

ANESTHESIOLOGY @ NJMS

"OUR INCLUSIVENESS IS INTENTIONAL BECAUSE EXCELLENCE REQUIRES A DIVERSE COMMUNITY..."

OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT | FALL 2017

Michal Gajewski, D.O.

Residency Director, Assistant Professor



As an immigrant growing up with a single mother I cannot say that life was always easy. What further complicated the matter was the fact that I identified as a gay man. Although I realized even before then, that a certain stigma surrounds the LGBT community, as soon as I joined it, I made it a point to try to break through all the barriers and make life for future LGBT members a bit easier. One of the reasons why I had the strength to do this was because my mother was always supportive and always preached acceptance, compassion, and love. As a physician I have tried to practice the same principles when taking care of my patients and getting involved in community initiatives. I have been very lucky in that being a part of NJMS as well as the Department of Anesthesiology I am surrounded by like-minded people who support my growth and believe that those same principles bring better care to our patients. The fact that we have programs such as the LGBT Patient Wellness Initiative showcases our commitment to educating each other about our differences and are striving to erase the stigma.

Daniel Rodriguez-Correa, M.D.

Assistant Professor



If anyone had told me that I would become a physician while growing in a "barrio" of Puerto Rico, I would have never believed it. Now the dream has become a reality and I have the privilege to serve an incredibly diverse population in Newark at NJMS. When I began my work at this institution, I did not expect the tremendous support offered by the Office for Diversity and Community Engagement, and the Hispanic Center of

Excellence. Thanks to their support, I have been able to attend multiple workshops and conferences that have helped me further develop my academic career. In addition, I have been given the opportunity to engage and mentor medical students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the hope of helping them achieve their highest potential as future physicians. I could not have asked for more.

Thalia Palmer, M.D.

Assistant Professor



As a minority and the daughter of immigrant parents, I have always been acutely aware of the health care disparities that exist along racial and ethnic lines. As a result, seeking to have the greatest impact on both a clinical and personal level, upon graduation from fellowship, I was purposeful in my desire to serve in an urban setting. Not only did I feel the needs were greatest there, but I also believed my background would be an

asset in establishing a connection with my patients that is often so critical to delivering optimal care. Although I have since left that job, when the opportunity to join the medical staff at NJMS in the Department of Anesthesiology arose, I immediately accepted it. I felt reassured by the department chair's commitment to diversity, particularly along the lines of ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation. Opportunities to grow and excel are made available to everyone not only within the department, but also within the hospital and medical school systems.

About Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

Rutgers New Jersey Medical School (NJMS) is part of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences, one of the country's largest academic health centers.

NJMS is dedicated to excellence in education, research, clinical care, and community outreach. Some pertinent facts:

- NJMS has 20 academic departments and many world-renowned scientists and doctors.
- In 2015, NJMS was named #1 in the state for NIH funding.
- NJMS is located in Newark, NJ, where African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian/Pacific Islanders comprise more than 90 percent of the city's population and face many socioeconomic, educational, and health challenges.
- Underrepresented minorities made up 23 percent of the medical school's enrollment in 2017-2018.
- NJMS ranks in the 80th percentile for underrepresented minority graduates and 85th percentile for minority faculty, according to the 2014 AAMC Missions Management Tool.

ANESTHESIOLOGY @ NJMS

"OUR INCLUSIVENESS IS INTENTIONAL BECAUSE EXCELLENCE REQUIRES A DIVERSE COMMUNITY..."

OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT | SPRING 2017



OBIWANNE EMEJULU, MD, RESIDENT

A broken finger, followed by a concussion and a dislocated hip, all in one week, did little to slow my pursuit of playing football at the University of Houston. I kept my focus with the hope of one day achieving greater things on and off the field. It's no surprise that my journey into anesthesia would be filled with similar twists and turns. After graduating from medical school, I spent three years as a general surgery resident unsure of what my future in medicine would be. It took me three years to realize where my true talents and desires belonged. And as I reflect on where this journey started, it thrills me to find myself here at the Rutgers NJMS anesthesia program. Not only am I surrounded with gifted co-residents, the faculty members provide both great mastery of the field and guidance. I am truly humbled to be part of this program.



**RITA SHANKAR, MD,
RESIDENT**

As a graduating senior and chief resident, I can truly say this program has made me academically, clinically, socially, and culturally very strong. I work with patients, co-residents, attendings, and OR staff of different sociocultural backgrounds on a daily basis. By learning from and helping each other, I believe we make patient care at Rutgers NJMS more efficient and comprehensive. As I step into my next phase of life I know that I will carry these enriching experiences with me as an aspiring pain physician.

SHEMILLE COLLINGWOOD, MD, RESIDENT

The anesthesiology department is invested in its residents' successful completion of their residencies and their preparation for rewarding careers. The emphasis on research, clinical skills, academics, mentorship, community service and resident wellness was evident within the first month of my training. Last summer, the department initiated an annual wellness seminar. To me, it underscores its focus on resident mental, physical and social well-being. The department encourages an environment of cohesiveness and collegiality by sponsoring a variety of activities, from volunteer opportunities at a Hoboken homeless shelter to a resident vs. faculty bowling night. I am very excited about my career choice and appreciative that NJMS is a part of this journey.



CHRISTIAN ESTRADA, MD, PAIN FELLOW

Growing up in a Spanish-speaking home, I learned at a young age the importance of community. NJMS is a place where diversity matters and is the place I chose to continue my commitment to the Latino community. Providing insight into different perspectives, driving innovation and fostering inclusiveness are areas of my life that NJMS has nurtured. These values, along with the training I received in anesthesia and currently in pain medicine, have prepared me to face the challenges that exist in today's communities. I am grateful for the ongoing support and mentorship I have received from faculty and staff.

