



# WESTCHESTER PHYSICIAN

October 2024

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### RESTORING TRUST IN HEALTHCARE: A CALL FOR COLLABORATION AND HOPE

KHAM ALI, MD PRESIDENT

In recent years, the relationship between patients and physicians has experienced significant strain, particularly amplified by the events of the COVID-19 pandemic. Trust, the cornerstone of the physician-patient relationship, has eroded for many, leading to a complex landscape where misinformation proliferates and skepticism thrives. However, as we reflect on these challenges, there lies a profound opportunity for restoration and renewal in the healthcare system.

### THE EROSION OF TRUST

The decline of trust in healthcare is not a new phenomenon. Historically, American society has demonstrated strong confidence in medical professionals, with over 75% of the population expressing great faith in doctors during the 1960s. Fast forward to today, and that figure has plummeted. A recent study found that only 34% of Americans have confidence in the public health system.

A 2024 survey found that the percentage of adults reporting a lot of trust in physicians and hospitals decreased dramatically from 71.5% in April 2020 to just 40.1% by January 2024. This decline is alarming, particularly as it correlates with declining vaccination rates for diseases like COVID-19 and influenza, highlighting the critical link between trust and health outcomes.

### FACTORS BEHIND THE DISTRUST

Understanding the factors that have contributed to the erosion of trust is crucial for addressing the issue:

1. **Communication Gaps:** Patients frequently cite poor communication as a significant factor in their mistrust. A 2021 survey indicated that while 98% of physicians believed it was important to spend appropriate time with patients, only 77% of patients felt that their doctors did so.
2. **Accessibility of Information:** The rise of the internet has transformed how patients seek information about their health.

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**KHAM ALI, MD**  
*President, WCMS*

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### Upcoming Events:

*WCMS/WAM Holiday Party  
Thursday, November 21, 2024  
Sam's of Gedney Way  
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*FROM THE EDITOR...***TWIN SCOURGES**  
**PETER ACKER, MD**

Note: In many ways the Covid pandemic is fading in the rear view mirror. The memories, though remain vivid and I think of it often. This is a piece I wrote during the pandemic

I am like all physicians who I'm sure are watching the unfolding of the pandemic with considerable trepidation. There are multiple facets to this: fear of its unpredictability, concern about my patients, and worries about my own and my family's health. As has been pointed out by some commentators, it is decidedly different from other forms of disasters. I remember vividly after hurricane Sandy, walking up my street strewn with fallen trees, the humming of home generators and the sense of bon homie among the neighbors. Similarly after 9/11, we dealt with the fear of the future by reaching out to friends and neighbors. With this crisis, there is an increasing sense of isolation and we have to confront our inner turmoil at least six feet away from others.

Luckily, there is some solace in modern technology enabling us to be electronically connected. Crisis often brings out the best of us. I was heartened last Saturday when I was besieged with calls that all of my partners reached out to help. Unfortunately, it can bring out the worse in people. Reports of a Kentucky man massively hoarding hand sanitizer and charging huge sums of money went viral. And then anytime there are fears of the unknown, tribalism comes to the fore and conspiracy theories abound.

Because my age puts me in a high risk group, my younger partners suggested that I stay home for a while. I was a bit startled, thinking of myself as a hale and hearty man who works out several times a week. Besides, isn't there a proud tradition of physicians and other first responders putting themselves in harm's way? As I thought about it though, I reconsidered. Health workers need to take care of themselves. What good would it be if I contracted the disease and was out of commission indefinitely? It is hard to keep one's ego out of the calculations.

So I have been home for the last couple of days. I still have a fair amount to do –fielding calls, learning how to use the app for virtual visits, but I also have more time to contemplate. It is strange and unsettling to be in middle of this unprecedented event during what I have to admit is occurring at the twilight of my career. It has caused me to harken back to the beginning of my career.

I began my pediatric internship and residency at Bellevue in 1982. The year before in 1981, the CDC reported a cluster of five homosexual men with pneumocystis carinii pneumonia.

Initially the disease was known as GRID or Gay Related Immune Deficiency. As it became increasingly recognized that more than 50% of cases were not gay related, its name was changed to Acquired Immune

*(Continued on page 7)*

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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**  
**RESTORING TRUST IN HEALTHCARE: A CALL**  
**FOR COLLABORATION AND HOPE**  
**KHAM ALI, MD PRESIDENT**  
*(Continued from page 1)*

Unfortunately, this has also led to the spread of misinformation. A report noted that one-third of Gen Z respondents trust TikTok more than their doctors when seeking health advice, indicating a troubling trend in how younger generations engage with health information. The convenience and relatability of social media influencers often overshadow the expertise of medical professionals.

3. **Time Constraints:** The fast-paced nature of modern healthcare limits the time physicians can spend with their patients. Patients often perceive this as a lack of care, further eroding trust.
4. **Economic Pressures:** The healthcare system's financial structure can lead to perceptions that profit takes precedence over patient care. Reports of unethical practices among some providers exacerbate these feelings.
5. **Historical Context:** Mistrust may be compounded by historical injustices experienced by specific populations, which influences their interactions with the healthcare system.

**THE ROLE OF PHYSICIANS ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

Despite the challenges, social media offers a unique platform for physicians to engage with patients and rebuild trust. By leveraging these platforms, healthcare professionals can disseminate accurate, data-backed medical information directly to the public. Initiatives to promote health literacy and transparency on social media can counteract misinformation and foster a sense of community.

Physicians have the opportunity to become trusted voices in the digital space, using their expertise to clarify misconceptions and present evidence-based practices. For example, social media can serve as a venue for health professionals to address common myths surrounding vaccination, mental health, and chronic disease management, thereby enhancing public understanding. By utilizing these channels, physicians can engage in a dialogue that empowers patients with accurate information and builds confidence in their care providers.

**TELLING THE TRUTH IN A COMPLEX LANDSCAPE**

However, it is essential to acknowledge the difficulties physicians face when communicating the truth to their patients in today's environment. The prevalence of misinformation and the emotional weight of health-related conversations create a landscape where many healthcare providers hesitate to share the full scope of a diagnosis or treatment plan.

Patients may come with preconceived notions influenced by social media, leading physicians to tread carefully when delivering medical advice. The fear of being misunderstood or dismissed can hinder the open, honest communication that is vital for effective patient care.

In a survey conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago, 43% of physicians reported that their trust in government healthcare agencies decreased during the pandemic, reflecting a broader sentiment of uncertainty that complicates their interactions with patients. This lack of confidence in the system can result in hesitance to communicate openly about treatment options or public health recommendations, further eroding the trust patients have in their providers.

**A PATH FORWARD: REBUILDING TRUST**

While the challenges are significant, there is hope on the horizon. Restoring trust requires concerted efforts from both healthcare providers and patients. Here are several strategies that can help rebuild this critical relationship:

1. **Enhancing Communication:** Physicians must prioritize open, transparent communication with their patients. Taking the time to listen actively, address concerns, and provide clear explanations can significantly enhance trust.
2. **Leveraging Technology:** Embracing digital platforms to disseminate accurate health information can counteract the spread of misinformation. Healthcare providers can utilize social media and other online platforms to engage with patients directly, providing trustworthy insights and resources.
3. **Patient-Centric Care:** The healthcare system must shift towards a more patient-centered

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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE****KHAM ALI, MD PRESIDENT***(Continued from page 5)*

approach. This includes involving patients in decision-making processes regarding their care, thereby fostering a sense of agency and partnership.

4. Addressing Economic Barriers: Ensuring that healthcare is accessible and affordable for all is paramount. Policymakers must work to eliminate economic disparities that hinder access to quality care.

5. Community Engagement: Building trust within communities, particularly among marginalized groups, requires targeted outreach and engagement efforts. Understanding the unique concerns and barriers faced by these populations is essential for effective healthcare delivery.

**FOR THE FUTURE**

As we navigate this complex landscape, it is crucial to remember that the heart of medicine lies in the relationships built between patients and physicians. By embracing transparency, compassion, and collaboration, we can begin to restore faith in the healthcare system.

It is important for physicians to recognize that their role extends beyond clinical expertise; they are also advocates for their patients. By fostering an environment of trust and respect, we can inspire a future where patients feel empowered to seek help and engage in their health journey confidently.

In conclusion, the path to rebuilding trust in healthcare may be fraught with challenges, but it is also paved with opportunities for growth and transformation. By addressing the root causes of distrust and actively working towards a more inclusive and empathetic healthcare system, we can reignite hope and healing for all.

**ENDNOTES**

1. Hailey Mensik, "Dive Brief: Physician trust in the U.S. healthcare system significantly declined during the pandemic," *Healthcare Dive*, May 25, 2021.

2. Roy H. Perlis et al., "Trust in Physicians and Hospitals During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *JAMA Network Open*, 2024.

3. Dec 20, 2022, "33% Of Gen Zers Trust TikTok More Than Doctors, New Survey Shows," *Forbes*.

4. "Why is trust in healthcare waning and what can be done about it?" *World Health Organization*, December 12, 2023.

5. "Physicians, patients lost trust in US healthcare system amid pandemic," *Dive Brief*, May 25, 2021.

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**STOP THE TRAIN  
Elliot Barsh, MD**

***"We are - every one of us - a force of nature, ..."*** - Jay Griffiths

*Hi everyone.*

*I hope that our column finds you at ease this month.*

*Staying busy with everything we have to do, and everything we want to have, has made us feel small and alone.*

***What is the opposite of loneliness?***

*The dictionary says that it is "social connectedness."*

*We can call it "oneness".*

***A force within us, a choice we can make, to reclaim our sense of peace and belonging.***

***A place, or connection, that we once had but then lost.***

***A connection that we can get back to, no matter how long it takes.***

*(Continued on page 7)*

## STOP THE TRAIN Elliot Barsh, MD

*(Continued from page 6)*

*Where no matter how lonely and depleted we may feel, we know that we still have so much to give.*

*When we look into our hearts, we can see that the connection is constant, continuous, and has always been there for us.*

*Thanks for reading.*

*Be safe.*

*See you next month.*

*"This stillness was once the entirety of the world, ..."*

### **Quiet as Old as the Beginning of Time**

Much of what's still undeveloped offers some the best defenses against climate change.

*"We are not just another patient, or just another doctor."*

*"...the key to a longer, healthier life is no mystery."*

### **The Key to Longevity Is Boring**

The best supplements are exercise, a good diet and strong relationships.

*"Showing up in a whole hearted way, being there, "staying near", may be all any of us need from each other."*

### **One Thing Never to Say to a Grieving Friend**

Some words hurt more than they help.

## THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS

*by Wendell Berry*

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,

I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great  
heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars

waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.



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*FROM THE EDITOR...*

### **TWIN SCOURGES**

**PETER ACKER, MD**

*(Continued from page 2)*

Deficiency Syndrome. At Bellevue, we began in the fall of 1982, to see young children with unusual infections. I remember one infant in particular who was my patient. Despite all our efforts, she got sicker and sicker. Drawing blood or replacing an IV in her became a dreaded task for all involved and I remember struggling sometimes up to an hour, ungloved in what was typical during that halcyon era and afterwards scrubbing off all the blood from my bare hands. Only in retrospect, did we recognize that she represented one of the first cases of pediatric AIDS, usually contracted at birth. Two years later, a pediatric AIDS clinic was set up at Bellevue.

In some ways, that era resembled America pre 9/11. Though the AIDS crisis intruded upon the public consciousness far more slowly than the terrorists attack upon the World Trade Center, there are, I think, some real similarities: the sense of an undetectable enemy, a similar kind of fear. AIDS changed our feeling of safety and brought an abrupt halt to the notion of sex without consequences which had blossomed on the college campuses of the 60's and 70's after the advent of oral contraception. Potential lovers were scrutinized suspiciously in the same way that thirty years later air travelers

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## MSSNY Podcasts

MSSNY

The Medical Society of the State of New York has created a number of podcasts on topics that are timely and relevant. In addition to weekly MSSNY Updates from the Division of Governmental Affairs, there are myriad timely and relevant podcasts on COVID-19 (both for physicians and patients) as well as a number of others on veterans, adult immunizations and emergency preparedness.

- |   |  |
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*Click on the podcast titles to listen*

### MSSNY Announces two NEW Podcasts on COVID-19

#### ★ A Discussion on COVID Vaccine for Patients ★

MSSNY President, Dr. Bonnie Litvack, President-elect, Dr. Joseph Sellers and Dr. William Valenti, Chair of MSSNY’s Committee on Infectious Diseases discuss vaccines currently available for COVID-19 and answer many questions patients may have about the vaccines.

#### ★ How to Talk to Patients About Vaccine Hesitancy ★

Dr. William Valenti, Chair of MSSNY’s Committee on Infectious Diseases discusses the history of vaccine hesitancy and offers sage advice to listeners on talking to vaccine hesitant patients.

★★The additions of these podcasts marks 100 podcasts published on the MSSNY Podcast website!★★



*FROM THE EDITOR...*

**PETER ACKER, MD**

*(Continued from page 7)*

uneasily eye fellow passengers of Middle Eastern appearance and today we look nervously at an Asian individual letting out a sneeze. The AIDS virus is the ultimate bioterrorist, sneaking into our bodies undetected, biding its time in patient preparation for its assault on the immune system. COVID 19 is cruel in a different way, sparing the majority of serious disease, but striking the vulnerable with fury. In addition, it's promiscuous in seeking out new hosts and spreading fear at light speed compared to the AIDS virus as it encircles the globe.

So my career strangely and improbably is bookended by two seminal epidemics, each quite different, but eerily similar at the same time. Stay well all.



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## Westchester Academy of Medicine Second Annual Bertrand-Pilkington Golf Outing & Fundraiser Tuesday, October 22, 2024—Westchester Country Club—Rye, NY



On Tuesday, October 22nd the Westchester Academy of Medicine held its *Second Annual Bertrand Pilkington Golf Outing & Fundraiser*. The event was renamed after one of our Past Presidents, Charles A. Bertrand, MD and his daughter Mary Ellen Pilkington in honor of their great service to our medical community. The Outing was held at Westchester Country Club in Rye. Following the golf, an additional group of members and guests joined the golfers for dinner, fellowship, and prizes.


Joseph Tartaglia, MD, Past President of the Academy & Chair of the Golf Outing Committee, welcomed everyone, thanked the Golf Committee, recognized and thanked all sponsors, and attendees. Dr. Tartaglia was recognized as this year’s “Friend of the Academy” for all of his dedication and efforts to organize the golf outing over the past decade. Thank you Dr. Tartaglia!

Raffles and a silent auction were held at the event and all proceeds directly benefit the Academy’s scholarship fund, which annually contributes to the Westchester Science and Engineering Fair held each year in the county.

We would like to thank all of our sponsors, raffle and prize donators, and players for once again making it a great event. We hope to see more of our members next year in attendance.







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**Faculty:** Mauvareen Beverley, MD

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- Extend respect for the individual's cultural beliefs regarding their health
- Outline what constitutes judgmental behavior directed at patients
- Recognize the harms of disparate care and employ methods that ensure patient dignity
- Apply methods designed to improve the health outcomes for diverse patient populations, focusing on the elderly black population

Click [here](#) to register

For more information, contact: **Melissa Hoffman** at [mhoffman@mssny.org](mailto:mhoffman@mssny.org) or call **(518) 465-8085**

*Funding provided by the New York State Department of Health*

The Medical Society of the State of New York is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

The Medical Society of the State of New York designates this live activity for a maximum of 1.0 **AMA PRA Category 1 credits™**. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.



The Common Thread



The Human Experience





**George Latimer, County Executive**  
**Sherlita Amler, MD, Commissioner**  
**Department of Health**

### Prevention is Still the Best Medicine

As we transition into fall, it is essential for healthcare providers to prioritize preventive health measures among their patient populations and communities.

### Fall Vaccines

As respiratory illnesses become more prevalent with the colder months, vaccination against influenza, RSV, and COVID-19 is imperative. We recommend that doctors assess their patients' vaccination statuses and offer these immunizations to mitigate the risks of severe disease, hospitalization, and death associated with these viruses. Not only do vaccines protect individual patients, but they also contribute to community immunity, reducing overall transmission rates. Let's work together to ensure our patients receive the preventative services they need to stay healthy this season and beyond. If you have uninsured or underinsured patients in need of vaccinations, the [Westchester County Department of Health](#) and various federally qualified [Community Health Centers](#) offer FREE vaccines to eligible patients.

### Vaccines for Respiratory Illnesses

- CDC recommends the **updated 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccine** for everyone 6 months and older.
- An annual **flu vaccine** is recommended for everyone 6 months and older to protect against the three influenza viruses expected to spread this season.
- The **RSV vaccine** is only recommended for the very young and older adults, which are the populations most likely to develop severe RSV.
  - **Babies younger than 8 months** (either through vaccination of a pregnant person (with Pfizer's Abrysvo) at weeks 32-36 of pregnancy or by the baby getting the antibody nirsevimab at birth or just before the RSV season)
  - **Children between ages 8 and 19 months** who are at increased risk for RSV disease
  - **All adults ages 75 and older**
  - **Adults ages 60 to 74** who are at increased risk of severe RSV disease



### Cancer Screenings

Various national and state reports have shown that cancer is on the rise in younger adults (18-49 years). The rate of "early onset" cancers has risen by 1% to 2% each year between 1995 and 2020. These increases have been in common cancers such as breast, prostate, endometrial, colorectal and cervical cancers in young adults. Changes to certain screening recommendations have resulted. Other data show an overall decline in uptake of clinical preventive services, while other research shows that cancer screening rates are substantially lower among those from racial/ethnic minorities compared to White individuals. Severe interruptions in cancer screening, especially during the pandemic, seem to have exacerbated the situation. Regular cancer screenings remain a cornerstone of early detection and can significantly improve treatment outcomes. We urge physicians to make sure their patients and communities stay up to date with their screenings and become aware of the changes to screening recommendations. These proactive steps are crucial in identifying cancer at an earlier stage, often before symptoms, when it is often more treatable. If you encounter uninsured or underinsured patients in need of cancer screenings, the [New York State Cancer Services Program](#) provides breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings and diagnostic services at NO COST to those who meet eligibility requirements.

### Recent Changes to Cancer Screening Recommendations

The CDC and the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) have made recent changes to cancer screening recommendations, including:

- **Breast cancer:** The USPSTF now recommends that all women get a mammogram every other year starting at age 40 and continuing through age 74. This is a shift from the previous recommendation to start screening between the ages of 40 and 50.
- **Colorectal cancer:** The USPSTF lowered the recommended age to begin screening from 50 to 45 for adults at average risk.

## VETO Latest Wrongful Death Bill and Preserve Patient Access to Healthcare

On December 29, 2023, Governor Hochul again vetoed legislation that would have greatly expanded damages awardable in wrongful death actions and dramatically increased our already high liability insurance premiums.

Thank you for your previous grassroots contacts urging a veto. Unfortunately, the Legislature has again passed a substantively similar bill (S8485-B/A9232-B) that would dramatically increase damages awardable in wrongful death actions, and produce a staggering increase in liability premiums. Therefore, we are asking physicians to contact the Governor to again veto this one-sided legislation and urge that any legislation to update New York's wrongful death law be balanced to also bring down our extraordinary medical liability costs.

Please remind the Governor that this legislation is fundamentally at odds with the policy efforts of many who seek to protect and expand patient access to care.

Ask Your Legislators to **OPPOSE** the passage of the Wrongful Death liability expansion bill and ask them to work for measures which balance the needs of grieving families with maintaining access to our health care system through reduction in medical liability insurance costs. Actions you can take today:

1

2 Send a [letter](#)

Share on social media [X](#) and [FB](#)

1. Call your legislators

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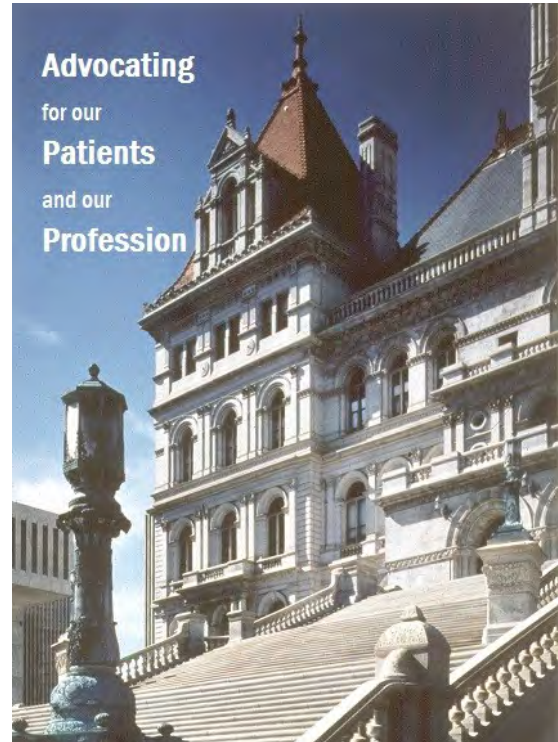
3. **Senator:** District 35 Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins at (518) 455-2585

NY Assembly switchboard [518-455-4100](tel:518-455-4100).

NY Senate switchboard [518-455-2800](tel:518-455-2800).

To see the full list of advocacy items, visit the [Grassroots Action Center](#).

Thank you for being part of our grassroots advocacy team.



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# NYMC Celebrates Visionary Public Health Leaders at Annual Founder's Dinner

College Community Honors Drs. Robert Amler, Sherlita Amler, and Edward Chew, and Supports the Next Generation of Physicians, Public Health Leaders, and Researchers—article credit <https://www.nymc.edu/newsroom/stories/founders-dinner-2024.php>



The 2024 Founder's Dinner was a night to remember at the scenic Surf Club on the Sound in New Rochelle, New York, on September 26. The annual fundraising event brought together more than 450 academic, health care, business and community stakeholders to celebrate New York Medical College's (NYMC) outstanding leaders and their impressive achievements.

The proceeds of the evening will directly benefit NYMC students through scholarships and important initiatives, and further NYMC's mission to educate the next generation of physicians and health care providers, and support life-saving biomedical research.

"At our annual Founder's Dinner, the NYMC community comes together to honor the College's accomplishments over the past year and acknowledge leaders who have had a positive influence on our students and the medical community," said **Edward C. Halperin, M.D., M.A.**, chancellor and chief executive officer of NYMC. "The immense support from all the gala's attendees is highly valued and appreciated. Together we are nourishing trailblazing biomedical research as well as sustaining the next generation of graduates through the scholarship funds raised."

The evening's honorees included **Robert W. Amler, M.D., M.M.S., M.B.A., FAAP, FACPM**, vice president for government affairs, dean of the School of Health Sciences and Practice, and professor of public health, pediatrics, and of environmental health sciences; and **Sherlita Amler, M.D., M.S., Ed.S., RN, FAAP, CEM**, commissioner of health for Westchester County, clinical associate professor of pediatrics, adjunct professor of public health, and senior fellow in the Center for Disaster Medicine, who received the William Cullen Bryant Award, the most prestigious honor awarded by the College. The award was established to recognize those remarkable individuals who, in the tradition of the College's founder, William Cullen Bryant, demonstrate seminal leadership in health care, science, education, business or the arts. **Edward Chew, M.D. '03, FACEP**, chief executive officer for Physician Affiliate Group of New York, chief of emergency medicine and deputy chief medical officer of Harlem Hospital, assistant clinical professor of emergency medicine, Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, a member of NYMC Board of Advisors and honorary surgeon for the New York Police Department, received the Jackson E. Spears Community Service Award, which recognizes individuals and organizations that have demonstrated exceptional commitment to serving their communities. He is the first NYMC alumnus to be awarded this prestigious honor.

The event was emceed by Vilma E. Bordonaro, M.B.A., chief of staff, and Michael J. Crupain, M.D. '06, M.P.H., FACPM, board certified preventative medicine physician and best-selling author.

"As always, it was a pleasure to credit and commemorate our distinguished award recipients," said Bess J. Chazhur, M.S., chief development officer and executive director of alumni relations. "This year's event raised more than \$400,000 toward the endowment and other important student initiatives at NYMC. We recognize and thank our more than generous donors for their contributions."

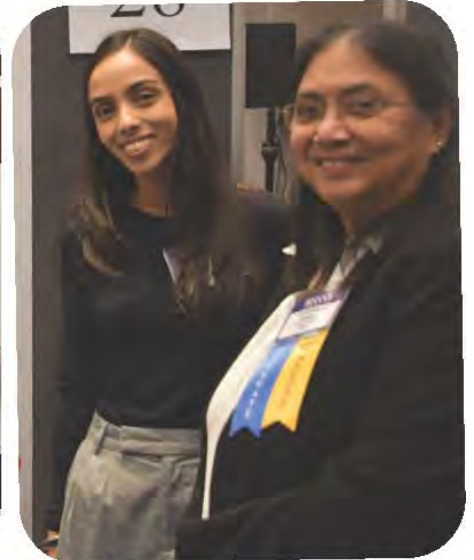
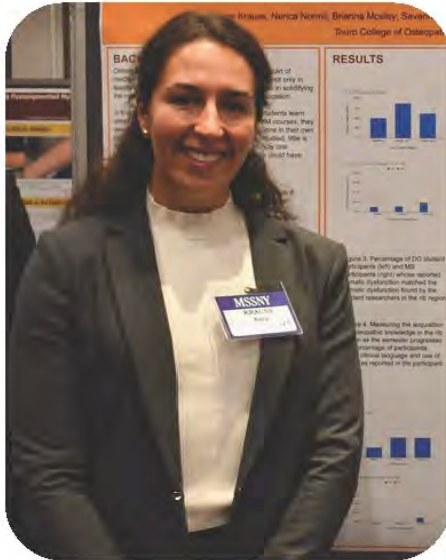


Call for Abstracts  
Deadline: JANUARY 6, 2025

# 2025



# Poster Symposium



**APRIL 4, 2025 @ 12PM**

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670 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, New York 10591

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- RESPONSIBLE FOR TRAVEL AND RELATED COSTS

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The Westchester County Medical Society**

Cordially Invites Our Members & Their Families Along with Our Business Partners to Our

**ANNUAL HOLIDAY  
COCKTAIL PARTY**

**Thursday, November 21, 2024  
6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**

**Sam's of Gedney Way**

50 Gedney Way  
White Plains, NY

Please consider donating an item for our Raffle, to be held in conjunction with our Holiday Party. All proceeds from the Raffle benefit the Westchester Academy of Medicine and our Scholarship Fund activities.

Please RSVP to Janine Miller at [jmiller@wems.org](mailto:jmiller@wems.org),  
call (914) 967-9100

Tickets are \$125/person or included with your sponsorship

