

Training Doctors to Improve Care of Older Adults

As our population ages and lives longer, there is a growing need for expertise in the care of older adults among all health care providers. The Association of American Medical Colleges estimates that by 2034 the population of people aged 65 and older will grow by 42 percent compared to 2019. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services projects a shortage of nearly 27,000 geriatricians by 2025. As a result of this gap in supply and demand, there is an increasing need to train all physicians in the health care needs of older adults.

Caring for older patients is complex and involves not just treating a variety of overlapping medical conditions, but taking into account all their medications, their physical and cognitive function, and their support network of family and friends.



The Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount

Sinai is the nation's largest training program in the field and has trained one out of five geriatricians nationwide. The Mount Sinai Hospital is ranked number one in Geriatrics by *U.S. News & World Report*. For Helen M. Fernandez, MD, named Vice Chair of Education in June 2021 and Brookdale Geriatrics Fellow '01, her goal goes beyond training outstanding clinicians in the field, it's about transforming medical education.

Brookdale's approach to creating the necessary workforce is multidimensional and all encompassing. It includes courses and clinical rotations in medical school and residency training, traditional post-graduate fellowship training, and mid-career training for practicing physicians interested in expanding their knowledge of integrative care for older adults and their loved ones.

All the programs championed by Dr. Fernandez advance her broad goals of improving care for patients and their families, creating future leaders to affect system-wide change, innovating bold initiatives to meet the evolving needs of an aging population, and developing new educational approaches to teach this field of study throughout the continuum of medical education and training.

One of Brookdale's newest initiatives is the Learn, Educate, Advocate, and Promote (LEAP) into Geriatrics Leadership program. The objective of our newest program is to train future leaders in geriatrics to lead hospitals, health systems, and quality improvement programs, and to assume leadership positions with payer organizations. Typically, within one year of fellowship graduation, 50 percent of our fellowship graduates attain



Helen Fernandez, MD with Nitzzy Casablanca, MD (Geriatrics-Nephrology Fellow), Rosmy Jimmy, MD (Geriatrics-Palliative Medicine Fellow), and Farah Adamali, MD (Geriatrics Fellow).

leadership positions; within six years, 100 percent have a leadership role. Our goal is to ensure that our graduates have the knowledge and skills to become the transformative leaders our U.S. health care system requires.

As an advocate for our aging population, Dr. Fernandez seeks to reframe the conversation about aging beyond medical training. By partnering with community organizations and government entities like the New York City Department for the Aging, the Brookdale Department strives to influence their approach to our aging population. Messaging is important to Dr. Fernandez, and that means thinking broadly about how to educate the public—from elementary school teachers to legislators—about avoiding stereotypes and creating a more inclusive environment. "We need to help people understand that older adults have a lot to share with the younger generations and contribute to society," she says. "We need to appreciate what they have to offer and not think of it as 'us vs them.'"

A Letter from Martha

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a renewed focus on the care of older adults and those living with serious illness. We have seen how the virus preys on those with compromised immune systems and how vaccines reduced serious complications and hospitalizations.



I am enormously proud of the team at the Martha Stewart Centers for Living (MSCL) for their efforts to vaccinate as many New Yorkers as possible.

As soon as the vaccines were available, the team sprang into action, connecting patients with vaccine appointments. These patients may have come into Mount Sinai, like myself; received their vaccine in the community; or had a Mount Sinai physician administer the dose at home. I would say that it was an all-hands-on-deck initiative, but it was more than that. The Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine enlisted high school volunteers to assist our patients who were less technologically savvy.

When the recent booster shot became available and was recommended, I once again rolled up my sleeve and presented to Mount Sinai. Our team at MSCL, once again, made sure that every patient was able to do so as well. I remain in awe of the team's expertise, dedication, and passion for the care of older adults. It is no surprise that they continue to rank No. 1 in the field!

It is deeply rewarding to support the Brookdale Department's mission to improve the lives of older adults, persons with serious illness, and their caregivers. In gratitude for their unwavering commitment to care, I would like to encourage all to join me in supporting our health care heroes. If you are interested in donating to our work, please visit:

<http://giving.mountsinai.org/geriatrics>

Sincerely,

Martha

Provider Spotlight:

Ravishankar Ramaswamy, MD, Associate Professor, Clerkship Co-Director, and Director of Medical Student Education

"I was destined to work in geriatrics. I enjoy unraveling the multiple, complex concerns facing older adults, improving their health and wellness, and educating the next generation of physicians,"

says **Ravishankar Ramaswamy,**

MD, Associate Professor, Clerkship
Co-Director, and Director of Medical

Student Education in the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine. *"The vast potential for innovation in geriatrics clinical care and interdisciplinary team-based care is what makes this field so special."*



Dr. Ramaswamy joined Mount Sinai in 2010 for his geriatrics fellowship; and was subsequently recruited as faculty. Since then, he has been instrumental in the education of learners at all levels, including medical students, fellows, and practicing physicians, via live and virtual teaching as well as online modules. He has adapted the existing curricula to incorporate the Geriatrics 5Ms – a framework for geriatrics education around five key areas: Mind, Mobility, Medications, Multicomplexity, and what Matters most. He works to ensure that all trainees have the knowledge and skills needed to provide the highest quality of care to older adults and their loved ones.

Most recently, Dr. Ramaswamy and three colleagues—Stephanie Chow, MD; Noelle Marie Javier, MD' and Amy Kelley, MD, MSHS – created a curriculum to raise medical students' awareness about ageism and bias in medicine, and to empower them to impact change, as part of the Building Trust and Equity in Internal Medicine Training grant from the Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine, the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM), the ABIM Foundation, the American College of Physicians, and the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation.

"I feel privileged to work with some of the most enthusiastic clinicians and innovative educators in the fields of geriatrics and palliative medicine, and with learners who are passionate advocates for high-quality and equitable patient care," he says. *"I hope our work will improve the health, independence, and quality of life of older adults."*



Brookdale Staff Walks to Raise Money for Alzheimer's Care

The Very Merry Geri Team, a group of 16 Brookdale staff members and their families, raised more than \$1,400 for dementia care during the annual CaringKind Alzheimer's Walk, held in Central Park in October. Led by Wanda Garcia, RN, of the Martha Stewart Center for Living Uptown, the 37-member team from Mount Sinai included doctors, nurses, social workers, and medical assistants.

The event raised \$631,000 for CaringKind, New York City's leading Alzheimer's disease and related dementias caregiving organization. CaringKind works with community organizations around the city to support individuals and families affected by dementia.

"It takes a village to take care of persons living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and it was nice to see so many people from our department, including members of the leadership team at The Mount Sinai Hospital, come together for this," says Ms. Garcia.



"This event is a great way to celebrate our work and our dedication to our patients, and to remember those patients we have lost."

Raising awareness for dementia care has become a tradition for the staff at the Martha Stewart Centers for Living. This is the third year that the Very Merry Geri Team participated in the walk. In addition, Cathryn A. Devons, MD, Assistant Clinical Professor of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine, has run in the New York City Marathon for the past 13 years to raise money for CaringKind, with her Brookdale colleagues supporting her along the way.

For 2022, Ms. Garcia is looking forward to once again leading the charge. *"It's an honor to continue to do this,"* she says. *"We've all been touched by dementia, not just among our patients, but also friends and family. We feel privileged to be able to make a difference."*

Kudos:

Special Faculty Awards and Achievements:

Eileen Callahan, MD, and

Audrey Chun, MD, received the 2022 Cullman Family Award for Excellence in Physician Communications, which is awarded to Mount Sinai physicians who rank in the top 1 percent in provider communication as measured in the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' patient experience survey.

Kavita Dharmarajan, MD, was awarded the highly competitive and prestigious Paul Beeson Emerging Leaders Career Development Award from the National Institute on Aging for her study "Improving Outcomes for Older Adults Undergoing Palliative Radiation Treatment."

Joyce Fogel, MD, and Rosanne

Leipzig, MD, were awarded funding from UJA-Federation for their dementia-friendly Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) project.

Cameron R. Hernandez, MD, was appointed Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of Mount Sinai Queens.

Jennifer Reckrey, MD, received the 2021 American Academy of Home Care Medicine Dan Gilden Creative Investigator Award, which is awarded to an exceptional investigator for their innovative body of work advancing the field of home care medicine.

Rainier P. Soriano, MD, was appointed Senior Associate Dean for Curricular Affairs in Medical Education at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

Meng Zhang, MD, received the 2021 American Academy of Home Care Medicine House Call Physician of the Year Award.

Save the Date:

The 25th Annual Douglas West Endowed Memorial Lecture "*Seeing Ghosts and Making Change: How a Mother's Passing Shaped a Geriatrician and a Writer*" featuring Kat Chow, author of **Seeing Ghosts: A Memoir** and Stephanie Chow, MD, Assistant Professor in the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine at Mount Sinai. **Monday, April 4, 2022, at 5:30 pm.** Formal invitation to follow. To register, please visit: <https://bit.ly/3zPGqgg>. For more information, please contact: Katherine.Brown@mssm.edu.



Kat Chow



Stephanie Chow, MD

Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

One Gustave L. Levy Place, Box 1070, New York, NY 10029

(212) 659-8552

mountsinai.org/care/geriatrics



@MSHSGeriPalCare