GME PROFESSIONALS DAY

PROGRAM COORDINATOR RECOGNITION

Graduate Medical Education
The program coordinator is a member of the leadership team and is critical to the success of the program.

August 20, 2021 the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai is joining teaching institutions across the county in participating in GME Professionals Day, a day of recognition for the Program Coordinators and Administrators across our Sponsoring Institution that play a pivotal role in ensuring the effective operation of our residency and fellowship training programs.

In planning for the day program directors, residents and fellows were invited to share narratives which demonstrate the impact these individuals have had on their programs. The ACGME Common Program Requirements note that "the program coordinator is a member of the leadership team and is critical to the success of the program." In the pages that follow you will have an opportunity to see more fully the valuable role that program coordinators play behind the scenes in ensuring the success of ISMMS training programs.

Ana Pena, MSH Cardiovascular Disease, 2nd from left, and Cynthia Meyers, MSH Critical Care Medicine, far right, participating with fellows in Resident/Rellow Run/Walk in June 2021
Inessa Gurariy, MSBI Podiatric Medicine and Surgery

Inessa has been with our team since 2018 but her contributions to our training program make it feel as if she was there from the start many years before. Every incoming student relies on her from before they ever step foot into our hospital to many years after they graduate from the residency. She keeps our residents and the program director on the right track and frankly we would not be able to function without her. We are lucky to have her meticulous organizational skills and her keen ability to honestly point out what's right and what's not. We thank her for all that she does.

David Gitlin, DPM, Program Director

Inessa, has been the backbone of our program from the day we started. She goes above and beyond to make resident lives easier by making sure everything from paperwork and other requirements are handled in timely manners. In addition she is always available to listen to any resident issues work related or not. She isn’t just a phenomenal program coordinator but a lifelong friend who is always willing to listen and help in any way she can. Anonymous Resident

Jacqueline Engracia, H+H/Elmhurst Internal Medicine

Jackie became the Program Coordinator for our program at the same time as I became the Program Director, and I cannot imagine what my job would be like without her energy, dedication, and institutional knowledge. Whether she is arranging an orientation picnic or revising evaluation forms, Jackie is always two steps ahead of me. She takes care of all the details before I even know that something needs to be taken care of, and she accomplishes everything in a seemingly effortless way and with a smile. Because she is beloved at the institution, she is able to get things done quickly and efficiently and always knows the right person to ask no matter how unusual the request. I know that I am able to count on her no matter what. If I am having a tough day, I just need to walk into her office, and I will feel better immediately. She is absolutely devoted to our program, and I could not have asked for a better partner. Thank you for always being there for us and for putting your heart and soul into the program!

Julie Kanevsky, MD, Program Director
Elizabeth Munkenbeck, MSH Otolaryngology
Lizzie Munkenbeck has truly been MVP of the otolaryngology residency program over the last two years in particular. First, she helped shepherd our residency through a complicated merger of two programs, including two backbreaking site visits. During this time, she handled a massive workload with care and grace. Last year, the global pandemic required not only massive adjustment of schedules, but also constant communication and organization, and even personal and psychological support for the residents. Lizzie rose to the occasion during this time, and unlike many who struggled with the challenges of working offsite, she managed to entirely engaged and responsive, 24/7.

The residents see Lizzie as an advocate, colleague, and a kind older sister. Faculty see her as a capable resource of information and support. As program director, I see her as an unwavering pillar of my professional livelihood, a source of podcast and fashion advice, an endless fount of hilarious anecdotes and playful sarcasm, and a true friend. I am delighted to recognize Lizzie's important role in our department during GME Professionals Day!

Marita Teng, MD, Program Director

Rebecca Segal, C-TAGME, MSH Internal Medicine
Rebecca puts 100% into everything she does for our residents. She supervises an amazing team of extraordinary administrators who run our residency program, which is the largest at Mount Sinai Hospital. From making sure that every resident is in compliance with all of the requirements for working at Mount Sinai Hospital, the Bronx VA, and Elmhurst, to checking up with so many of them on a personal level when they come in the office, she performs at the very highest level every day. The past 16 months of the COVID-19 pandemic have been incredibly challenging, but through it all, both virtually and in person, she made sure that everything in the program ran as smoothly as possible. With our office staff reduced by two recently, she has personally taken over multiple jobs and performed them with tremendous aplomb. One particular example of her dedication has been her commitment to the wellness of the office staff and the residents--she has worked tirelessly to make sure that our residents were able to fund wellness events during the pandemic. These were directly responsible for the preservation of and improvement in morale. Above all, her energy and enthusiasm fills our residency office, and we are very lucky to have her working with us!

Salvatore Cilmi, MD, Program Director
Katharina Wang, MPH, C-TAGME, MSH Radiology
Katharina Wang serves as Senior Residency Program Manager/Coordinator for the MSH Department of Diagnostic, Molecular and Interventional Radiology. She was promoted to this role following several successful years as the DR Program Coordinator and now oversees two residency programs (Diagnostic Radiology and Integrated Interventional Radiology) and multiple fellowship programs. She is assisted by the wonderful Ms. Jennifer Polanco, recently named Residency coordinator.

Throughout the current Pandemic, she has been an invaluable resource in navigating ever-changing resident schedules, medical student interview schedules - always with attention to everyone’s well-being. She has worked to help integrate Wellness activities into our resident routine.

In addition to her demonstrated success in Program management, Ms. Wang contributes to the professional development of other residency coordinators throughout the Mount Sinai Health System - through mentorship of junior coordinators and active engagement in GME leadership activities. She has presented at the MSHS GME meetings on Administrative Best Practices and has presented nationally at the ACGME Coordinator Symposium on Best Practices in Annual Program Evaluation and Effective Recruitment Management.

Residents, fellows and faculty know to tap Katharina’s "know-how" and "can-do" attitude for any issue that arises - I am incredibly grateful for her support of our program and our trainees during this difficult year. Kathleen Halton, MD, Program Director

Angeles Delgado-Skerret, MSH Neurological Surgery
On behalf of the neurosurgery residents, I would like to recognize Angie for her tireless efforts in making the neurosurgery residency function. From day one, Angie has set us up for success, both clinically and academically. She is always reachable and will constantly make sacrifices for the good of the residency. We don’t say it enough, but we appreciate Angie incredibly and are always glad to see her smiling face. She leaves her mark on all of us from the very beginning, even before starting, on interview day. And that effect lasts throughout residency, even past graduation. Her daily efforts are noticed and appreciated, and out residency could not run without her care. Kurt Yaeger, MD, Chief Resident

Max Bomser, MSSN Surgery
Max Bomser has been an integral part of our training program since we began. He has helped to build and advance our program on every level. From building our academic schedule, to arranging conferences to being a wellness resource for our residents. He has been a resident advocate from the beginning and looks our for their best interest. He dedicates his time to their education and addresses urgent issues at night and on the weekends without being asked.

Max is involved in The Association of Residency Administrators in Surgery and keeps in close contact with the Mount Sinai GME office to keep our program up to date on the latest educational developments.

Max should be recognized for his work which elevates our program and contributes to the success of our future surgeons. Eric Seitelman, MD, Program Director
Olivia Kenwell, MSMW Anesthesiology

Olivia joined our residency program in October of 2019, just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. I cannot imagine having gone through the last few years without her. During the pandemic, she helped keep track of our house staff, ensuring they felt supported and had all of the resources they needed. During the virtual interview season, she helped us become a nationally recognized trailblazer in how to provide the best virtual interview experience possible. Her work in this area is even published in our GME scholarly literature! She may be the most outstanding coordinator to join the healthcare system in recent history. She certainly deserves recognition. Bryan Mahoney, MD, Program Director

Midred Fernandez, MSSN Internal Medicine

The Mount Sinai South Nassau Internal Medicine Residency Program is proud to recognize the work and achievement of our Coordinator, Mildred Fernandez. We’re a new residency program, and when Mildred signed-on as Coordinator she was new to the job. She’s a quick learner, and she rapidly climbed the learning curve to the point where in about two years she’s become an “old pro.” Mildred has mastered the yearly cycle of our program, and she fully understands residency alphabet soup (ACGME, ABIM, AAMC, APDIM, AAIM). She’s become the Program Director’s alter-ego. During our ACGME site visit in January 2021, the site visitor, Mildred, and myself were each in our own offices on Zoom on our own computers. In this surreal situation, I was fully confident that anything I left-out Mildred would fill-in and, if necessary, she could finish my sentences for me.

More importantly, though, Mildred has become our residents’ best friend and advocate. Residents know that Mildred is always there for them. Steven Weiss, MD, Program Director
Ramona Tirado, MSH Radiation Oncology
It is impossible to think about the Radiation Oncology Residency at Mt. Sinai without thinking about Ramona. She is not only the backbone that keeps the program standing but also the “oil” that keeps it moving. Even when things get crazy, Ramona puts on her calm smile and gets us through it. There are many examples that come to mind, but I would like to mention her flawless execution of virtual interviews. She got many innocent bystanders, including her family, to help by being mock participants to make sure the Zoom links would work. It did perfectly. Thank you, Ramona, for all that you do!
Michael Buckstein, MD, PHD, Program Director

Erika Molina, MSH Preventive Medicine
Erika Molina is the backbone of the General Preventive Medicine residency program. She is accommodating and responsive to the needs of the residents and is such an important aspect to the smooth performance of the program. Her insights have helped the PD and the APD maintain the goals and objectives of the residency, especially through the pandemic. Her gentle, nudging emails to remind everyone to submit duty hours are very successful, our quarterly reports are filed on time! When our whole interview process changed to virtual, she quickly learned and mastered zoom skills to enable us to successfully recruit great candidates. Thanks to her warmth, discretion and listening skills, Erika is a trusted member of the residency team. We are so lucky to have such a dedicated, hardworking program coordinator.
Elizabeth Garland, MD, Program Director

Kenisha Felix, MSBI Psychiatry
We are proud to write this letter on the behalf of the psychiatry residency program at Mt. Sinai Beth Israel in support of Kenisha Felix, Program Coordinator, for GME Professional’s Day. As residents, we are very fortunate to have a coordinator of this caliber. Since most of her work is behind the scenes, it is easy to take for granted the efforts that she put into creating a smooth running residency program. However, when working with Kenisha, one begins to realize this is a result of hard work and dedication to the residents. She deals with a multitude of tasks for each one of the 48 residents and is one step ahead of everyone when it comes to the logistics of running a program. On top of that, she deals with the tall task of organizing the interview season with 200 candidates and ensuring they each get the attention they need. She’s extremely prompt and if one contacts her with an issue, it generally is addressed, if not solved, within the day. Beyond this, it is her kindness, humor and approachability to the residents that make her the backbone of our program. Her door is open at all times and she will always stop what she’s doing to listen and chat. These attributes were invaluable to the morale of the program during the pandemic, where she provided not only PPE (and individually packaged snacks!), but a much needed source of support and encouragement. There is no more deserving individual for recognition on GME Professionals Day than Kenisha Felix. She is an amazing administrator and educator through her passion, ability and care for the residents.
Anonymous Resident

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Elizabeth Garland, MD, Program Director
**Taniya Wallace, MSH Pediatric Cardiology**

I consider myself to be extremely fortunate to have worked with and gotten to know Taniya over the last year. Taniya conducts herself with excellence, professionalism and grace with every single interaction. As one example of Taniya’s incredible resourcefulness; one afternoon I was seeing a patient in our cardiology clinic with psychiatric co-morbidities who began to become agitated. Taniya heard the commotion and quickly alerted hospital security and then professionally and calmly helped me de-escalate the situation ensuring the safety of the patient and other staff members. On a personal note, Taniya has been the guardian angel for the pediatric cardiology fellows and is a fierce advocate on our behalf. Taniya always checks in on our emotional wellbeing and goes out of her way to make our lives better. I am so lucky to work with Taniya and am thrilled to recognize her contribution to my training.

David Barris, MD, Fellow

**Cynthia Meyers, C-TAGME, MSH Critical Care Medicine**

Cynthia Meyers has been the critical care medicine coordinator for the past 14 years. Recently she also became the neurocritical care and anesthesia critical care coordinator, making her the program coordinator for 30 fellows. Cynthia is one of a handful of coordinators at Mount Sinai who is Training Administrators in Graduate Medical Education (TAGME) certified and has mentored several other coordinators to become TAGME certified. TAGME recognizes training administrators who have achieved competence in all areas related to their profession and expertise needed to successfully manage GME programs.

In addition to handling three fellowships without any assistance, she also manages the schedule and paperwork for all rotating residents and fellows including pulmonary critical care, neurocritical care, renal, gynecology/oncology, maternal fetal medicine, interventional radiology, general surgery, vascular surgery, ENT, emergency, anesthesia, and plastic surgery. She always ensures that the paperwork is submitted in a timely manner and goes out of her way to follow up on delays.

Cynthia is diligent, compassionate, organized, meticulous, kind, and hard working. Fellows text and email her at all hours and she answers even after hours and on the weekend. Cynthia organizes all educational activities including fellow and attending lectures, morbidity and mortality, simulation training, journal club, pro/con debates, and ensures that fellows attend these activities. She is instrumental in ensuring the interview process is organized and that the Zoom sessions go smoothly. Other coordinators often go to her with questions because of her extensive experience and patience. All three of our critical care fellowships would not be able to function without her. She is irreplaceable and invaluable to our fellowship.

Jennifer Wang, DO, Associate Program Director
Grace Li, MSH Allergy and Immunology
Grace Li has been an incredible asset to our training program! She joined our program during the pandemic since our previous coordinator was retiring and adapted very quickly during the transition during a challenging time. She is organized, efficient and thoughtful in her work. She is friendly and respectful of the faculty, fellows and staff. I really enjoy working with her and appreciate her efforts in improving our program management. Shradha Agarwal, MD, Program Director

Grace became the coordinator in the year 2020 for the Allergy and Immunology division. Since starting, she had made the world of difference in the fellow’s life while in training. Grace is meticulous in organizing our group and never fails to remind us when something is due. She is kind, patient and truly cares about us as a group. She is the most spectacular coordinator I have ever worked with and I am happy to continue working with her as our coordinator. Kimberly Cousins, MD, Fellow

Arlisa Brown, MSBI Internal Medicine
The Internal Medicine Residency Program at Mount Sinai Beth Israel would like to recognize Ms. Arlisa Brown for all she does to the support the program as a Program Coordinator. She is put it simply and succinctly an amazing person to work with. Knowing her, makes us all feel like our lives are fuller. Ms. Brown for throughout the COVID pandemic has come in to the office each day and made sure that our program functions at its highest possible level. She ensured that while much of the world slowed down or put off issues until a more convenient time, the MSBI IM program continued ahead without missing a beat. In addition to making sure, we are on point with our work, Ms. Brown shares of her time and baking efforts, bringing in her home baked treats for the office. These sweets rank up there with the most popular bakeshops out there. Each day we in the program leadership are thankful that Ms. Brown is part of our team and hope she will be for a long time to come. Alfred Burger, MD, Associate Program Director

Michelle Torres-Avelar, MSBI Internal Medicine
We here at the Internal Medicine Residency Program at Mount Sinai Beth Israel would like to recognize Ms. Michelle Torres-Avelar, our Program Manager for all the hard work and dedication she has put into the program. Ms. Torres-Avelar joined our team in November of 2020. She joined our team in the middle of the pandemic and during our virtual recruitment season. Ms. Torres-Avelar, quickly found her rhythm and helped to enhance our use of virtual tools, a newly implemented scheduling system and interacting with the applicants in a very unusual year. She brought great ideas to our meetings and challenged us all to rethink previous assumptions. Since then Ms. Torres-Avelar has continued to rethink all of our processes, enhancing them where possible. On a personal level, Ms. Torres-Avelar is a caring and compassionate person looking to improve the resident’s experience and make every day in the office the best it can be. We have been thankful that she has joined our team and look forward to working with her for a long time to come. Alfred Burger, MD, Associate Program Director

Patricia Jones, MSBI Gastroenterology
Ms. Jones came at the right time for our program. We had not had a program coordinator in so long and with the constraints of the pandemic, it had been difficult to find someone new. When she started, she meant business! She eased into her role with grace finding time to reach out to our fellows and even making it to our graduation party (which she helped plan). She is organized, professional, and a pleasure to work with. She helps keep us on top of our deadlines for paperwork. She deserves to be recognized for everything she does for us behind the scenes. We are lucky to have you, Pat! Anonymous Fellow
Scott Goldfarb, MSH Pathology Fellowships
I have been a trainee in more than 4 big institutions in the US, and out of all the program coordinators that I worked with, Scott is absolutely the most outstanding one. Very professional, knowledgeable, helpful, responsive and detail-oriented. During the last couple of months, he never missed an email from me, nor been later more than a day to reply. He also followed-up very closely on the onboarding process by sending detailed reminders that includes all the directions needed to reach a specific building or a room. And he did all that while being very friendly, welcoming and enthusiastic. Thank you Scott for all what you did! YOU made my onboarding very easy! Tony El Jabbour, MD, Fellow

Paula Green, MSMW Diagnostic Radiology
Paula Green has been program coordinator for our diagnostic radiology residency program since October 2018. She transferred to this position after having served for many years as administrative assistant in the department of psychiatry at MSBI. She has been exceptional in her role. She is diligent, thoughtful, personable and dedicated. She has been an ally, friend, confidante, and incredible support for me, whether it be through her administrative role, or as a sounding board for ideas and decision making. She does all of this while maintaining a calm presence and demeanor in the face of adversity. Much of the success of our program goes to her. We are so grateful to have her as a part of our residency team! Thank you Paula, for all that you do!
Amita Kamath, MD, Program Director

Keith Maynard, MSMW Diagnostic Radiology
Keith Maynard has served as program coordinator for the Mount Sinai West Diagnostic Radiology Residency for many years, preceding my role as Program Director. He is hard working, dedicated, thoughtful and meticulous. He has been particularly helpful to me given his attention to detail by helping to revise and edit numerous recommendation letters that I write annually for medical students and residents. Of particular note, during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, he continued to commute into work every day, and was a great source of support to me during a critical time managing multiple resident schedule changes, helping to ensure that our program continued to thrive despite the significant challenges we faced during that time. I am grateful to have him as a part of our residency team! Thank you Keith for all that you do for our program!
Amita Kamath, MD, Program Director

Paula and Keith have always been incredibly helpful and prompt when addressing resident needs. It was an absolute pleasure working with them as chief last year and even into this year during my Interventional Radiology chief year. They work tirelessly to ensure our training experience is seamless and we can focus on education and patient care.
Matthew Tangel, MD, Fellow
Luis Prieto, MSH Pediatric Nephrology
Luis, everybody knows this: you are the one who keeps the wheels on our program's bus as we drive around in this crazy GME and ACGME maze of paperwork and regulations, interviews, evaluations, duty hours, rotation schedules, conferences, reimbursements, and checklists and a million other details! You never hesitate to go above and beyond to help us and make sure we are taken care of, from offering to bring us coffee to making sure we get our paychecks! It is clear from our patients' feedback how much your help means to them, and we would not be able to take care of our patients as effectively without your dedication and hard work! Your energy and positivity never fail to bring a smile to our faces! We see and appreciate your work! Thank you!  Jeffrey Saland, MD, Program Director

Michelle Pitzer, MSH Psychiatry
Our residency program could not run without Michelle. Time and time again she has gone above and beyond to support residents and keep our program running smoothly. Not only is she absolutely integral to our program, but she's one of the kindest, warmest people I have come across during my time at Mount Sinai. Words cannot express how grateful we are to have Michelle steering the ship! Thank you for everything you do!!

This year’s residency recruitment cycle took new form during adaptations for COVID-19: completely virtual interviews. I wouldn’t wish the logistical and technical conundrum on anyone. But at my Mount Sinai interview, the entirety of my day was seamless, and my focus was on the supportive environment and excellent training opportunities. Only recently did I learn how much of that support is found in the same person who coordinated our interview day (and entire recruitment season): Michelle Pitzer. And only last week did I learn that she was new in this role - starting herself during COVID. I would never have guessed Michelle hadn’t been in this role for many years.

Michelle has worked tirelessly to help the program remain organized and taken it upon herself to develop her own initiatives to enhance communication and connectedness during the pandemic. She is a breath of fresh air, always warm to everyone, and baking fresh treats on a regular basis. She does so much and I hope she is recognized for that.  Resident Compilation

Nicolia Grierson, MSH Gastroenterology
Nicki has been the Fellowship Coordinator for the GI Division for over 15 years, and is one of the senior-most Coordinators in the Medical School. She is highly respected by her peers and Departmental leadership, and the GI Division could not function without her. During the COVID pandemic, Nicki went way beyond the call of duty. She spearheaded fellowship recruitment efforts not only for the GI Division, but was also asked to take on recruitment for two other fellowship programs that needed Coordinator support. All this while adapting to a virtual recruitment environment. She has been a source of support and strength to our fellows, and a consistent face for our first year fellows. She always does her best to find the answers to questions and always advocates for our fellows. This year she received a Certificate of Appreciation from the GI Division at Fellowship graduation. Nicki is a treasure, and the institution is lucky to have her!  Steven Itzkowitz, MD, Program Director

Ana Pena, MSH Cardiovascular Disease
Ana Pena is the program coordinator for many cardiology programs and does the work of 3 people. She’s always open to talk about ways to improve organization and the program. Her organizational skills and dedication to the fellows is unparalleled by few.  Anonymous Fellow
**Bibi Jathu-Bahadur, H+H/Elmhurst Psychiatry**

Being a program coordinator for a residency program is hard. Being one for both a residency AND a fellowship program sounds downright impossible. Yet Bibi manages to do just that with such effortlessness and aplomb every day. Oftentimes it’s hard to imagine how the programs would run without her. Be it the need for a new battery for your pager or just a kind word of comfort, Bibi is always there for us, ready to lend a helping hand. It speaks volumes that she’s won the program’s “staff member of the year” award so many times that we’ve decided to just name the award after her! With the onset of the pandemic and move to virtual learning and interviewing, Bibi has adapted so gracefully and seamlessly, ensuring that our training is not compromised, and sending out those constant reminders to make sure we attend our classes, sometimes even tracking us down in our offices! Thank you, Bibi, for always knowing what we need before we even think of it!  

**Anonymous Resident**

**Sukaina Jaffery, H+H/Queens Internal Medicine**

Looking back to when residency all started one of the people that really comes to mind from the first day is our program coordinator, Sukaina Jaffery. Like many, starting residency was filled with excitement, anxiety, and even a little fear. A particular time that really stands out is during this unfortunate pandemic where she was available at all times and has made so many changes to protect us, made sure we stayed healthy, and were getting everything we needed in order to also be strong enough for our patients. For this, I am truly grateful.

The program coordinator holds the power to make your life amazing or miserable, I am lucky enough to have an amazing person like Sukaina as our program coordinator. I call her wonder woman because she deals with the requests of 70+ residents and she handles us with so much patience and compassion. She is my go to person for any problems that I might be having, and she always comes up with a solution. I cannot imagine my residency without her.

It is difficult for me to put in words how much you mean to our program, because no amount of typing can quantify your true value. You show up every day and give, and give, and give. So, this is just a small way in which our program chooses to say thank you. You truly are a pillar of strength and there is no way that any of us would have made it through without you. We complain and whine all the time about this and that (mostly our schedules), but like the caring, thoughtful, meticulous, person that you are, you always have the time to listen, support us, and fix our problems. Whenever we have work-related problems, yours is the first number we think to call, you always have the answers. Thank you for the countless hours of work you put in to ensure everything runs like a well-oiled machine. We appreciate and love you Sukaina, even though we might not say it often enough. You really are the best.  

**Resident Compilation**
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