



Pennsylvania
MEDICAL SOCIETY®

ADVOCATE. EDUCATE. NAVIGATE.

Putting the ***passion*** back
in the practice of medicine
by celebrating excellence in medicine.





On behalf of everyone at ProAssurance

congratulations

on your well deserved recognition!

Congratulations to all winners of the annual PAMED Awards, which honor physicians who go above and beyond to provide exceptional service to their patients and communities. We recognize their commitment, compassion, and achievements in their respective medical fields. ProAssurance further extends our gratitude to all physicians who dedicate their time and expertise to improve lives. The work you do matters, and we commit to providing solid and comprehensive protection for your unique practice.



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Congratulations on all of your accomplishments in 2024!

From the PAMED Executive Vice President & CEO, Martin P. Raniowski, MA, FCPP, CAE

As CEO, I have the privilege of being involved in many aspects of the Pennsylvania Medical Society (PAMED).

This year, PAMED has truly listened to its members' voices and continued its advocacy efforts in the Commonwealth. We saw significant legislative progress on one of the biggest issues our members care about – noncompete clauses. Over 1,000 members responded to the calls to action, leading to the signing of noncompete clause legislation by the Governor this summer. Although we have not finished our work on this issue, this was a significant step forward.

Similarly, you reached out to your representatives when scope of practice was coming up for debate again. Because of YOU, PAMED was able to maintain the appropriate scope of practice regulations that are needed for patient care and to keep the healthcare team together.

These are incredible achievements, demonstrating the power of the physician voice where it matters most.

The Emergency Department Overcrowding Task Force has made major strides, having been heard by Governor Josh Shapiro and actively collaborating with the Pennsylvania Department of Health and other stakeholders to address this pervasive issue, which affects not just emergency physicians but the entire healthcare system.

I also have the honor of celebrating physicians who are making a significant impact in their practice and patient care. Our Top Physicians Under 40 award recognizes young physicians across the Commonwealth who bring unique perspectives to the practice of medicine. Among this year's recipients are those working in Federally Qualified Health Centers to make a difference in their communities, those passionate about women's health and the impact of climate change on their patients, and one dedicated to mental health, who supported her fellow physicians during the pandemic.

We also celebrated our International Voluntary Service Award recipient, Dr. Virginia Hall, for her decades of hard work in places like Sierra Leone and India, providing essential women's care that would otherwise be unavailable in those communities.

Our 2023/24 Innovation Grant recipients continue to showcase the ingenuity of our physicians, turning their ideas into projects that aim to transform current medical practices.

I am incredibly proud to witness all that PAMED and our members have accomplished this year and to celebrate the physicians who continually push the boundaries of quality care for patients in Pennsylvania. We are honored to have you all as members!

Martin P. Raniowski, MA, FCPP, CAE
CEO/Executive Vice President, PAMED



Continuing the Joy in Medicine!

From the PAMED President, Kristen Sandel, MD, FACEP, FAAEM

Congratulations to all the recipients of PAMED's Top Physicians Under 40, International Voluntary Service Award, and Innovation Grant winners. Your leadership and passion for restoring the joy in medicine have been the inspiration of my presidential initiative this year.

During my tenure as president, I've traveled across Pennsylvania, visiting various practices, systems, and county medical societies, to discuss the importance of restoring the joy in practicing medicine. As a practicing emergency physician for over 20 years, I understand how the day-to-day stress and burnout of our profession can overshadow the passion that drives us to deliver the best care to our patients.

Working with patients is the reason most of us became physicians. The best moments for physicians often come when we are closely engaged with our patients, facing challenges together, and supporting them on their journey to recovery.

Physicians like Virginia Hall, MD, the 2024 International Voluntary Service Award recipient, exemplify this leadership and dedication. Dr. Hall has traveled the world with students and residents, teaching them how to perform surgeries and provide care that would otherwise be unavailable in those communities. Her work is an inspiring example of going above and beyond in our profession.

The Top Physicians Under 40 are also using their passion and drive to shape the future of medicine. Their innovative approaches and dedication to their patients are restoring the joy in practicing medicine and setting a powerful example for all of us.

I am incredibly proud to witness all that PAMED has accomplished this year and to celebrate the physicians who continually push the boundaries to ensure safe and efficient care for patients in Pennsylvania. We are honored to have you all as members!

Kristen Sandel, MD, FACEP, FAAEM
President, PAMED





The Pennsylvania Medical Society's 2025 Awards Nominations are OPEN!

Nominate an outstanding physician for one of these awards today!

www.pamedsoc.org/awards

Deadline: Friday, February 14, 2025

Top Physician Under 40

Know of a rising star? A young physician who is already going above and beyond and making waves in the medical profession? We want to recognize their achievements!

We're looking for PAMED members who are:

- Dynamic physicians under 40 who are making a significant impact in their specialty or community.
- Innovators who are advancing medical practice, research, or education.
- Leaders who inspire others with their dedication, compassion, and expertise.

Community Voluntary Service Award

Awarded every other year, the Community Voluntary Service Award celebrates members who go beyond the call of duty to serve their communities. Nominees must have engaged in volunteer community service that may be described as distinguished for one or more of the following reasons:

- Duration of service.
- Significance of impact on one or many lives.
- Physician's courage.
- Physician's selflessness.
- The overcoming of difficult circumstances or limitations.

We're looking for PAMED members who exemplify true altruism and commitment to community well-being.

Distinguished Service Award

The Distinguished Service Award is PAMED's highest accolade, presented to a member who has demonstrated unparalleled commitment and outstanding achievements in the field of medicine over a lifetime.

We're looking for PAMED members who have made exceptional contributions and have significantly advanced the practice and profession of medicine.

And, throughout the year, we're always recognizing our Everyday Heroes!

Sometimes our physicians are the unsung heroes of our communities, tirelessly working to improve lives and inspire hope. They don't just heal; they uplift, support, and lead with unwavering dedication. All too often, they go unrecognized. PAMED is dedicated to acknowledging and celebrating our Everyday Hero physicians.

We're looking for PAMED members who make extraordinary contributions through their daily actions. Their commitment, compassion, and resilience are the cornerstones of exceptional care and community well-being.

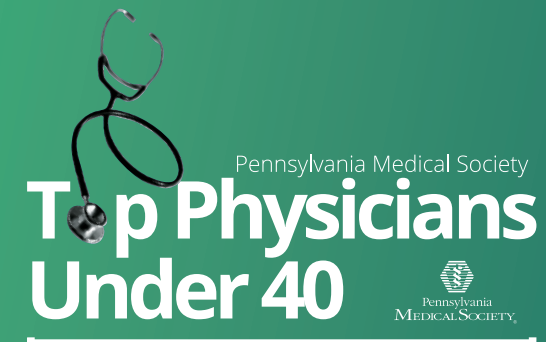


Award winners will be announced
Friday, May 16 via a live, online event!
www.pamedsoc.org/awards



Pennsylvania
MEDICAL SOCIETY

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Pennsylvania's Top Physicians Under 40 Award recognizes the best of the best early career physicians. This year we recognized 30 physicians across 17 specialties and 10 counties.



Rasha Abdulmassih, MD
*Infectious Disease
(Internal Medicine)*
Allegheny County



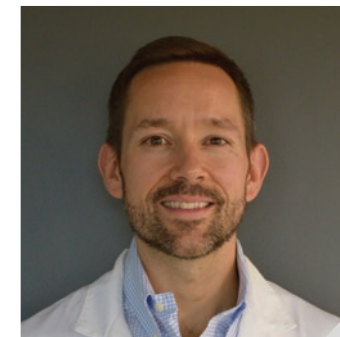
Blair Armstrong, MD
Ophthalmology
Montgomery County



Irtaza Asar, DO
Emergency Medicine
Erie County



Bhavna Bali, MD
Internal Medicine
Dauphin County



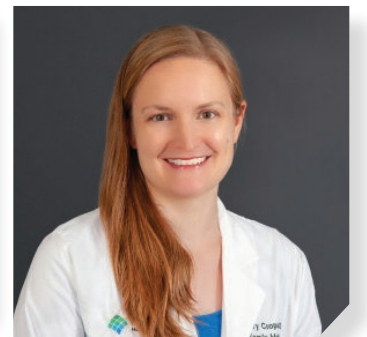
Nicholas Bertoni, MD
Emergency Medicine
Lancaster County



Tanmayee Bichile, MD
*Rheumatology
(Internal Medicine)*
Allegheny County



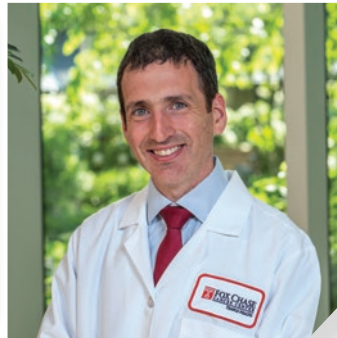
Eisha Chopra, MD
Emergency Medicine
Philadelphia County



Mary Cooper, MD
Family Medicine
Allegheny County



**Molly Ainsman
Fisher, MD**
Internal Medicine
Allegheny County



**Zachary Adam Koel
Frosch, MD**
*Hematology & Medical
Oncology (Internal Medicine)*
Philadelphia County



Eric Ghiraldi, DO
Urology
Montgomery County



Jay Idler, MD
Obstetrics & Gynecology
Allegheny County



“My interest in medicine was driven by my mom who is a nurse. She would discuss medical information and cases that I found to be very interesting. I thought the expertise of a physician was something to be admired,” recalls Dr. Abramovitz.



Blaise Abramovitz, DO
Nephrology
(Internal Medicine)
Allegheny County

Inspiring the Next Generation

Growing up in Monroeville, Pennsylvania, **Blaise Abramovitz, DO** was surrounded by the world of medicine from an early age. His mother, a dedicated nurse, often shared fascinating medical stories and cases that piqued his interest.

“My interest in medicine was driven by my mom who is a nurse. She would discuss medical information and cases that I found to be very interesting. I thought the expertise of a physician was something to be admired,” he recalls.

Dr. Abramovitz pursued his undergraduate studies at the University of Pittsburgh and went on to attend medical school at the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine in Erie. He completed his residency at Allegheny General Hospital and further specialized with a fellowship in nephrology at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2018, he returned to Pittsburgh to join the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) as a nephrologist.

His passion for nephrology was sparked by his desire to explore more than just hospital medicine.

“Nephrology perfectly spans inpatient and alternating outpatient

circumstances,” he explains. “Our chronic kidney disease population is one where we develop these long relationships and follow patients over time. That’s the hard part too, though, you grow relationships with people.”

As the Division Chief of Nephrology at UPMC Mercy, Dr. Abramovitz oversees the nephrologists who round and see patients within the hospital, ensuring the quality of care provided. His role involves significant collaboration with hospital leadership, various quality groups, and the inpatient hemodialysis units. He also serves as the Renal Course Director for second-year medical students, a role he finds particularly rewarding and says is his favorite stage of learners to work with.

Dr. Abramovitz said, “They’re so ready to learn everything – they’re like sponges as this point. They want to soak up everything you’re teaching them and are so interested and involved. It really is a passion and its invigorating to see.”

Dr. Abramovitz’s dedication to education extends beyond medical students. He is involved in residency and fellowship programs at UPMC Mercy, where he serves as a rotation course director and rounds on inpatient services.

“I have my hands in a lot of different areas, and I love that variety and having to tailor that education to different levels of learners,” he said.

The field of nephrology comes with its challenges and rewards.

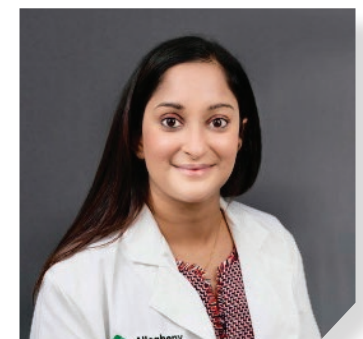
“The hardest part is seeing dialysis patients regularly, providing lifesaving care but without the prospect of a kidney transplant,” Dr. Abramovitz admits.

He explains that dialysis patients often spend three days a week for four hours at a time in dialysis units, a routine that can be both physically and emotionally taxing. However, the relationships built over time with these patients are immensely rewarding.

“Seeing the progression slow down and giving these patients more time and a healthy life is incredibly fulfilling,” he shares.

He says working with UPMC has been a great experience in getting to be involved in so many different aspects of his career. Especially as he says, nephrology is a specialty that often goes without being filled for fellowship and residency programs.

Dr. Abramovitz said, “It’s important that I’m involved in showing medical students and residents how much I love nephrology and how much passion I have for it. And I hope that it rubs off on them and hopefully they pick up that passion as well.” ♦



**Deeksha
Jandhyala, MD**
Infectious Disease
(Internal Medicine)
Allegheny County



**Alexandra
Johnston, DO**
Internal Medicine
Allegheny County



Rebecca Kreston, MD
Emergency Medicine
Philadelphia County



Lena Makaroun, MD
Internal Medicine
Allegheny County



Don Mathew, MD
Internal Medicine
Allegheny County



Eric Balaban, MD
Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine (Internal Medicine)
 Montgomery County

A Passion for Service: From Medicine to Environmental Advocacy

When studying biomedical engineering as an undergraduate, **Eric Balaban, MD**, realized he was more interested in the medical aspect of that career path than the engineering part. Taking inspiration from his father, he continued his studies in medicine.

“My dad’s devotion to his patients was always inspiring to me,” Dr. Balaban said. “He served a large part of what motivates me to get involved in policy and advocacy in the medical field.”

He went on to receive a medical degree from Penn State College of Medicine and completed his residency in internal medicine at the University of Colorado. While there, he was awarded a Fellowship on Climate and Health Science Policy, which aims to train credible and knowledgeable health leaders in clinical, basic science, and policy settings.

“My interest in climate change inserted itself late in my residency. Climate change was making headlines more and more frequently, and I really wanted

to understand, in a real way, what the problem was and if it was as significant a problem for patients as it was billed to be.” He says it didn’t take too much research to realize that was the case. “The question very quickly changed from ‘is climate change real and important’ to ‘how the heck can I be effective in my community to defend and adapt to climate change.’”

His passion for advocacy was a natural driver to get involved. In 2022, the PAMED Board of Trustees issued an Environmental Medicine Task Force to study and apply knowledge to the issues of climate change and its effects on public health.

“This is something bigger than the individual, but we need a buy-in at a system level, and policy is a clear tool to make that happen. This is why I’m excited to be a part of PAMED and other professional societies and learn more about advocacy to make sure I’m leveraging my expertise, knowledge, and energy as well as possible to



comprehensively care for my patients,” Dr. Balaban said.

Since its inception, the Environmental Medicine Task Force has spearheaded successful resolutions that have been passed at the House of Delegates meetings to make climate change and its effects on patients a policy for PAMED. “My experience with the task force has been gratifying and exciting. It has given me an opportunity to embrace the missions of education and policy actions while also demonstrating that PAMED is interested in this sort of topic.”

In 2023, he traveled to Dubai for the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), which he says gave him a renewed passion for the topic of climate change. “Something that I think is very

valuable is the interdisciplinary approach. We’re always talking about interdisciplinary approaches to medical problems because we, in medicine, have found that when you have different perspectives and different expertise, you meet with greater success,” he said. “That principle is as applicable to environmental treatment and safety as it is to treating patients.”

Dr. Balaban’s commitment to service extends beyond his medical and environmental advocacy. During medical school, he joined the Army National Guard as a physician. His curiosity about being a soldier was piqued when he discovered he could serve within the scope of medicine. He served as a battalion field surgeon (the Army’s term for physician) in Pennsylvania and Colorado, where

he cared for soldiers during field exercises and prepared them for “medical readiness” in domestic responses. In 2023, he deployed to Kuwait for four months, where he was responsible for the healthcare of about 520 soldiers while teaching medics in the desert.

“I joined the National Guard for the same reason I got into climate change and the same reason I went to medical school. The thing that motivates me and gives me meaning is serving the community that I feel I’ve benefitted so much from,” he explained. “Fighting disease is one way I can do that, protecting our environment is another way, and contributing to our practical defensive efforts is a way that I morally thought I should contribute.”



“My dad’s devotion to his patients was always inspiring to me. He served a large part of what motivates me to get involved in policy and advocacy in the medical field.”



**Grace Pang-Fried
 Ferguson, MD**
Obstetrics & Gynecology
 Allegheny County

Championing Maternal Health Care

Grace Ferguson, MD, is a passionate advocate for women’s and maternal health, with the belief that “to improve the overall health and wellbeing of our communities, we must improve the health of our mothers.”

“We have to trust that people can make decisions for themselves, if we give them good information,” she said. “A lot of patient referrals I’ve experienced, patients are often tearful because they’ve

experienced medical providers who never listened to them. At the end of the day, we have to meet people where they are.”

This conviction has guided her career and her efforts to enhance health care services in western Pennsylvania.

Originally from New York City, Dr. Ferguson’s interest in public health was sparked early on. She pursued her undergraduate studies at Johns Hopkins University, largely because, at the time,



“To improve the overall health and wellbeing of our communities, we must improve the health of our mothers.”

it was unique that it offered a public health undergraduate degree.

She then attended Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University for medical school, specializing in women’s health.

Dr. Ferguson’s professional journey is marked by her involvement with organizations dedicated to reproductive rights. As a medical student at the University of Pittsburgh, she joined “Med Students for Choice,” which further solidified her commitment to women’s health. Her residency and fellowship at UPMC Magee-Women’s Hospital provided her with extensive exposure to obstetrics and gynecology.

In her role as the Associate Program Director of the Residency at Allegheny Health Network (AHN)

she aims to work with residents in normalizing conversations around reproductive health and ensuring that future health care providers are well-equipped to support their patients.

“It’s about how we respect patient autonomy in every aspect. Their birthing experience, their birth control choice and whether they need a pap smear this year... everything is about trusting that our patients can make full decisions for themselves.”

Her work at AHN’s Women’s Institute is particularly noteworthy. She has expanded the spectrum of care for patients dealing with complex reproductive health issues, including those facing life-limiting diagnoses for their babies or their own severe health complications.

She also sat on the board of the

Pittsburgh Bereavement Doula organization as it was being formed.

“I was able to be part of those initial conversations. The organization was open and receptive to expanding their bereavement care to a population of women who have felt excluded by traditional pregnancy loss spaces.”

Her efforts ensured that no patient is turned away, regardless of their circumstances.

Dr. Ferguson also engages in political advocacy, striving to meet people where they are and address unmet public health needs. Her work is a testament to her belief in respecting and trusting patients and how maternal health can have a profound impact on community wellbeing. ●





Mona Syeda Masood, DO
Addiction Psychiatry (Psychiatry)
 Bucks County

“We have a shared experience as physicians. I want my colleagues to know they’re not alone.”

Bringing Humanity to the Medical Field

Growing up in a medical family, **Mona Syeda Masood, DO**, always knew she would become a physician.

“My parents really valued medicine, and that was an inadvertent encouragement for me,” she said. “They valued medicine as more than just a career – for them, it had much more meaning. It was the reason they moved to this country with a new lease on life and a catalyst for change.”

However, Dr. Masood was more interested in the humanities of medicine than the science of it.

“What drew me to medicine was less about science and how the human body

worked, but more about the humanity of human beings. We have all these processes within the human body that are similar, yet as individuals, we are very different,” she said. “What makes that individuality? What makes us that way, and where is the intersection between us?”

The psychiatry specialty answered those questions for her. After completing her residency at Temple University Hospital, Dr. Masood now practices in Bucks County.

When the pandemic hit in 2020, she saw that humanity in her co-workers and started a physician support line to allow physicians to call anonymously and talk to a psychiatrist about their anxiety and fears.

“It wasn’t necessarily a sudden need, but it was finally a time for physicians to admit they needed help,” Dr. Masood said. “I saw it as an opportunity to not only address physician mental health but to begin a movement that would lead to long-term outcomes for the betterment of physician mental health.”

It started with a simple social media post.

“I was seeing in my physician social media groups that everyone was talking about the pandemic and feeling overwhelmed by it, so I put up a post of my own calling on fellow psychiatrists who would be interested in starting a support line for physician colleagues as they navigate this uncertainty.”

Within two days of the post, she had 200 volunteers nationwide wanting to help. Admittedly, she didn’t know where to start and did her own research to obtain a toll-free phone line, figured out how to set it up so that it connected to volunteers around the country, and contacted expert friends who helped with Good Samaritan laws to draft policies and procedures.

“I had no clue what would happen,” she said. Her highest volume of volunteers reached 800 psychiatrists.

Four years later, the hotline is still going strong for physicians in need, even if the pandemic isn’t the number one concern.

“The need was there prior to the pandemic,” Dr. Masood said. “As a psychiatrist, whenever I’m trying to build support or awareness in my patients, I look for that window of opportunity. You can tell people all you want that they could benefit from some help and therapy, but they need to be willing to hear it. I think during the pandemic, that’s what happened –

“My parents really valued medicine, and that was an inadvertent encouragement for me,” she said. “They valued medicine as more than just a career – for them, it had much more meaning. It was the reason they moved to this country with a new lease on life and a catalyst for change.”

physicians and health care workers were finally willing to hear it.”

Although it was her initiation of the support line, she says it couldn’t have worked without the volunteers who signed on for the position. “This didn’t just come from me; it came from a mutual coming together and understanding that we need to act. It was something everyone was noticing but needed permission to finally address.”

“We have a shared experience as physicians,” she said. “I want my colleagues to know they’re not alone.”



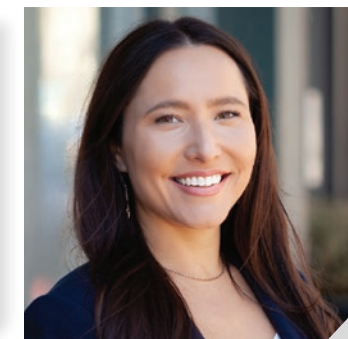
PAMED EVP Martin Raniowski, Dr. Mona Syeda Masood, and PAMED President Dr. Kristen Sandel



Roopa Ganapathi Naik, MD
Hospitalist
 Northeast Counties



Karthikeyan Ranganathan, MD
Interventional Cardiology (Internal Medicine)
 Allegheny County



Emily Scott, DO
Sports Medicine (Family Medicine)
 Allegheny County



Sepehr Sedigh Haghighat, MD
Emergency Medical Services (Emergency Medicine)
 Philadelphia County



Abhishek Ravindra Nitturkar, MD
Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (Psychiatry)
Franklin County

“My father’s dedication to his patients and the profound impact he had on their lives left a lasting impression on me,” he said.



Championing Child Psychiatry in Rural Communities

In rural Pennsylvania, **Abhishek Ravindra Nitturkar, MD** is at the forefront of child psychiatry care for children and adolescents struggling with mental health issues.

Growing up in India, Dr. Nitturkar was inspired by his father, a physician, to pursue a career in health care.

“My father’s dedication to his patients and the profound impact he had on their lives left a lasting impression on me,” he said.

His early experiences, where friends would come to him for advice, sparked his interest in exploring both the mind and the brain. This passion led him to complete medical school at the Government Medical College in India. He completed two years of residency at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences in India. Afterward, he was matched in the psychiatric residency program at the University of Virginia. He then finished his fellowship in child and adolescent psychiatry at the Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

“I’ve always believed that understanding the mental health system is crucial to providing the best care possible,” he says. Colleagues often describe him as both curious and wise, a combination that

has driven his success.

His role at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Chambersburg has allowed him to serve underserved populations, a cause close to his heart.

“Working in an FQHC has given me the opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of children and their families,” Dr. Nitturkar explains.

He sees the importance of early intervention and prevention in mental health.

“Addressing mental health issues early can significantly improve the quality of life,” he notes. His work involves collaborating with families, schools, and various care systems to create a supportive environment for young patients.

“The opportunity for early intervention is incredibly appealing to me. It presents a chance to make a meaningful and lasting impact from the very beginning.”

His dedication to health equity is evident in his recent appointment as Director of Health Advocacy for Keystone Health. In this role, he focuses on identifying health disparities and working strategically to improve health access and patient outcomes.

Dr. Nitturkar’s energy and enthusiasm are palpable. “Every day is a new opportunity to learn and serve,” he says.

Dr. Nitturkar says his experience in community mental health has been deeply satisfying. “Working in community mental health is incredibly rewarding. The benefits far outweigh the challenges,” he says. He passionately encourages early-career physicians to consider practicing in rural areas and community health centers, where their skills can have a transformative impact on both individuals and communities.

Despite the challenges, such as a shortage of professional health workers and transportation issues for rural residents, Dr. Nitturkar remains

optimistic. “There are disparities in access to mental health care, but we’re working hard to close that gap,” he asserts. His involvement with the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society and the Franklin Advisory Board highlights his commitment to improving mental health services.

“Collaborating with community members ensures that quality

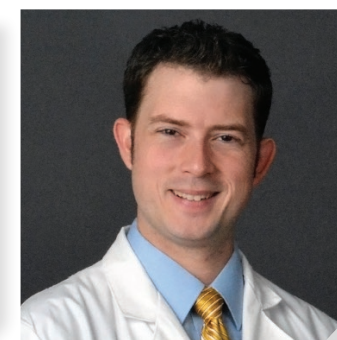
support programs are available,” he adds.

As he continues his mission, Dr. Nitturkar remains a steadfast advocate for mental health, inspiring others with his unwavering commitment to making a difference. “The journey is ongoing, and there’s always more to learn and more ways to help,” he said. ●

“The potential for early intervention is incredibly appealing to me. It’s a chance to make a lasting impact.”



Aaron Shedlock, MD
Pediatrics
Dauphin County



Nathan Shively, MD
Infectious Disease (Internal Medicine)
Allegheny County



Tyler VanDyck, MD
Emergency Medicine & Critical Care Medicine
Allegheny County



Brian Walkowski, MD
General Surgery
Indiana County

Virginia E. Hall, MD, FACOG, FACP
A Lifetime of Work Recognized

In a remarkable testament to a lifetime of dedication and compassion, Virginia E. Hall, MD, FACOG, FACP, has been awarded the prestigious International Voluntary Service Award by the Pennsylvania Medical Society. Dr. Hall is a double board-certified physician in internal

medicine and obstetrics and gynecology. This accolade recognizes her extraordinary contributions to global healthcare over the past four decades. Dr. Hall's career has been marked by her unwavering commitment to improving women's health care in underserved regions. She has traveled extensively to countries

such as Sierra Leone and India, where she has not only performed surgeries but also educated medical students and residents. Her efforts have provided a level of care that would otherwise be inaccessible to these communities. Reflecting on her recognition, Dr. Hall said, "I was surprised and humbled by this award as I



"I wanted to help people while incorporating science and giving them the tools for self-care. Teaching the patient and family is just as important as teaching medical students and residents."



felt I was just fulfilling my role as a physician." Her humility underscores the profound impact of her work, which has been both practical and transformative. In India, Dr. Hall's contributions have been particularly significant. Accompanied by medical students, a nurse practitioner, and an eminent plastic surgeon, she has engaged in active medical practice and the development of clinics and policies. These initiatives aim to create lasting improvements in the health of women and children in the region. "I wanted to help people while incorporating science and giving them the tools for self-care. Teaching the patient and family is just as important as teaching medical students and residents," Dr. Hall said. Dr. Hall's journey in medicine began at the former Hahnemann Medical School in Philadelphia. She later joined the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, where she worked until her retirement in 2018. Her passion for medicine is deeply rooted in her personal experiences.

"I love people and science and medicine is the perfect marriage of both. I grew up in a household where my parents did not have the money or insurance to care for their eight children. I saw the need and wanted to fulfill this lack," she shared.

Dr. Hall's legacy is a testament to the power of compassion and the impact of dedicated medical professionals in improving global health. Her work continues to inspire future generations of physicians to pursue excellence and service in their careers. ♦



PAMED EVP Martin Raniowski, Dr. Virginia E. Hall, PAMED President Dr. Kristen Sandel



2024 AWARDS CELEBRATION



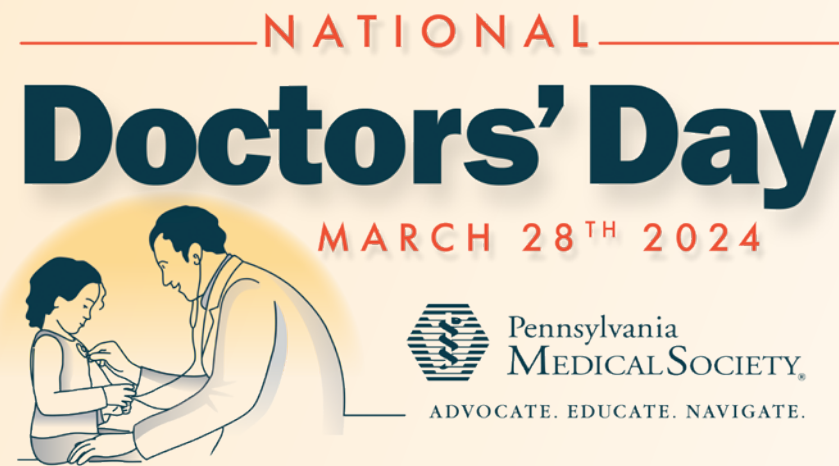
The Pennsylvania Medical Society was pleased to host award recipients and their families at the Hershey Country Club on Saturday, September 7. Following a morning of rain, the weather cleared, providing a perfect setting for this celebratory event. Among the distinguished honorees were Dr. Virginia Hall, recipient of the International Voluntary Service Award, and several of our Top Physicians Under 40 Award winners.

Martin Raniowski, CEO of PAMED, praised Dr. Hall for her exceptional commitment to volunteerism, stating, “Dr. Hall has been a dedicated and engaged volunteer for both the Pennsylvania Medical Society and the Foundation of the Pennsylvania Medical Society for many years. It’s no surprise that her service to others extends beyond our nation’s borders. We are truly honored to recognize her contributions.”

Dr. Kristen Sandel, PAMED’s President, remarked on the energetic atmosphere of the event. “The room was filled with excitement, with many winners accompanied by their families, children, and friends. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the achievements of so many young, dedicated professionals.”

The 2025 PAMED Awards nomination process is now open at www.pamedsoc.org/awards. We encourage you to nominate a deserving colleague or friend. The deadline for nominations is February 14, 2025—don’t miss this opportunity to recognize excellence in the medical community! ♦





***We were #PAMEDProud to celebrate Doctors' Day in 2024!
Congratulations to all our 2024 physician honorees,
including these PAMED members:***

Adam Biuckians, MD Lancaster County	David Keller, MD Lebanon County	Jody Leonardo, MD Allegheny County
Alan Chang, MD Bucks County	David Lasorda, DO Allegheny County	Joelle Lauchner, DO Berks County
Alan Kivitz, MD, MACR Blair County	Douha Sabouni, MD Northampton County	John Mantione, MD Dauphin County
Allison Aggon, DO Philadelphia County	Eric Griffin, DO Allegheny County	John Six, MD Washington County
Antonieta D'Urso, MD Chester County	Farhad Elmi, MD Northampton County	Jolanta Zelaznicka, MD Northampton County
Bharat Adroja, MD Clinton County	Heather Osher, DO Montgomery County	Kathleen Osten, MD Allegheny County
Bonnie Zehr, MD Lancaster County	Herbert Patrick, MD, MSE Philadelphia County	Kayleigh Taylor, MD Montour County
Bridget Hilliard, MD York County	Jane Hughes, MD Allegheny County	Kiley Walp, DO Bucks County
Bruce Wright, MD Allegheny County	Janiece Andrews, MD Cumberland County	Korosh Khalighi, MD Northampton County
Caren Kirschner, MD Montgomery County	Jared Nissley, MD Lancaster County	Kripa Rajak, MD Dauphin County
Charles Mount, MD Allegheny County	Jeffery Minter, MD Washington County	Kristen Lutzkanin, MD Dauphin County

Lauren O'Brien, MD
Washington County

Linda Nadwodny, DO
Montgomery County

Marc Kress, MD
Montgomery County

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Michael Daniels, DO
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Michael Karp, MD
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Zohaib Yousaf, MD, FACP
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View all of the honorees at
www.pamedsoc.org/DoctorsDay



Dr. John Six poses with PAMED staff member Janet Thompson on Doctors' Day 2024.



PAMED staff member Julie Carr presented Dr. John Manitone with his recognition.



We're #PAMEDProud of 2024 honoree Dr. Allison Aggon.



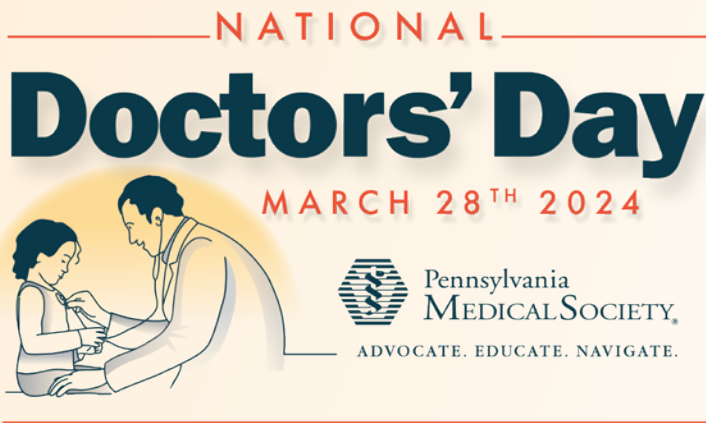
Dr. Jeffery Minter's staff poses with him on Doctors' Day 2024.



PAMED Board of Trustee member Dr. G. Alan Yeasted, presented Dr. Bruce Wright with his Doctors' Day recognition.



PAMED President, Dr. Kristen Sandel presented Dr. Bridget Hilliard with her Doctors' Day recognition.



Dr. Bonie Zehr poses with her award.



Dr. Jared Nissley of Lancaster General Health was recognized on Doctors' Day.



We're #PAMEDProud of Dr. Janiece Andrews.



Dr. Michael Daniels smiled with his staff on Doctors' Day 2024.

Breaking Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening:
The ACCESS Program

Recipient
Claire Raab, MD, President and CEO, Temple Faculty Physicians (TFP)

Project Location
Temple Health inpatient facilities, ambulatory centers, and community settings.

As the President and CEO of Temple Faculty Physicians, Claire Raab, MD oversees 55 ambulatory practices and a faculty of more than 600 members. This year, Dr. Raab was awarded a PAMED Innovation Grant to launch the “Advancing Colorectal Cancer Equity through Systematic Screening (ACCESS)” program.

The primary aim of the ACCESS program is to improve access to colorectal cancer (CRC) screenings for vulnerable and underrepresented populations. By introducing fecal immunochemical testing (FIT) as an additional option alongside traditional colonoscopy screening, the program seeks to overcome significant barriers to healthcare access and address social determinants of health (SDOH).

Colorectal cancer screening is vital for early detection and reducing mortality rates. However, significant disparities in CRC screening and outcomes exist among different racial and socioeconomic groups. Factors contributing to these disparities include:

- Limited access to colonoscopy and other screening methods.
- Lack of health literacy and mistrust in the healthcare system.
- Inadequate availability of gastroenterologists and endoscopy facilities in Medicaid-rich areas.
- Cultural sensitivities and psychosocial obstacles associated with colonoscopy.

These barriers result in lower

screening rates and higher morbidity and mortality rates in underserved populations.

“These gaps had previously existed, but after COVID, there was a notable decrease in the number of colonoscopies being performed,” Dr. Raab observed. “The FIT program is designed to provide screenings to as many people as possible.”

The ACCESS program adopts a patient-centered, population-based strategy to lower the barriers to CRC screening. The program’s key components include:

FIT Testing

The program prioritizes FIT, a non-invasive, stool-based test that patients can complete at home. FIT is cost-effective, easy to use, and offers comparable results for CRC detection, making it a preferable option for many patients over traditional colonoscopy.

Increased Touchpoints

The program distributes FIT kits in community settings (e.g., churches, health fairs), specialty ambulatory clinics, and inpatient settings. This broadens access beyond clinical encounters, ensuring more patients are reached.

Community Engagement

Clinicians and community members work together to distribute FIT kits and educate patients, leveraging cultural influence to enhance trust and understanding.

Technology Utilization

Educational videos on the importance and use of FIT testing are



shared via text and email, providing accessible information to patients.

The success of the ACCESS program will be measured using several key metrics:

- **Distribution Rate:** Increase the number of FIT kits distributed by 10% using internal resources.
- **Completion Rate:** Increase in the completion rate of FIT tests by 20% through point-of-care testing.
- **Timeliness of Follow-Up:** Reduction in the time from a positive FIT result to a follow-up colonoscopy from six weeks to two weeks, facilitated by a nurse navigator.

By addressing access barriers and engaging patients in familiar, comfortable settings, the ACCESS program aims to significantly improve CRC screening rates among underserved populations. This initiative is expected to:

- Increase early detection of colorectal cancer.
- Reduce CRC mortality rates.
- Demonstrate a scalable and replicable model for other health systems.

Through this comprehensive approach, Dr. Raab and her team are committed to leading innovations in health equity and making a substantial impact on the health outcomes of vulnerable communities.



This model not only enhances CRC screening accessibility but also sets a precedent for addressing other health disparities through community-centered, equitable healthcare solutions.



“These gaps had previously existed, but after COVID, there was a notable decrease in the number of colonoscopies being performed,” Dr. Raab observed. “The FIT program is designed to provide screenings to as many people as possible.”



Thank You

Kristen Sandel, MD, FACEP, FAAEM

for working to restore the
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as PAMED’s 174th President!



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Enhancing Vision Care for Older Adults: The Mobile Ophthalmic Imaging Program

Recipient
Evan L. Waxman, MD, PhD, Professor of Ophthalmology; Vice Chair, Medical and Resident Education, The University of Pittsburgh

Project Location
Elder care facilities in Pittsburgh with underserved or high-risk older adult populations.



Evan L. Waxman, MD, PhD is the founder and director of Guerilla Eye Service (GES), a program of UPMC Eye Center. GES is a mobile ophthalmology clinic providing free eye exams to residents throughout the Greater Pittsburgh area. This year, he received PAMED’s Innovation Grant to further his mission by implementing a mobile ophthalmic imaging program targeting high-risk older adults in Pittsburgh. The primary objective of the mobile ophthalmic imaging program is to enhance access to eye screenings for older adults, particularly those in elder care facilities who are underserved or at high risk for vision loss. The program aims to detect age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy (DR) at earlier stages to improve patient outcomes and prevent irreversible vision loss. “There’s a large burden of treatable causes of decreased vision and

blindness in the older population,” Dr. Waxman asserts. “People residing in assisted living facilities can have a hard time arranging for a visit to the eye doctor’s office. We want to bring care to them.” Vision loss among older adults is a pressing public health issue, affecting millions of Americans. Conditions such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy (DR) frequently remain undiagnosed until they cause substantial damage. This often happens due to barriers such as financial constraints, transportation issues, and the prioritization of other health needs over eye care. Consequently, many older adults do not receive timely eye exams, which are crucial for early detection and effective treatment. Dr. Waxman’s program leverages state-of-the-art technology to address these challenges. Using the Topcon Maestro, a sophisticated robotic imaging device, trained technicians visit elder care facilities to perform eye exams. This device captures high-quality images of the retina and optic nerve, which are then transmitted to ophthalmologists for interpretation. By bringing eye care directly to the patients, the program eliminates significant barriers like transportation and high costs. Success will be gauged through several metrics, including:

- Increased Screening Rates: The program aims to significantly increase the number of older adults receiving regular eye exams.

- Early Detection: The goal is to improve outcomes by identifying more cases of AMD, DR, and glaucoma early, when it is most treatable.
 - Patient and Provider Satisfaction: Surveys will assess the convenience and perceived value of the program among patients, their families, and primary care providers.
 - Cost-Effectiveness: The program will evaluate cost savings related to reduced transportation needs and streamlined referral processes.
- The program collaborates with elder care facilities with underserved and high-risk populations throughout Pittsburgh. Technicians visit these sites, conduct exams, and upload the images to electronic health records. The results are interpreted by ophthalmologists at the UPMC Vision Institute, and detailed reports are provided to patients’ primary care providers within 24 hours.



“We have the mobile unit and purchased some new essential equipment. We’ve hired key personnel to drive the van and provide care. We’ve made progress,” states Dr. Waxman. “Our barriers to date have been those surrounding the reality of hiring in the current environment.” The program will undergo continuous evaluation and process improvements based on data and stakeholder feedback. This approach ensures the program remains effective, feasible, and sustainable.

Dr. Waxman’s mobile ophthalmic imaging program represents a pioneering effort to make eye care more accessible for older adults. By addressing common barriers and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders, the program has the potential to significantly enhance the visual health and quality of life for older adults in Pittsburgh. This initiative aims to create a future where preventable vision loss is minimized and older adults can maintain their independence and well-being. ♦



“People residing in assisted living facilities can have a hard time arranging for a visit to the eye doctor’s office. We want to bring care to them.”

A Prospective, Single-Center Study to Measure Efficacy of ECGio in Determination of Coronary Artery Disease (PE-CAD)

Recipient
Veronica Covalesky, MD, Cardiology Consultants of Philadelphia

Coronary artery disease (CAD) is a prevalent chronic condition that poses significant challenges in primary care settings. Electrocardiograms (ECGs), a cost-effective and widely accessible technology, are frequently used to evaluate patients. However, the sensitivity and specificity of ECGs in predicting angiographically significant CAD are 51.5% and 66.1%, respectively. Advanced diagnostic tests for CAD, such as stress ECG, stress echocardiography, myocardial perfusion imaging, and cardiac computed tomography angiography (CTA), are available in specialist offices or hospitals. These tests, while more accurate, are less accessible and come with higher costs. HEARTio (Heart Input Output Inc, Pittsburgh, PA) has developed a deep learning software tool named ECGio.

This tool processes a standard 12-lead ECG in the cloud and provides physicians with real-time predictions of CAD. The primary objective of this project is to assess the effectiveness of the ECGio algorithm in predicting clinically significant CAD. The diagnostic performance of ECGio will be compared with myocardial perfusion imaging and calcium scoring results. The study will be a prospective cohort analysis involving patients suspected of having CAD. Patient histories will be reviewed to ensure they have undergone a resting 12-lead ECG within 60 days of additional diagnostic testing. Depending on the site-reading of the patient's myocardial perfusion imaging (MPI), they may be referred for invasive coronary angiography (ICA), coronary computed tomography angiography

(CCTA), other diagnostic tests, or exit the testing pathway. This study will focus on patients referred for coronary angiography. The ability of ECGio to measure the presence and severity of CAD in the four primary coronary vessels will be evaluated. The ECGio algorithm is designed to integrate seamlessly into network and practice electronic medical records (EMRs) where ECGs are stored digitally. If validated, ECGio could enable primary care physicians to quickly and accurately risk stratify CAD patients using a standard 12-lead ECG. This would help prioritize referrals to specialist care and advanced diagnostic testing, particularly in rural areas where these services are less available, ultimately improving the overall quality of care for CAD patients. ●

“The primary objective of this project is to assess the effectiveness of the ECGio algorithm in predicting clinically significant CAD. The diagnostic performance of ECGio will be compared with myocardial perfusion imaging and calcium scoring results.”

Automated Digital Solution for High-Quality Behavioral Health Treatment in the Primary Care Setting

Recipient
Mitchell Crawford, DO – Sunflower Health, LLC

At best, 50 percent of the 1.8 million Pennsylvanians struggling with behavioral health disorders have access to treatment. Research shows that one of the biggest reasons so many vulnerable members of our communities are suffering without care is that the supply of highly trained specialist providers can't make the demand. Sunflower Health, LLC's project goal is to create an artificial intelligence (AI) program that integrates with electronic medical records (EMR) to assist primary care providers in delivering behavioral health care. This program will prompt providers to make accurate behavioral health diagnoses by displaying criteria in a non-intrusive, simplified checklist. It will also suggest clarifying questions to help differentiate between diagnoses with overlapping symptoms, such as generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Dr. Crawford, a leading physician involved in the project, shared, “Development of this product, like any new venture, has been a great experience with a lot of learning and surprises. We have successfully created a minimally viable product which has received great feedback from initial users, and we look forward to continued development with iterative improvements.” Once a diagnosis is made, the program will analyze the EMR for key variables, including organ function and comorbid diagnoses. Using this information, it will reference evidence-based algorithms to provide real-time recommendations during

“Simply put, our aim is to create a product that helps providers feel more comfortable while more effectively treating behavioral health disorders, reducing the total cost of care, and creating a better experience for patients.”

the visit. These recommendations will include, but not be limited to, first-line treatments. Dr. Crawford said, “As to be expected, there have been a number of surprise challenges. When you're trying to do something that's never been done before, there's no perfect blueprint to follow. That's part of the adventure though, thinking creatively with others and learning how to navigate challenges as they come.” The ultimate aim of this project is to enhance the comfort and effectiveness of providers in treating behavioral health disorders. Dr. Crawford emphasized, “Simply put, our aim is to create a product that helps providers feel more comfortable while more effectively treating behavioral health disorders, reducing the total cost of care, and creating a better experience for patients.” Sunflower Health, LLC's AI program

represents a significant advancement in integrating technology with health care. By assisting primary care providers in making accurate behavioral health diagnoses and providing real-time treatment recommendations, this program has the potential to improve patient outcomes and streamline the delivery of behavioral healthcare. The ongoing development and iterative improvements promise to further enhance its effectiveness and usability. ●

Advancing Skin Graft Survival:
Oxygen-Releasing Therapy for Soft Tissue Reconstruction

Recipients

Oren Friedman, MD, Director, Facial Plastic Surgery; Co-Director, Facial Plastic Fellowship Program, Department of Otorhinolaryngology, University of Pennsylvania

Sarah Ebmeier: CEO and Founder of Graftable, Inc. BS, Biochemistry, University of Virginia; MS, Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology, Yale University

Graftable, Inc., founded in 2022, aims to develop therapeutics that enhance the long-term viability of skin and soft tissues post-trauma or surgery. This year, their multidisciplinary team, under the leadership of Project Director and Clinical Advisor Oren Friedman, MD, was awarded PAMED’s Innovation Grant. This grant supports an innovative project to improve the survival and functionality of skin grafts used in reconstructive surgery. Dr. Friedman, with 20 years of experience as a facial plastic and reconstructive surgeon, brings extensive expertise in using nonvascularized autologous tissue transplants (tissue from the patient’s own body).

The primary goal of this initiative is to create a new therapy that increases the survival rate of skin grafts, which are crucial for reconstructive surgeries addressing functional losses or aesthetic deformities due to trauma, cancer, or congenital abnormalities. The project aims to achieve better outcomes by addressing the common problem of insufficient oxygen supply to grafted tissues, which often leads to variable survival and the need for additional surgeries.

“If we succeed at making fat transfer predictable,” Dr. Friedman emphasizes, “we will have a powerful tool to regenerate damaged tissues and scars and can treat patients faster, with far fewer and less invasive procedures.”

“If we succeed at making fat transfer predictable,” Dr. Friedman emphasizes, “we will have a powerful tool to regenerate damaged tissues and scars and can treat patients faster, with far fewer and less invasive procedures.”

Every year, approximately one million patients in the U.S. undergo soft tissue reconstruction. Many face complications due to the limited survival of grafted tissues. Fat grafts, highly susceptible to tissue breakdown, present a significant challenge, with up to 70% of the grafted volume being lost post-surgery. This results in unsatisfactory outcomes and necessitates multiple procedures, increasing the psychological and financial burden on patients. The Graftable team’s project introduces the use of oxygen-releasing microparticles, designed to supply essential oxygen to grafted tissues during the critical period before new blood vessels form.

Developed in collaboration with the Daeyeon Lee Lab at the University of Pennsylvania, these biocompatible (not harmful to living tissue) and biodegradable microparticles release oxygen in a controlled manner directly into transplanted tissues, promoting their survival and integration. The project involves producing and evaluating oxygen microparticles and testing their efficacy in extending the viability of fat grafts. Collaboration with the Lee Lab will facilitate microparticle production, while the Cooperative Human Tissue Network at the University of Pennsylvania will provide access to human fat grafts for testing. Detailed reports

generated from these tests will be crucial for advancing the project to clinical use.

The success of this project will be measured through various metrics:

Increased Graft Survival

Enhancing the viability of grafted tissues, leading to fewer revision surgeries.

Early Detection and Intervention

By ensuring consistent oxygen supply, the project aims to identify and address potential complications early.

Patient and Provider Satisfaction

Feedback from patients and healthcare providers will be collected to evaluate the perceived value and convenience of the new therapy.

Cost-Effectiveness

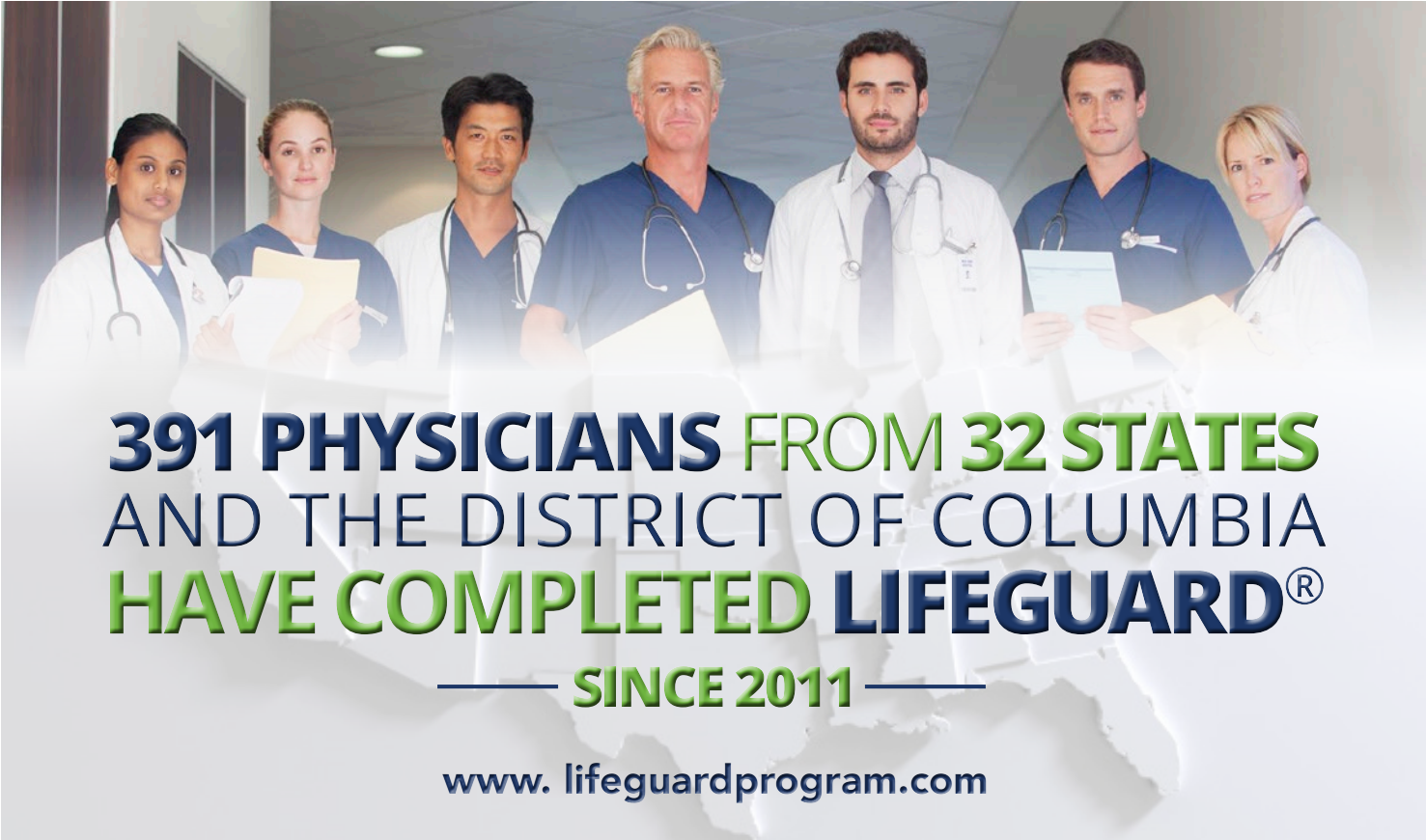
The project will assess the economic benefits of reducing the need for additional surgeries and improving overall patient outcomes.

The project will undergo regular evaluations to refine the technology and improve its effectiveness. The team will continuously collect data and stakeholder feedback to ensure the therapy remains practical, scalable, and beneficial for a wide range of reconstructive surgeries.

The oxygen-releasing therapy project represents a considerable development in the field of reconstructive surgery. By improving the survival rates of skin grafts, this innovation has the potential to transform patient

care, reduce the need for multiple surgeries, and enhance the quality of life for individuals undergoing reconstructive procedures. The successful implementation of this therapy could pave the way for broader applications, ultimately benefiting a vast number of patients facing similar challenges.

“Our funding from PAMED was the initial support that enabled us to get our project off the ground,” remarks Sarah Ebmeier, CEO and Founder of Graftable, Inc. “Since the Innovation Grant enabled us to get us started, we have been able to raise an additional \$160,000 for the project. We could not have done this without this initial support from PAMED.”



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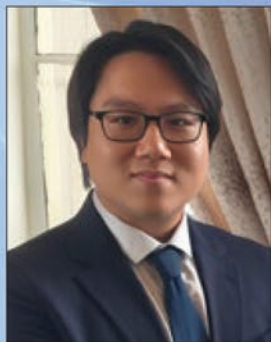
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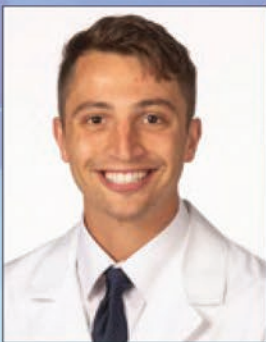
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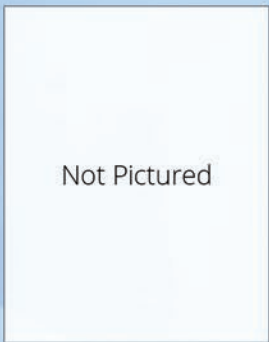
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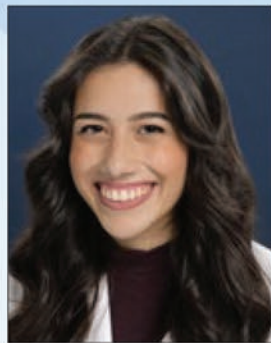
Lina & Jitendra Shah Scholarship



Not Pictured

NIKHIL GANJOO

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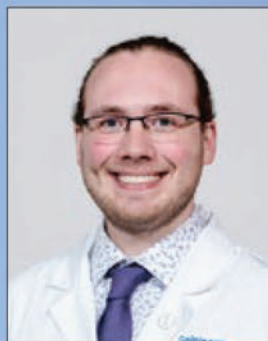
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LYNN LUCAS-FEHM, MD, JD
as its **175th President**
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Dr. Lucas-Fehm brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to supporting physicians, with a particular focus on practice choices and the evolving landscape of private equity. We look forward to the visionary leadership and expertise she will bring to our organization in the coming year.



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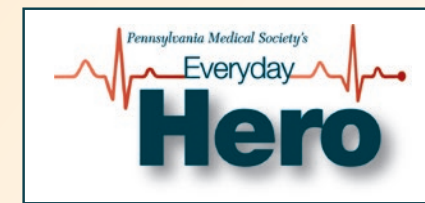


Upcoming Deadlines

Register to participate by January 19, 2025

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Questions: CMEAdmin@pamedsoc.org



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