General Internal Medicine Newsletter

Message from Division Leadership
What an intense last three months it has been. Through your heroic efforts, we’ve successfully emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, incredibly stronger than ever. In response to changing needs, you innovated by creating COVID programs across the entire spectrum—ICU, inpatient, palliative, recovery, post-discharge, and outpatient. You trained yourselves and your colleagues to confidently care for patients with COVID. You were fierce advocates for our patients, bringing family members virtually to the bedside. You creatively engaged our students, crafting new telemedicine electives to ensure safe learning. You supported each other in more ways than we could count as virtual team members, peer supporters, backup staff. We applaud and thank you for your incredible dedication and service. On the heels of pandemic losses, we were reminded that racism, especially in the form of police brutality, continues to threaten the lives of the people we are trying to protect. You organized and lent voice and strength to a variety of critical movements at NYP-WCM/LMH as well as around the city and the country. We pledge continued support and action. Finally, we celebrate the close of this academic year with many accolades. GIM swept in the Department of Medicine for teaching awards at convocation. Congratulations!

Judy Tung, MD | Section Chief, Adult Internal Medicine

Clinical Updates
The Cough, Cold and Fever Clinic was created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since mid-March, the program has evaluated and treated over 600 patients with suspected coronavirus, providing a vital service to New York especially during pandemic peak when hospital resources were constrained. The program teamed up with the Emergency Department to receive over 100 overflow patients and with the Department of Radiology to offer over 150 on-site chest x-rays for the accurate triaging of illness acuity. Dozens of patients were sent home with oxygen saturation devices to allow for safe monitoring of their disease course and patients were additionally closely followed with discharge phone calls made by our nurses and medical students.

The COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges for the healthcare system, with one of the biggest burdens being the management of ICU patients with respiratory failure and post-ICU care. Hospital Medicine physicians in collaboration with other healthcare providers and NYP leadership created an innovative 30-bed COVID-19 Recovery Unit to provide a multidisciplinary, comprehensive treatment model for those recovering from COVID-19 critical illness, with a critical eye toward medicine, rehabilitation, and neuro-psychological needs. During the past two months, the unit has admitted 83 patients. Of those, around 80% were sent home with good recovery.

Similarly, Hospital Medicine physicians participated in the development of a Tracheostomy Care Unit at NYP/WCM, bringing together a multidisciplinary team and geographically localizing dedicated physical therapy, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, and respiratory therapists to facilitate medical management and rehabilitation of patients with COVID-19.

The Best Practices for Clinical Teaching Noon Conference series was started this year to bring faculty, residents, and chief residents together in identifying our group’s best teaching practices using appreciative inquiry. To build upon the strategies discussed, we invite all faculty to join our Peer Teaching Coach program, where faculty have the opportunity to observe colleagues teaching in the authentic context, as well as receive feedback on their own teaching skills through peer observation. Please contact Alice Tang, MD if interested!

Research Updates
Parag Goyal, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine, was awarded by the American Heart Association for his project Successful Aging and Cardiovascular Disease.
The award duration is July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2023, in the amount of $231,000.

In a response to provide optimal care to COVID-19 positive patients amidst this healthcare crisis, a team of GIM faculty, staff, and students created the “Weill Cornell COVID-19 Observational Research Cohort,” led by Drs. Parag Goyal, Laura Pinheiro, Justin Choi and Monika Safford. There were over 50 WCM medical students involved in helping to abstract medical chart data. Together they created a comprehensive registry of COVID-19 cases at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medicine, NewYork-Presbyterian/Lower Manhattan Hospital, and NewYork-Presbyterian/Queens. The team has published “Clinical Characteristics of Covid-19 in New York City,” along with two more articles, and there are several other manuscripts under review. They have over 30 projects underway using our data with investigators from across study settings NYP/WCM, NYP/LMH, NYP/Queens, NYP/BK, and Columbia University Medical Center. If interested in collaborating or accessing data, please email Assem Jabri.

Arnab Ghosh, MD was awarded the Dean’s Diversity and Healthcare Disparity Research Award in the amount of $50,000 for one year, to investigate the influence of value-based payment models on racial and socioeconomic disparities in hospitalized patients. The Affordable Care Act of 2011 created new models called Value-Based Payment Models (VBPMs) to manage healthcare costs while maintaining quality. The project’s long-term objective is to illuminate the unknown but manifold effects of VBPMs on healthcare disparities. The project’s specific aim seeks to explore VBPMs in the hospital setting, through the examination of large datasets to detect differences in healthcare outcomes between patients of different races/ethnicities and income levels.

Education Updates

While the Primary Care Clerkship has been paused due to COVID-19, the Primary Care Clerkship leadership team created a new 4-week elective, “Telehealth in the Age of COVID-19,” which allowed medical students to take part in the pandemic efforts remotely. During this time, 25 students rose to the challenge and made follow-up calls to patients that presented to Weill Cornell Internal Medicine Associates’ Cough, Cold and Fever Clinic and/or the Emergency Department’s OnDemand video visit service. They played a vital role in patient education, reassurance, and occasionally escalation of care for acutely ill patients. In addition, a few selected students rotated through the Center on Aging and made frequent phone calls to help the geriatric community manage their anxiety and loneliness during isolation.

We are excited to welcome our students back into the outpatient practices on July 6th. Our newly revamped clerkship will adapt to the “new normal” of clinical practice. On top of in-person clinical sessions, students will participate in more telemedicine/video visits and will continue to play an important role in follow-up care for our patients after COVID-19.

We would like to thank Dr. Pamela Eliach, Senior Clerkship Advisor, for all she has done for the Primary Care Clerkship this past year. She will be greatly missed. We wish her a fun and happy retirement!

The Hospital Medicine Clinical Scholars program graduates its third class of scholars. Congratulations to Drs. Laura Kolbe, Michael Wagner, William Levine, and Devin Worster!

The Hospital Medicine Point of Care Ultrasound Clinical Fellowship is graduating its first class of fellows! Congratulations to Dr. Alberto Rojas and Dr. Rajiv Bhagat! We are looking forward to our next class of
fellows who are starting on July 1st! Welcome Dr. Nikita Rabelo-Pagan and Dr. Laura Chen!

The Integrative Health Clinical Fellowship is graduating its first fellow, Jillian Cohen, MD. Dr. Cohen will be joining our faculty in the Integrative Health and Wellbeing program, effective July 1, 2020.

Cornell Center for Health Equity (CCHeq)
The Health Equity Seminar Series takes place every first Friday of the month and is currently presented remotely via Zoom due to COVID-19. On May 1, 2020, Robert White, MD gave a talk on Identification of Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Maternal Morbidity and Mortality: Measurement Issues. For more information on the Health Equity Seminar Series or if you would like to give a talk at one of the seminars, please email Grace Figueroa.

Diversity Center of Excellence (DCoE)
The Diversity Center of Excellence of the Cornell Center for Health Equity has received a grant of $150,000 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to support increased health professions workforce training with a focus on telehealth and distance learning capabilities in response to COVID-19.

Quality Improvement Academy (QIA)
The annual Weill Cornell Medicine Quality Improvement Poster Session, originally scheduled for May, has been postponed. The new date is Tuesday, September 15, from 5PM-7PM. Registration for this free virtual event will begin in early September. Interactive poster viewing and presentations will be incorporated into the format. More information will be included in the August newsletter. Stay tuned!

Honors & Awards
The following faculty received awards at the Weill Cornell commencement ceremony on May 28, 2020. To view a full list of awards, click here. Congratulations!

Dr. Susana Morales was awarded the Leonard Tow Humanism Award.
Dr. Ernie Esquivel was awarded the Elliot Hochstein Teaching Award.
Drs. Brian Eiss, Ernie Esquivel, Sydney Katz, Michael Torres Lizardi, Anthony Ogedegbe, Amanda Ramsdell, Melissa Rusli, and Alice Tang were named to the Senior List.

At the residency graduation ceremony, Dr. Adrian Majid was awarded the J. James Smith teaching award.
Dr. Gregory Mints was awarded as the Hospital Medicine Attending of the Year and Dr. Peggy Leung was awarded as the WCIMA Attending of the Year.

Publications
Todd Cutler, MD Inpatient Management of COVID-19 Pneumonia: A Practical Approach from the Hospitalist Perspective
Christopher Gonzalez, MD Preparing Telemedicine for the Frontlines of Healthcare Equity
Parag Goyal, MD had several publications during this period; click here.
Renuka Gupta, MD A Paradigm for the Pandemic: A Covid-19 Recovery Unit
Dhruv Khullar, MD The Patient-Driven Payment Model: Addressing Perverse Incentives, Creating New Ones
Justin Kingery, MD HIV-Associated Myocardial Diastolic Dysfunction and Soluble ST2 Concentration in Tanzanian Adults: A Cross-Sectional Study
Matthew McCarthy, MD Harnessing the Potential of CRISPR-Based Platforms to Advance the Field of Hospital Medicine
Iris Navarro-Millán, MD Barriers and Facilitators for Screening and Treatment of Hyperlipidemia among Patients with Inflammatory Arthritis
Fred Pelzman, MD Social Justice: Yes, It’s a Medical Issue
Erica Phillips, MD Protocol for the Trial to Establish a Causal Linkage between Mycotoxin Exposure and Child Stunting: A Cluster Randomized Trial
Laura Pinheiro, PhD Differences in Ambulatory Care Fragmentation Between Cancer Survivors and Noncancer Controls
Laura Pinheiro, PhD Diabetes Care Management Patterns Before and After a Cancer Diagnosis: A SEER-Medicare Matched Cohort Study
Monika Safford, MD had several publications during this period; click here.
Joseph Shin, MD Gender-Based Violence Experienced by Women Seeking Asylum in the United State: A Lifetime of Multiple Traumas Inflicted by Multiple Perpetrators
Joseph Shin, MD Medical and Mental Health Implications of Gestational Surrogacy and Trends in State Regulations on Compensated Gestational Surrogacy
Madeline Sterling, MD They Are Essential Workers Now, and Should Continue to Be: Social Workers and Home Health Care Workers during COVID-19 and Beyond
Madeline Sterling, MD Social Determinants of Health and 90-Day Mortality After Hospitalization for Heart Failure in the REGARDS Study
Madeline Sterling, MD Hearing Loss and Physical Functioning Among Adults with Heart Failure: Data from NHANES

Appointments & Promotions
Renuka Gupta, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine, has been appointed as Chief of Medicine at NewYork-Presbyterian/Lower Manhattan Hospital. Dr. Gupta will begin her role in July 2020 and will be succeeding Dr. Judy Tung, who had served in this role since 2016. In addition to her roles as a clinician and educator, Dr. Gupta is an expert on hospital operational efficiency, hospital systems, healthcare policy, and quality improvement. She is also a leader in the academic domain of discrimination against physicians. In her role at LMH, Dr. Gupta will oversee and coordinate the outpatient and inpatient activities of WDOM faculty at LMH, serving an important role as liaison for the faculty, Division Chiefs, Chair of Medicine, and hospital leadership.

Katelyn Zingg, BA, Program Assistant for PALS, has been promoted to Administrative Specialist to Dr. Monika Safford effective May 1, 2020.

GIM Grand Rounds
GIM Grand Rounds takes place every first Thursday of the month via Zoom. The following speakers gave grand rounds: Kimberly Bloom-Feshbach, MD, on COVID Talk: Communication in Crisis; and Henry Wei, MD, on Machine Learning and AI in Medicine: It’s Not About the Technology. For speaker recommendations, please email Fred Pelzman, MD or Jigar Contractor, MD.

Spread the Word
Bryan Leppert, MD, Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine, published a textbook, Netter’s Integrated Review of Medicine: Pathogenesis to Treatment, 1st edition. The textbook is available for sale on Amazon and Elsevier.

Fred Pelzman, MD was featured in WCM’s newsroom with “COVID-19 Treatment Depends upon Disease Severity” and “COVID-19: Why Is It Mild for Some, Deadly for Others?”

Laura Pinheiro, PhD presented on Optimizing the Delivery of Diabetes Management during Breast Cancer Care at the Department of Medicine Research-in-Progress Seminar Series on June 8, 2020.

Monika Safford, MD found that obesity is linked to more serious complications from COVID-19, including in younger people. Read more from NYP Health Matters here or on WCM’s Newsroom here.
Monika Safford, MD was featured in The Cornell Daily Sun for her interview on “Race as a Social Determinant of Health: Why Black Populations Are Disproportionately Affected by COVID-19.” Click here to read more.

Monika Safford, MD led discussions on the emerging disparities in COVID care and outcomes, as well as the ongoing research initiatives that are taking place at the Cornell Center for Health Equity during the Diversity COVID-19 Town Hall meeting on April 22, 2020.

Joseph Shin, MD presented at the 2020 TEDMED Conference in Boston, March 2020 (pre-COVID), discussing research and advocacy related to child asylum seekers. Some of the preliminary work was presented last year; click here to read more. The TEDMED talk is scheduled to be released in July 2020; learn more here.

Joseph Shin, MD has been working with a network of physicians alongside legal aid and human rights organizations engaged in medical-legal advocacy for people in jails, prisons, and immigration detention centers who are in heightened jeopardy due to unsafe conditions exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are a list of news articles:

1. “Impending Public Health Disaster”: Leading U.S. Medical and Constitutional Law Experts File Milestone Amicus Brief to Release Detained Immigrants from ICE Detention Facility
2. Corey Stoughton Lauded for Helping to Free Hundreds of Incarcerated New Yorkers
3. Doctor Warns of Risks in ICE Detainee Transfers
4. ICE Ignores Coronavirus Guidelines in Detention, Federal Lawsuit Says. ‘Many will die’

Madeline Sterling, MD gave a virtual talk on April 22, 2020, at the University of North Carolina’s Center for Health session entitled “Equity Behind the Scenes and In the Shadows: Essential Employees in COVID-19.” Click here to read more.

Madeline Sterling, MD was featured in the American Heart Association newsroom for her article on “Health Disparities in Rural US: Higher Coronary Artery Disease Death in Women Under 65 and People with Heart Failure.” Click here to read more.

Judy Tung, MD shares tips with NYP Health Matters on how to treat yourself at home if you have COVID-19. Read more here.

#WhiteCoatsforBlackLives moments of solidarity with Weill Cornell Medicine and NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital teams standing against racism and injustice in our community.
The Department of Medicine #HairstylesForHeroes initiative raised $81,025. The funds raised through this effort will be an immediate accelerator to support the academic efforts of trainees and junior faculty, whose work has been impacted, and often delayed, by the need to join the COVID-19 response. This will help support their careers and amplify their work during this next recovery phase. Check out some cool hairstyles from our GIM faculty!

Welcome to the Team!

Academic:
Juveria Abdullah, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine
Josef Brejt, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine
Laura Chen, MD, Instructor in Medicine
Joshua Heisler, MD, Instructor in Medicine
Alexandra King, MD, Instructor in Medicine
Zachary Mulvihill, MD, Instructor in Medicine
Lily Yan, MD, Instructor in Medicine
Kristina Fernandez, MD, Chief Resident
Ariel Schaap, MD, Chief Resident
Mark Sonnick, MD, Chief Resident

Staff:
Mackenzie Brown, MPH, Research Assistant for Dr. Navarro-Millán
Noel Higgason, BA, Research Assistant for Dr. Pinheiro
Miranda Metz, BS, Research Assistant for Dr. McNairy

Farewell!

Benedict Harvey, BS, Diversity Programs Specialist
Geyanne Lui, BS, Research Assistant
Daniela Nilo, BA, Patient Navigator
Caleigh Smith, BS, Research Assistant

Congratulations!

Dr. Deborah Fung welcomed baby girl Katelyn Leia Fung to the family!