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Diversity and Innovation Set Maimonides Residency Programs Apart



Seventy-seven languages. That's a number represented by the diverse communities of patients seen by providers at Maimonides Medical Center—including physicians-in-training through the center's 25 ACGME-accredited residency and fellowship programs. "Here, global is local," says Robin J. Gitman, Vice President/Designated Institutional Official of Academic Affairs. "Our residents arrive here from all over the US and the world, and in turn they learn to care for people with cultural humility, compassion, and respect."

Indeed, the program's 500 residents and fellows come from far and wide: traditional, allopathic, and osteopathic medical schools across the US and Canada, and one-third from international schools. With a mission-driven, strategic approach, Maimonides thoughtfully builds its residency programs to represent the diversity of its patients and to meet community needs. A program aptly named Global Is Local provides every resident with essential health equity training, with additional modules offered for those who plan to pursue global health in their specialty. An internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee also creates a safe space for residents of color to share ideas and promote

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FEATURED STORIES

the institution's own commitment to diversity. "Everyone who trains here has a unique opportunity to apply global health skills within an institution that offers both academic medical center-level quality care and a community hospital feel," says Gitman.

In addition to the ACGME-accredited programs and two program applications currently under review, Maimonides offers three CODA-approved dental programs; three society-sponsored fellowships in MIGS, MIS, and breast care; two Maimonides-specific programs, in pediatric hospital medicine and NIS/NER; and four emergency medicine fellowships focused in ultrasound, administration, medical education, and simulation. Access to a 24/7 simulation center is another differentiator of Maimonides' residency programs, along with a Residents Quality Council that teaches advocacy and process skills to help future physicians fix systemic problems in medicine.

Underpinning the program is a commitment to the career and personal development of each and every resident, adds Gitman. Psychologists and coaches are available to help residents build their professional identities and maintain their personal and mental health throughout the program. The Department of Academic Affairs operates as a kind of incubator to test new initiatives that may improve the experience of residents training at Maimonides.

"Once a resident is in our program, they are in—we don't turn our back when learning doesn't happen as expected or a life transition happens. We work to help each and every resident grow as both an individual and as a physician," Gitman says.

Introducing Interventional Radiology Services at MMCH

Service offerings continue to expand at Maimonides Midwood Community Hospital (MMCH). With plans to center MMCH as a premiere facility in Brooklyn, hospital leadership introduced interventional radiology in April of this year.

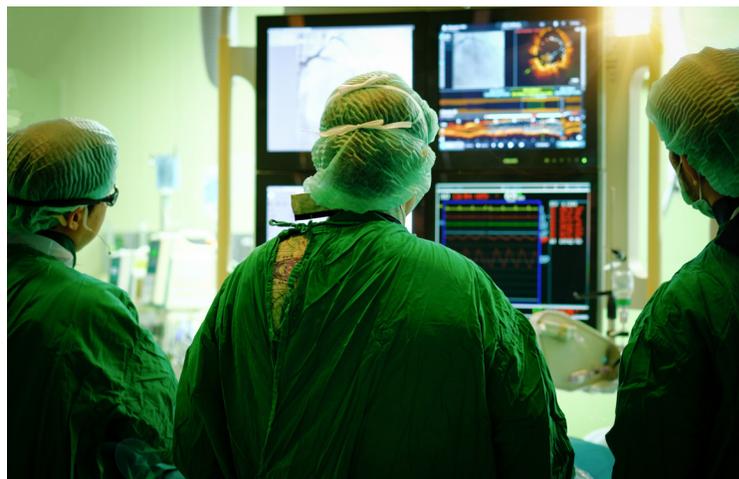
Interventional radiology gives physicians an opportunity to provide high-quality care using the most minimally invasive treatments available while also reducing costs, pain, and recovery time for patients. It's a discipline that's been around for a while, but it's relatively new compared to long-standing specialties like primary care and pediatrics.

The greatest opportunity for interventional radiology at MMCH lies in the collaborative care these physicians can

provide in conjunction with other departments. Using imaging equipment, interventional radiologists guide instruments into veins and arteries for stents, angioplasty, embolization, and other minimally invasive procedures. Although cardiovascular treatments are very common, interventional radiologists also perform procedures in many other parts of the body.

More than 20 patients have benefited from interventional radiology procedures at MMCH to date. In the few months since the program began, MMCH has provided interventional radiology treatment on Tuesdays. Soon, a dedicated interventional radiologist will join the dynamic staff at MMCH to provide coverage at least twice a week.

Partnering with interventional radiology is a great idea for specialists across many disciplines, including cardiology, neurology, gynecology, and urology to name a few. Refer your patients for minimally invasive interventional radiology services that save them both time and money.



CANCER CARE

Anticipating and Managing Side Effects for Lung Cancer Treatment — Targeted Therapy and Immunotherapy

Maimonides Medical Center has embraced a variety of innovative lung cancer care treatments that include both targeted treatment and immunotherapy. Since these treatments affect patients differently than traditional chemotherapy and surgery do, physicians should become familiar with any possible side effects so they can recognize them early.

Fortunately for patients, side effects are usually quite mild. “Targeted treatment drugs like osimertinib have fewer side effects than chemotherapy, while having a better chance of reducing the cancer,” said Kevin Becker, MD, the Maimonides Cancer Center Medical Director and the Hematology/Oncology Division Chief.

Innovation in Cancer Care: Targeted Treatment

Targeted treatment drugs are often so effective while producing such mild side effects that patients often cannot tell they are ill, changing the perception of lung cancer as an incurable disease to one that can be successfully managed. “Many times, students and doctors-in-training in my clinic are surprised at how easy some of the drug treatments for lung cancer can be,” Dr. Becker said. “Most patients get better to the point that they often tell me that unless I said otherwise, they wouldn’t know they were sick. They have no symptoms and no side effects. That is not what people think of when they think of lung cancer, but it’s the new reality.”

Targeted therapy side effects can include sensitivity to light; blisters and burns can appear even with little exposure to the sun. Rash is also common, often looking like acne on the face, chest, neck, upper back, and scalp. The rash can get dry and red a month after its inception, leading to pimples that can get infected. In general, rash should disappear about a month after the treatment has ended.

Other side effects could include sore cuticles on thumbs and big toes, hand-foot syndrome, and changes in hair growth and skin color.



Game Changer: Immunotherapy

Like targeted treatment, immunotherapy kills cancer cells while usually producing only mild side effects. Immunotherapy has had such positive results that even patients with metastatic level 4 lung cancer can sometimes stop treatment. “One of the first patients with metastatic lung cancer that I treated with immunotherapy in a clinical trial is going on eight years now completely off treatment, living her life almost as if she didn’t have the diagnosis,” Dr. Becker said. “And that’s a disease that used to have an average survival period of 9 to 12 months.”

Side effects for immunotherapy can include fatigue, fever, flu-like symptoms, and irritated skin. When recognized early, the side effects can be managed using immunosuppressive medication; their frequency and duration can be minimized; and pain can be reduced. Sometimes, physicians can reduce side effects by pausing the immunotherapy treatment.

SLEEP MEDICINE

Helping Patients Get Quality Sleep

Recognizing symptoms for a sleep disorder isn't always easy. Collaborating with specialists in sleep medicine is the best way to evaluate symptoms, reach a diagnosis, and provide effective treatment options.

Monita Mediratta, MD, and Yizhak Kupfer, MD, are two pulmonology physicians at Maimonides Doctors Multispecialty Pavilion who specialize in sleep medicine. Adults with sleep concerns benefit from Dr. Kupfer's deep and varied experience, while Dr. Mendiratta primarily works with pediatric patients.

Sleep Medicine in Pediatric Versus Adult Patients

It's easy to think of sleep medicine as a specialty for adults, especially since children don't usually complain about poor quality sleep. "Adults discuss these issues with their doctor when they're experiencing daytime fatigue from restless sleep. Unless they wake their parent or guardian during the night, these symptoms can go unnoticed in children," according to Dr. Mendiratta.

BEARS Sleep Screening Algorithm

One of the pediatric sleep assessment tools Dr. Mendiratta uses often is the BEARS Sleep Screening Algorithm. She likes its simplicity for discussing sleep with parents, and finds that it's a great way to introduce pediatric sleep medicine to her residents. BEARS is an acronym that helps physicians assess five key sleep domains:



1. **B**edtime problems
2. **E**xcessive daytime sleepiness
3. **A**wakenings during the night
4. **R**egularity and duration of sleep
5. **S**noring

However, children are often unable to articulate these signs and symptoms of a sleep disorder. "Instead of waiting for parents to report concerning sleep issues, I encourage pediatricians to be proactive," Dr. Mendiratta explained. "In addition to the BEARS tool, restlessness, and snoring, we also look for a few daytime symptoms like early morning headaches, irritability, and hyperactivity."

Dr. Mendiratta is one of the only pediatric sleep medicine specialists in Brooklyn, which sets Maimonides apart from other facilities in the area. "I find it fascinating because sleep is physiologically critical for daily functioning and it's tied to overall health more than you might think," she explained.

Pediatric patients who experience sleep disorder symptoms as indicated by the BEARS tool and adults with self-reported sleep difficulties should receive a referral to sleep medicine. Some of these patients will need a sleep study, particularly if they present with snoring as a symptom. This is the only way to determine if snoring is the result of a medical condition like sleep apnea.

ORTHOPEDICS

Patients Regain Mobility with Robot-Assisted Joint Replacement

Helping patients get back on their feet is easier than ever with the orthopedic specialists at Maimonides Bone & Joint Center. Under the guidance of Jack Choueka, MD, the Chairman for the Department of Orthopedics, orthopedic surgeons provide cutting-edge treatment and surgery for patients of all ages.

The Bone & Joint Center is a world-class, comprehensive orthopedic treatment facility in Brooklyn. Not only do they offer excellent patient care, there is one key differentiator that sets them apart from the competition: The Bone & Joint Center is a research site with access to new technology and treatments.

Top of the Line Technology and Treatments

Specialists at this state-of-the-art facility provide treatment for all sorts of bone and joint issues, including Orry Erez, MD. He specializes in hip and knee replacement surgery, as well as treatment for sports injuries, osteoarthritis, and a wide variety of other bone and joint conditions. Patients can also receive life-changing treatment from doctors specializing in spine, shoulder, elbow, and all other parts of the musculoskeletal system.

“One of the highlights of the orthopedic surgery program is minimally invasive joint replacement, but surgery is always the last course of treatment,” Dr. Erez explains. “We always start with a holistic approach that often includes medication, therapy, and injections.”



Non-surgical treatment options don't work for all patients. When all other treatment options have run their course, specialists like Dr. Erez consider surgical options. Whenever possible, they utilize minimally invasive surgical procedures.

Maimonides Bone & Joint Center's Robotics Program

“Minimally invasive surgery is one way surgeons at Maimonides Bone & Joint Center improve outcomes,” Dr. Erez said. “However, our main focus for joint replacement is our robotics program. We're utilizing enhanced imaging to map out joints prior to surgical intervention. Then, we use intraoperative robotics to help align and balance joints to improve outcomes.”

Top-of-the-line technology like this elevates Maimonides Bone & Joint Center as the premiere facility for orthopedic treatment and surgery in Brooklyn. “These talented physicians work together to provide convenient, supportive, and complete care for their patients,” Dr. Erez assures.

To book an appointment with the orthopedic team at Maimonides Bone & Joint Center, call (718) 283-7400.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Life Forward Program: Supporting Comprehensive Care for Patients with HIV

For patients living with HIV or AIDS, seeing a physician for regular check-ups is just one aspect of care. That was the central idea behind the creation of Life Forward, a comprehensive program connecting patients in Brooklyn and beyond with tailored medical, mental health, and social services. “We created Life Forward to expand HIV and AIDS care beyond physicians seeing patients, performing labs, and prescribing medications,” explains Monica Ghitan, MD, Associate Director for Infectious Diseases and Medical Director of the program at Maimonides Medical Center. “We intentionally emphasize all aspects of care, beyond the infection alone.”

Approximately 300 patients are served by the program, which recently expanded to include patients with hepatitis C, often seen as a co-infection in patients with HIV. Patients work with a coordinator who helps to create a personalized care plan following a complete evaluation of medical, nutritional, and behavioral needs. Other than referrals to social service agencies to support needs such as housing or food, any referrals—such as to counselors or medical specialists—are kept within the Maimonides Health network.

Importantly, participants in Life Forward are all seen by a physician in a private-practice setting, and a coordinator helps patient navigate insurance options, including government-funded insurance offered



to every patient diagnosed with HIV. An on-site pharmacist is a crucial member of the Life Forward care team, communicating with patients regarding side effects and helping them to incorporate medications into their daily routines.

“Often our patients will be asymptomatic, so even a minor side effect of their medication regimen can discourage them from taking it,” explains Dr. Ghitan. “Our pharmacists call patients to check in, remind them to take the medications, and answer any questions they may have.”

With consistent adherence to today’s available medications to treat HIV, adds Dr. Ghitan, the majority of patients can expect a normal quality of life—which is why medication management remains a centerpiece of the Life Forward program.

For more information or to enroll a patient, call (718) 283-5912.



PEDIATRICS

Maimonides Children's Hospital Hosts Fourth NICU Reunion with Former Patients and Providers

On June 13, 2022, Maimonides Children's Hospital welcomed 300 former patients of their Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and their families for an annual reunion event at the hospital. The block party took place outside the hospital and featured food, games, entertainment, raffles, and more. The former patients, many of whom were some of the NICU's highest risk cases, and their families, spoke about their experiences being treated at Maimonides and receiving the care that allowed them to survive despite being born prematurely and with life-threatening conditions. Part of the Maimonides Health system, Maimonides Children's Hospital is the only children's hospital and pediatric trauma center in Brooklyn.

"The patients being cared for at the Maimonides NICU are some of the highest-risk newborns in the City, so treating them requires advanced training, compassion, and empathy for the parents who put their children's lives in our hands," said Alok Bhutada, MD, Chief of the Division of Newborn Medicine at Maimonides Children's Hospital. "It was such an inspiration seeing them doing so well, because when they exit the ward as babies you don't know how they're doing but seeing them as older children is a powerful stimulant to continue."

Maimonides Children's Hospital is a New York State-designated Regional Perinatal Center (RPC), in recognition of excellence in delivering maternity and neonatal care. The NICU provides critical care for newborns in a state-of-the-art facility, which is equipped to offer advanced procedures such as therapeutic hypothermia and video electroencephalogram (EEG). In-house coverage by a board-certified neonatologist is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for all high-risk deliveries and care in the NICU.

To see event highlights, visit:

- ◆ "Maimonides Medical Center celebrates NICU reunion and new facility," Bronx News 12 (June 12, 2022)
- ◆ "Together again: Maimonides welcomes former NICU babies for patient-team 'family' reunion," The Brooklyn Paper (June 27, 2022)



Dr. Aaron Tokayer Leads Brooklyn's First Neurogastroenterology and GI Motility Center

Maimonides Medical Center opened the Maimonides Neurogastroenterology and Gastrointestinal (GI) Motility Center—the first center of its kind in Brooklyn. Aaron Tokayer, MD, Director of the center, knows how debilitating it can be for patients to live with digestive conditions that are not only bothersome, but functionally limiting.

“Appropriate diagnosis is essential to direct effective treatments for improved quality of life and function,” Dr. Tokayer says.

The Maimonides Neurogastroenterology and GI Motility Center offers patients the opportunity to receive comprehensive care from a multidisciplinary team of specialists through screening, diagnosis, and treatment of digestive disorders. Specializing in the full spectrum of neurogastroenterology and GI motility disorders, the Center is a resource not only for patients but also for referring primary and GI physicians to evaluate and treat the full spectrum of GI disorders from “top to bottom.”

This includes esophageal and swallowing disorders, Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease, stomach function disorders, such as poor digestion or discomfort with eating, gas and bloating, irritable bowel syndrome, and more.

Convening Multidisciplinary Experts to Provide Comprehensive Patient Care

“We collaborate across different specialties including ENT, general thoracic and colorectal surgery, gynecology, and many others, to provide patients with the comprehensive care required to achieve optimal digestive health,” says Dr. Tokayer, a gastroenterologist with over 30 years of experience. He also serves as a Clinical Professor of Medicine at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and as an Adjunct Professor of Medicine at SUNY Downstate.

Digestive problems are extremely common and on the rise. According to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, 60–70 million Americans are affected by digestive diseases.

“If a patient has persistent, refractory, or bothersome digestive symptoms and isn't responding adequately to medication and dietary changes, we welcome physician referrals,” Dr. Tokayer says. “In addition to standard imaging tests (including ultrasounds, MRIs, CT scans, and X-rays), we use state-of-the-art diagnostic testing and therapeutic interventions that examine GI motility, GERD, stomach, small bowel and colon, as well as anorectal function. Accurate diagnosis then

directs treatment and care.”

Prior to joining Maimonides, Dr. Tokayer worked as attending physician on the full-time staff in the training program as well as Director of GI Motility at Montefiore Medical Center. His areas of interest include neurogastroenterology and GI motility; GI clinical practice and patient care; endoscopic interventions; patient-physician interactions; and educating colleagues, physicians, and GI fellows.

He adds it's possible for most GI patients to achieve better health outcomes with a proper diagnosis, education, and an individualized treatment plan.

“Our testing and treatment capacities go beyond traditional medicine and examine how a patient's sleep patterns, ability to manage stress, and proper nutrition, also play a role in how well their GI condition is managed,” Dr. Tokayer says. “By combining modalities such as diet and behavioral therapy, biofeedback, pharmacologic or surgical therapies, we can treat the underlying cause of a patient's symptoms and create a comprehensive and effective treatment plan.”

Featured Podcast



Urinary Incontinence: Solutions For Men and Women

Uncontrollable urine leakage is often called urinary incontinence or “leaky bladder” and it can affect anyone. Dr. Allison Polland discussed the causes of incontinence and ways that you can address it

[Listen Here](#)