



**Hospice Fellowship Training Program**

# **Meet the Fellows**

2023-24 Class



**The future of care.  
The comfort of home.**

**[vnshealth.org](https://vnshealth.org)**

VNS Health Hospice is the largest hospice provider in New York and the seventh largest in the country, having served 6,134 patients in 2022. Founded in 1983, it is a program of hope and humanity that works to achieve comfort, promote choice, and provide support. Hospice care is provided by a team comprising physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, spiritual care counselors, dietitians, bereavement counselors and volunteers. It is a program of VNS Health, the largest not-for-profit home- and community-based health care organization in the nation.

Since 2004, VNS Health Hospice has sponsored the Fellowship Training Program, offering participants carefully designed hospice rotations lasting up to ten weeks. The Program gives the Fellows a unique, humanistic, and hands-on home health care experience that is often transformative for the next generation of physicians and interdisciplinary clinicians.



“We are delighted to welcome the current class of 48 Fellows from eight medical centers to our VNS Health Hospice family.”

– **Ritchell Dignam, M.D.**, VNS Health Hospice Medical Director and Fellowship Director

### **Dr. Carol Abousaab**

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Houston, Tx

**Education:** University of Texas; UT Southwestern Medical School; UT Southwestern Medical Center Internal Medicine Residency

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Traveling, running, reading



### **Dr. Riddhi Amin**

NYU Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** New Jersey

**Education:** Drexel University; St. George's University School of Medicine

**Personal outside interests/talents:** I like to DIY projects, sketch, and learning about woodworking



### **Dr. Christian Archer**

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Miami, FL

**Education:** University of Florida for college and medical school; University of Rochester for a residency in Family Medicine

**Why medicine?** I entered medicine with a desire to help people live healthier and fuller lives. After training in Family Medicine preparing to care for individuals and families across the lifespan, I felt the most meaningful experiences I had were serving those facing severe life limiting illnesses and death. Providing these individuals and their communities with even a modicum of ease and peace in such difficult times is an incredible privilege, and I want to train to be able to provide whole person and communal care

**Personal Outside interest/talents:** Sociology, travel, food (cooking and eating), and a variety of outdoor activities ranging from soccer and rock climbing to hiking and pickleball.

**Family information of interest:** My partner is a law student at St. John's University



## Michael Ballard

MSKCC Nurse Practitioner Fellow

**Grew up:** New York and South Carolina

**Education:** Brooklyn College, BA in Psychology; Phillips School of Nursing; Graduate School, Columbia University School of Nursing – Master of Science in Nursing-Acute Care Nurse Practitioner and Doctor of Nursing Practice degree with expected completion date of December 2023

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Reading, hiking, travelling

**Prior jobs/careers:** Registered Nurse in Hospice and Palliative Care at Mount Sinai Hospital and Emergency Medicine at Mount Sinai Brooklyn



## Dr. Kevin “Bo” Barley

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Orlando, FL

**Education:** Undergrad: BS, Chemistry from Davidson College; Internal Medicine residency, Hematology/Oncology Fellowship

**Family information of interest:** I am married and have two children: a 7-year-old girl and 1 year old boy. I suddenly lost most of my vision at the end of my hematology/oncology training. I spend most of my non-work time playing with my children in Central Park



## Dr. Hajira Basit

Brookdale Hospital Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Lahore, Pakistan

**Education:** Attended Lahore College for Women, for my pre-med; I went to Allama Iqbal Medical College for my medical degree, it is one of the prestigious medical colleges in Pakistan; Internal Medicine resident at Brookdale University, Brooklyn, New York

**Why medicine?** I was always interested in medical sciences and opting for medicine as a profession seemed like a natural choice. I was clear very early on in my student life that I wanted to pursue medicine as a profession

**Personal outside interests/talents:** I'm a foodie; I love to cook and try out new restaurants. Other than food I like exploring new cities in particular the architecture and markets. I'm a pretty good cook and treat my friends with home-cooked meals all the time



### Dr. Sheila Bawany

Lincoln Medical Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Orlando, FL

**Education:** University of Central Florida; University of South Florida

**Why medicine?** I have a strong family history of medicine however this worked out well for me in that I personally enjoy science and working with people; medicine serves as a platform for both

**Personal outside interests/talents:** My interests include traveling, reading, art, snowboarding, surfing and exploring new restaurants and cuisines

**Prior jobs/careers:** High school student tutor, office secretary, seasonal mall worker physiology college TA, ER attending



### Dr. Michelle Bergeron

Columbia Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Lafayette, LA

**Education:** Tulane University; LSUHSC New Orleans, General Surgery

**Personal outside interests/talents:** I love spending time with my dachshund Edie and my cat Minou



### Dr. Rose Carlson

Columbia Physician Fellow



### Dr. James Cescon

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Montreal, Canada

**Education:** Trinity College, Hartford CT; St. George's University School of Medicine; Mount Sinai Beth Israel-Internal Medicine

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Hockey, NYC restaurants



### Dr. Helen Chen

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Columbus, Ohio

**Education:** The Ohio State University; St. George's University School of Medicine; Internal Medicine at Woodhull Medical Center

**Why medicine?** The pursuit to help patients find joy in their lives beyond medication. Helping patients realize we care about them beyond patients but as people.

**Personal outside interests/talents:** I am into food exploring, trying new restaurants, new 5K runner interested in conquering half marathon next year, writing for op-Ed, traveling upstate to Hudson and Catskills

**Prior jobs/careers:** Most memorable jobs were working making frozen yogurt and at the local grocery store market district

**Family information of interest:** While ethnically Chinese, I was born in Australia and then moved to Ohio; my family now lives in Florida



### Dr. Elaine Chiu

Lincoln Medical Physician Fellow

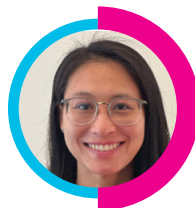
**Grew up:** San Francisco, CA

**Education:** UCLA; Albert Einstein; UCLA Pediatric Residency

**Why Medicine?** I want to help children with medical complexity

**Personal outside interests/talents:** I am a foodie

**Prior jobs/careers:** I was a pediatrician in Chicago



### Dr. Abigail Cohen

NYU Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Millburn, NJ

**Education:** Colgate University; Tulane University school of Medicine; Internal Medicine, Boston Medical Center

**Personal outside interests/talents:** I have a cute Jack Russell/Chihuahua mix named Sadie who enjoys long walks in the park and eating chicken bones he finds on the sidewalk



### Dr. Fionnuala Crowley

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Cork, Ireland

**Education:** University College Dublin, Ireland; University College Cork, Ireland; Internal Medicine, Mount Sinai West Morningside; Hematology, Oncology and Palliative Care

**Why medicine?** Lots of variation, lots of interaction with people

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Spinning, running, long walks with podcasts, cooking, travel

**Prior jobs/careers:** Chef

**Family information of interest:** I grew up on a farm and my parents built a family run museum on the farm



### Dr. Dana Curtis

Jamaica Hospital Physician Fellow



### Dr. Roberto Droz Rosario

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** San Juan, Puerto Rico

**Education:** University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus-B.Sc.; Rutgers University, Cancer Institute of New Jersey-PhD; University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine; Internal Medicine, Morristown Medical

**CenterWhy Medicine?** I missed the connection with people and felt too far removed from the application of scientific breakthroughs. I realized I needed to step away from the lab bench and become a physician. Now I am passionate about helping my patients and community get through complex illnesses, focusing on living life at their fullest

**Personal outside interests/talents:** I cherish summer afternoons with my children in our water slide, grill aficionado, and I'm learning to master the fire pit! I have Salsa and Latin music in my blood; used to burn my shoes off in San Juan and NJ/NY but now I live and dance vicariously through Instagram

**Prior jobs/careers:** Cancer Basic Science Research and BioPharma Quality Specialist



### Dr. Chantel Gordon

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Bronx, NY

**Education:** Smith College for BA, Drexel University College of Medicine for MS; Howard University College of Medicine; Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx NY in Family Medicine

**Why Medicine?** Inspired by my grandfather who was a surgeon and enjoy helping people

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Love indoor gardening and biking

**Prior jobs/careers:** Engineering, teacher, public health research

**Family information of interest:** Family is from Jamaica and Trinidad



### Dr. Peter Gordon

Jamaica Hospital Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Philadelphia and Brooklyn

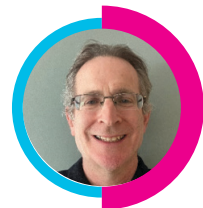
**Education:** Harvard College; University of Pennsylvania; Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, 1996, Emergency Medicine

**Why Medicine?** I wanted to have skills that were relevant and useful all over the world

**Personal outside interests/talents** **Prior jobs/careers:** I have a real weakness for derelict sports cars

**Prior jobs/careers:** I have worked in academic medical centers, major urban centers, and small rural community hospitals. I have worked on and off in Romania participating in emergency medicine development programs since 2000. I spent a year running in emergency medicine training program in Rwanda in 2014/2015

**Family information of interest:** My wife is a jeweler. My son is in college



### Dr. Ameish Govindarajan

MSKCC Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Los Angeles, California

**Education:** Ross University; Internal Medicine Residency at UCLA Kern

**Why medicine?** My passion for Internal Medicine lies in the patient connection and the opportunity to provide care for individuals with chronic conditions.

**Personal outside interests/talents:** I have a deep love for all genres of music and enjoy traveling





### Dr. Barley Halton

NYU Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Netherlands

**Education:** Trinity University in San Antonio, TX; University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia; Adult Psychiatry Residency at Tulane University in New Orleans, LA

**Why medicine?** Particularly interested in intersection of mental health and palliative care. Planning to focus particularly on treating mental health in those with terminal illnesses



### Dr. Frannie Itzkow

Jamaica Hospital Physician Fellow



### Dr. June Jeon

New York Presbyterian-Queens Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Born in South Korea, grew up in Southern California

**Education:** University of California-San Diego; University of Sydney Medical School, Australia; Internal Medicine residency at Greenwich Hospital, CT

**Why Medicine?** I was originally working in the medical research field, but wanted to be involved in direct patient care

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Sewing, painting, and music (church choir)

**Prior jobs/careers:** Biomedical researcher

**Family information of interest:** My sister is in pediatrics and loves taking care of new born babies, whereas I'm interested in helping patients at the end of their life



### Dr. Jaewon Jung

NYU Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** South Korea and Indiana

**Education:** University of Notre Dame; Indiana University School of Medicine; University of Louisville in Kentucky, Internal Medicine

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Tennis, golf, crafts, k-pop



### Dr. Emma Kofmehl

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Charleston, SC

**Education:** University of Pennsylvania; Medical University of South Carolina; Emory University, Internal Medicine

**Personal outside interests/talents:** I'm a voracious reader, former competitive sailor, enthusiastic crochet novice!



### Dr. Michael Lau

MSKCC Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Santa Clara, CA

**Education:** University of California, Irvine; University of Central Florida, College of Medicine; Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center, Pediatrics

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Spending time with my wife and bernedoodle, exploring NYC

**Prior jobs/careers:** Research and development scientist in the Biotech industry



### Dr. Tristan Lee

MSKCC Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Oakland, California

**Education:** UCLA for undergraduate; Duke University for medical school; Internal Medicine Residency at Columbia University Hospital in Washington Heights

**Why medicine?** I chose to go into medicine because of my time as an AmeriCorps volunteer at a clinic in East Oakland, caring for patients with chronic conditions

**Personal outside interests/talents:** I love anything active (basketball, tennis, hiking) and traveling with my wife



### Dr. Kyaw Zaw “KZ” Linn

Columbia Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Born and raised in Yangon, Myanmar

**Education:** Cambridge Tutors College for A levels in UK and studied undergraduate five year medicine program at the Trinity College Dublin; School of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin, Republic of Ireland; Internal Medicine Residency, The Brooklyn Hospital Center, Brooklyn, NY

**Why medicine?** I am the second person in my family to go into medicine. Since I got into medical school, I love looking after older adults and find fulfilling and meaningful in helping patients who are suffering.

**Outside interests/talents:** Classical music, going for a walk in the parks, spending time with my love ones, trying different cuisines around NYC

**Family information of interest:** My family won the “Green Card Lottery” and they transplanted to USA from Myanmar in 2009. I met my wife here in NYC, and I now call Queens my new home



### Dr. Jordan Kelly Magruder

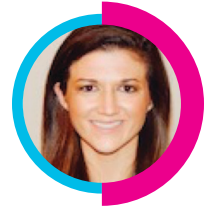
Brookdale Hospital Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Scottsdale, Arizona

**Education:** University of Colorado, Boulder and Grand Canyon University; St. George’s University; Internal Medicine at Brookdale

**Why medicine?** Enjoy the complexity and ability to establish long lasting relationships with patients and their families

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Golf, pilates, hiking



### Dr. Katherine Mark

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Moscow, Russia and Brooklyn, NY

**Education:** SUNY Binghamton; St. George’s University School of Medicine; Internal Medicine Residency-SUNY Upstate; Geriatrics Fellowship-SUNY Upstate

**Why medicine?** Health promotion; Making the right diagnosis is like solving a mystery

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Reading, fitness, cooking, travel

**Prior jobs/careers:** I am currently a Medical Director for Geriatric and Palliative Medicine Program at Mount Sinai West



## Sarah Micley

MSKCC Nurse Practitioner Fellow

**Grew up:** Western Massachusetts

**Education:** University of Chicago; Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing; SUNY Downstate College of Nursing

**Why medicine?** After losing an aunt at a young age to cancer, and seeing the support she received from hospice care, I was drawn to comfort, care for and support families and patients facing serious illness

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Knitting, crosswording, bread-baking, rock climbing

**Prior jobs/careers:** Hospice and Palliative Care Nursing at VNSNY, Mt. Sinai Hospital and Calvary



## Dr. Carley Mitchell

MSKCC Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Saegertown, PA

**Education:** Western Michigan University; Drexel University College of Medicine; Internal Medicine-Case Western Reserve University Hospitals, Cleveland, Ohio

**Why medicine?** I have always been driven by patient connections and helping people navigate through some of the most challenging aspects of life

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Previous competitive figure skater and coach



## Dr. Syeda Sundus Mujahid

NYPQ Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Rockland County, NY

**Education:** William E. Macaulay Honors College at City College of NY (CUNY); American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine; Family Medicine Residency at Virtua Health Inc., South Jersey

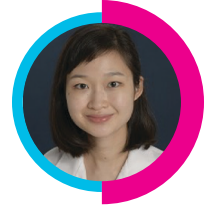
**Why medicine?** Provide care to a diverse patient population

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Watching sports, exploring cities on foot



### Dr. Kristi Nguyen

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow



### Dr. Dhvani Patel

Jamaica hospital Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Calgary, Alberta Canada

**Education:** University of Calgary; St. George's University; Internal Medicine at NYCHHC ConeyIsland/South Brooklyn Health



### Dr. Gibram Ramos Ortiz

Lincoln Hospital Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Bayamon, Puerto Rico

**Education:** University of Puerto Rico, BA of Science in Cell and Molecular Biology; Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY; NYU Grossman School of Medicine-Internal Medicine

**Why medicine?** I hope that by acquiring further training, I can better serve the people of this wonderful city

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Personal finance, investing, anime and video games



### Dr. Amna Rana

MSKCC Physician Fellow



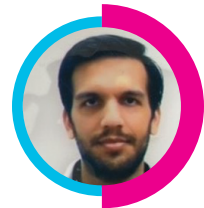
### Dr. Fawad Rashid

Lincoln Hospital Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Pakistan

**Education:** King Edward Medical University in Lahore, Pakistan; Internal Medicine residency Montefiore Medical Center

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Sports, traveling and cooking



### Dr. Jasmine Sandhu

NYPQ Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Delta, Vancouver British Columbia

**Education:** Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada; St. George's University School of Medicine; Internal Medicine graduate from Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

**Why medicine?** Started off as being strong encouragement from my parents, which turned into a fascination for human physiology and condition

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Crochet and knit

**Family information of interest:** I am of Indian and Mauritian descent, half Hindu, and half Sikh. This exposed me early to different groups of people and opened me to seeing the diversity of the world we live in



### Dr. Joseph Schnitter

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Buffalo, NY

**Education:** Canisius College; Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai; Internal Medicine at Northwestern University

**Why medicine?** Always was interested in the humanities and science, seemed like a good way to marry those interests

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Distance running, reading history and philosophy, going to art museums, exploring NYC, road trips, caring too much about the Buffalo Bills and Sabers



### Dr. Benjamin Schwarz

Columbia Physician Fellow



### Dr. Allison Shen

NYU Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Long Island, NY

**Education:** Duke University; University of Rochester; University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Internal medicine

**Why medicine?** I always loved both stories and science, and it is so satisfying to be able to listen to patients' stories and then use my understanding of their pathophysiology to work together with them to make a plan for their health

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Reading, writing, cooking



### Dr. Sherine Talaat

Jamaica Hospital Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Alexandria, Egypt

**Education:** University of Alexandria, Egypt; University of North Dakota

**Why medicine?** I love it

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Reading, baking, traveling, and spending time with my family

**Family information of interest:** Married, three grown children



### Dr. Rodrigo Taniguchi

Mount Sinai Physician Fellow

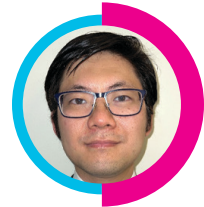
**Grew up:** Sao Paulo, Brazil

**Education:** University of Sao Paulo Medical School; Montefiore Medical Center Wakefield Campus

**Why medicine?** Wanted to help people

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Volleyball, chess, play the guitar

**Family information of interest:** 6 month old daughter



### Dr. Ophelia Wang

Jamaica Hospital Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Queens and Syosset, NY

**Education:** NYU; Touro Osteopathic Medicine-Harlem

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Love to travel and cook



### Dr. Lauren Ward


MSKCC Physician Fellow

**Grew up:** Hershey, PA

**Education:** NYU; University of Minnesota Medical School in Minneapolis, MN; Internal Medicine at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, TX

**Personal outside interests/talents:** Enjoy running, board games, crossword puzzles, rock climbing, baking





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Eugene M. Lang Foundation  
Heidi Paoli Fund  
Pine Tree Foundation of New York  
Margaret Ruttenberg, MD  
Phyllis Schwartz  
Wise Hospice Options



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Hospice Fellowship Training Program, please contact  
Carlos Sosa at (646) 819-2894 or [Carlos.Sosa2@vnshealth.org](mailto:Carlos.Sosa2@vnshealth.org).