

## Alumni Profiles

### Class of 2020

**Name:** Rialnat (Bisi) Lawal, MD, PhD

**Birthplace:** Houston, TX

**Med School:** University of Rochester

**Post-residency position:** Hematology-Oncology Fellowship, National Institutes of Health



**How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?** The program prompted me to thinking early on about my next career steps through noon conference presentations, talks with seniors and attendings about my interests and goals. By making me think about this early I was able to start networking and asking questions that would help me get to a fellowship program that would suit my career interests.

**What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?** The accessibility to the program director, chiefs and faculty, night shift brunch, resident camaraderie, hot lunches, noon conference talks, especially when several faculty were present to share their insight, Epic

**What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?** Affordable housing, extracurricular activities, lack of traffic, easy access/ commute to work, work-life balance, Wegman's, outdoor events, openness to feedback, affinity groups for minority residents

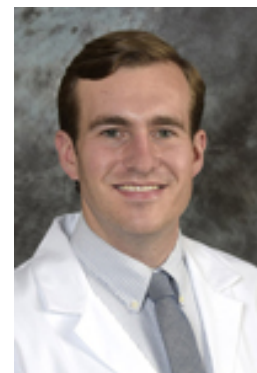
**Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?** You are about to have the best time of your life... just wait and see!

**Name:** Geoff Newcomb, MD

**Birthplace:** Columbus, OH

**Med School:** University of Cincinnati College of Medicine

**Post-residency position:** Chief Resident, University of Rochester



**How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?** Extremely well, I feel confident in my abilities to perform as a fellow

**Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?** Definitely!

***What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?*** I greatly valued the camaraderie among my co-residents. I knew I could count on my colleagues if I was ever going through a difficult rotation or time in my life. I also appreciated the residency program's attentiveness to feedback and willingness to change quickly based on this.

***What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?*** I loved the small city feel with larger city amenities. We have an excellent food scene compared to the overall size of the city. We also have easy access to so many outdoor activities all year around with some of the best state parks and public golf courses in the state and country.

***Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?*** I would tell them that if they come here, they are truly joining the URMCM family. Everyone will be looking out for you and ensuring you succeed. There is a general sense of respect and collegiality among all services that you don't always feel at certain institutions.

**Name:** Titas Banerjee, MD

**Birthplace:** Kolkata, India

**Med School:** Stony Brook University School of Medicine

**Post-residency position:** Hematology-Oncology Fellow, Oregon Health Sciences University



***Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?*** Definitely!

***What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?*** My favorite thing was how supportive the program was of our learning and well-being. Education was always a priority and I believe the program recognizes well the fine balance of having enough exposure to maximize learning without overworking us to the point where it hinders learning. I believe our program director was one of the greatest assets to keeping these goals forefront.

***What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?*** You get the advantages of being in a city - plenty to do, eat, & explore but it is affordable, there's no traffic, people are friendly, and you can easily drive out to lakes, mountains, glens, and gullies whenever you want. Also - can't go without mentioning the lilacs in Highland Park in the Spring!

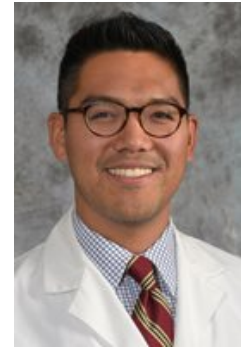
## Class of 2019

**Name:** Carlos Irwin Oronce, MD, MPH, MSc

**Birthplace:** Alexandria, VA

**Med School:** Tulane University School of Medicine

**Post-residency position:** UCLA National Clinician Scholars Program



**How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?** I felt I was well prepared to be a general internist both on the inpatient and outpatient sides, as well as a teacher for residents and medical students.

**Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?** Definitely!

**What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?** My co-residents were incredibly supportive. There is a strong culture of caring for one another and helping each other out whether it's overnight and getting swamped with admissions or a family emergency that requires taking time off on short notice. Additionally the attendings (especially in GMD, HMD, and MICU) foster an environment of growth, independence, and learning without fear of judgment.

**What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?** The city has plenty to offer for a resident while still being small to medium and size. There are excellent restaurants, ranging from amazing French (Cure and Roux), to Malaysian (Coco Garden), to Dominican (D'Mangu). The Finger Lakes and wineries are close by as is Toronto and all it has to offer.

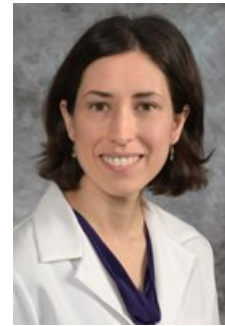
**Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?** The culture of the medicine residency is not stagnant and welcomes growth. It is a place to receive excellent clinical training and also a place where residents can explore their interests. From diagnostic reasoning, to being empowered to help patients address their unique social determinants, to POCUS and more, the U of R offers many ways to really broaden and deepen your skills as a physician. Despite being a 900+ bed hospital, the residency also manages the feeling of being a close-knit program while offering a ton of resources for residents. For example, as someone with an interest in research, the program covered the cost of my statistical analysis program for a project.

**Name: Sara Spinella, MD**

*Birthplace:* District of Columbia

*Med School:* University of Rochester

*Post-residency position:* Academic Clinician-Educator Scholars Fellow,  
University of Pittsburgh



***How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?***

I have felt ready to take on my new role as an attending in both inpatient and primary care settings. The variety in training and experiences at both Strong and Highland have helped prepare for my current role.

***Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?*** Definitely!

***What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?*** I was so lucky to work with such amazing colleagues, mentors, and students during my training. I felt like the work that I did for my patients as a resident was valued and my education was always a priority. The community that existed within the program helped me grow as a physician- and have fun while I did it.

***What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?*** So many great things about Rochester! I loved the parks and proximity to the Finger Lakes in the spring, and I spent a lot of time eating out and seeing movies at the George Eastman House during the winter.

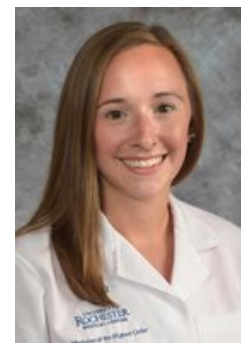
***Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?*** This program is special- I think the balance that Rochester strikes between autonomy and supervision is just right. I consistently felt like program leadership had resident education as its top priority, and people were always ready to support me in my interests. I am now pursuing a career as an academic clinician educator in general medicine. I particularly appreciate the way that the program enthusiastically mentored me as a generalist and provided with so many role models in general internal medicine - even as I was delighted to see that my colleagues who wanted to sub-specialize successfully matched in their fields.

**Name: Gabriella Palacio, MD**

*Birthplace:* Albany, NY

*Med School:* State University of NY at Upstate

*Post-residency position:* Palliative Care Fellowship, University of Rochester



***How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?***

I think the breadth of exposure during my residency helped me to consider and pursue a career that wasn't even on my radar coming into residency. We are so spoiled with our exposure to palliative care, both during HMD and ICU rotations, but also with a mandatory, dedicated

palliative care rotation. I felt my clinical training was excellent. I was able to have graduated responsibility and supervision. I felt I truly owned my patients no matter the rotation and the majority of faculty were approachable and engaged in teaching.

***Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?*** Definitely!

***What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?*** The cliché answer is the people, but it's true. My classmates were a group with diverse interests, but an amazing sense of caring both for their patients and for each other. The warmth extended to the faculty and I am still in touch with both my research and clinical advisor now over a year out from graduation. The relationships are real and lasting.

***What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?*** Ease of living. Easy to get around, easy to find things to do, places to eat.

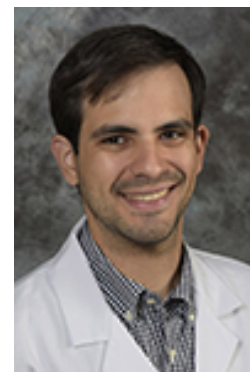
***Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?*** It's so hard to get a sense of fit when you can't meet the people, see how they interact with one another. What I can tell you about Rochester is that the sense of caring extends not only to patients, but your friends and colleagues. The warmth and sense of family among residents and the program as a whole is the real deal here.

***Name:*** Carlos Diaz-Balzac, MD, PhD

***Birthplace:*** Los Angeles, CA

***Med School:*** Albert Einstein College of Medicine

***Post-residency position:*** PSTP Endocrinology Fellowship, University of Rochester



***How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?*** Excellent preparation. Felt ready and with an excellent knowledge base on day 1 of fellowship.

***Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?*** Definitely!

***What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?*** Faculty and co-residents. We worked hard, but in a safe, friendly and supportive environment that maximizes learning and quality of life. Faculty are very supportive in your research and quality improvement projects.

***What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?*** Rochester people are very friendly. Safe environment. Many activities, indoor and outdoor to do year-round.

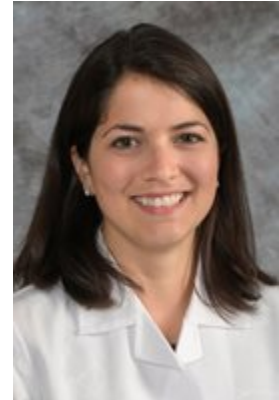
***Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?*** University of Rochester is a unique place where you can advance your career and have a life outside of work. My family enjoys every day so much that we decided to stay here for fellowship.

**Name:** Danielle Wallace, MD

**Birthplace:** Elmira, NY

**Med School:** State University of NY at Upstate

**Post-residency positions:** Chief Resident then Hematology-Oncology Fellow, University of Rochester



***How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?*** I felt very well prepared to enter fellowship. I was given a strong foundation in Internal Medicine, and opportunities for electives within my subspecialty of interest in order to be sure it was what I wanted to pursue a fellowship in.

***Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?*** Definitely!

***What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?*** I loved the combination of a relatively smaller program size and the opportunity to train in a large academic center. I quickly knew all my co-residents, who were wonderful and friendly; our program leadership who unequivocally supported us and our interests; and the faculty who despite being world-class clinicians and researchers, were approachable and friendly.

***What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?*** Rochester is an ideal mid-size city which has such an affordable cost of living. I loved being able to become a homeowner as an intern as opposed to paying high rent prices in larger cities. Plenty to do on days off, particularly being so close to outdoor activities and with great restaurants.

***Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?*** The most important things when picking a residency are liking where you live and enjoying who you train with. Don't pick a program based on clinic schedules, Doximity reputation, or rotation structure--most academic programs will give you the training you need to take care of patients well. You need to enjoy the part of life that happens outside the hospital in order to be your best self when you are inside the hospital.



**Name: Nick Bartell, MD**

*Birthplace:* Rochester, NY

*Med School:* New York Medical College

*Post-residency position:* Gastroenterology Fellow, University of Rochester



**How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?** Very well, I had opportunities to participate in research projects which allowed me to match into the fellowship of my choice. In addition the training I received made me a more competent fellow on day 1.

**Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?** Definitely!

**What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?** The sense of community and camaraderie among the residents. We all operated as a team and supported each other. I still keep up with the bulk of my class and I have made life-long friendships because of this program.

**What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?** The affordability and ease of living. I was easily able to buy a home during my intern year and really start to put down roots.

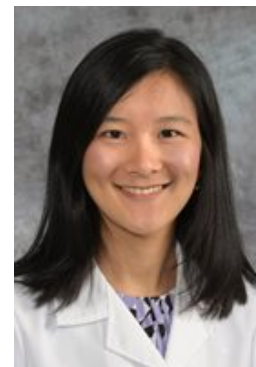
**Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?** Think about coming to a city that not only has a world class medical center which will train you well, but also is a place where you can comfortably start your adult life. Rochester is that place.

**Name: Caroline Hsu, MD**

*Birthplace:* Allentown, PA

*Med School:* Mount Sinai School of Medicine

*Post-residency position:* Nephrology Fellowship, Tufts University



**How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?** Very well, in both clinical knowledge and professional skills

**Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?** Definitely!

**What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?** The people! The faculty were always supportive and wanted to teach while allowing us appropriate independence. More than clinical pearls, they modeled being good doctor and colleagues (and overall good human beings). As for my co-residents, from day 1 we were on the same page in doing the best for our patients and working together as a team. These are some of the best friends of my life, and we still all text each other constantly.

***What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?*** Excellent restaurants and bars right in the city, wineries with lake views a short drive away. All very affordable

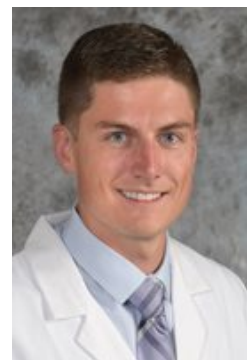
***Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?*** The program takes feedback very seriously - I entered already quite pleased with the curriculum, and over three years I saw changes that really helped focus the high-yield learning. Most changes rose as suggestions from residents. Time is precious during the residency years, and it matters when a program constantly evaluates and improves itself from the residents' perspective.

***Name:*** Patrick Donohue, MD

***Birthplace:*** Rochester, NY

***Med School:*** University at Buffalo

***Post-residency position:*** Chief Resident, then Pulmonary-Critical Care Fellow, University of Rochester



***How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?*** I feel absolutely prepared in the next phase of my career. The IM residency here provided the perfect balance of supportive supervision from my attendings, as well as the space to grow and develop autonomy. Faculty members were very approachable and eager to act as mentors in my career planning. Finally, the program's deeply rooted educational mission and collegial atmosphere contributed strongly to my personal professional development.

***Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?*** Definitely!

***What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?*** The program's focus on resident experience, education, and wellness.

***What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?*** The hospitable people, parks, lakes, breweries, wineries, hiking trails, good food, festivals, local music, local theatre...the list goes on and on and on!

***Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?*** You won't find another program as dedicated to your wellness and professional development!

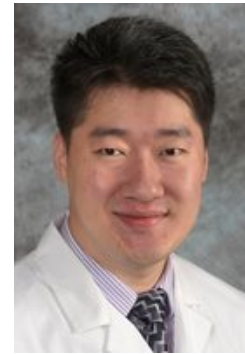


**Name:** Chris Yan, MD, MPH

**Birthplace:** Jillan, China

**Med School:** University of Texas, San Antonio

**Post-residency position:** Hospitalist then Pulmonary-Critical Care Fellowship, University of Massachusetts



**How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?** Felt very competent and well-prepared starting out as a gen med attending (hospitalist). Heading into pulm/crit fellowship afterwards, I also felt very well prepared for the first year of fellowship. Beyond just the knowledge and medical skills preparation, I also felt well-prepared in several intangible skill sets, such as how and when to reach out for help as an attending, how to build professional relationships with specialists and multi-disciplinary support staff, how to maximize and utilize hospital resources around you, and how to maintain a routine process of self-educating and learning, as well as independently appraising medical literature when no longer a trainee. Coming from a program with many advanced subspecialty resources available (e.g. ECMO, heart transplant, CAR-T cell therapy, etc) also helped provided very broad perspectives on what was important to me during the process of searching for an institution to begin my next career steps.

**Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?** Definitely!

**What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?** My friends. My clinic block. My mentors. The pink muffins at morning report. The pocket ultrasounds were also pretty sweet.

**What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?** The nature. Upstate NY was really beautiful in the spring and summer. Mountains, lakes, rivers, trails--it's all there. Cost of living is low, and quiet, safe communities to raise your kids in are abundant. And the Strong Museum of Play.

**Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?** The best training programs are programs in which faculty/ attendings love having residents on service with them, but aren't completely reliant on them. In other words, if residents disappeared from the hospital for a little while, things would still run just fine. The work you do should be tough and rigorous, but for the purpose of training you to become a physician of high standards. Your life should not be tough simply because the hospital constantly depends on you to be the cost-effective labor force. Find a program that shares these values and will thus value you as trainee. Excellence in residency training does not simply correlate with higher number of hours worked or number of patients seen. It comes from a balance of wide, direct patient exposure and rigorous repetition, with thoughtful and closely guided mentorship that promotes independence. URM is a perfect example of how this type of model can produce awesome physicians.

## Class of 2018

**Name: Gradon Nielsen, MD**

*Birthplace:* Salt Lake City, UT

*Med School:* University of Virginia

*Post-residency position:* Hematology-Oncology Fellow, Washington University



***How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?***

The residency program at the University of Rochester was absolutely incredible. From individualized mentorship to top notch clinical training - I could not have been more pleased with the opportunities that were available. The program leadership is top notch. They are supportive and want you to be successful, whatever your career interest may be.

***Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?*** Definitely!

***What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?*** The people! I have never been in a health system that had more collegial and kind people.

***What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?*** Easy access to top notch outdoor activities but also a lot to do within the city.

***Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?*** If you want to get excellent clinical training at a top institution while maintaining a healthy work-life balance, you need to consider the program at the University of Rochester.

**Name: Jodi Lipof, MD**

*Birthplace:* San Mateo, CA

*Med School:* George Washington University

*Post-residency position:* Hematology-Oncology Fellow, University of Rochester



***How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?*** Extremely well. Feel very well trained in general medicine!

***Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?*** Definitely!

***What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?*** The people!! Academic hospital with a community vibe at times. The faculty are amazing, approachable, intelligent, and kind. Can't ask for more!

**What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?** The summer festivals, the Finger Lakes, the people.. no traffic... Wegmans!

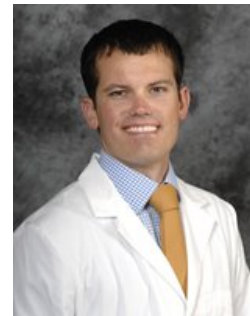
**Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?** Rochester is a hidden gem. I was always a big city person but the charm and ease of life in Rochester won me over... I'm also a west coast sunny weather person that not only survived the winters but grew to love them!

**Name: Brandon Bader, MD**

**Birthplace:** Sioux City, IA

**Med School:** University of Rochester

**Post-residency position:** Cardiology Fellow, University of Minnesota



**How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?** Very well. I feel the 6+2 curriculum is an excellent model and provides adequate outpatient experience while still providing enough inpatient work.

**Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?** Definitely!

**What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?** 6+2 model, the outpatient subspecialty rotations during ambulatory block, the opportunity to moonlight, even without a license.

**What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?** Low cost of living, Finger Lakes nearby, the kickball league

**Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?** This is an excellent program that will have you absolutely prepared for fellowship or immediately entering practice. The senior years provide plenty of opportunity to specialize your training while also ensuring you obtain adequate breadth of knowledge in all areas of internal medicine.

**Name: Nick Tschernia, MD**

**Birthplace:** Las Vegas, NV

**Med School:** University of Nevada

**Post-residency position:** Hematology-Oncology Fellowship, University of North Carolina



**How well did the residency program prepare you for your next career steps?** Exceptional training environment on multiple levels: 1.

Camaraderie is bar none the best I have experienced in a work environment. From colleagues to leadership, I felt supported throughout - without question. 2. Training - Having moved to another institution for fellowship, one equally well known for training. UPMC produces some of the most competent, reliable, and caring physicians I've worked with. 3. Responsiveness - During my residency any improvements we suggested or hurdles faced were quickly and promptly addressed with the expediency I'm still surprised by. You felt like the program was behind you all the way.

***Would you choose Rochester again for residency if you were applying again?*** Definitely!

***What was your favorite thing about the medicine residency at U of R?*** It felt like a family, between the residents and leadership. I still regularly talk to my former co-residents and reminisce over my time. I genuinely miss my residency, not just the people but entire experience.

***What was your favorite thing about living in Rochester?*** The people are all friendly and smart. I made local friends outside of the hospital that will remain lifelong. Never any traffic due to excellent infrastructure, easy to travel and visit many local outdoor adventures or nearby cities. *Is there anything else you would want to share with residency applicants if you could talk with them?* Normally the applicants are invited to a historical house for a relaxed, catered dinner between the applicants and current residents. The caterers have been the same for years and the house dinner is a fundamental experience. It feels like a family dinner and gives the vibe everyone is genuine. That feeling is real and sold me on the program. And - it stayed true.