

Graduate Medical Education COVID Champions

Week ending 5/1/2020

Department of Cardiology Fellows



Charley Tharp, MD Aaron Emmons, MD Stanley Swat, MD Chris Kovach, MD Christopher Barrett, MD Aaron Strobel, MD

“All of the above-named individuals are cardiology fellows who volunteered to serve as critical care physicians taking care of COVID patients at Denver Health. They all were eager to serve out of a sense of duty to the institution and the profession. They have worked both day and night shifts helping to care for critically ill patients. They all have our gratitude and our admiration.”

Nominated by Department of Cardiology Program Directors and Associate Program Directors: Dr. Peter Buttrick, Dr. Amrut Ambardekar, Dr. Pam Peterson, Dr. John Messenger, Dr. Matt Zipse, Dr. Andreas Brieke

Department of Internal Medicine Resident



Kathryn Guinn, MD

“Dr. Guinn cared for COVID+ patients in the MICU during the first phase of COVID in which there were no surge teams and relatively little support. She then volunteered to miss her elective in April in order to be available for additional coverage. She was subsequently assigned an additional month on a surge team which is unusual for our program given that she didn’t have a clinic break between these back to back ICU months. Dr. Guinn advocates for all of her patients but specifically advocated for COVID+ patients in which procedures were potentially being avoided given their +status. She thinks of her patients first and has gone above and beyond during this time.

Dr. Guinn worked in the COVID ICU from its inception, serving intermittently on the service from mid-March until the end of April. She came to work every day with a passion for helping this patient population. On a service that, at times, could be emotionally draining, she maintained a positivity and commitment to thorough care. During a time when patient's families could not visit them in the hospital, she spent hours on the phone each day communicating with families. Her level of understanding, empathy, and communication helped to make this difficult time a little more bearable for the families involved. Her time working with these patients was exemplary from start to finish.”

Department of Orthopedics Resident



Andrew Maertens, MD

“Dr. Maertens was nominated for constantly trying to facilitate patient care and operating as much through COVID as possible.

Department of Categorical Internal Medicine Resident



David Little, MD

“Dr. Little has been instrumental in leading the effort to pilot a Virtual Hospital at Home program at Denver Health to help manage patients with COVID-19 infection at home and thus alleviating the burden on our inpatient hospital systems in the Denver area. He has lead patient care day-to-day through telehealth visits while helping streamline broad logistics of this program.

The program has showed benefits to patients already. One example being just yesterday (4/26), a patient he was following at home had suddenly developed dropping oxygen sats into the 60s for which he immediately contacted EMS. The patient was rapidly transported to ED where she was then intubated for rapidly developing ARDS due to COVID. Without the program or David's interventions, this patient may not have gotten the care she needed in such a timely manner.”

Department of Preventative Medicine Resident



Brian Erly, MD

“I’m very pleased to nominate Dr. Brian Erly to be CU COVID-19 Champion. Dr. Erly is a preventive medicine resident in his final year of training, and his skill, leadership, and dedication at CDPHE have been critical in supporting the COVID-19 response in the state of Colorado.

Immediately upon activation of the GME Stage 3 triage response, Dr. Erly volunteered to end his rotation at CDC and return to CDPHE, where he had spent his first year of residency creating a surveillance system for infective endocarditis. He was given the task of quickly establishing a system of statewide hospital surveillance systems for COVID-19, and leveraged his experience with EMR implementation to forge an innovative public-private partnership to help hospital systems meet reporting requirements.

Dr. Erly is a frequent and steady presence in the epidemiology call center, supporting a team of epidemiologists as clinical consultant and answering questions from physicians, infection preventionists, and members of the public about COVID-19. He has been instrumental in helping his colleagues get involved as well, recruiting members of the preventive medicine and occupational medicine residency to join him in his effort.

Dr. Erly is always ready to lend his clinical expertise to other areas of CDPHE’s disease control efforts as well. He has worked to craft CDC guidance into an updated Health Alert Network notification (keeping all of Colorado’s providers up-to-date on the latest COVID guidance), presents surveillance updates on the weekly statewide infections disease and infection control calls, and helped to protocolize testing requirements at Kaiser outpatient clinics.

Despite this dizzying array of tasks, Dr. Erly has continued to keep his curiosity and sense of humor intact. He makes sure to stay in contact with his residency colleagues despite our physical distance, whether checking in on new parents in our cohort or providing updates on the health of his sourdough starter, Vincent van Dough. In all, Dr. Erly has been an excellent senior resident and role model, and I am pleased to recommend him for this award.”

Nominated by Dr. Isaac Armistead

Department of Pediatrics, Division of Pulmonary & Sleep Medicine Faculty



Emily DeBoer, MD

Oren Kupfer, MD

Amanda Messinger, MD

Gwen Kerby MD

“The protection of our staff and division has been these individuals utmost focus. All four have spearheaded ways to make our operations run appropriately and safely for both the staff and patients at hand. Dr. DeBoer has been working diligently to help manage our bronchoscopy operations, a high- risk procedure in this setting for the proceduralist, yet one that is often necessary for many critically ill children. She has ensured our safety and effectively communicated at all hours of the day on how to care for both ourselves and our patients in these times. Dr. Kupfer has also helped with this and been instrumental in organizing our inpatient operations, as well as protecting the staff as a whole. Dr. Messinger and Dr. Kerby have been instrumental in our outpatient operations at this time, helping set up the first fellow's telehealth clinic at CHCO to help continue our education during this difficult time.”

Nominated by Dr. Spencer Poore, Pediatric Pulmonary Fellow

Department of OBGYN Faculty and Chief Residents



Christine Conageski, MD

Steve Scott, MD

Meggan Zsemlye, MD

Kristin Powell, MD

Shawna Tonick, MD

Amy Markese, MD

Diane Christopher, MD

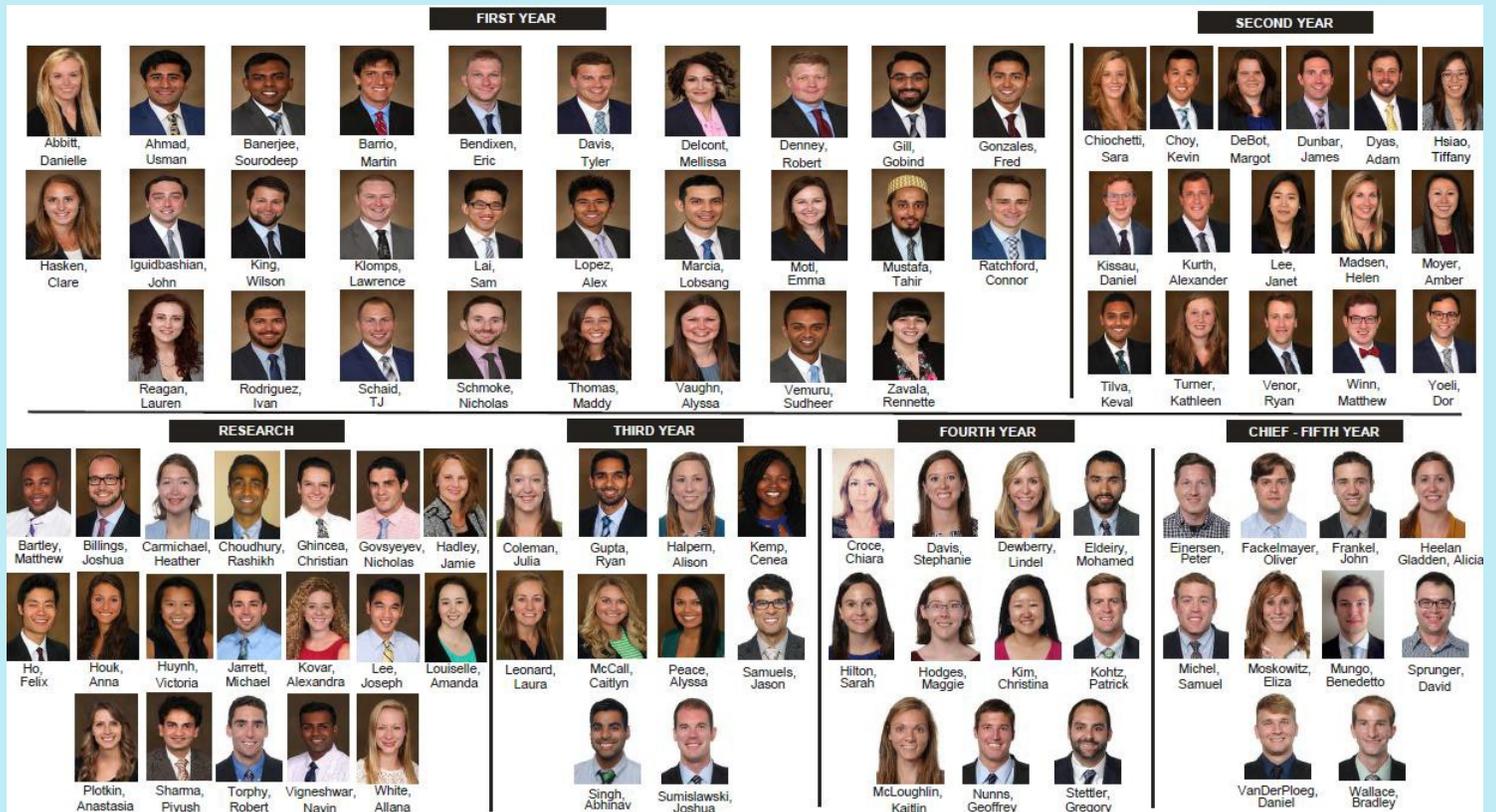


Chief Residents: Betsy Dickson, MD

Porshia Underwood, MD

“At the start of the COVID epidemic in Colorado these faculty and chief residents made a team to cover the inpatient OB/GYN services. The faculty were responsible for continuing the usual care for the pregnant and laboring patients while providing consultation to other services caring for pregnant and postpartum COVID positive patients. This team went above and beyond to assure continued excellent care and reassurance to healthy pregnant patients during a very stressful and scary time to be in the hospital. They worked extra hours, nights, and weekends always with huge smiles on their faces, happy to be of service to their patients and colleagues. They truly showed the heart of what it is to be a physician during a time of crisis. Their hard work, attitude, and service are definitely to be commended.”

Department of General Surgery Residents



“During this time of crisis and uncertainty, we would like to recognize the exceptional ways in which all of the surgery residents have improved the lives of patients and our community. With almost 100 trainees, it would be impossible to recognize every last one of them, although they all have stepped up in ways big and small. This event has disrupted their training and their lives, and their ongoing leadership, clinical care, compassion, and spirit has been inspiring for the entire education team. We would like to share a few representative stories of the ways in which these trainees embody the spirit of improving every life:

- Coordinating donation of supplies, food, and personal cloth masks. People’s friends and families have made masks, caps, and food and residents have rapidly shared and disseminated these materials.
- Volunteering to cover COVID ICU shifts. All R2s, R3s, and research residents deserve special recognition for their rapid assembly to cover a significant portion of new ICU coverage needs in addition to ongoing ICU care.
- Campus-wide and multisystem leadership and advocacy with the Housestaff Association.
- National leadership and advocacy with RAS-ACS.
- Administrative chief residents navigating rapidly changing clinical schedules, expectations, and illness coverage. All of the administrative chiefs have stepped up to logistically manage this crisis, and all of them have also experienced the exceptional teamwork of residents who have responded to these logistic changes to make it work.
- Exceptional attitudes across all classes as they navigate uncertainty, fear, and loss of normalcy in their lives and training. We have seen so many examples of residents helping residents deal with the emotional, practical, and personal highs and (more so) lows of this crisis. Multiple residents have experienced the personal impact of loved ones being sick across the country as well as at home and continue to be committed to taking care of their patients and each other.
- All of our trainees came to this program to learn to be surgical leaders, and they have consistently demonstrated that they already know what leadership looks like through their collective response to this pandemic.

We as a department and program could not respond to this crisis without our trainees, and want to express personal gratitude of how they have inspired us, filled us with hope for the future of surgery and medicine, and improved our lives with their actions and attitudes during this crisis.”

Nominated by: Dr. Mark Nehler, Dr. Kshama Jaiswal & Dr. Nicole Christian on behalf of the Department of Surgery

Department of Surgery Program Director



Mark Nehler, MD

"Mark Nehler has been available and proactive during this whole pandemic crisis. He is phenomenal."

Nominated by Dr. Max Wohlauer

Department of Family Medicine Chief Residents



Cristi Rabaza, MD Naomi Malam, MD Morgan Schiller, MD Anita Mathews, MD

"Four of our chiefs stepped up with courage and incredible energy to transform our three hospital services at DH and UH so that we could expand our team capacity while prioritizing the safety and learning of all residents. They worked endless hours to get us all PPE trained, educated about COVID care, and even strengthened for the fight by creating extra supports with "Covid Buddies" and "Wisdom Wednesdays." They have been Our Amazing #COVIDBusters!!!"

Nominated by Dr. Linda Montgomery, Program Director

Department of Family Medicine Faculty



Nida Awadallah, MD

"Dr. Nida Awadallah has been an inspiration during the entire pandemic response mounted by UHealth and the School of Medicine. While maintaining her role as a clinician within the department of family medicine and continuing to support the school of nursing as a physician consultant, she has also managed to take time to sew cloth masks for team members who are on the frontline. She has done all of this while homeschooling her 7-year old son and mentoring our on-campus learners during these difficult times. Her role as Director of Remediation is even more critical at times like these when supporting our students and trainees requires patience, wisdom and a steady hand. I would like to recognize her for being a star performer and an integral part of our campus leadership."

Department of Diagnostic Radiology Program Director



Rustain Morgan, MD

“Dr. Morgan took over as the Diagnostic Radiology Residency PD in April. He has walked into his new role demonstrating great leadership and holds townhalls with the residents weekly to address their concerns. His strong communication with myself as the PC and his trainees brings a certain calm to the chaos.”

Department of Internal Medicine Program Director



Dr. Geoff Connors, MD

From the start of the COVID-19 epidemic, Geoff has provided thoughtful leadership. He has communicated with residents on a regular basis- at one point, sending daily email updates and have two zoom resident-wide meetings per week. He has provided a structured approach to the pandemic that took into consideration the perspectives of many and was led by multiple members of the IM faculty. For example, when residents needed to be pulled from electives for COVID coverage, he thought about how residents applying to subspecialties may be needing letters of recommendation from faculty during these electives, and pulled these residents last from these electives. When GME required moonlighting to stop, he helped facilitate a resident relief fund for those struggling financially. In addition, he also provided a moral example of leadership during a time when it was needed. He came to the resident weekly meetings full of energy. I remember one meeting he was working in the MICU and was late because he had been putting a patient on ECMO and you could see the exhilaration he felt from being able to treat patients with COVID. He routinely talked about what a gift it was to be a physician during this time with the ability to help others when many sat at home wishing to make a difference.

Department of Vascular Surgery Fellowship Program Director



Rafael Malgor, MD

“Rafael Was one of the first among his program director peers to transfer our educational conferences to a virtual platform. He works with the trainees every day to make sure they’re doing OK and is thinking ahead about how to ensure that they will receive an appropriate education given the current circumstances.”

Nominated by Dr. Max Wohlauser

Department of Anesthesiology Faculty & Wellness Director



Alison Brainard, MD

“Dr. Brainard co-founded a resident support program (Project LIFT) that pairs residents with faculty and community members. The faculty/ community members then help support their paired resident by sending meals, groceries, providing lodging, and other small (or large) things to help residents with their own well-being while they work in this now very stressful environment. It started with the residents in the Depts. of Anesthesiology and Emergency Medicine and has spread from there.

Dr. Brainard has also arranged meal delivery for the Anesthesiology staff who is covering the intubations and line placements for the COVID units.” Nominated by Dr. Rachel Kacmar