

# DOCTORS' DAY 2022

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# DOCTORS' DAY 2022

May 10, 2022

## WELCOME

### **MACHELLE ALLEN, MD**

Senior Vice President, Chief Medical Officer

### **MITCHELL KATZ, MD**

President and Chief Executive Officer





# NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS

## 2022 DOCTORS' DAY RECIPIENTS

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/BELLEVUE

**LEONARDO LOPEZ, MD**

Associate Chief of Psychiatry

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/CARTER

**SANJAY PATEL, MD**

Infectious Diseases Physician

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/COLER

**DEANE TSUEI, MD, PH.D.**

Associate Director of Medicine

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
CONEY ISLAND

**MICHELLE SOTO, MD, MBA**

Chief of Ambulatory Care

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
CORRECTIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

**FRANTZ MEDARD, MD**

Attending Physician

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
ELMHURST

**DEVORAH JUDITH  
NAZARIAN, MD**

Associate Director,  
Emergency Department

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
GOTHAM HEALTH, BELVIS

**FRANCES W. QUEE, MD**

Pediatrician

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
GOTHAM HEALTH, CUMBERLAND

**NAYAZ AHMED, MD**

Primary Care Physician

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
GOTHAM HEALTH, EAST NEW YORK

**TESS PUNNAPUZHA, MD**

Primary Care Physician

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
GOTHAM HEALTH, JUDSON

**RACHEL BRING, MD**

Attending Physician

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
GOTHAM HEALTH, MORRISANIA

**NELLY MASEDA, MD, FAAP**

Director of Pediatrics

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
GOUVERNEUR

**MICHAEL GOLDSTEIN, MD**

Psychiatrist



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**CARA TAUBMAN, MD, MPH**

Assistant Director, Emergency  
Medicine Residency Program

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**ELANA SYDNEY, MD**

Chief of Ambulatory Care

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
KINGS COUNTY

**SUSAN W. LAW, DO, MPH**

Neurology Attending Physician

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/LINCOLN

**NAIL CEMALOVIC, MD**

Director, Intensive Care Unit

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/MCKINNEY

**INNA SOSINA, MD**

Physician

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
METROPOLITAN

**NICOLA KOTCHEV, MD**

Attending Physician, Geriatrics

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
NORTH CENTRAL BRONX

**JESSICA STOECKEL, MD**

Director, Intensive Care Unit

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/QUEENS

**PARAMPREET BAKSHI, MD**

Associate Director of  
Ambulatory Care

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Attending Psychiatrist

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Associate Education Director



# CELEBRATING OUR DOCTORS, 2022



**MITCHELL KATZ, MD**

PRESIDENT AND  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

## Reunited Again to Honor Our Outstanding Doctors

After nearly three years of battling a global pandemic that impacted our health system in epic proportions, we are relieved and overjoyed to reunite once again to celebrate Doctors' Day.

Back in 2020, when the first COVID-19 patient was admitted to our health system, no one could have imagined the horror, pain and loss that we would face. Yet, through the darkest days, our incredible doctors cared for patients, consoled loved ones and carried us through.

This year, for Doctors' Day 2022, we honor 24 physicians from sites throughout the city, who are among the thousands of physicians that provided care on our frontlines and saved countless lives.

This year's honorees include: Psychiatrists, ER Physicians, Pediatricians, Primary Care Doctors, ICU Physicians and more. Many are immigrants who share vivid childhood stories of growing up and knowing their dream was to become a doctor. Our 2022 doctor honorees come from an array of nations including Bulgaria, Bosnia, India, Haiti, Italy, Puerto Rico, Ukraine and others. Their backgrounds reflect the diverse range of nationalities that we find among the millions of patients we treat.

For your dedication during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, we salute you, our doctors, for your excellence and commitment to our patients. As a Primary Care Physician and an Obstetrician, both of us are proud and honored to stand with you as we continue our mission and commitment to helping New Yorkers get vaccinated, get boosted and live their healthiest lives.

Congratulations to all of you!



**MACHELLE ALLEN, MD**

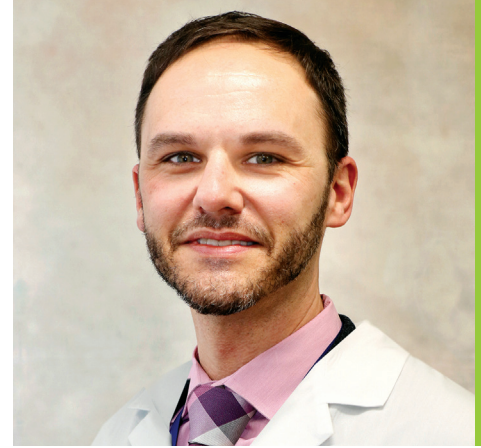
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT  
SYSTEM CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER



## LEONARDO LOPEZ, MD

Associate Chief of Psychiatry

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/BELLEVUE**



## From Math Teacher to Mental Health Care Provider

In just four years, Dr. Leonardo Lopez, a former high school math teacher, has made a remarkable impact on the psychiatry service at NYC Health + Hospitals/ Bellevue. He has transformed the quality of inpatient care, won plaudits for clinical and teaching excellence and taken on growing responsibilities in the department and the hospital.

In 2018, Dr. Lopez was recruited directly from residency to be Director of Bellevue's eight units of Inpatient Psychiatry. In 2021, he also assumed responsibility for patients in the hospital's two forensic inpatient units and now oversees the treatment of more than 200 psychiatric inpatients whose care is provided by 30 psychiatrists and psychiatric nurse practitioners. Since joining Bellevue, he has been successively promoted to Assistant and then Associate Chief of Psychiatry and taken on hospital-level roles including Chair of the Physician Peer Review Committee.

Dr. Lopez graduated from Columbia with a degree in mathematics and physics and taught high school math before starting medical school at Northwestern. "I was inspired to become a doctor through my experiences as a high school teacher in New York City," he said. "I taught many adolescents experiencing difficulty with their physical and mental health, and I realized that their success as students was to some degree dependent on their health issues being addressed."

At Bellevue, Dr. Lopez has reduced length of stays by revamping inpatient flow from the hospital's psychiatric emergency service while also developing a streamlined process to accept patients from other hospitals who can benefit from Bellevue's specialized treatment. He has also been cited for his success in recruiting inpatient psychiatrists and for creating a highly regarded weekly psychiatry clinical conference.

He's proud to work in a hospital – and a health system – that promotes interdisciplinary collaboration to provide the best care for patients with complicated health issues. "It is a rare hospital in which psychiatrists and critical care doctors can work side-by-side," he says, "and where physicians, nurses and social workers are motivated by a singular mission. I have worked with outstanding colleagues in the private sector as well, but the dedication to the disenfranchised in the public health system is truly unique."

## SANJAY PATEL, MD

Infectious Diseases Physician  
**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/CARTER**



## Battling Infectious Disease

For nearly 20 years, Dr. Sanjay Patel has distinguished himself as a highly valued infectious disease specialist at NYC Health + Hospitals nursing facilities in Manhattan, helping to deliver expert care to patients with HIV, tuberculosis, hepatitis and other drug-resistant infections. But his dedication has never been more important – or more recognized – than during the pandemic.

Dr. Patel has been the sole infectious disease consultant seeing COVID-19 patients and residents at NYC Health + Hospitals/Carter, his home facility in East Harlem, as well as at the two facilities on Roosevelt Island: Coler and Roosevelt Island Medical Center, which provided care at the height of the pandemic. Carter's Chief Medical Officer Dr. David Margolis says the rates of infection experienced at these sites – all lower than state and national levels – were "directly related to Dr. Patel's tireless efforts."

"The joy that I saw in the patients' eyes as they recovered from this unknown illness – and the joy of their families – has given me the greatest sense of accomplishment so far in my career," Dr. Patel says. He adds, "Seeing the NYC Health + Hospitals family come together to control the pandemic has been quite memorable."

Dr. Patel earned his medical degree in India before completing his internal medicine residency and a fellowship in infectious diseases in New York. He joined NYC Health + Hospitals/Coler in 2003 and moved to Carter in 2013.

"The work of a doctor is not just to treat patients but also to look for better methods of treatment – both challenges that attracted me from the earliest," Dr. Patel said.

Traveling daily to see patients in several facilities who were facing the mysterious and deadly new coronavirus, Dr. Patel took inspiration that he says will stay with him the rest of his life. "My motivation to continue being a better doctor," he says, "comes directly from patients."



## DEANE TSUEI, MD, PhD

Associate Director of Medicine  
**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/COLER**



## A Coler Legend

Dr. Deane Tsuei is practically an institution himself at NYC Health + Hospitals/Coler. After 36 years as an internist and associate director of medicine at the nursing care center on Roosevelt Island, Dr. Tsuei is recognized by his colleagues as an extraordinary physician and known for his indefatigable dedication, abundant patience, humility and unflagging readiness, even past 80, to deliver help to patients and colleagues whenever and wherever it's needed.

When Superstorm Sandy hit in 2012, Dr. Tsuei stayed at Coler for several days and nights, helping move patients to other facilities and care for those who remained as Roosevelt Island flooded and power shut down. He's a calm and assuring presence in any emergency, and if he's complimented on his many contributions, his impulse is to deflect credit to his colleagues.

Dr. Tsuei began his career as a medical researcher, earning a graduate degree in biochemistry in Taiwan and then emigrating to the United States for a Ph.D. in microbiology at UC-Davis in the late 1960s. After a decade as a cancer researcher, he decided he wanted to help people more directly and came to New York to attend Albert Einstein College of Medicine, from which he graduated in 1983.

He joined Coler in 1986 and never wanted to leave. "Coler is part of my family," he says. One thing he's come to love is that the facility never fails to be interesting and invigorating. He appreciates being able to help people in new ways and learn things he didn't know, even after nearly four decades of practice. He and his colleagues recently found themselves caring for a woman in her 30s with a rare neurovascular disease called moyamoya.

"We had all read about it in textbooks and journal articles, but now we had a young lady who came to us," he said. "Because we have a unique population of patients from all kinds of ethnic groups and backgrounds, I am fortunate to be able to be in a setting where I can help people and at the same time expand my knowledge. After so many years, I can still learn."

## MICHELLE SOTO, MD, MBA

Chief of Ambulatory Care

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/CONEY ISLAND**



## Dedicated to Care for Underserved Communities

Dr. Michelle Soto is proud to say her world has been shaped by NYC Health + Hospitals. She rotated at Kings County as a medical student, served her residency at Jacobi and worked early in her career at Woodhull and Gotham Health, Morrisania. Now, as the Chief of Ambulatory Care at NYC Health + Hospitals/Coney Island, she is a leader and mentor who is credited with raising the quality of care provided to the hospital's most vulnerable patients and playing a key role in managing its COVID response.

Dr. Soto says she loves working in the city's public health system and draws motivation from her colleagues and what they represent. "When I look around me, I am surrounded by people of different nationalities, different religions and different cultures, all sharing a common goal. They care for their patients and also for each other."

Dr. Soto herself is Afro-Latina, born in Brooklyn of Puerto Rican heritage. When she was 9 and living with her mother in Puerto Rico, she was told that her father, whom she hadn't seen since she was 2, was ill in Brooklyn with a new disease called AIDS. She and her mother moved to Brooklyn in time to see her father before he died. It was also an introduction to medicine, and over the next few years, her own experiences with health care put her on the path to her career.

"We did not have access to routine medical care and often had to use the overcrowded emergency room," she said, adding, "I did not see doctors who represented me or my community."

Dr. Soto went on to graduate from CUNY's Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education (now the CUNY School of Medicine), whose mission is to diversify medicine and turn out doctors who will improve primary care in underserved and marginalized communities. She completed her medical education at SUNY Downstate, and for the past 17 years, she has provided bilingual and bicultural primary care to underserved populations, including those with behavioral health and substance-use disorders.

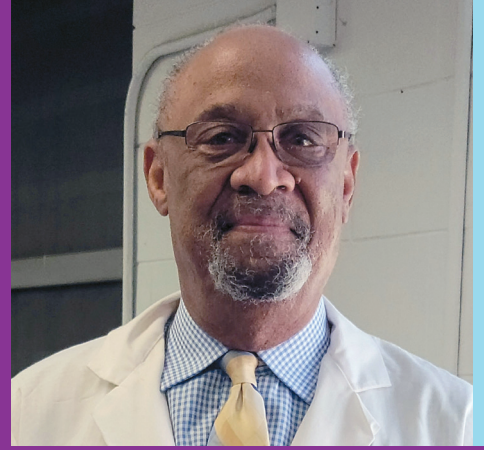
"As a doctor, I meet diverse patients at their most vulnerable stages," she says. "Respect is at the core of bridging cultural, linguistic and social differences and achieving the trust that is at the heart of the doctor-patient relationship."



## FRANTZ MEDARD, MD

Attending Physician

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
CORRECTIONAL HEALTH SERVICES**



## A Calming Force in Correctional Health

As a child, Frantz Medard would accompany his father, who was a doctor, during his Sunday morning housecalls through some of the poorest neighborhoods in Haiti.

"I always admired his dedication, compassion and knowledge," said Dr. Medard, who is now an Attending Physician for Correctional Health Services on Rikers Island. "By the time I was an adolescent I knew that I wanted to become a doctor."

His commitment to underserved populations hasn't always been easy, as when he contracted tuberculosis during his residency.

"We are all well aware that correctional health is among the most challenging settings to render care, and we all have our good days and bad. Days we find patience and resiliency, and days when the weight of what we do can overwhelm," said Luis Cintron, Assistant Chief of Service for Medicine at Correctional Health Services.

"Dr. Medard is that unique soul that seems to rise above all that is difficult and finds grace and calm in all that he does and with whomever he works with or cares for."

He is known as a savvy clinician, a committed health care provider, an empathetic humanitarian, a gentleman and a scholar who brings out the very best in others. He also serves as a role model for the younger clinicians on staff where he shares not only a keen medical mind but a warm and caring spirit.

"My job as a physician is to take care of my patients," Dr. Medard said. "I don't know - and I don't want to know - why they are detained."

He'll spend his day fielding sick calls like migraines, chronic illness including diabetes and hypertension, and emergencies that might include falls or difficulty breathing.

"During COVID-19, inmates couldn't receive any visitors - not even family - for over two years," he said. "So often we would hear about the difficulties; they would talk with me. There are times physicians remember. And those times I will always remember."

While there is no such thing as a perfect physician, his Correctional Health colleagues says that Dr. Medard comes close to the mark.

## DEVORAH JUDITH NAZARIAN, MD

Associate Director, Emergency Department  
**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/ELMHURST**



### Battling COVID-19 in the Epicenter

As Associate Director of the Emergency Department at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst, Dr. Devorah Nazarian was part of the leadership that got the hospital through what The New York Times called “the epicenter of the epicenter” of the pandemic’s early gruesome grip on the city.

“Dr. Nazarian’s administrative roles at Elmhurst have allowed her to play an integral role in developing systems to ensure more efficient patient care,” said Dr. Jasmin Moshirpur, Chief Medical Officer at Elmhurst. “While on the ICU committee, she helped develop an ED-ICU admission policy for all hospital critical care units to streamline the admissions process. Her work through the LEAN project focused on modifying the Emergency Department critical care area structure and layout to improve efficiency and reduce delay in patient care.”

Dr. Nazarian’s time at Elmhurst has overlapped the hospital winning many awards, while she still finds time to develop and write more than 35 clinical policies, lecture across the country and internationally and draft policy statements to practicing emergency physicians - all published in the Annals of Emergency Medicine and the National Guideline Clearinghouse (she started developing clinical policies as a resident). It helps that, just as she has served at Elmhurst since 2000, she worked as an Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai from 2000 to 2020.

“The idea that I can be involved in improving someone’s life at their most vulnerable time has always given me tremendous satisfaction,” said Dr. Nazarian. “Now, decades later, my sentiment has not changed. I am thankful I chose the right profession years ago.”

She continued: “Being able to say that you’ve helped someone through their most difficult times was something that made me feel good about myself. People say it’s very altruistic, but it has its selfish side too. We feel good doing it.”



## FRANCES W. QUEE, MD

Pediatrician

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/GOTHAM HEALTH, BELVIS**



## Transforming Lives at Belvis

When she was 10 years old, Dr. Frances Quee's father fell critically ill. "We took him to the hospital and spent most of the day waiting for services," she recalled. "I felt so bad that he was not even treated well because we didn't have the money to pay. When he got better, I promised him I will study hard to become a doctor so I can help people who cannot afford private health care."

Dr. Quee - now a pediatrician at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Belvis - has made good on that promise and then some. Over her 30 years of caregiving, Dr. Quee has cared for children who are now adults and are bringing their children back to her practice because of her. Her journey has taken her around the world - from college training at Moscow State Medical School in Russia to a teaching hospital internship in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone in Africa.

"Dr. Quee was instrumental in ensuring that children continued to receive the necessary care throughout the pandemic and has helped to bring families back into care by alleviating fears and enforcing the necessity of children getting timely care and needed vaccinations," said Dr. Jeremy O'Connor, Regional Medical Director at Belvis.

"Growing up poor, I always wanted to help people who are underserved and who have no one to advocate for them. I see myself in the children I take care of, and if I can make even a minimal change in their lives, that makes my day," said Dr. Quee. "Working every day and seeing how the children and their parents look up to me for advice, I see how I have changed most of their children's lives - them completing high school or even college and aspiring for higher heights because I look like them and always encourage them that if I can do this, you can too."

## NAYAZ AHMED, MD

Primary Care Physician

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
GOTHAM HEALTH, CUMBERLAND**



## A Shining Star for Patients in Need

During a routine exam a few years ago, Dr. Nayaz Ahmed suspected that a 10-year-old boy had a tumor in his chest, though he had no symptoms. He ordered a CT scan, and the results confirmed his suspicion. But when he tried to call the child's parents, he found that their number had been disconnected. "So I went to their house, but they had moved," Dr. Ahmed recalls. "A neighbor said the mother worked at Dunkin' Donuts, so I went, but she wasn't there. Luckily the neighbor was able to contact the mother, and I arranged for the boy to come to Elmhurst Hospital Center for surgery."

That story earned Dr. Ahmed one of his two "Shining Star" awards from the hospital and burnished his reputation for dedication to the patients of the public health system. For 20 years, Dr. Ahmed has been a primary care physician and pediatrician in several NYC Health + Hospitals centers in Queens, most recently at Gotham Health, Jackson Heights, a subsite of Gotham Health, Cumberland. Wherever he's worked, Dr. Ahmed has impressed patients and colleagues alike for the same kind of diagnostic acumen and concern that saved a little boy's life years ago.

Dr. Ahmed received his medical education in India and began his career there in 1976. "As a child, I was admitted to hospitals twice, once for typhoid and once for glomerulonephritis, and I marveled at the way my doctors eased my pain and the suffering of other patients," he said. "Their dedication to the medical profession and to their patients inspired me to become a doctor."

Now, after 40 years in practice, Dr. Ahmed says kindness has always been key for him. "Gaining trust and confidence from patients helps in healing," he says. "The peace and relief that I see in their faces after a successful treatment regimen still keeps me going."



## TESS PUNNAPUZHA, MD

Primary Care Physician

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
GOTHAM HEALTH, EAST NEW YORK**



## East New York's Family Doctor

Doctors have had to cope with the pandemic in so many unseen ways, and at NYC Health + Hospitals/ Gotham Health, East New York, Dr. Tess Punnapuzha has been a model of steadiness under the most challenging and volatile circumstances. One day at the height of the crisis, she took a phone call from a woman whose 7-year-old daughter had suddenly become unable to use one of her legs while walking or to write normally.

"I wanted her to be seen immediately, but this was at the time when we didn't have the capacity to bring in patients, so I asked her to go to the ER," Dr. Punnapuzha recalls. "I called her the next day, and she said she didn't go because she was afraid about all the news about people dying. I told her she had to go, and finally I convinced her." It turned out that the little girl had a brain tumor. Fortunately, it was operable, and now, two years later, she is almost back to normal.

A veteran pediatrician, Dr. Punnapuzha is known by patients and their families for her warm and caring nature and admired by colleagues for being a stabilizing influence during the most difficult and fluid period of the pandemic, just as she has been since joining the East New York clinic in 2014. Her affiliation with NYC Health + Hospitals goes back to her internship and residency at Lincoln Hospital in 1992 after a decade of medical education and training in her native India. Among her positions prior to East New York was a four-year tenure as a school health specialist for the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Through the years, Dr. Punnapuzha has also been a mentor to medical students and a role model for younger colleagues. She represents East New York in the health system's monthly pediatric ambulatory care workshop, helping foster best practices and bringing back new ideas and guidance to her colleagues.

## RACHEL BRING, MD

Attending Physician

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
GOTHAM HEALTH, JUDSON**



## Building Bridges for Young Adults

As an adolescent medicine physician at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Judson, Dr. Rachel Bring says that the moments that bring her the deepest satisfaction are when young patients who are wary of the health care system tell her they trust her.

"I feel the most pride when a patient with a history of trauma and distrust expresses that they are grateful to have connected with me," she says. For her part, Dr. Bring is grateful in return – for the opportunity to provide compassionate and equitable care to young New Yorkers of all backgrounds and status and to see them thrive, often in the face of daunting circumstances.

"Witnessing my patients' resilience as they overcome major challenges, especially during a pandemic, and grow into remarkable young adults inspires me to support them in any way I can," she says.

Dr. Bring is the Associate Director of the Bridge Program for Emerging Adults at Judson, a clinic in Lower Manhattan that specializes in serving LGBTQ young people. She was also appointed last year as the Clinical Lead for Adolescent and Young Adult Health in the NYC Health + Hospitals Office of Ambulatory Care and Population Health. Both roles call on her expertise in adolescent and young adult reproductive health, LGBTQ+ health and health care transition from adolescent to adult medicine.

Dr. Bring graduated from NYU School of Medicine in 2013 and now has an appointment there as Clinical Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Medicine. She served her residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in adolescent medicine at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center. In just three years with NYC Health + Hospitals, she has established herself as a natural leader whose dedication to her patients is a model for others. Along with her day-to-day clinical duties, she has spearheaded initiatives to bring MyChart access to adolescents and created a system-wide program to help transition young adult patients from pediatrics to adult primary care.

"I think it's so important to listen to patients, try to understand who they are as people, meet them where they are and partner with them to work towards improving their health," Dr. Bring says. "That kind of connection starts with compassion."

## NELLY MASEDA, MD, FAAP

Director of Pediatrics

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
GOTHAM HEALTH, MORRISANIA**



## Healing Children and Teens in the South Bronx

At the age of 15, Dr. Nelly Maseda became the caretaker and interpreter for her stroke-struck grandmother, who never learned to read or write. Born and raised in Washington Heights by a single Dominican mother on public assistance, Dr. Maseda now works as Director of Pediatrics at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Morrisania, a few blocks away from Aquinas High School where Sister Joan Davis of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkhill nudged her toward chemistry and science instead of her planned practical classes in bookkeeping and typing.

In her searingly personal memoir, "Strangers in the Night: Mentally Ill Mothers and Their Effects on Their Children," Dr. Maseda detailed her mother's mood swings - rage and depression - as well as her brothers' decline into substance abuse, violence and crime. Somehow, she was able in all that chaos to graduate from Cornell University with a bachelor's degree in biology and her doctorate from Albert Einstein School of Medicine in the Bronx.

"As a result of her work, we have seen substantial improvements in our performance on quality metrics, including well-child checks, pediatric immunizations, access to contraception for adolescents and linkage to social services," said Morrisania's Medical Officer Dr. Jeremy O'Connor. "She is leading our care from pediatrics to adult medicine, integrating tablets into adolescent screening workflows and improving the linkage to care in pediatrics for newborn patients."

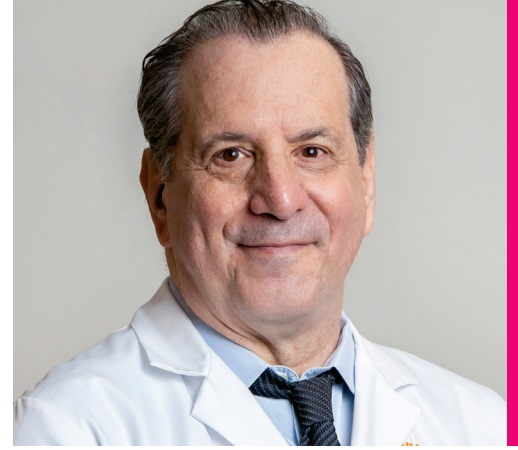
For her part, Dr. Maseda said, "There is so much need in multiple domains - physical, psychological, social - that our sense of purpose gets fueled as we try to address these, knowing how much of a positive difference we make in their lives. Making patients feel welcomed and accepted is a form of great medical care; it's a goal I strive for daily in my work."



# MICHAEL GOLDSTEIN, MD

Psychiatrist

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/GOUVERNEUR



## Connections Through Music

Laughter may be the best medicine, but Dr. Michael Goldstein – a psychiatrist at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gouverneur – ups the dose by adding another healing element: music. As a trained jazz musician who later entered psychiatry, he knows the value – and charm – of riffing and improvising.

When a patient refused to cooperate, he noticed her tattoos and figured that anyone with so many tattoos must be into music. “I’ll get out of your hair if you answer three quick questions,” he told her. Question 1: Do you like music? She shrugged yes. Question 2: Do you know Twisted Sister? She shrugged yes. Question 3: Who is the singer? She scoffed that it was Dee Snyder, but Dr. Goldstein rebuffed: “No. His name is Daniel Schneider, I sold him his first guitar, and we bar mitzvahed together.” The patient cooperated after that.

Asked to choose between accountability, compassion, excellence, integrity and respect, Dr. Goldstein replied: “Having been a jazz musician, is it all right to improvise a bit here and say: all? I think they are all possibly interrelated with the root being: always caring and trying to do my best to imagine myself in the other person’s shoes. I am not sure I am excellent in any of these categories, but I do my best to always try in all of them.”

He is a tertiary consultant, the person summoned after both the internist and psychiatrist are flummoxed. He strolls in, motorcycle helmet in hand and a swish of salsa in his stride, to find connections with patients – often through music. For a world-famous opera singer, it was a casual debate over whether or not Jussi Björling is the world’s best tenor. With another patient, it was gossip about jazz great Sonny Rollins, who had been the patient’s fellow inmate at Rikers Island.

Dr. Goldstein’s specialty is vulnerability, whether in geriatric psychiatry or research in 1992 about the benefits of roommates for HIV-positive patients with depression.

## CARA TAUBMAN, MD, MPH

Assistant Director, Emergency Medicine  
Residency Program

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/HARLEM**



### Harlem's Quiet Storm

In the words of one of her colleagues, Dr. Cara Taubman is “a quiet storm” – an Emergency Medicine Physician whose passion and selflessness have led her to experiences ranging from a tour with Doctors Without Borders in Africa to her essential role coordinating the clinical response teams at Harlem Hospital throughout the pandemic.

“The spring of 2020 was when I was most proud to work at Harlem Hospital and honored to be working alongside an incredible team,” says Dr. Taubman, whose positions include Director of Disaster Medicine in the Emergency Department. “It was a tough time, but seeing critical patients that I cared for being discharged would remind me that we were making a difference even with all the suffering we saw around us.”

Dr. Taubman was inspired to go into health care by her mother, a nurse, and decided to become a doctor while volunteering in a local emergency department when she was in high school. She graduated from New York Medical College's MD-MPH program in 2010 and completed her residency at the Jacobi Emergency Medicine Program in the North Bronx. A fellowship in international emergency medicine at Columbia sent her to Ghana, Rwanda and South Sudan.

She now holds several leadership positions, including Assistant Program Director for the combined Emergency Medicine Residency Program for Harlem and Metropolitan Hospital Centers and Director of the Medical Care Branch of Harlem's Incident Management Team. She also has a system-wide role as Senior Advisor for Disaster Preparedness and Response. It's all about improving the system's delivery of care, she says, but ultimately nothing is more important to her than her interactions with patients.

“Every day I get to make someone better,” Dr. Taubman says. “It may be relieving their pain, explaining a diagnosis, helping them access the care they need or just listening to their frustrations.” As someone who grew up in New York, she adds, “I'm grateful to work for a system whose bottom line is the health of New York City and non-profits.”

## ELANA SYDNEY, MD

Chief of Ambulatory Care

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/JACOBI



## Making Strides in Hypertension Control

When she was just 2 years old, Elana Sydney's mother had a stroke that left her paralyzed and aphasic (unable to talk or understand speech). From the care she saw her mother receive, Dr. Sydney said, "I knew from a young age that I wanted to be to others what I saw my mother receive."

She is now in her 25th year of practice and serves as both Medical Director for the Primary Care Clinic and Chief of Ambulatory Care at NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi, where she has significantly improved hypertension control rates to greater than 70 percent and directly impacted improvement in depression screening, diabetes control and vaccination administration.

"Dr. Sydney's work during her career at Jacobi has been nothing less than transformational," said Michael Zinaman, Jacobi's Chief Medical Officer.

"Dr. Sydney has also led teams to significantly increase access to care, improve patient experience, improve the overall quality of care and improve patient safety in primary care."

Last year, she debuted a weight management clinic in response to the Bronx's perpetual ranking as the unhealthiest county in the state – leading in diabetes, hypertension and obesity. The clinic was designed for prediabetic and obese patients and offered a dramatically tailored experience with the help of a staff nutritionist, a staff endocrinologist and an exercise trainer.

"It's not just a funnel for bariatric surgery," said Dr. Sydney. "We're finding that obesity is a family affair. It usually starts with one patient but expands into their spouse and their children."

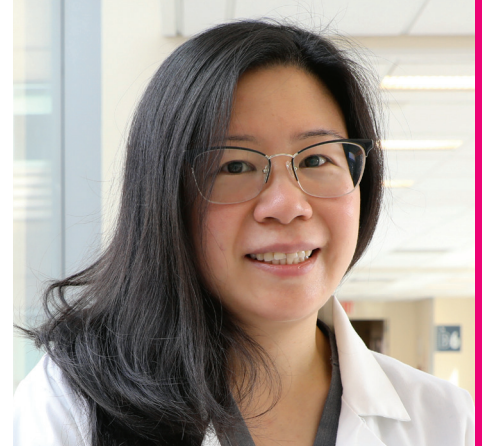
The clinic has already helped 100 unique patients and has a wait list of several hundred more.



## SUSAN W. LAW, DO, MPH

Neurology Attending Physician

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/KINGS COUNTY**



## Providing Stroke Care in Brooklyn

Dr. Susan Law spent her childhood in her father's Chinatown clinic, helping with supplies and inventory and handling the waiting room. She brings that same community connection to her work at NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County, where she is a neurologist and director of the Stroke Center and makes herself so available to her patients that they even check in on their travel plans.

"I was young and didn't realize things like health disparities," she said of those days in her dad's clinic. Although the national average age of stroke is 70, in her Brooklyn community it is slightly younger at 67. Stroke is personal to Dr. Law, who lost her grandfather to stroke in his 40s, an uncle to stroke and a grandmother who died in her 60s after suffering three strokes.

"Whether they come to us by ambulance or walk-in triage, our patients have made a choice to come here, a choice to be better," she said. "Our service is a promise to our community that they can trust us when they make that choice."

Kings County has been one of a handful of hospitals in the public health system to receive national recognition for improving quality of care and outcomes for stroke patients, winning awards from the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association for consistently applying best-practice, research-based standards of care that reduce recovery time, disability and mortality rates for stroke patients, as well as reducing hospital readmissions for stroke patients.

When she took over in 2014, Dr. Law brought the stroke unit from zero patients in 2008 to 700 patients a year now, winning a prestigious Stroke Gold Plus Award year after year - including a five-year streak. On average, someone in the U.S. suffers a stroke every 40 seconds, someone dies of a stroke every four minutes and nearly 800,000 people suffer a new or recurrent stroke each year. But it must battle against Dr. Law's 24/7 vigilance.

## NAIL CEMALOVIC, MD

Director, Intensive Care Unit

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/LINCOLN**



## From Bosnia to the Bronx

Raised by a nurse grandmother and a gynecologist mother, Dr. Nail Cemalovic was born in the village of Velika Kladuša in northwest Bosnia on the Croatian border. He escaped war in Bosnia to graduate medical school and then came to New York to work as an emergency medical technician for eight years before joining the Emergency Department at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln in the Bronx.

At Lincoln, as the director of the hospital's medical intensive care unit, he has started a program that rotates interdisciplinary doctors through the MICU's rounds, seeing results in the form of improved care and getting patients closer to zero harm. Throughout the pandemic, he introduced proning into intensive care, created video evaluations of swallowing, instituted continuous electroencephalograph monitoring and opened a neuro intensive care unit. "I'm a firm believer that our society should be judged based upon how we treat our most vulnerable members," he said. "Every patient taken care of is an accomplishment."

Like many doctors, his compassion and talent have shone brightly throughout the pandemic. "During each wave of the pandemic, he was on the front line caring for the sickest patients in the facility," said Dr. Lewis W. Marshall Jr., Lincoln's Chief Medical Officer. "He did so with grace and humility." Dr. Cemalovic embraces the challenge of public health. "With significantly less resources, the ability to provide excellent care with equivalent if not better outcomes than private hospitals attests to the quality of our physicians," he said.

Dr. Cemalovic approaches life with a sense of adventure – in Hawai'i or Paris, whether skiing snow-topped mountains or riding a camel across a desert – and he brings a similar flair to his work. A photo he posted to Instagram of himself with two doctors during the pandemic is simply titled "Three Musketeers" – doctors who are one for all and all for one.

## INNA SOSINA, MD

Physician

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/MCKINNEY



# Protecting Vulnerable Patients in the Pandemic

From her childhood Ukrainian village of Balabino, Dr. Inna Sosina – an 18-year veteran at NYC Health + Hospitals/McKinney, a facility in Brooklyn that provides long-term, post-acute rehabilitation and adult day care – would take a half-hour train ride to Zaporzhie, the Ukrainian town where her grandmother lived. From the age of 6, Dr. Sosina remembers collecting medicinal herbs in the nearby woods and hills with her grandmother, who was known as a healer.

Those memories inspired her to graduate with a medical degree from the Russian State University of Medicine in Moscow before she moved to New York to serve marginalized patients in vulnerable need across the city – evaluating Social Security disabilities, helping with long-term care in homes for nursing and rehabilitation or attending to emergency medicine.

She knows that hospice is its own kind of emergency care, given that most of her patients have never had regular medical care and so are admitted with end-stage diseases. Without the benefits of consultant or inpatient services, she managed patients' comorbidities during the pandemic – even extending capacity during the heavy waves of cases, given that clinics were closed at the time and hospitalizations were high risk due to her patients' vulnerable health.

"At one point we had three COVID-19 units at McKinney," she recalled. "It was devastating to see my residents in the COVID units when their rooms stayed empty. It was the hardest time for me. The proudest accomplishment was when we started to graduate our residents and almost all of them were able to return back to their former rooms on the units, and the COVID units were transitioned back to a dining area."

Her expertise is in long-term care, and it shows through almost two decades of service.

"She has taken busy night and weekend calls when COVID-19 was once again at a peak, allowing her colleagues a few hours of rest before returning to the fight," said Robert Holland, McKinney's Chief Medical Officer. "All the while, she has remained professional and optimistic – there is no COVID fatigue here!"



## NICOLA KOTCHEV, MD

Attending Physician, Geriatrics

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/METROPOLITAN**



## Providing Dignity to Senior Patients

Dr. Nicola Kotchev came of age in Bulgaria with a curiosity about life, the drive to make a difference and a sense of adventure that took him to Missouri after completing his medical education in 2004. Nearly 20 years later, he is a popular geriatrician at NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan, widely admired for his even-keeled and compassionate care of patients as they struggle for dignity at the end of their lives.

To Dr. Kotchev, there are no magic cures in geriatrics, but there are magic words: You're going home. "That's a very big deal," he says, "when you have an elderly person, and you're able to take care of every single aspect of their needs without hurting them in the process and then send them home. Because that's all they want. They don't want to be in a nursing home or a hospital. They want to be home. This is like winning the battle. That is a good explanation of what we do in geriatrics."

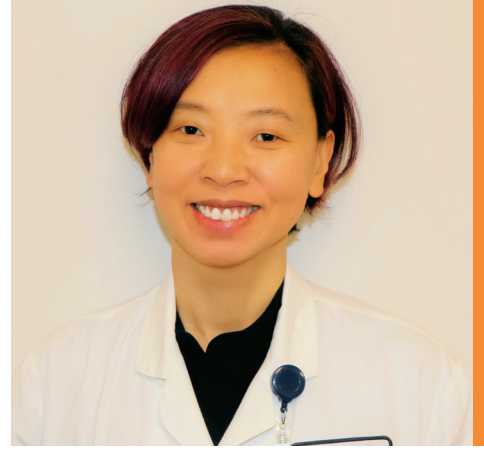
Dr. Kotchev began his career in orthopedics, training in spinal surgery and trauma in Bulgaria and France. But soon after coming to the United States, he developed his own serious orthopedic problem – a back injury that required spinal fusion and ended his surgical career. But those years also gave him a patient's perspective. After a period working as a hospital technician and lab assistant in Missouri, he resumed and refocused his career, coming to New York for a residency in internal medicine at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln, followed by a fellowship in geriatrics at Montefiore Medical Center and stints as an attending physician there and at St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx.

He joined Metropolitan in late 2019, just a couple of months before the onslaught of COVID overwhelmed the city's hospitals and nursing homes. "It was very, very tough," Dr. Kotchev said. "We had to constantly change staffing, operations and how we managed patients. We had to stretch our imaginations."

## JESSICA STOECKEL, MD

Director, Intensive Care Unit

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/NORTH CENTRAL BRONX**



## Battling COVID-19 at North Central Bronx

In the beginning of April 2020, during the first wave of COVID-19 patients, Dr. Jessica Stoeckel – new to her role as Hospital Medical Intensive Care Unit Director at NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx – was on the night shift. “There was a 36-year-old previously healthy intubated patient with acute kidney injury, bilateral pneumothoraces and severe ARDS,” she recalled, grappling with a respiratory pandemic as a pulmonologist. “I stared at his telemetry and thought to myself if he walks out of the hospital then all of this stress, death and mayhem would be worthwhile.”

About a week later, the patient self-extubated and had a cardiac arrest. “We were able to resuscitate him, but I was severely concerned that he had anoxic brain injury,” said Dr. Stoeckel. “Two months later, I watched him walk out of acute rehab, and he is now home with his 2-year-old daughter.”

During the pandemic, Dr. Stoeckel stood up a new 20-bed medical intensive care unit and a 20-bed step-down unit amid the throes of the Delta variant surge, keeping all of the North Central Bronx critical care units continuously staffed with outstanding physicians, most of whom were new to the hospital because they were temporary surge doctors.

“I always pictured myself as a worker bee,” she said. When FEMA built a 100-bed ICU in her hospital, she rolled with it, knowing that through level-loading, the hospital was able to help other hospitals in the system be even slightly less overwhelmed.

“Dr. Stoeckel is a true health care hero who oversaw and directly participated in the care of approximately 60 critically ill patients tirelessly seven days a week,” said Michael Zinaman, North Central Bronx’s Chief Medical Officer. As a bonus to her many talents, like millions of everyday people in the pandemic, she picked up her baking and knitting skills.

## PARAMPREET BAKSHI, MD

Associate Director of Ambulatory Care  
**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/QUEENS**



### Emerging as a Leader Amid COVID-19

Dr. Parampreet Bakshi is a career member of the NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens medical team – from her residency after arriving from India in 2005 to her appointment as Associate Director of Ambulatory Care in February 2020. That was the month COVID-19 began its assault on New York, hitting no borough harder than Queens. Dr. Bakshi was in the thick of it, and she quickly emerged as a leader when leaders were needed most – nimbly deploying staff to help with express care of COVID patients while pivoting other staff to continue managing chronic disease patients via telemedicine for the first time.

Being promoted in that critical moment was a turning point for her. “It brought on a sense of responsibility and pride,” she said. “I was able to step up to the challenge and we were able to work as one team regardless of job roles.”

Dr. Bakshi grew up in India, where she received her medical education and early training. “From a very young age, I was deeply affected by the pain and suffering of people around me from poverty, illness and social isolation, often all combined,” she said. “I wanted to be able to help others in some way. What could be better than being able to comfort and help people heal during the gravest hours in their lives?”

Dr. Bakshi’s appointment to a leadership position followed years as a respected preceptor for medical students at Queens in her role as a faculty member of Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. She has recently also begun a new program of student rotations in adult primary care with the CUNY School of Medicine, whose mission aligns with that of NYC Health + Hospitals.

“Working in a public hospital system provides unique experiences and broadens our perspectives not only medically but socially and culturally,” Dr. Bakshi says. “In addition to taking care of one individual patient and providing personalized care, the policies and changes we make in our hospitals have a huge impact on a very diverse and underserved community as a whole.”



## EDWARD RENDON, MD

Attending Psychiatrist

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/SEA VIEW



## In Constant Service to Others

For 18 years, Dr. Edward Rendon has been an attending psychiatrist at NYC Health + Hospitals/Sea View, a rehabilitation and nursing home on Staten Island where he's responsible for the care of patients struggling with all varieties of severe and challenging mental illnesses. "Best job I've ever had," he says flatly.

"He has a distinguished way of dealing with tough situations," is how Sea View's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Salwa Gerges puts it. "He has an empathetic and educated approach to identifying and treating mental illness, and he is wise about prescribing psychotropic medications. He is always smiling and easily approachable, and he is not only known for his outstanding care of Sea View residents, but he makes himself available to staff as well." During the critical months of the pandemic, Dr. Rendon helped staff members in crisis as a member of the health system's Helping Healers Heal program.

Dr. Rendon was born in the Bronx, grew up in Puerto Rico and says medicine "runs in the family." His father and great grandfather were physicians, as is his older brother.

"I grew up in an environment of sciences with a belief in improving yourself intellectually and spiritually and in service to our fellow human beings," he says. He returned to New York after medical school in Puerto Rico and joined NYC Health + Hospitals/Sea View as Attending Psychiatrist in 2004. He was appointed Chief of Psychiatry Services in 2016.

"I love my job," Dr. Rendon says. "It's very rewarding, and at times challenging, to deal with the many different issues I can encounter each day. Being a psychiatrist requires mostly compassion and empathy to alleviate emotional suffering. Not always easy, but I ask God for guidance."

## LUCIA PALLADINO, MD

Attending Critical Care Physician  
NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/WOODHULL



# Making Emotional Connections to Patients

It was her passion to care for the most fragile, critically ill patients that led Dr. Lucia Palladino to her career as an intensivist. "I have always been unsettled by people suffering," she says. As a critical care doctor at NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull, she says she is grateful that working in a public health system allows her to embrace the human side of the doctor-patient relationship and make an emotional connection that some avoid.

"The population we care for is very vulnerable in so many ways," she says. "It is impossible not to be emotionally involved when a very young patient who spent months walking to New York City from Chile gets so sick that he needs to be admitted to the Intensive Care Unit. In the private world, at times the misinterpretation of the meaning of professionalism creates a distance between the patient and the physician. I love when my successfully extubated patients call me sweetie. I don't think it makes me any less professional. Instead, it is a way to say we made it together."

Dr. Palladino is from Italy and received her medical education and early training in Rome. After coming to the United States in 1997, she served a critical care fellowship at George Washington University then came to New York to join Woodhull in 2004. She moved to posts at Maimonides in Brooklyn and Richmond University Medical Center on Staten Island before returning to Woodhull in 2018. Her compassion for patients and their families was never more evident than during the worst months of the pandemic, says Woodhull's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Edward Fishkin. Day after day, she spent hours with COVID patients and hours more consoling their families as they struggled to deal with the severity of the virus.

"Compassion is what drives integrity," Dr. Palladino says, adding, "I am thankful to care for patients because it helps me stay grounded and become a better person. Truth is: Patients, without knowing it, do more for me than I do for them."

## SANJIV SHAH, MD, MPH

Chief Medical Officer

**METROPLUSHEALTH**



# Establishing Trust between Doctor and Patient

Growing up in Tanzania, Dr. Sanjiv Shah lived three floors above his father's medical office and recalls how often he heard him say that caring for his patients was his greatest joy. "If he made them better, they would be eternally grateful. If things did not go well, as might occur from time to time, they would say it was God's will." From that, Dr. Shah learned that being a doctor "bestows a special privilege. It is a trust relationship that is both challenging and rewarding and must be respected and honored."

As Chief Medical Officer of MetroPlusHealth, Dr. Shah combines his personal inspiration with his 25 years of experience as an infectious disease specialist, teacher and physician leader to build on the health system insurance plan's record of providing New Yorkers with access to affordable, high-quality health care. He joined MetroPlus in 2019, just six months before the pandemic hit New York, and during the height of the emergency, he oversaw the redeployment of the plan's clinical staff to the health system and launched several outreach campaigns, including a partnership with the city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to increase testing and vaccination rates among the plan's more than 600,000 members.

Dr. Shah received his medical education in England and arrived in New York for his residency at Mount Sinai in 1992. In his second year, he rotated to NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst, an introduction to the nation's largest public health care system that left an indelible impression. "I learned a life lesson about the importance of psychosocial and socioeconomic factors that are inextricably woven into the fabric of medical care. It was also like being part of this great medical team providing care to a community as diverse as the United Nations."

After 30 years and many career stops later, Dr. Shah is lauded for being "tireless in ensuring high standards and exemplifying the system's ICARE values," especially during a pandemic that has highlighted health disparities and the role NYC Health + Hospitals plays in narrowing them. "It was the privilege of a lifetime working with colleagues at MetroPlusHealth as NYC responded to COVID-19," Dr. Shah says. "We tied our ropes together. You quickly appreciate the aphorism: All achievement is shared."

## TRICIA CAMILLE YUSAF, MD

Associate Education Director

**NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/SIMULATION CENTER**



## Preparing the Next Generation of Doctors

"It is through physicians like her that we are going to change the way we approach medicine." That's what Senior Medical Director of NYC Health + Hospitals/Simulation Center Dr. Michael Meguerdichian says of Dr. Tricia Camille Yusaf.

Dr. Yusaf, an OB-GYN, joined the Simulation Center in 2019 after eight years as Chief of Labor and Delivery at NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens. She made an immediate impact at the center, which uses innovative teaching methods and simulation technology to improve clinical skills and promote teamwork. Dr. Yusaf focused on the center's Maternal Mortality Reduction Program, delivering workshops and lectures at hospitals both inside and outside the health system across the city.

Dr. Yusaf was inspired to become a doctor after her grandmother developed diabetes and became a patient of NYC Health + Hospitals physicians whom she admired. "I assisted her with her insulin injections and often attended clinic visits," Dr. Yusaf said. "Having great physician role models led to my decision to pursue a career in medicine."

Aside from her role at the Simulation Center, Dr. Yusaf is an attending physician in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the health system's Jacobi and North Central Bronx facilities. She has also trained and mentored many physicians, nurses and other health care providers and received faculty awards from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and the Council on Resident Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology. "I believe it is essential to teach and mentor the next generations of health care providers," she says.

One of the things she emphasizes to her students is the importance of making a connection with patients: "My regular practice includes sitting at eye level when speaking, making eye contact while listening and looking for patients' non-verbal emotional cues," she says. "The smallest act of kindness we show our patients can profoundly affect the outcome of their illness and lives."



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