trauma, and was open to students and staff across all disciplines.



Dr. Biana Kotlyar

The university hosted its second annual **RFU Unity Fest** on January 15. During the multicultural celebration of our campus community, students, faculty, and staff were invited to a feast of Chinese, Indian, Mediterranean, and Jamaican cuisine. Other Unity Day activities included live music by students in the **RFU Music Club**, a scavenger

hunt with RFU trivia, a dance class, a photobooth, and a craft session led by students from the **South Asian Medical Organization for Student Activities (SAMOSA)**.



Students in the RFU Music Club provided music.



SAMOSA hosted a diya-painting activity.

The CMS Executive House Council hosted their annual social event on January 30. The **Casino Winter Formal** took place in Independence Grove, where students enjoyed an evening of food, music, dancing, and games.



Brenda Affinati, MD, assistant dean for medical student education and associate professor of medicine, met

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with CMS students in the **Illinois Clinicians for Climate Action (ICCA) Student Section** for a roundtable discussion about climate change in health care. The group discussed the effects of climate change on health outcomes and how environmental concerns manifest in a clinical context.

The ICCA Student Section is a coalition of health professions students across Illinois — led by four CMS students — who advocate for climate policy and education due to the health implications of climate change. Members work to address the health impacts of climate change and raise awareness among future health professionals through policy advocacy, educational workshops, and curriculum reform.



The **RFU Performing Arts Club** welcomed physiatrist and violinist **Dr. François DeAsis** on January 26 to talk about performing arts medicine, a branch of medicine focused on the treatment and prevention of injuries in musicians, dancers, actors, and other performers. The event was organized by **Connor Quinby**, a first-year medical student who is also a flutist.

Dr. DeAsis is the founder of Medicine for Musicians, a team of healthcare professionals who have dedicated their careers to providing care and support to performing artists. He majored in music and biology at Loyola University, and after earning his medical degree at Northwestern University, he trained at the only Performing Arts Medicine fellowship in the world. Since he discovered performing arts medicine in medical school, Dr. DeAsis has a special interest in outreach and

education, introducing medical students to this unique specialty.



Dr. François DeAsis (right) with Connor Quinby.

Lana Trautman, CMS '28, 2025 president of the Interprofessional Community Clinic (ICC), gave her **"State of the ICC" presentation**, highlighting a year of growth, innovation, and impact across the ICC's clinics and programs. She reflected on key accomplishments, shared data on patient care and community outreach, and outlined priorities for the coming year. "We have a really special opportunity here at RFU," Lana said. "As students, we're entrusted with the responsibility of not only running the clinic, but also given the freedom to drive the change that we want to see in our community and for our patients."

The event also served to introduce the new student leaders for the ICC: **Madeline Marks**, CMS '29, is the 2026 ICC president, and **Eesha Singh**, CMS '29, is the 2026 vice president. ■



During the "State of the ICC" presentation, 2025 ICC president Lana Trautman (left) took a moment to thank the student and faculty volunteers who make the ICC possible. In 2025, the clinic had 419 total volunteers, including 383 students.



Leadership from the Lake County Health Department visited Chicago Medical School in November to discuss their partnership and ways that the two organizations can work together to improve health care for the Lake County community. CMS leadership had visited the Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center in September.

We want to hear from you!

**To submit information or news for upcoming issues, contact
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