

Department of Medicine

Winter 2020



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The Department of Medicine Newsletter is published three times per year.

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Chairman's Message



Louis Rice, MD

"When they go low, we go high." I suspect most of us remember this memorable principle espoused by Michelle Obama in Philadelphia in 2016, referring to how the Obamas teach their children to deal with those who might be cruel to or bully them. Most, but perhaps not all of us consider these words to be emblematic of the dignity and decency with which the Obamas discharged their duties as President and First Lady of the United States for the entirety of their eight years in the White House.

I have thought of this saying lately as we have been working with our trainees to process an experience that we had at Grand Rounds last week. The topic was "Medicine in the Me Too era and Beyond". The speaker, who was a physician, an attorney and a faculty member at a well-respected medical school, had been recommended by a highly respected faculty member based on her hearing this talk at a regional educational conference. The talk was well-received at this conference with more than 90% of more than 130 participants rating it 4/5 or 5/5 and none rating it below a 3. The reaction to the talk here at Brown was quite different, however, with many people taking offense at both the content of the

lecture and the style of delivery. Many felt that the speaker ignored obvious power differentials that exist in our society and made light of public examples of execrable predatory behavior. Personally, I share these reactions to the talk, and expressed my opinions to the speaker in private following the presentation.

I write this message in the Department of Medicine Newsletter not to further review the merits of the presentation but rather to reflect on the event and the response of Department and Program Leadership, in order to seek clarity and a path forward that not only addresses some of the criticisms expressed below but that fully reflects the values and principles of our department and medical community.

1. The Department should have vetted the speaker more thoroughly, as he had not published on this topic. This is a fair criticism, and in retrospect we could certainly have been more cautious. The speaker had a credible record of publications in the area of risk management and physician defense against lawsuits. In retrospect, had we done the research and considered his perspective as a physician-attorney who counseled physicians accused of disruptive behavior, we may well have decided he was not the best person to deliver the talk. On the other hand, we accept the recommendations of our respected colleagues all the time. We have had many thoughtful and educational presentations from speakers with valuable experience but sparse publication records, invited based upon recommendations from our faculty. We have likewise invited speakers with extensive publication records and expertise whose presentations fall short on the topic. While we clearly

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Asombang Selected For GI Leadership Development Program

Akwi W. Asombang, MD, MPH

Gastroenterology, was nominated and selected to participate in the American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) GI Organizational Leadership Development Program (GOLD), Class of 2020.

The GOLD program was developed by ASGE to enhance the leadership skills and provide career development skills through education, coaching, and building professional networks, as well as to enhance the path to leadership within academic or private practice and within ASGE.

The GOLD program addresses opportunities and challenges within the context of a gastroenterology career, and helps to build strategies to navigate the increasingly complex health systems that gastroenterologists practice in.

Dr. Asombang attended Kasturba Medical College in Manipal, India, and completed Internal Medicine/Pediatrics Residency at Saint Louis University Hospital/Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center. During her general gastroenterology fellowship at Washington University School of Medicine in Saint Louis, she was the recipient of the National Institute of Health's Fogarty International Clinical Research Fellowship, which gave her the opportunity to conduct clinical research in Zambia, Southern Africa, on gastric and esophageal cancers. She completed her advanced endoscopy fellowship (ERCP/EUS) at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Harvard Medical School.

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failed to anticipate the perspectives offered in this presentation, I would not want to universalize the notion that only speakers with extensive publication records should be invited to Grand Rounds.

2. The program & department leadership should have stood up and challenged the speaker. I think this is also a fair criticism. As leaders, we should stand up publicly for the things we hold dear. There are several rationalizations of why none of us critiqued the speaker in public, in real time (courtesy, disbelief in what we were hearing, expectation of some resolution at the end of the talk) but those are in fact just rationalizations. If I had the opportunity again, I hope that I would be more assertive in real time, in the moment. Many of our faculty have expressed similar regrets. We should be setting an example. It has been suggested that we engage some experts in "bystander" phenomena to prepare us better as a group to function in these situations. The program leadership is currently looking into ways to facilitate these sessions based upon such feedback.

3. The speaker and his institution should be notified about the reactions to the talk. Regarding notifying the speaker, I believe this is a valid suggestion. In fact, we have mechanisms for routinely relaying Grand Rounds evaluations to invited speakers and will do that in this case as per our routine. We are also drafting a cover letter to explain more thematically the reactions to the talk and note that the evaluations span generations among the audience. I do not feel that we should formally notify the speaker's institution, however. He came here at our invitation specifically to give a talk that he believed (and others who have heard the talk in the past have believed) was informative and useful. I believe that our profession must be willing to hear opinions contrary to our own for it is through such exposure that our own efforts to advance science and support our

social contract will grow and thrive. We must have room to respectfully disagree with each other and in hindsight could have done just that at this Grand Rounds, engaging the speaker, asking questions and sharing our perspectives on his presentation professionally in the moment. Of all people, we as physicians must be open to different ways of thinking, since I would postulate that many patients over the years have been poorly served by physicians who stubbornly clung to one orthodoxy or another.

Over the next several months, we will plan additional talks and other sessions to address the issues that this talk has raised, thanks in large part to suggestions made by our residents, faculty and students. We will invite highly regarded speakers from outside as well as within our Brown Community to come and discuss these topics. It is also important to emphasize that we are in the middle of a large NIH-sponsored study entitled BRIM (Bias Reduction in Internal Medicine), designed to increase awareness and provide tools for addressing the systemic biases that exist within our system and throughout society. This effort has been led here at Brown by Dom Tammaro and plans are underway to deliver BRIM workshops to our residents once the study concludes this Spring. I hope the awareness and discussion generated by this Grand Rounds presentation will emphasize to all in our community the importance of recognizing and addressing our biases as we focus our efforts on creating a much more just, fair, safe and equitable environment. In the end, as Chair of the Department of Medicine it is my responsibility to assure the quality of our educational programming as well as the spirit of fairness and inclusion throughout this department. I appreciate all who have engaged in the recent discussion with candid feedback, suggestions and criticisms – all of which strengthens our community, promotes growth and helps us all to "Go High". Thank you.

Infectious Diseases and Neurology Physicians Collaborate on Alzheimer's Clinical Trial

With a new grant from the Alzheimer's Association, a team of researchers from Brown University, Butler Hospital and the Miriam Hospital will conduct a phase-one clinical trial of a drug that could potentially provide a new avenue for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

The drug, called emtricitabine (Emtriva), is from a class of therapeutics typically used to treat HIV and AIDS. Research by John Sedivy, a professor of molecular biology, cell biology and biochemistry at Brown and

director of the Brown Center on the Biology of Aging, has shown that the drug can potentially reduce a type of age-related cellular inflammation that has been associated with Alzheimer's.

The trial is supported by a \$750,000 grant from the Alzheimer's Association's Part the Cloud Translational Research Funding program, which aims to increase funding for early-stage clinical trials of promising new drug treatments. Sedivy and Dr. Stephen Salloway, a professor of neurology and psychiatry at the Warren Alpert Medical School and director of Butler Hospital's Memory and Aging Program, will lead the research. They will work closely with **Dr. Rami Kantor**, a professor of medicine and director of the HIV Resistance Laboratory at the Miriam Hospital, as well as Constantine Gatsonis and Fenghai Duan from the Center for Statistical

Sciences at Brown's School of Public Health.

"There's been a tremendous push to start thinking about Alzheimer's and other age-associated diseases in new ways," said Sedivy, who is also affiliated with the Brown Institute for Translational Science (BITS). "That is exactly what we're doing with this study by using a class of drugs that has never been used before in this context. We know that the Alzheimer's brain is an inflamed brain, and we're hopeful that by down-regulating that inflammation we can modify the course of the disease."

"This is such an exciting trial because this is an entirely new target for treating Alzheimer's," said Salloway, who is also affiliated with Brown's Carney Institute for Brain Science. "This is the kind of discovery science that will be necessary for us to find more effective treatments for this disease. We're very

grateful that the Alzheimer's Association and Part the Cloud have made this work possible."

"This study exemplifies the work we are doing in the Brown Institute for Translational Science and in Biology and Medicine at Brown University," said Jack A. Elias, senior vice president for health affairs and dean of medicine and biological sciences at Brown. "We have an integrated team of basic and pathogenesis-focused scientists and master clinicians collaborating with experts from the School of Public Health. Working together, they are testing the application of Dr. Sedivy's discovery in a real-world setting. If this study is successful it will have an amazing impact at Brown and the world and will change our understanding of the mechanisms that underlie this devastating disease. This is exactly the type of research we do and want to do more of through BITS."



Gravenstein Appointed Director of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine Division

Stefan Gravenstein, M.D. was recently appointed Director of the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine in the Department of Medicine at Rhode Island Hospital and The Miriam Hospital and at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. Dr. Gravenstein is a graduate of the Ohio State University School of Medicine and completed his Internal Medicine residency training and Geriatrics fellowship at the University of Wisconsin Hospitals and the William S. Middleton Veterans Hospital in Madison, Wisconsin.

After spending his early career at the University of Wisconsin, he moved to Eastern Virginia Medical School as the Chief of the Division of Geriatrics. From there he came to Brown, where, among other duties, he served as Associate Division Chief and Director of Research in the Division of Geriatrics and as Director of Quality Management and Outcomes in the Department of Medicine. He then spent time in Cleveland and Case

Western Reserve University, where he served as Interim Chief of the Geriatrics Division and Senior Quality Officer and Director of Quality Research Institute at University Hospitals-Case Medical Center.

He returned to Providence and Brown where he is Professor of Medicine and Health Services Policy and Practice and Associate Director of the COIN-LTSS and the Providence VAMC. Dr. Gravenstein is a world expert on a variety of measures to improve the safety of elderly citizens, most recently through large clinical trials of influenza vaccination. He has published more than 160 peer-reviewed articles, received grants from NIH, CDC and a variety of pharmaceutical companies. He has been invited to speak around the world and is committed to building an age friendly world through innovation and better care.

Dr. Gravenstein succeeds Dr. Richard Besdine, who for the past 20 years served as an exemplary Director of the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine and the Greer Professor of Geriatric Medicine. Dr. Besdine started visionary co-management programs in our hospitals that have become national models of care and served as interim Dean of Brown Medical School.



News from The Cardiovascular Institute

Ulrike Mende, MD, from Cardiovascular Research Center, has assumed leadership roles in the newly established Advance-K Program at Brown. She has been a member of the committee since July 2019 and as of October 1, 2019 she became a member of the Advance-K Leadership Team.

Athena Poppas, MD, will assume her role as President of the American College of Cardiology in March of 2020.

Gaurav Choudhary, MD has been appointed as a Member, Nonprofit Program Oversight Board, Office of Research and Development, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs in 2019 and Research Fellowship Awards Committee, American College of Cardiology from 2020-2023. He is an Elected Member-Region 1, Field Research Advisory Committee, Department of Veterans Affairs from 2019-2022.

News from the Hospitalist Division at The Miriam Hospital

Dr. Christina Beyer has been appointed Director of the Hospitalist program at Newport hospital. She will assume this new role in May 2020. Christina Beyer has been a member of the Division of Hospital Medicine at Miriam Hospital since August of 2011. She has been the Coordinator of the Division's Patient Experience initiative since 2015. Dr. Beyer is a

fellow of the American College of Physicians and of the Society of Hospital Medicine.

Dr. Kwame Dapaah-Afryie and **Dr. Arkadiy Finn** are involved in an AHRQ funded multi-center study – UPSIDE (Utility of Predictive Systems to identify Inpatient Diagnostic Errors) study. The primary center for this study is UCSF, and The

Miriam Hospital is one of 20 other collaborating hospitals. UPSIDE is a retrospective review of events where it is likely that a potential diagnostic error took place. The major goal is to define the prevalence of diagnostic errors in hospitalized patients resulting in transfer to ICU, unexpected deaths and/or re-admission within 7 days.

Gardner named Director of Scholarship

Dr. Rebekah Gardner has been named Director of Scholarship for the Division of General Internal Medicine. This role is designed to foster academic engagement and productivity for faculty members in the Division. Dr. Gardner will support faculty efforts to expand their scholarly work in medical education, quality improvement, health services research, as well as less traditional areas of exploration. She hopes to promote collaboration across the Department of Medicine, to create a more clearly defined infrastructure for scholarship within the Division, and to amplify the diverse ways that faculty investigate teaching, care delivery, and the practice of medicine.

Sara Geffert joins Infectious Diseases Division

Dr. Sara Geffert joined the Brown Medicine Faculty in the Division of Infectious Diseases in October 2019. She earned her Master's degree in Medical Laboratory Science (concentration in Clinical Microbiology) at Northeastern University. She then decided to pursue her medical degree at Wayne State University School of Medicine in Michigan. She trained in Internal Medicine at the University of Connecticut, followed by an Infectious

Diseases Fellowship at Brown University (Lifespan, VA, and Memorial Hospitals). She continued as a Post-Doctoral NIH Research Fellow focusing on Microbiology and Infectious Diseases at The Miriam Hospital, with additional training at the Rhode Island Hospital Clinical Microbiology Laboratory. She became certified as a Diplomate by the American Board of Medical Microbiology (ABMM) in August 2019.

Recently Awarded Grants

Ruhul Abid, MD, Cardiovascular Institute, received \$16,682 for “A Public Health Approach for Managing and Strengthening Cervical Cancer Program in Bangladesh” as part of a Brown University sub-grant from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

Philip Chan, MD, Infectious Diseases, received \$204,640 for “Applying User-centered Design Strategies to Develop a Tablet-optimized Intervention to Help High-risk Men starting PrEP Reduce their Heavy Drinking and Adhere to their Medication.” the grant is a subaward via Brown University from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA).

Bum-Rak Choi, PhD, Cardiovascular Institute, received an award from Ocean State Research Institute for his project entitled “Bioelectric Structures for Electrical Integration of Engineered Cardiac Tissues in the Heart.”

Deepan Dalal, MD, Rheumatology, received \$27,765 for “Impact of Aggressive Rheumatoid Arthritis Therapy on Osteoporotic Fractures in Older Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients.” The grant is a subaward through Brown from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS).

Elizabeth O. Harrington, MD, Providence VA Medical Center, received \$89,338 for “Role of Endothelial Anoctamin-1 in Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension.” The grant is a subaward from Ocean State Research Institute through the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

Rami Kantor, MD, Infectious Diseases, received \$240,000 for “Treatment Failure and Drug Resistance in HIV-1 Subtype C Infected Individuals Starting Dolutegravir-based First-line Therapy in India” from CRDF Global

Jason Machan, Research, received \$20,000 for “Predicting Suicide: A Longitudinal Analysis Of Speech Patterns In A High Risk Sample.” The grant is a subaward from Butler Hospital through the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

Leonard Mermel, MD, Infectious Diseases, was named a Highly Cited Researcher by Web of Science for the second year in a row. Researchers are recognized for exceptional research influence, demonstrated by the production of multiple highly cited papers that rank in the top 1% by citations for field and year in Web of Science.

Eleftherios Mylonakis, MD, Infectious Diseases, received \$146,240 for “Harvard-wide Program on Antibiotic Resistance - Diversity Supplement.” The grant is a sub-award from Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary through the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).

Josiah Rich, MD, Infectious Diseases, received \$89,600 for “The Rhode Island Young Adult Prescription and Illicit Drug Study (RAPIDS): Responding to Fentanyl and Associated Harms.” The grant is a subaward from Brown University through the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

Josiah Rich, MD, Infectious Diseases, received \$35,993 for “Using Implementation Interventions and Peer Recovery Support to Improve Opioid Treatment Outcomes in Community Supervision.” The grant is a sub-award through Brown from the National Institute on Drug Abuse

Nishant Shah, MD, Cardiovascular Institute, obtained a 1-year pilot grant from Pfizer to study cardiac amyloid prevalence in the VA.

Karen Tashima, MD Medicine Infectious Diseases, received \$93,101 for “Acute Neural and Immune Effects of Alcohol in People Living with HIV Infection.” The grant is a sub-award from Brown University through the National Institute of General Medical Sciences.

Karen Tashima, MD and **Megan Pinkston, PhD**, Co-PIs, Infectious Diseases, received \$119,451 for “A Peer Navigator Model to Improve Quit Attempts, Quitline Use, and Smoking Cessation Rates among HIV-positive Smokers.” The grant is a subaward through Brown University from the National Cancer Institute.

Rahul Vanjani, MD, General Internal Medicine, received \$430,243 for “Translating Training into Practice: Enhancing Medical Student and Resident Education on Buprenorphine for the Treatment of Opioid Disorder” from the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment at the NIH.

Rahul Vanjani, MD, General Internal Medicine, received \$109,286 for “Translating Training into Practice: Enhancing Medical Student and Resident Education on Buprenorphine for the Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder.” The grant is a sub-award from Brown University through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Rahul Vanjani, MD, General Internal Medicine, received \$381,252 for “Impact of DEA Waiver on Resident Buprenorphine Prescribing” from the Rhode Island Department of Health.

Lidia A. Vognar, MD, Geriatrics, received \$74,994 for “Introducing an age friendly 4Ms curriculum using the hospital at home care model” from the Health Resources and Services Administration.

Wen-Chih “Hank” Wu, MD, Cardiovascular Institute, MD obtained a 2-year pilot implementation grant from the VA to disseminate shared medical appointments in heart failure to two VAMC’s.



Awards and Honors For Faculty



Bourjeily Honored with Distinguished Educator Award

Ghada Bourjeily, MD, of Women's Medicine Collaborative, was named 2019 Distinguished CHEST Educator by the American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST), and was honored at the 2019 CHEST Annual Meeting in October. CHEST members honored with this award have shown great commitment,

involvement, and leadership in CHEST education programs and activities; they are placed well within the top 5% of CHEST's international faculty and are recognized for their achievements and long-term contributions to the design and delivery of CHEST education.



Martin Receives Rakatansky Award

Edward W. Martin, MD, HopeHealth Hospice and Palliative Care, has received the Dr. Herbert Rakatansky Award for his achievements in hospice and palliative care. The award was presented by the Rhode Island Medical Society at its annual convivium.

Martin's career has been focused on improving care for the seriously ill and dying, and has involved expanding the use of hospice services and the establishment of palliative care throughout Rhode Island and Massachusetts. He has also done volunteer work with Amos House and served for 30 years in the Rhode Island Army National Guard.

Since 2008, the award has been given to honor individuals who have distinguished themselves through exemplary professionalism and/or humanitarian service in the field of medicine. Dr. Martin is director of the Hospice and Palliative Medicine fellowship program at the Warren Alpert Medical School and is the Chief Medical Officer at HopeHealth.



McLaughlin Honored with Courage to Teach Award by ACGME

Suzanne McLaughlin, MD, MSc, was recently selected by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education as a recipient of a Parker J. Palmer "Courage to Teach" Award. This prestigious national award honors program directors who find innovative

ways to teach residents and to provide quality health care while remaining connected to their initial impulse to care for others.

Dr. McLaughlin is the program director of the Medicine-Pediatrics Residency Program at Rhode Island Hospital and its Hasbro Children's Hospital. She received a master's degree in maternal and child health from the Harvard School of Public Health and her medical degree from the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. She completed her residency training at Rhode Island/Hasbro Children's Hospital, and a Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars fellowship at Johns Hopkins University. Her clinical research interests are in health care transition and care delivery in primary care settings, and her work has been supported by the Picker Institute, Gold Foundation and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The "Courage to Teach" award is given to approximately five individual recipients each year. Dr. McLaughlin formally accepted the award at the ACGME Annual Educational Conference in San Diego in February.



Wands Elected as AAAS Fellow

Jack R. Wands, MD, of the Liver Research Center, and Director of the Division of Gastroenterology, has been elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Election as a Fellow honors members whose efforts on behalf of the advancement of science

or its applications in service to society have distinguished them among their peers and colleagues.

Wands was recognized "for distinguished contributions to basic and translational research of liver diseases, particularly in understanding pathogenesis of hepatitis B infection and hepatocellular carcinoma," according to AAAS.

"I've spent most of my career studying how this disease develops and how we can establish new, early diagnostic techniques to detect it when it's still small and then locate targets for therapy," Wands said. "We want to detect it early and have powerful ways to treat it when it develops."

Wands founded the Rhode Island Hospital/Brown University Liver Research Center and has received a number of awards, including two National Institutes of Health merit awards, a Max Planck

Merit Award and a Bristol Myers Squibb unrestricted grant in infectious disease. He is the recipient of approximately 100 U.S. and international patents related to investigative work in hepatology, as well as several major NIH grants.

For Wands, being named fellow "is a great honor, and one that really clarifies your role and your contributions as a scientist," he said. "I'm very proud to have been nominated and selected; it really means a great deal to me."

Providence VA Medical Center Cuts Ribbon on New ICU

In this photo, Dr. Satish Sharma, VA Providence Healthcare System chief of medical staff, cuts the ribbon on a new Intensive Care Unit at the medical center in Providence, with Ryan Lilly, director of the VA New England HCS, far left, Erin Clare Sears, acting director of the VA Providence HCS, second from right, Matt

Goulet, associate director for patient care, and Leslie Pierson, acting associate director for operations. One of several recent improvements at the Providence VA Medical Center, the new ICU is a significant clinical improvement from the former facility. The \$8 million, 10,000 square-foot ICU provides state-of-the-art equipment,

a location adjacent to the surgical suite, and additional space for patients and staff. It incorporates nine inpatient care units, modern nurse stations, and a family consultation room. ICU patients now have individual rooms with enhanced privacy and ample space for visitors.





BROWN
Alpert Medical School

Department of

Medicine

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Faculty Appointments September 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020

The Miriam and Rhode Island Hospitals

Michelle Breda, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Melissa Chin, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Seth Clark, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Daniel Greenwald, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor, Gastroenterology

Atin Jindal, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Sayed Kazmi, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Mohammad Saud Khan, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Brian Mikolasko, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine

Andrew Nowak, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor, Cardiology

Thomas Ollila, MD, Assistant Professor, Hematology/Oncology

Amrit Pathak, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Alexander Raufi, MD, Assistant Professor, Hematology/Oncology

Michael Santos, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Vadim Shteyler, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep

James Simmons, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep

Shannon Simmons, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, Gastroenterology

Aaron Wheeler, MD, Assistant Professor, Clinician Educator, General Internal Medicine

Other

Alan Epstein, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Cheryl Gottesman, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine

Sara Jane Nuciforo, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor, General Internal Medicine