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HOSPITALS

# DOCTORS' DAY 2026



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# **DOCTORS'** **DAY 2026**

April 28, 2026

**Welcome**

**Mitchell Katz, MD**

President and Chief Executive Officer

## 2026 Doctors' Day Recipients

### **Taiye Odedosu, MD, FACP**

Attending Physician, Internal Medicine  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue

### **Jose Robles, MD**

Attending Physician  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Carter

### **Hyesung Kim, MD, PhD, MS**

Attending Physician  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Coler

### **Joon Park, MD**

Attending Physician  
NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Correctional Health Services

### **George Agriantonis, MD, FACS**

Chair, Surgery and  
Trauma Medical Director  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst

### **Hamid Gilak, MD**

Attending Physician,  
Obstetrics and Gynecology  
NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Belvis

### **Alisen Huang, MD, FAAD**

Attending Physician, Dermatology  
NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Broadway

### **Jayshree Modi, MD**

Attending Physician, Pediatrics  
NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Cumberland

### **James Schmidtberger, MD**

Chief of Service, Medicine  
NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Gouverneur

### **Daniela Atanassova Lineva, MD**

Attending Physician, Pediatrics  
NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Jackson Heights

### **Hossam Fayed, MD**

Attending Physician, Adult Primary Care  
NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Morrisania

### **Darcy Tabotabo, MD**

Attending Physician, Pediatrics  
NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Sydenham

### **Tanya Tandon, MD, FAAP**

Pediatrician  
NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Tremont

### **Gavrill Ilizarov, DO, MA, BA**

Attending Physician  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Gouverneur

**Aracelis Fernandez, MD, FAAP**

Chief of Pediatrics and  
Pediatrics Infectious Disease  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem

**Anila A. Siddiqi, MD**

Medical Director,  
Partial Hospital Program  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens

**Jeremy Sperling, MD, FACEP, FAAEM**

Chair, Emergency Medicine  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi

**Neena Gadangi, MD**

Ophthalmologist  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Sea View

**Bonny J. Baron, MD, FACEP**

Emergency Department  
Trauma Director  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County

**Georgia Anastasia Patikoglou,  
MD, PhD**

Attending Physician,  
Internal Medicine/Geriatric Medicine  
NYC Health + Hospitals/  
South Brooklyn Health

**Mason Blake Pimsler, MD**

Attending Physician, Ambulatory Care  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln

**Elizabeth Jalkut, MD**

Vice Chair, Medicine  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull

**Sima Pendharkar, MD, MPH, FACP**

Attending Physician  
NYC Health + Hospitals/McKinney

**Vani Dandolu, MD, MPH, MBA**

Chair, Obstetrics and Gynecology  
NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan

**Vimala Ramasamy, MD, FACP**

Vice Chair, Medicine;  
Director, Hospitalists Division  
NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx



**Mitchell Katz, MD**

President and  
Chief Executive Officer

## A Mission Beyond Medical Care

At NYC Health + Hospitals, our mission is to provide care for all New Yorkers. No exceptions. Often, as our Doctors' Day honorees teach us, that means going beyond medical care.

One of the outstanding doctors recognized this year recalls a patient who came to an appointment after someone had stolen her food stamps. She had not eaten in two days. The doctor connected her with social workers and made sure she left with food.

Several of our other honorees describe their duties as building trust and creating safe spaces where people feel heard. One doctor says simply: "We take care of those who may feel unseen. There is no greater honor than being in a position to help."

At a time of fear and uncertainty for many of our patients, our extraordinary doctors remain committed to not only treating illness and disease, but offering compassion and restoring stability at some of the most difficult moments in patients' lives.

This year's 25 Doctors' Day honorees represent a wide variety of specialties including pediatrics, psychiatry, emergency medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, and ophthalmology.

They come from all over the world: Nigeria, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, India, and Iran. But their hearts are all in the same place: here in New York City with our patients.

To this year's honorees, we congratulate you and thank you for your service and tireless dedication that is improving the lives of countless New Yorkers, every day.

## Compassionate Mentor to Physician Assistants

### Taiye Odedosu, MD, FACP

Attending Physician, Internal Medicine

NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue



Dr. Taiye Odedosu's connection to NYC Health + Hospitals began the day she was born. It would eventually come full circle in her career as a physician in the public hospital system.

She was born at NYC Health + Hospitals/Cumberland and grew up between New York and Nigeria, a deeply personal dual experience that gave her an early understanding of how profoundly access to health care can shape people's lives. Those experiences — along with teachers and mentors who recognized her curiosity and encouraged her interest in science — helped guide her toward medicine.

Today, nearly two decades after joining NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue, Dr. Odedosu has become one of the hospital's most respected clinicians, educators and leaders. She has served as director of Bellevue's Internal Medicine Inpatient Physician Assistant Service since 2013, and under her leadership the program has grown from 14 physician assistants to 84 working across 18 inpatient medicine teams.

"What makes me most proud is not just the growth but the PAs that I have hired," she says. "They are mission-driven professionals who step forward in moments of crisis, from COVID-19 to Ebola to Mpox, and who deliver compassionate, excellent care to our Bellevue patients every day."

It's a transformation that has made the service an essential component of Bellevue's clinical operations – and, says Chief Medical Officer Dr. Amit Uppal, "revolutionized the department by creating a self-sustaining culture where young PAs are mentored into leadership roles and empowered to solve complex challenges."

As a clinical professor at NYU Grossman School of Medicine, Dr. Odedosu is also a dedicated and widely admired medical educator and researcher, combining her lifelong scientific curiosity with a passion for health equity in studies examining issues such as hypertension among Black patients and diabetes management.

Colleagues say Dr. Odedosu's leadership reflects the same qualities that define her work with patients: calm judgment, a deep investment in mentorship and a commitment to building strong teams devoted to equitable care. "Compassion resonates most with me as a doctor," she says — a principle she brings to every patient encounter and every member of the team she leads.

## Helping Patients Reclaim Their Dignity

### Jose C. Robles, MD

Attending Physician

NYC Health + Hospitals/Carter



Growing up in the Philippines, Dr. Jose Robles was often sick and frequently treated by his uncle, one of only two doctors serving their town. What struck him as a child and stays with him still was both his uncle's empathy and his ingenuity — how he managed to deliver expert care despite limited tools and resources. "My inspiration to become a physician didn't come from a textbook," he says. "It came from a pair of compassionate hands in a town with almost no medical resources."

Watching his uncle work, Dr. Robles learned that medicine is empowered by technique and technology but sustained by human connection. And it showed him what a single physician could mean to an entire community. A lesson that would shape his own career.

After medical training in the Philippines, Dr. Robles came to New York for a residency in internal medicine at NYC Health + Hospitals/ Harlem. In 2003, he joined NYC Health + Hospitals/Coler on Roosevelt Island, then moved to NYC Health + Hospitals/Carter. For more than two decades, he has devoted his work to caring for chronically and critically ill patients, those facing complex medical conditions and prolonged dependence on life-sustaining treatments.

Among his proudest accomplishments has been his work with an interdisciplinary team focused on patients with respiratory failure who require long-term mechanical ventilation. By implementing specialized weaning protocols in Carter's long-term acute care unit, the team has helped many patients regain the ability to breathe independently and reclaim a measure of their independence — and with it their dignity and hope in the face of some of the most daunting medical challenges.

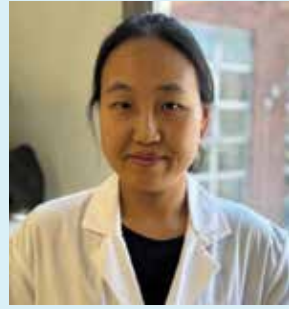
"There is no greater professional reward," Dr. Robles says, "than witnessing a patient once dependent on mechanical ventilation regain the ability to breathe on their own."

## Medicine in Her DNA

### Hyesung Kim, MD

Attending Physician

NYC Health + Hospitals/Coler



At NYC Health + Hospitals/Coler on Roosevelt Island, Dr. Hyesung Kim cares for residents with complex medical needs in one of the city's public long-term care and rehabilitation facilities. For Dr. Kim, caring for them means being part of something more than a post-acute facility.

"We provide a home and a community for New Yorkers who might otherwise be left behind," she says – a mission that extends beyond treatment to the dignity and personal attention every resident deserves.

Dr. Kim joined the Coler medical staff after completing her internal medicine residency at NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi and North Central Bronx in 2024. The transition marked an important milestone in her career. "Transitioning from my NYC Health + Hospitals residency into my role at Coler has been my proudest moment," she says. "It allowed me to turn my training into a long-term commitment to this community."

Though Dr. Kim is one of the newest members of the Coler staff, colleagues say she has already distinguished herself with her professionalism, compassion and a deep commitment to person-centered care. Chief Medical Officer Dr. Melissa Martin calls her "an emerging leader within our department."

Dr. Kim grew up in South Korea and saw first-hand the dedication that a medical career demands and the impact it can have. "With a family full of doctors, medicine was always in my DNA," she says. "I never doubted that I wanted to dedicate my life to the same kind of meaningful work."

Her path reflects an unusual combination of clinical training and academic achievement. Dr. Kim earned her medical degree in Seoul and completed postgraduate training in obstetrics and gynecology before pursuing advanced research, ultimately earning both a master's and Ph.D. She later came to New York to train in internal medicine, expanding her clinical expertise while developing a strong interest in quality improvement and evidence-based care.

"What keeps me moving forward every day is the memory of my patients' resilience," she says. Seeing even small improvements in a resident's quality of life — and the gratitude that follows — is, she adds, "a powerful reminder of why I chose this path."

# A Calling to Correctional Health

## Joon Park, MD

Attending Physician

NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Correctional Health Services



In the clinics of Rikers Island, physicians have to make decisions quickly and connect with patients in a matter of minutes. For Dr. Joon Park, those brief encounters are where correctional medicine begins. “In a mercurial environment, we have but a few moments with each patient to build trust,” he says. “In that snapshot, correctional healthcare professionals rise up to the challenge.”

Dr. Park came to medicine after years of searching for the right path. As a young adult he explored everything from marketing to auto mechanics, even commercial fishing. It was his older brother’s example that ultimately drew him to a medical career. “I remember the feeling when my heart and mind aligned with a passion for helping others,” he says.

Dr. Park joined NYC Health + Hospitals/ Correctional Health Services in 2010 after completing a residency in family medicine and a fellowship in sports medicine. At first, he considered it just a first job, a stepping stone, but he soon found his calling at Rikers. “Correctional medicine has challenged me in ways I never imagined possible,” he says, offering opportunities to care for vulnerable patients while mentoring new clinicians entering the field.

Over more than a decade, Dr. Park has taken on a wide range of roles — including primary care provider, assistant medical director, onboarding trainer and telehealth physician — consistently stepping forward to support colleagues and deliver care without judgment, one patient at a time.

The work is not without its weight. “When you face the loss of a patient, you replay every moment over and over and it changes you. I’ve learned that adversity must strengthen you and push you to become better so you can improve the lives of others.”

Colleagues describe Dr. Park as calm, thoughtful and deeply committed in an environment that demands resilience. “Dr. Park is one of the most considerate and cheerful physicians working in Correctional Health Services,” says Dr. Zachary Rosner, Chief of Medicine for Correctional Health Services. “This is not an easy task, given how challenging our work can be. He is the ultimate team player who has his hand on the pulse of our work and thrives in the trenches.”

## Building a World-Class Trauma Center in Queens

### George Agriantonis, MD, FACS

Chair, Department of Surgery and Trauma Medical Director

NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst



When Dr. George Agriantonis began his career at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst nearly three decades ago, trauma care in New York City was far less organized than it is today. Hospitals largely operated independently, without the standardized protocols or national benchmarks that now define modern trauma systems. Over the years, Dr. Agriantonis helped change that — building a program at Elmhurst that would become a model for coordinated, high-quality trauma care across the city.

“We knew we had to organize, adapt and change,” he says. “We had to build something that met national standards.”

That effort culminated in 2018, when Elmhurst achieved Level I Trauma Center verification from the American College of Surgeons — the highest designation for trauma care. It was a defining moment. “You can call yourself a trauma center, but you really are one when you meet their standards,” Dr. Agriantonis says. Since then, the program has continued to mature, with outcomes now comparable to top centers nationwide.

Dr. Agriantonis’s influence extends beyond Elmhurst. As chair of New York City’s Regional Trauma Advisory Committee, he works with trauma leaders across all 19 trauma centers in the city, helping shape protocols, share best practices and advance care statewide. Many of the approaches now used across the city — from data tracking to clinical protocols — were first developed at Elmhurst.

At the heart of that progress is teamwork. Over the years, he has seen patients with devastating injuries — severe pelvic trauma, complex internal injuries — survive and recover when similar cases might once have been fatal. That change, he says, reflects the evolution of a system. “From the ER to the blood bank to radiology, everyone works together as a seamless team,” he says. “That wasn’t always the case.”

“This is a very special place,” he says. “Patients come here and get the best care they can get anywhere.”

## Finding Home at Belvis

### Hamid Gilak, MD

Attending Physician, Obstetrics & Gynecology

NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Belvis

When Dr. Hamid Gilak joined NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Belvis, in 1999, he was building a new chapter in a career that had already spanned continents. He had trained and practiced in Tehran before relocating to New York, completing his obstetrics and gynecology residency at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln and going on to serve patients across multiple NYC Health + Hospitals facilities. At Belvis, he found his home.

For more than 25 years, he has been the anchor of the women's health service at Belvis — at times carrying much of the clinical responsibility on his own to ensure that patients never lose access to essential obstetric and gynecologic care. Through periods of significant staffing challenges and organizational change, his presence made the difference between women in the community getting care they needed and going without it. "He places patients first," says Associate Medical Director Dr. Charles Gillihan, "and approaches his work with a sense of responsibility to the community we serve."

That sense of responsibility extends beyond the exam room. As a member of the Facility-Based Collaboration Council, Dr. Gilak has advocated for patients and colleagues alike, raising concerns about safety, access and working conditions — always with the goal of strengthening care rather than simply registering complaints. It is the kind of sustained engagement that only comes from someone who has watched a community's needs evolve over decades and feels personally accountable for meeting them.

Dr. Gillihan describes him as a trusted, steady presence whose experience and commitment have maintained continuity for generations of patients. Dr. Gilak has been delivering babies in the Bronx long enough that some of his earliest patients are now patients themselves. It's the kind of contribution that's part of the backbone of NYC Health + Hospitals: nearly three decades of showing up, absorbing change and keeping the doors open for people who depend on him.

Asked what makes practicing in the public health system different from private medicine, Dr. Gilak's mind goes right to his patients — and with characteristically bluntness: "They need me more, and they respect me more."

## Treating Skin Conditions with Compassion

### Alisen Huang, MD, FAAD

Attending Physician, Dermatology

NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Broadway



The patient was in for a skin biopsy and doing her best to smile and chat her way through what seemed like routine pre-procedure anxiety. Only later did she tearfully share with Dr. Alisen Huang what was truly weighing on her: Someone had stolen her food stamps, and she had not eaten in two days. “She said, ‘I have exactly 36 cents to my name,’ but she had come to the appointment anyway.” The clinic staff made sure she left with food, and Dr. Huang connected her with social workers who could help her get back on her feet.

Experiences like that, Dr. Huang says, remind her that “New Yorkers are built differently – there’s a unique gumption and resilience in someone who balances multiple jobs and family responsibilities while navigating a complex health issue.” And it captures what NYC Health + Hospitals makes possible: that a patient can come in for a biopsy and leave not only with medical care, but a lifeline.

At NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Broadway, Dr. Huang cares for patients living with chronic skin conditions that can touch nearly every part of their daily lives: a painful inflammatory disease that made it

impossible for one patient to hug her child; an autoimmune condition that can cause everything from rashes to permanent hair loss. They are conditions that remind Dr. Huang that dermatology is often about restoring dignity and function as much as treating disease.

Her path to medicine began when she was in high school and her toddler brother was hospitalized with severe pneumonia that kept him in the pediatric intensive care unit with chest tubes for two weeks. Watching the physicians care for him with both precision and compassion showed her what medicine can mean to families at their most overwhelming moments.

Today, she brings that same attentiveness to one of the most diverse communities in the country, where many patients are newly arrived immigrants navigating unfamiliar systems while managing chronic illness and learning how to advocate for themselves in a new healthcare environment.

“I’m inspired every day by the strength my patients bring with them,” she says, “even when they are facing far more than anyone can see.”

## A Career of Caring for Children

### Jayshree J. Modi, MD

Attending Physician, Pediatrics

NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Cumberland



Growing up in India, Dr. Jayshree Modi marveled at her mother's natural way of caring for her, her siblings and even their neighbor through everyday childhood illnesses. "She knew exactly what to do for each one of us," Dr. Modi recalls. "She seemed to know the art and science of caregiving. I think this implanted the urge to learn all that I could about diseases and treatments to reduce suffering, especially of children, and in my teenage years I became keen to be a doctor."

After earning her medical degree in India and completing pediatric training in Mumbai, she moved to New York, where she completed her pediatric residency at NYC Health + Hospitals/ Metropolitan. In 1994 she joined NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Cumberland, beginning more than three decades of caring for children and families in Brooklyn's public health clinics.

One of her proudest accomplishments came through her work in asthma care. While working with New York City Department of Health child health clinics, Dr. Modi became a trainer for the Medical Home Asthma Program, helping physicians and staff better manage pediatric asthma. When those clinics later merged with NYC Health + Hospitals, she brought that training to Gotham Health, dramatically improving outcomes for patients. Children who once required daily nebulizer treatments achieved better asthma control and emergency visits declined dramatically.

For Dr. Modi, the privilege of pediatrics is seeing children grow from newborns into young adults and building the years-long relationships that come with caring for families. Through it all, compassion remains her compass, guiding every conversation, diagnosis and moment of care. "It teaches me to acknowledge and understand the problems that families have and help them even when their behavior is adversarial," she says. "Often, they calm down and at times become the most loyal patients. Practicing compassion makes the receiver feel at ease, heard and cared for and helps the giver become a better person."

## Commitment to Care for All

### James A. Schmidtberger, MD

Chief of Service, Medicine

NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Gouverneur



Dr. James Schmidtberger's career has been shaped by the defining public health emergency of his generation. "The HIV/AIDS crisis inspired me to become a doctor," he says. What began as a response to the devastating epidemic of the 1980s and '90s has become a decades-long commitment to caring for patients through every stage of that illness — from fear and uncertainty to survival and, increasingly, long and stable lives.

At NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Gouverneur, Dr. Schmidtberger has spent more than 20 years building and leading a comprehensive model of care for patients with HIV. Early in his career, many of his patients believed they would not survive. Some didn't.

"We worked hard together to keep them alive," he recalls. "Then when they survived, we worked to get their lives back on track. Then we worked on their thriving. And now, they are living their best possible lives." He adds, "We don't always succeed, but it's the journey that stays with me."

Today, that work continues as part of a broader leadership role. As Chief of Service for Medicine, Dr. Schmidtberger oversees one of the largest outpatient departments in Gotham Health, serving more than 22,000 adults across primary care and multiple specialties, including HIV services, the World Trade Center Environmental Health Center and the Pride Center.

Even while leading a large and complex department, he remains deeply committed to individual patients. Colleagues describe a physician who listens closely, treats every patient with respect and takes time to build trust — even making the effort to communicate across language barriers.

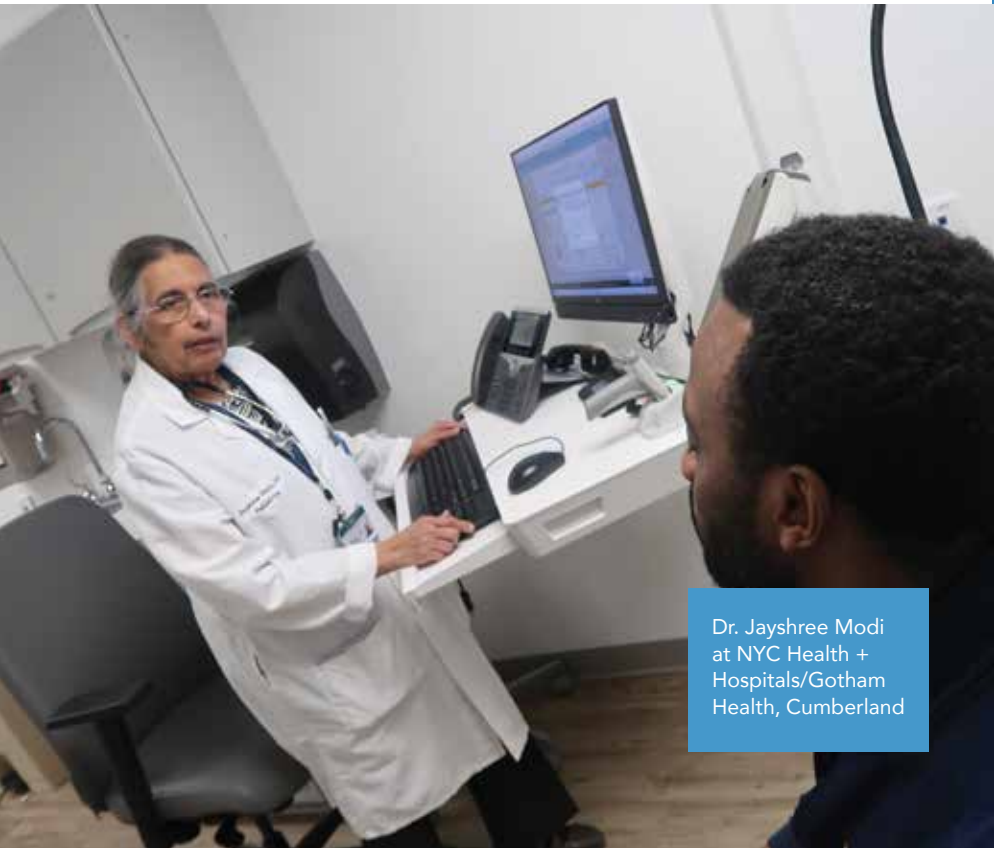
"It is all about the relationships," he says — connecting with patients, colleagues and staff alike. In his view, that sense of shared purpose is what makes the public health system so special. "I cannot tell you how many times patients have come to us because the private sector has let them down," he says. "There is a warmth here that patients really appreciate."



Dr. Georgia Patikoglou, MD, PhD at NYC Health + Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health



Dr. George Agriantonis at NYC Health + Hospitals/ Elmhurst



Dr. Jayshree Modi at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Cumberland

## Helping Families Feel Understood

### Daniela Atanassova Lineva, MD

Pediatrician

NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Jackson Heights



As a young child in Bulgaria, Dr. Daniela Atanassova-Lineva would line up her dolls as patients, mixing flowers and soil into imagined medicines and tending to them with quiet seriousness. By the time she was five, she had memorized the anatomical names of bones in Latin, already fascinated by what she calls “the language of the body.”

Dr. Atanassova-Lineva drew inspiration from her family. Her uncle, Ivan Mitev, was a physician who discovered the sixth tone of the heart and changed the way doctors could diagnose cardiac conditions in children. From him, she learned how attention to subtle signs could save lives. Her mother, a daycare teacher, modeled steady devotion to children, while her father, an agricultural engineer who devised ways to coax life back into ailing plants, taught her about patience and faith in renewal.

“I did not decide to become a doctor – I grew into it,” Dr. Daniela Atanassova-Lineva says. “I learned that care is not rushed and healing is never forceful—it is earned through presence.”

Today, she brings that same attentiveness to her work in Jackson Heights, a community of immigrants and a place she remembers seeing in the movie “Coming to America” as a teenager in Bulgaria. “We are often the first people they meet in this country,” she says of her patients. “The first who can instill courage, confidence and hope. She often moves between four or five languages in a single day, helping children and reassuring their parents, and seeing them relax the moment they realize they are understood. “It is something I am deeply proud of and it defines my work at NYC Health + Hospitals.”

Dr. Atanassova-Lineva joined Gotham Health in 2012 after more than a decade as an attending physician in the pediatric emergency department at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst, where she treated children at some of their most urgent and vulnerable moments. She continues to extend that commitment beyond her clinic through volunteer work with Doctors Without Borders – experiences that reflect the same enduring purpose that first drew her to medicine.

“Becoming a doctor was never about status or certainty,” she says, “but about staying faithful to that early instinct—the quiet, human desire to care.”

## The Physician Who is Part of the Family

### Hossam Fayed, MD

Attending Physician, Primary Care

NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Morrisania



When Dr. Hossam Eldin Fayed was six-years-old, his father, a biologist, became seriously ill with liver disease and began showing him how to examine the abdomen and feel for the spleen. “The interaction was so intense,” Dr. Fayed recalls, “that as I went into medicine step by step, I felt like he was with me.”

Dr. Fayed trained and began practicing in Egypt but his adventurous impulse brought him to New York in 1990. He worked as a medical assistant and took a second job at a 7-Eleven until he passed his boards and began a pulmonary residency – later becoming chief resident – at Cabrini Medical Center in Manhattan at a defining moment.

“It was the height of the AIDS epidemic and I cared for many very sick patients, often young people who died in my hands,” he recalls. It was an emotional experience that left him with an enduring lesson: “There will always be challenges. You may not be able to change everything the way you want, but to give up – no. Do the maximum you can do. You will have an impact.”

After 16 years in New York, Dr. Fayed returned to Egypt and spent a decade building two intensive care units and training young physicians in the American model of medical education. He returned to the U.S. in 2017 and found his way to NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Morrisania. After decades as a pulmonary and critical care specialist, the move to primary care struck an immediate chord. “It took me back to when I started my first office in my family’s village in Egypt,” he says. “You feel like the doctor in the old black and white movies — the physician who is part of the family. People come to me with a lot of problems and I’m the kind of a guy who likes to handle problems.”

At Morrisania, Dr. Fayed mentors residents, nurse practitioners and pharmacists. The first advice he gives them has nothing to do with clinical medicine: balance your ambition with your personal life. Over time, he has come to see that balance as part of a deeper way of judging a life well-lived: “Am I of value to somebody else? That is what life is about now.”

## Making Families Feel Supported

### Darcy Tabotabo, MD

Attending Physician, Pediatrics

NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Sydenham



As a child growing up in Tennessee after emigrating with his parents from the Philippines, Dr. Darcy Tabotabo learned firsthand how much a community can matter. Without extended family nearby, he came to value the mentors who stepped forward to help him find his way. It was, he says, “my lifeline,” and it shaped both his path into medicine and the physician he would become — “the one people can come to when they are sick, need an ear to listen, or a hand to help.”

At NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Sydenham, Dr. Tabotabo lives out that commitment in everyday ways: welcoming walk-in patients, helping families complete urgent paperwork, and making time for parents who need reassurance as much as treatment. In just two years, he has impressed colleagues as a physician who consistently goes beyond expectations to ensure that children and families feel supported and cared for. Dr. Marion Billings, Sydenham’s chief medical officer, recalls a recent snowy day when Dr. Tabotabo arrived at work wearing a brace and using a cane after surgery for a serious basketball injury. “Even dealing with a busted knee,” she said, “he shows up.”

One experience early in his time at Sydenham captured what that dedication can mean to patients. When the mother of one of his young patients contacted him from Egypt after noticing unusual movements in her infant, Dr. Tabotabo asked her to send a video. He recognized signs of infantile spasms and helped arrange urgent neurological care abroad before coordinating follow-up in New York.

Teaching has been central to Dr. Tabotabo’s work from the start of his career. During residency at Jacobi Medical Center, he received the Resident-as-Teacher Award three years in a row. He continues to teach through emergency department and inpatient shifts at Jacobi and by welcoming residents interested in primary care to observe his clinic at Sydenham, emphasizing communication that builds trust with families.

“We take care of those who may feel unseen,” he says. “There is no greater honor than being in a position to help.”

## Supporting Young Patients in the Bronx

### Tanya Tandon, MD, FAAP

Pediatrician

NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Gotham Health, Tremont



At age 13, growing up in India, Dr. Tanya Tandon was diagnosed with polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), a condition that affected her health, confidence and sense of identity at a formative moment in adolescence. The experience shaped her understanding of how stigma, body image pressures from social media and limited access to reliable medical information can affect young people. And it helped define the physician she would become.

That early and intensely personal encounter with illness strengthened Dr. Tandon's determination to pursue a medical career in which she could advocate for adolescents facing misunderstood conditions and address the social forces that shape child and family health.

Today, as a pediatrician at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gotham Health, Tremont, Dr. Tandon brings that commitment to families across the Bronx. Since joining Tremont in 2024, she has created patient education resources addressing nutrition, introduced programs such as Reach Out and Read and Prescription for Play and led initiatives promoting respectful communication with gender-diverse youth.

One of her proudest accomplishments has been securing a foundation grant to buy 300 bilingual books supporting safe-sleep practices for the many parents she sees who co-sleep with their babies. It both reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome and promotes early literacy. "Seeing the smiles of parents as they read to their babies' from their first book is a beautiful thing," she says.

After serving her residency in a community hospital focused on underserved populations, Dr. Tandon found that joining NYC Health + Hospitals was "the obvious choice" to continue her mission of providing equity-focused pediatric care. "At Tremont, every day I am reminded that medicine is about building trust and creating safe spaces where people feel seen and heard," she says. "Working here has been incredibly rewarding. It has given me the opportunity to connect with patients from diverse backgrounds, inspired me to learn a new language to better serve my community and allowed me to form meaningful bonds with our families."

## Supporting Post-Acute and Rehab Care

### Gavriil Ilizarov, DO

Attending Physician

NYC Health + Hospitals/Gouverneur



Dr. Gavriil (Gabe) Ilizarov came to medicine with an unusual legacy. His grandfather, also named Gavriil Ilizarov, was the Soviet surgeon who pioneered distraction osteogenesis – the technique that taught the world that bone can regenerate. “Growing up sharing a name with my grandfather instilled in me a lifelong reverence for the human body’s capacity to heal,” he says.

The younger Dr. Ilizarov absorbed that lesson and chose his own path: restoring function and independence through rehabilitation medicine while improving the digital systems that support clinical care.

Board-certified in both Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation and Clinical Informatics, Dr. Ilizarov sees the two as parallel pursuits: Restoring mobility is the essence of preserving what makes a patient’s life their own, and advancing clinical infrastructure raises the standard of care for everyone. By streamlining electronic health records and using AI-powered documentation, he says, “We buy back precious time for physicians to focus on bedside care.”

At NYC Health + Hospitals/Gouverneur, that bedside care is demanding. His patients are older adults, medically complex, and frequently contending with housing insecurity and financial pressures that make even a routine discharge anything but. In that kind

of setting, progress is often measured not in dramatic interventions but in the steady work required to help patients return safely to their communities. Supporting that transition – whether by managing chronic pain, arranging prosthetics, untangling a housing problem or coordinating the right follow-up – remains one of the most meaningful parts of his practice.

Dr. Ilizarov maintains a demanding schedule as both a physiatrist at Gouverneur and a clinical professor at NYU School of Medicine, where he has created clinical informatics training programs that have reached more than a thousand providers and medical students. But he always makes time for Gouverneur’s residents, advocating for the needs of a vulnerable population and strengthening a culture of collaboration across the care team that translates directly into safer transitions, greater independence and better quality of life for patients.

“Unencumbered mobility is the absolute cornerstone of independence,” Dr. Ilizarov says. “Victories are often measured by the meticulous coordination required to help a complex patient transition safely back into their community.”

# Healing Harlem's Most Vulnerable Children

## Aracelis D. Fernandez, MD

Chief, Pediatrics and  
Pediatric Infectious Disease

NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem



As a teenager in the Dominican Republic, Dr. Aracelis Fernandez stood at the bedside of her closest friend, Alfredina, pleading with her to urinate. Alfredina was dying of lupus nephritis and her kidneys had shut down. At 15, Dr. Fernandez was too young to understand what was happening but old enough to feel its weight. "It was in that moment," she recalls, "that I decided to become a physician."

It's the kind of origin story that explains everything about the doctor she became: A pediatrician whose career has been devoted to caring for children and adolescents facing serious illness—especially those navigating HIV and other complex infectious diseases.

Today, as director of pediatrics and chief of pediatric ambulatory care services at NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem, Dr. Fernandez leads clinical programs that combine specialized treatment with long-term support for families across one of New York City's most diverse communities. Her work spans patient care, research, education and system improvement, including participation in major pediatric HIV research networks and leadership of programs funded through city, state and federal initiatives.

A graduate of Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra in Santiago — where she was seeing patients by 18 — Dr. Fernandez completed her fellowship in pediatric infectious diseases and HIV at New York Presbyterian/Cornell and has spent decades at the forefront of the fight against HIV in children and youth. As an assistant professor of clinical pediatrics at Columbia University, she is a physician-educator who teaches trainees not only clinical skill but "the art of demonstrating empathy while delivering outstanding care," says Harlem's chief medical officer, Dr. Maurice Wright, adding, "Her motivation is contagious."

Dr. Fernandez might put it more plainly: "I wake up at 4:40 a.m. every day excited to come to work. Once I arrive, I remind myself that I have it easy. I'm not sick — my patients are." The deepest reward, she says, is watching children born with HIV grow up, finish college, build careers, and have families of their own. "These are the true joys of the job."

## Passion for Emergency Medicine

### **Jeremy D. Sperling, MD, FACEP, FAAEM**

Chair, Emergency Medicine

NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi



When Dr. Jeremy Sperling arrived at NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi in 2015, he came with a clear sense of what an emergency department could be. What he built over the next decade is a measure of how far that vision reached.

As Chair of Emergency Medicine at Jacobi and North Central Bronx, he has overseen the transformation of a department that now fields more than 150,000 emergency visits a year and has grown to more than 45 attending physicians, many of whom he has recruited and mentored. He created a toxicology service, launched fellowships in emergency ultrasound and simulation, and built public health initiatives addressing opioid and alcohol use disorders and connecting undiagnosed HIV patients in the ED to ongoing care. Jacobi earned Gold Status from the American College of Emergency Physicians as a Pain and Addiction Care center of excellence, and he helped lead major institutional certifications as a Level 1 Adult Trauma Center, Joint Commission Stroke Center, and cardiac catheterization PCI center.

Behind all of it is a doctor who loves the work. "I love the daily interactions with patients, building rapport with a new patient, helping them with their concerns," he says. "I love solving problems and the satisfaction of making a challenging diagnosis."

A Professor of Emergency Medicine at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and President of the Board of Directors of the Physician Affiliate Group of New York, Dr. Sperling has also won multiple teaching awards including the national ACEP Emergency Medicine Faculty Teaching Award.

When the Bronx was among the hardest-hit communities in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Sperling guided his department through extraordinary clinical demand — rapid assessment areas, new treatment pathways, constant staff communication — while making sure someone was checking on how his team was holding up.

For Dr. Sperling, practicing emergency medicine in the public hospital system carries a special weight. Many patients arrive without reliable access to primary care, medications, or stable housing, requiring physicians to look beyond the immediate complaint. His guiding principle, shared with every colleague in the department, is straightforward: provide "private hospital care in a public hospital setting."

## Joy and Heartbreak in the ED

### Bonny J. Baron, MD

Emergency Department Trauma Director

NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County



In the summer of 1993, Dr. Bonny Baron walked into the original C Building Emergency Department at NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County for her first shift as an attending physician. She was one of a handful of founding faculty assembled to build Brooklyn's first academic department of emergency medicine from scratch and launch a residency program.

Dr. Baron is still there more than three decades later, and today she is at the center of a program that has trained some 500 emergency physicians, many of whom are now leaders in the field nationally. As Emergency Department Trauma Director, she has been instrumental in earning and maintaining Kings County's Level 1 Trauma Center designation. And as a tenured professor at her medical school alma mater, SUNY Downstate, she has authored more than 30 peer-reviewed articles on trauma resuscitation and injury and mentored generations of residents who credit her as a defining influence on their careers.

The devotion runs deep, and its roots go back to her childhood. Dr. Baron's mother had dreamed of becoming a doctor but was steered into teaching instead — a more acceptable career for women of her college generation in the 1950s. "But she shared her passion for medicine with me," Dr. Baron says. "She demonstrated the science experiments she taught her third graders and I grew up on a steady TV diet of 'Dr. Kildare,' and 'Marcus Welby MD.' Once 'M\*A\*S\*H' aired, my career choice was made."

Dr. Baron has spent her entire career in public hospitals by choice and says it takes a certain kind of doctor to thrive in an environment with limited resources and serve patients who depend on the public health system as their lifeline. "Those of us who embrace the challenges and limitations find we are better doctors for it," she says. "My emergency department shifts, which combine chaos, humor, tragedy, joy, heartbreak and total gratification, always keep me coming back for more."

After more than three decades, the emergency department she helped build from nothing has become a national model for both frontline trauma care and the training of future emergency physicians—exactly the kind of work her mother, the schoolteacher who wanted to be a doctor, had always dreamed of.



Dr. Joon Park  
at NYC Health  
+ Hospitals/  
Correctional Health  
Services



Dr. Neena Gadangi  
at NYC Health +  
Hospitals/Sea View



Dr. Vani Dandolu  
at NYC Health  
+ Hospitals/  
Metropolitan

## Caring for the Homeless in the Bronx

### Mason Blake Pimsler, MD

Attending Physician, Ambulatory Care

NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln



When a 73-year-old man without insurance arrived at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln after receiving little recent preventive screening elsewhere, Dr. Mason Blake Pimsler ordered a panel of labs. One was a PSA test, even though prostate cancer screening after age 70 isn't routinely recommended. The result revealed cancer—caught early enough to treat successfully. "NYC Health + Hospitals allowed me to order the test because he was a human being who needed it," Dr. Pimsler says.

As an attending physician in ambulatory care, Dr. Pimsler works in Lincoln's Safety Net Clinic, caring for patients experiencing homelessness, living in shelters or managing substance use disorders alongside complex medical and psychiatric conditions. He sees the clinic not simply as a place to treat illness, but as a place to restore stability and trust at some of the most difficult moments in patients' lives. The breadth of services available across the system—from medications to social work and legal support—makes that possible.

"At NYC Health + Hospitals, I have a deep tool chest to help patients," he says, adding, "I really enjoy making their day a better one and they make my day better."

That simple outlook reflects what first drew him to medicine. From an early age, Dr. Pimsler was struck by how compassionate care can change the course of someone's life during periods of illness and uncertainty. Today, he still describes the work as a privilege—an opportunity to listen carefully, earn trust and guide patients through experiences that might otherwise feel overwhelming.

Colleagues note that his clinical rigor is matched by a steady respect for patients whose lives are often shaped by barriers to care beyond the exam room. He has helped formerly incarcerated patients navigate employment challenges and worked to ensure continuity of care for those who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

For Dr. Pimsler, that approach begins with respect for everyone. "From the cleaning lady I have tea with most mornings in the pavilion clinic to the people in the C-suite," he says, "I value every patient, colleague and staff member."

## Guiding Light for Post-Acute Patients

### Sima Pendharkar, MD, MPH

Post-Acute Care Physician

NYC Health + Hospitals/McKinney



She had been caring for the woman for two years — a patient with dementia who loved cats. Over time, Dr. Sima Pendharkar had come to know her well: her life stories, her passion for painting, the world she still carried inside her even as it grew harder to reach. Dr. Pendharkar is a cat lover herself, and in the patient's last days she sat by her side and showed her videos of Lucky, the street cat she adopted in Brooklyn. The woman smiled.

To Dr. Pendharkar it was a small but quietly profound moment that reflected a dimension of medicine that can be as important as treatment. "Through suffering and pain, the common human experience can always be a guiding light that brings dignity and hope," Dr. Pendharkar says. "To me, this is the essence of what doctoring is about."

That instinct to find the human connection inside the clinical one has defined her career from the beginning. Before medical school, Dr. Pendharkar spent a year in Texas with AmeriCorps, designing public health programs for the state's health department: diabetes support groups, nutrition classes, after-school exercise programs. She also founded a soccer team for children and raised money for equipment and clinics.

At NYC Health + Hospitals/McKinney, she has brought the same combination of commitment and resourcefulness to post-acute care. She helped develop a remote care program that gives patients around-the-clock access to a physician. And during significant staffing challenges, Dr. Pendharkar extended her own coverage through nights and weekends so residents never felt the disruption.

Dr. Pendharkar is board-certified in both internal medicine and pediatrics and also holds a master's in public health. She has served as chief of hospital medicine and held faculty appointments at several institutions. She has also pursued a parallel interest in physician wellness, co-authoring research on physician suicide and presenting nationally on the topic.

For Dr. Pendharkar, the diversity of patients she encounters in the public health system is one of its great gifts. "I have had to use interpreters for languages I didn't know existed," she says, "and this is always a reminder of how expansive our world is — and yet we can still all be connected through a simple smile or caring gesture."

## Improving Women's Health in East Harlem

### Vani Dandolu, MD, MPH, MBA

Chair, Obstetrics and Gynecology

NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan



Dr. Vani Dandolu fell in love with robotic surgery the first time she used it. "I was like, wow, I could do this forever," she says. "It makes you feel like you have four arms — it's an extension of the human hand. Your skill level is higher, your outcomes are much better, safer." She has performed more than 200 robotic procedures, and when NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan recruited her as chair of OBGYN in November 2022, bringing robotic surgery to the hospital was central to her mandate.

Six months after arriving, Dr. Dandolu performed the hospital's first-ever robotic procedure. Even seasoned robotic surgeons hesitate to be first at a new institution, she explains: "Surgery is a team sport. The support team may be trained but untested." Prudence prevailed. Three years later, robotic surgery is now routine enough at Metropolitan that Dr. Dandolu is training her gynecology residents. It's a milestone that carries meaning beyond her department. "Usually people don't think of women's health providers as surgeons," she says. "But we do complex surgeries and now there is more acceptance."

Dr. Dandolu grew up in a small town in India and trained at the highly selective Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research before coming to the United States. She chaired OBGYN departments at Temple University and the University of Nevada and now teaches at New York Medical College. Along the way she earned an MPH from Johns Hopkins to support her residents' research and an MBA from Temple — pursuits that reflect her peripheral vision for better health care.

When she arrived at Metropolitan, Dr. Dandolu learned that the hospital's cervical cancer screening rate earned only a one-star Medicaid rating. So she launched an outreach campaign, opened Saturday and evening clinics and rallied every provider around one premise: "If a patient comes in for any reason, that may be the only chance to do a pap smear." Within two years, Metropolitan had a five- star rating and was ranked number one across NYC Health + Hospitals.

"There is deep satisfaction," Dr. Dandolu says, "in knowing that your workday leaves a positive tangible impact on the community every day."

## Training the Next Generation of Physicians

### Vimala Ramasamy, MD

Vice Chair, Medicine;  
Director, Hospitalists Division

NYC Health + Hospitals/  
Jacobi & North Central Bronx



When NYC Health + Hospitals/North Central Bronx graduated its first class of internal medicine residents in 2023, Dr. Vimala Ramasamy felt the weight of the moment beyond the milestone it was for the hospital. For her, it was the result of years of work building a training environment where new doctors could grow into skilled clinicians—and often remain to serve the same community themselves.

“Seeing residents grow from uncertain beginners to confident, competent physicians was incredibly fulfilling,” she says. “Being part of their journey and witnessing their success reminded me why I am passionate about medicine and teaching.”

Dr. Ramasamy has devoted virtually her entire career to NYC Health + Hospitals/Jacobi and North Central Bronx, where she now serves as vice chair of medicine, director of the hospitalist division and site director for medicine at the North Central Bronx campus.

Over decades of leadership, she has helped expand inpatient medicine services and played a central role in launching and securing accreditation for the internal medicine residency program—recruiting faculty, shaping curriculum and mentoring trainees as the program took root. Many of the

physicians she trained have remained at the institution as attending physicians, extending the reach of the program and strengthening care for the community it serves.

That the program launched at all is itself a testament to her resolve. Its early days coincided with the first wave of COVID-19, but Dr. Ramasamy simultaneously got the residency running while helping create and staff additional ICU beds at North Central Bronx to ensure that critically ill patients continued to receive care during one of the most challenging moments in the hospital’s history.

Her caring nature and commitment to medicine took root early in her life. As a middle schooler, if a classmate got hurt on the playground she would be the one to walk them to the nurse’s office without thinking twice. As a clinician, mentor and leader, she’s been walking people to where they need to go ever since.

For Dr. Ramasamy, practicing in the city’s public health system carries special meaning. Many of the patients she serves, she says, “look like me and come from similar backgrounds,” deepening her sense of connection to the community and reinforcing her commitment to providing equitable care where it is needed most.

## Building Trust with Patients in Queens

### Anila A. Siddiqi, MD

Medical Director, Partial Hospital Program

NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens



For more than two decades at NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens, Dr. Anila Ahsan Siddiqi has worked with patients at their most vulnerable — guiding them through the treacherous stretch between inpatient discharge and outpatient stability. As medical director of the Partial Hospital Program, she leads a multidisciplinary team whose work in that fragile space can determine whether a patient continues to recover or falls back.

The patients she sees carry enormous burdens. One, living with depression, substance use disorder, lung cancer and a history of incarceration, told her: “No one ever understood me in my life better than you.” It’s the kind of trust that can only be earned with genuine attention and presence. For Dr. Siddiqi, it reflects what she considers the foundation of the work. “Compassion,” she says, “is the hallmark of a healthcare professional.”

A graduate of Allama Iqbal Medical College in Lahore, Pakistan, Dr. Siddiqi completed her psychiatry residency at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst before a fellowship in geriatric psychiatry at Zucker Hillside Hospital. That training deepened her understanding of patients navigating the accumulation of challenges that can converge later in life: medical illness, cognitive change, depression and anxiety, substance use. Earlier in

her career at Queens, she directed inpatient psychiatric services, supervising interdisciplinary teams caring for individuals with severe psychiatric illness and complex diagnoses. For all her dedication and impact, Dr. Siddiqi was named to Schneps Media’s 2026 list of “Power Women of Queens.”

As an assistant professor and member of the core faculty of Queens Hospital’s new psychiatry residency program, Dr. Siddiqi is now helping to shape the next generation of psychiatrists — many of whom have been inspired to enter the field after working with her. In meetings, her questions consistently push the team to be better, says Chief Medical Officer Dr. Dave Holson, and she does it all “with grace and humility.”

What keeps Dr. Siddiqi going every day is a simple goal: “Seeing that I am making a tangible difference in people’s lives.”

## Connecting Eye Care to Community Health

### Neena Gadangi, MD

Ophthalmologist

NYC Health + Hospitals/Sea View



Early in her ophthalmology career in India, Dr. Neena Gadangi helped conduct immunization programs in rural communities and volunteered in eye-care camps providing examinations and surgery for patients with little access to treatment. They were experiences that shaped her lifelong commitment to prevention, access and pediatric care – but they also reflected a commitment that had deeper roots.

As a child growing up in the southern India city of Secunderabad, Dr. Gadangi often accompanied her aunt, an obstetrician, on hospital visits and watched her care for patients during some of the most difficult moments of pregnancy. One case that stayed with her was a mother whose baby survived a complicated pregnancy because her aunt never left her side. It helped shape her decision to pursue medicine – and still guides the way she shows up for her own patients.

After completing advanced ophthalmology training in India, Dr. Gadangi continued her clinical work internationally before coming to the United States for further residency training in Brooklyn and a fellowship in Chicago. She has since served for more than two decades as Chief of Pediatric Ophthalmology at Interfaith Medical Center while also caring for patients at NYC Health + Hospitals/Sea View and other sites in Brooklyn and Staten Island.

At Sea View, she continues to find meaning in moments when careful diagnosis and persistence can change the course of a patient's life. She recalls treating a patient whose vision loss was ultimately traced to tuberculosis. The diagnosis allowed the patient to receive treatment through the city's public health system and regain stability—an experience that reinforced for her how closely eye care can intersect with broader medical conditions and community health.

For Dr. Gadangi, practicing in the city's public health system offers the chance to focus on patients without worrying about whether their treatment is covered. And she remains guided by a simple principle: "Treat every patient as my own. Always listen and put myself in their shoes."

## In Awe of Physicians

### **Georgia A. Patikoglou, MD, Ph.D.**

Attending Physician,  
Internal Medicine/Geriatric Medicine

NYC Health + Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health



As a precocious 7-year-old in Astoria learning about her Greek heritage, Dr. Georgia Patikoglou found herself drawn to Hippocrates. Even in her childlike way, she was fascinated by the ancient philosopher and grasped his beliefs about medicine as equal parts science and humanity.

By then, she was already on a path to becoming a doctor. Dr. Patikoglou was born at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst after her mother, in distress, was transported by ambulance with a police escort. She got her pediatric care there and made two visits to the ER after childhood mishaps. “I was in awe of the physicians who cared for me at Elmhurst,” she recalls. “One of my earliest memories is being about four years old and knowing – without hesitation – that I wanted to be just like them, that medicine and helping others was my purpose in life. It was a deeply spiritual experience. I simply knew.”

Dr. Patikoglou took an unusually rigorous route to that calling, first completing a Ph.D. in molecular biophysics and biochemistry at Yale and spending several years as a postdoctoral fellow and researcher at The Rockefeller University before starting medical school in her mid-thirties. Along the way, personal experiences—caring for her father during his illness with myelofibrosis and

raising a daughter with special needs—deepened her commitment to easing suffering and addressing disparities in care.

Dr. Patikoglou joined NYC Health + Hospitals/South Brooklyn Health as an attending physician in internal medicine and geriatrics in 2019. Within months she found herself in a moment that demanded – and tested – the steadiness and commitment that had long guided her. Her inpatient unit was one of the hospital’s first COVID-19 units. She met the moment, walking room to room with residents, providing treatment and reassurance to patients isolated from their families while modeling calm leadership in an unprecedented moment.

Today, she is admired for her combination of analytical precision, a deeply human approach to patient care and the same moral commitment that drew her to medicine as a child reading about Hippocrates. “Every day,” she says, “I pray that I can improve someone’s health, ease their pain, and in some small way make their life better.”

## Small Moments of Connection

### Elizabeth Jalkut, MD

Vice Chair, Medicine

NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull



Not long ago, an attending physician told Dr. Elizabeth Jalkut something that struck her as the clearest measure of her work as a teacher. He had trained under her as a resident eight years earlier and told her he now gives his own residents the same advice: “Look for small moments of connection with your patients. When you recognize the immense challenge they’re feeling in that moment” – that’s when you know the lesson has taken hold.

That concept — that human connection is not incidental to hospital medicine but central to it — has defined Dr. Jalkut’s 15 years at NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull. As a hospitalist, division director of hospital medicine and vice chair of medicine, she spends most of her time on the floors, supervising residents and caring for patients through some of their most frightening moments.

Just as she encourages trainees to look for meaning in those encounters, she finds that her patients often reveal it themselves – and, in the process, deepen her own understanding of resilience and selflessness. When she expressed empathy to a recent patient who was hospitalized repeatedly for gastrointestinal bleeding, he told her simply: “Everybody has a thing. This is my thing.” Another kept waving off the doctors during rounds — “I’m fine, I’m fine” — because he was worried about the more critically ill patient across the room. “I’m struck by people’s capacity for care and empathy,” Dr. Jalkut says.

She came to Woodhull after her residency at Boston City Hospital, drawn to public hospital medicine and its deeper social mission. As an example, she said, when she discharges a patient who is living in a shelter, she knows they won’t fall through the cracks — Woodhull’s safety net clinics for patients experiencing homelessness will pick up their care and keep it going. “That doesn’t just happen,” she says. “That’s from the system level, deciding to put an effort there. It is a privilege to work at an institution with a clear commitment to better the health of the people in this community.”



Dr. Taiye Odedosu  
at NYC Health +  
Hospitals/Bellevue



Dr. Alisen Huang  
at NYC Health +  
Hospitals/Gotham  
Health, Broadway



Dr. Anila Siddiqi  
at NYC Health +  
Hospitals/Queens

TRAUMA CENTER

EMERGENCY ENTRANCE



Dr. Jeremy Sperling  
at NYC Health +  
Hospitals/Jacobi



Dr. Daniela  
Atanassova Lineva,  
NYC Health +  
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