

# DOWNSTATE TIMES

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The Newsletter for SUNY Downstate  
University Hospital of Brooklyn



## Why I Chose Downstate for My Medical Training

This month, when 262 new residents and fellows arrive to do their medical training at UHB, campus members may recognize some familiar faces: 39 of the residents are newly minted MDs who graduated from Downstate in May.

They have chosen to stay and provide critically needed medical services in this community. (This year, 70 percent of College of Medicine grads are staying in New York to practice,

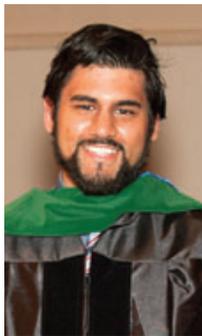
underscoring Downstate's importance in training New York State's healthcare workforce.)

Below three residents explain why Downstate is the best place to receive medical training. Two are recent Downstate grads who are beginning their residency this month; and one is a Medicine chief resident who has completed his training here and is saying farewell.

### Rahul Chakraverty, MD

Class of 2013

My decision to do my residency training at Downstate was initially a difficult one. One part of me wanted to stay here to help the underserved and gain as much clinical experience as possible. Another part of me wanted to leave, to



possibly train at an institution with more name recognition. So before I submitted my rank list for residency, I had to re-evaluate what constitutes a "good physician."

To me, the recipe for becoming a good physician is to have a passion for the field you are going into and also the experience to fulfill your passion. I have the passion for internal medicine and serving those in need, but I really need the experience that this hospital can provide. At the end of the day, the patients at our hospital are really grateful for your help, your fellow residents are truly your friends, and the attending physicians, for the most part, are down to earth and value your opinion when it comes to managing the patient's care. It is actually very hard to find a residency program where your fellow residents are

### Annekay Forbes, MD

Class of 2013

I chose SUNY Downstate for the next chapter of my medical training because the world-renowned faculty of the Anesthesiology Department are the very people who inspired me to become an anesthesiologist.



My interactions with my professors have always been fruitful. They have always been very supportive of me and of other students' interest in the field.

There is no shortage of faculty members at Downstate who have done groundbreaking work in anesthesiology, as well as others who are currently working on new and innovative ideas for the future.

Finally, I enjoy the environment that Downstate creates for my training. The diverse community of colleagues here and the opportunity to serve an equally diverse and underserved population are important to me.

I feel like Downstate brings the world within reach.

### Ismet Lukolic, MD

Medicine Chief Resident (2012-2013)

More than a century ago, Louis Pasteur said, "Chance favors only the prepared mind." By this he meant that sudden flashes of insight don't just happen—they are the product of careful preparation. As I reflect on the



past eight years I have spent as a medical student, intern, resident, and chief resident, I view this statement with new meaning and understanding.

While we all begin our medical training as naive and inexperienced beginners, before we become competent and confident physicians, the experiences we gain in the interim are what mold us. The most enriching experiences during this period are rarely arrived at by accident. Often, they require us to recognize the uniqueness and potential of the opportunity at hand, as well as the courage to act. We need to constantly ask ourselves, "What don't I know that I should at this level?" Hopefully, this type of self-reflection will enable us all to become better physicians. It should encourage us to

## A Second Chance at Life: One Man's Kidney Transplant Journey

By *Nelcia Trim, Nurse Manager, NS 82, as told to Dianne Forbes Woods, RN, MA, NE-BC, Deputy Nursing Director*

I recently had the pleasure of speaking with Nelcia Trim, assistant director of nursing for NS 82. When I asked Ms. Trim to tell me what it's like to work in a kidney transplant unit, she said, "There are so many wonderful stories. Let me tell you about Mr. Cecil Lawrence."

In 2002, Mr. Lawrence was diagnosed with hypertension and told he needed dialysis to help his failing kidneys. After years of dialysis and declining kidney function, he agreed to have his name placed on the list for a kidney transplant. Finally, eight years later, on January 12, 2013, he got the call: "We've found a match for you!"

The surgery went smoothly. After

spending two days in the CT ICU, he was transferred to the kidney transplant unit and was out of bed and walking around the same day. As Ms. Trim explains, "We mobilize our patients quickly, because this speeds their recovery."

Another important part of caring for transplant patients is teaching them how to take the immunosuppressive medications they need to maintain the kidney graft and minimize rejection. "We don't want this to be overwhelming for our patients, so we help them to incorporate medications as part of their daily routine," says Ms. Trim.

Six days after his surgery, Mr. Lawrence was discharged from the hospital and now visits the clinic once a month. He says it is comforting to come in for appointments and be greeted by so many friends.

When asked how his life has changed following the transplant, he told Ms. Trim,



The transplant team (shown from left to right): Johanna Ponce, RN, Veniese Goodridge, RN, Sheilla Philemond, PA, Kate Casazza, SW, Roberto Rauda, PA, Chief of Transplant Devon John, MD, Nurse Manager Nelcia Trim, RN, Transplant Renal Fellow Pablow Loarte, MD, and Jennifer McDonald, RN.

"It is the greatest feeling to live a normal life, go to work, and travel to Trinidad without having to worry about being dialyzed. Thank you, Downstate, for giving me a second chance at life."

### *Rahul Chakraverty (continued)*

your friends and not competing against you, and the attendings respect your opinion, rather than dismiss it.

So at the end of the day it was a no-brainer. Downstate is a great place to be a resident. Yes, Downstate has problems, but find me an institution that does not have any problems. Residency is tough everywhere, but the main point of residency is to develop your skills and become a good physician.

As a medical student at Downstate, I always felt like I was a part of the team and everybody was approachable. I know I can always stop Dr. John Quale to discuss a difficult infectious disease case without formally requesting a consult. I can always go over to the Radiology Department to go over an unclear radiology study, and the cardiology fellows are willing to help me interpret difficult EKGs.

There are a lot of good people at Downstate, and they are always willing to help you. So choosing to continue my career at Downstate was the best choice. I know the institution very well and I know what I signed up for. Residency is going to be hard, but I am up for the challenge!

### *Ismet Lukolic (continued)*

learn more by questioning our assumptions, participating in research, reading more, and becoming better listeners. After all, our patients do tell us their complaints as well as their diagnosis; all we have to do is listen to their words and tie it all together.

Beginning the year as a chief resident was a feeling akin to entering as a brand new July intern. I was aware of how much I did not yet know and had yet to experience. Among the many hats I was expected to wear were conflict manager, leader, role model, scholar, teacher, and

advocate. What was not apparent to me at the time was that these were the very roles I had been preparing for and refining throughout my previous medical training. Although I now had a new title, I was still advocating for patients and house staff, holding myself to the highest professional standards (since my colleagues and patients deserve nothing less), and devoting myself to learning and teaching the art of medicine.

As a graduate of one of the most recognized training programs in the country, I have always been proud to announce myself as a "Downstate resident." This pride rises up whenever there is a chance to offer lifesaving therapy in an emergency, be a patient's advocate, or further the pursuit of knowledge as a scholar. It is a reminder to me that we are the inheritors of a legacy built by those who came before us and the proprietors of a legacy we will one day pass to others.

### Growing Our Own

Six nurses who currently work at University Hospital graduated in May from Downstate's College of Nursing; 5 received advanced nursing degrees, and one earned a bachelor's. The college is one of only four nursing schools in New York State to offer master's degree programs in all advanced nursing practice roles. This year, 193 nurses earned baccalaureate and master's degrees from Downstate. "We are proud to be able to offer our patients some of the best-trained nurses in the state," says Chief Nursing Officer Margaret Jackson, RN.



# Healing through Music: The Downstate Performing Arts Society

By Benjamin Hartley, COM 2015

The Downstate Performing Arts Society (DPA for short) is a student organization with a storied yet variable history on campus. In years past, it was a musical force in the community, serving as a creative medium for students, faculty, and staff. But over time, its ranks dwindled to no more than 10 students who formed an *capella* group known as the Notocords.

Noticing a dearth of artistic expression

on campus, a group of concerned medical students launched a campaign in 2011 to reimagine DPA from the ground up. Since then, membership has grown to over 140 students, faculty, and staff. The club has been allocated a rehearsal and storage space on campus, along with high-end sound equipment and musical instruments. The use of this equipment is available to all campus members.

In the past year, DPA members have performed for hospital patients, at

fundraisers for the victims of Hurricane Sandy, at the Brooklyn Rescue Mission and the Brooklyn Free Clinic, at health fairs, memorial services, and other campus events. Production is underway on a CD featuring the music of the Downstate Performing Arts Society, which will be sold to benefit charity.

We are open to requests to perform in the hospital and elsewhere on campus. Please contact Ben Hartley at benjamin.hartley@downstate.edu for more details.

## The UHB Lobby Player Piano

Have you ever wondered what invisible hand is producing the lovely sounds coming from the piano in the hospital lobby? Well, it performs all by itself because it's a player piano, and it comes with an interesting history.

Some years ago, the Department of Pediatrics sponsored Healing through Music, a benefit for Children's Hospital of Brooklyn. Wanting to find additional ways to bring peace and healing to patients and their families, Dr. Stanley Fisher, chairman of pediatrics, hit on the idea of purchasing a player piano to entertain hospital visitors.

Thanks to the generosity of numerous Downstate faculty members, along with students at Public School 244 and youngsters in the Penny Harvest Program who turned in their penny collections, sufficient funds were raised. Visitors can now enjoy the sounds of classical and other styles of music throughout the day performed on the player piano.



Dr. George Vas, distinguished teaching professor of neurology and a classically trained musician, demonstrates his chops on the piano.

# Red Light, Green Light An Innovative Way to Reduce Noise on Patient Floors

By Elizabeth Igboechi, RNC-OB, MSN, FNP, NEA-BC  
Director of Nursing, Women and Children's Services

Noise reduction is one of the most inexpensive corrective actions that nursing staff can implement in their hospital units to improve patient satisfaction and promote healing.

When patients are subjected to high noise levels, they cannot get the rest they need and may become agitated. Excessive noise can make patients sicker and extend their length of stay unnecessarily. In one study conducted at a busy hospital during the change in nursing shifts, the noise level measured greater than the sounds from a trailer truck on an expressway!



Yunona Zaytseva, RN, gets the green light for keeping things quiet at NS 32.

To make sure that noise is kept to a minimum, UHB's Women and Children's Services has installed an ingenious and very effective early-warning system. At nursing stations 31, 32, 35, 42, and 43, we

use a device modeled to look like a traffic light to let staff know when it is necessary to quiet down. If the noise level rises above a set threshold, the light changes from green to amber. If the noise continues to rise, the light will change to red.

The settings for the different units vary depending on competing noises. In the PICU and NICU, for example, the noise thresholds are higher due to the sounds from mechanical equipment.

At some of the nursing units, the traffic light has a smiley face whenever the noise level is kept down, but a frown appears as soon as the noise rises. This is a friendly reminder to staff that the unit needs to be kept quiet for healthy healing to take place.

Thanks to this simple innovation, Press Ganey patient satisfaction scores for these units have all gone up.

# Extreme Makeover: SUNY Downstate Edition

By Lily Grossmann, COM 2014

The Room Makeover Project was started in 2012 by members of Downstate's Oncology Club as a way to extend care into a patient's home. Inspired by the TV reality show *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, the idea was to help children battling cancer and the side effects of chemotherapy by providing a comfortable and cheerful room in their homes. This year, Johnathan, age 10, was chosen as the recipient of a new room. His family had moved to Far Rockaway just one month before the arrival of Hurricane Sandy.

Hearing of this family's plight, hundreds of volunteers, ranging from students, nurses, and administrative staff to attending physicians and their families and

friends, helped raise over \$3,500 to give Johnathan's room a makeover. A store registry was created so that those who wished to contribute could also purchase clothes, toys, and other items for the room online.

On the day of the makeover, over 40 volunteers were organized into carpools bound for Far Rockaway. Despite a lack of expertise in construction, the group found ingenious solutions to improve Johnathan's bedroom. Since Johnathan enjoys comic books about super heroes, he received a hand-painted mural of Batman and Superman on his wall. When the family returned after a day's outing, the finished product was unveiled by a student dressed as Spiderman. Judging by their delighted response, the project was a big hit.



## We Can Help

By Lorraine C. Brooks, MPH, CEAP  
Director, Employee Assistance Program

We all experience problems that we do not have the resources or information to deal with successfully on our own. There is nothing wrong with asking for help.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential resource. It can help identify and resolve personal concerns that affect job performance, such as anger management, drug abuse, and relationship difficulties. The EAP staff can also provide referrals to appropriate outside professional help.

The EAP is available to all Downstate employees, including those who work part-time and retirees. Call ext. 1489 to make an appointment.

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