

# Resident Report

A NEWSLETTER FOR SUNY UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY RESIDENTS AND FELLOWS | FALL 2015

For more information about the residency programs at Upstate Medical University please visit:

[www.upstate.edu/gme](http://www.upstate.edu/gme)



## Pediatric residency program bestows first award in memory of Dr. Kunal Sawale

Dr. Erin Donahue never met Dr. Kunal Sawale, but said she is honored to have been the first recipient of the award established in memory of the chief pediatric resident who died of cancer in May.

"I was very flattered and honored to have been chosen," said Dr. Donahue, who heard stories of the courage and dedication shown by Dr. Sawale throughout his illness.

Dr. Donahue was at Upstate only for her final year of residency, 2014-15. Her program in southern California had announced it was shutting down, forcing several residents to find new placements.

"The Upstate program was very, very gracious to give me a place to finish my third year," Dr. Donahue said in a telephone interview from Washington state, where she grew up. "I was very lucky."

After two years in southern California, Dr. Donahue had a choice between Upstate and Orlando, Fla. for her last year of residency – a year that, as it turned out, included a particularly harsh winter in Syracuse.

"I told myself I was tired of palm trees," she said of her decision-making process. "I chose Syracuse, and I did wonder if I was crazy."

Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital also was a change from the small community hospital she had been working in. "Being with child life specialists, and the way a children's hospital is set up, made it a really enjoyable environment to work in," she said.

Now a pediatrician with Kittitas Valley Healthcare



The 2015 Kunal Sawale Award was presented to Dr. Erin Donahue at the House Staff Appreciation Dinner for Upstate's Pediatric Residency Program. Dr. Sawale passed away in May after a long battle with cancer. The prize will be awarded annually to a graduating pediatric resident who "best exemplifies Kunal's courage and perseverance in the face of adversity, as well as his dedication to family and patients," said Dr. Thomas Welch, chair of the Department of Pediatrics. A segment of the award ceremony can be seen at: <https://vimeo.com/130392158>

in Ellensburg, WA, Dr. Donahue said two things come to mind when she thinks of Upstate – the mentoring of Dr. Elizabeth Nelsen, and the "Eyeplay" interactive floor game on the 12th floor of the children's hospital.

"I was often caught playing on that," she said, especially the "Frogz" and "Cheese Heist" games. "It really was a fun place to work."

Dr. Donahue praised the mentoring she received from Dr. Nelsen, and said the two of them hit it off right away.

"She was very good at meeting you where you were. She was good at assessing what you knew and your strengths, giving you the space to manage patients in a way you're proficient and comfortable with," Dr. Donahue said. "She gave you space and freedom, but when you needed help or insight or wanted to bounce things off someone, she was always there."

Dr. Nelsen, an assistant professor of pediatrics and associate director of the pediatric residency program, said Dr. Donahue had a very strong work ethic and cared deeply about her patients – traits she shared with Dr. Sawale.

"The day she interviewed here, I was really impressed," Dr. Nelsen said. "It's pretty hard to pack up and move across country and only be there 12 months. She was pretty brave to do that, knowing full well she needed to complete her training in a good spot. She kind of chose us as well, which is a credit to us."

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## Pediatric Residency Program

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Dr. Donahue worked very hard the year she was here, and handled many complicated cases, Dr. Nelsen said.

"She dealt with it very appropriately, and managed things well. It speaks so much to her character how much she cares for patients, wants the best for them and works for that," she said.

"A lot of being a physician is making decisions, but also learning how to ask for help," Dr. Nelsen added. "When you're a third-year pediatrics resident there's a lot you should be able to do independently. Erin demonstrated that early on."

The similarities between Dr. Donahue and Dr. Sawale were evident, Dr. Nelsen said.

"They were kindred spirits, and I enjoyed working with both of them," she said. "People who want to learn and are engaged in the process and passionate, they're the easiest to teach."

Dr. Nelsen said Dr. Sawale was well-loved by his colleagues. "We still talk about him a lot," she said.

The annual award in his memory will keep alive his legacy of courage and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Dr. Sawale cared deeply for his patients, Dr. Nelsen said, "and you see a lot of that in Erin, the attention to patients and quality of care."

## Resident helps medical students

(continued from inside)

skills, general medical knowledge and critical care, as well as emergency situations in anesthesia that complemented my interests and ultimately led to my career choice."

Dr. Kromas said the Upstate club has succeeded in recruiting several students to the specialty.

"We hope to continue doing so in the coming years, or at least offer opportunity for fun

and interesting clinical experiences regardless of what specialty a student ultimately chooses," she said.

"Aside from giving them a basic foundation and understanding of what we do as anesthesiologists, my goal is to be a support system during the process of choosing a specialty and applying for residency, as this may seem daunting to many."

## Excessive social media use discussed on air

Drs. Mirabelle Mattar and Theresa Blatchford from the Department of Psychiatry spoke on Upstate's HealthLink On Air radio show recently about excessive social media use and its effects, especially on teenagers.

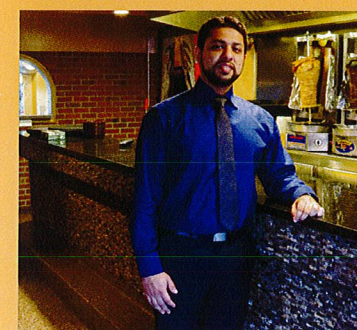
Although social media offers unprecedented opportunities for positive communication (including information and support for patients), it can also be associated with bullying, depression and even suicide.

Both doctors cited examples of patients feeling depressed or suicidal because they had been victims of cyber-bullying or had been "unfriended" on Facebook.

Dr. Mattar is a fellow in child and adolescent psychiatry; Dr. Blatchford is a fourth-year resident. Their interview can be heard at: <http://blogs.upstate.edu/healthlinkonair/>. Search for: SOCIAL MEDIA.

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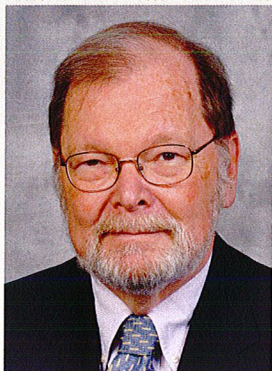
## Resident co-owns restaurant in Hawley-Green



Neurology resident Dr. Usman Qadeer is co-owner of the Red Olive, a Middle Eastern restaurant that opened in July in Syracuse's Hawley-Green neighborhood. Dr. Qadeer and his father-in-law, Muhammad Aleem, renovated the former Sparky Town restaurant, a popular gathering place that had closed last year. Check out <http://www.redoliveonline.com/> for menu and hours.



## When good people do bad things



William Grant, EdD

Professionalism. It is a term that is often derided as something that we all know about and therefore why talk about it? The ACGME formal definition includes: Residents must demonstrate a commitment to carrying out professional

responsibilities and an adherence to ethical principles.

Unfortunately the public is often confronted with national news stories of residents behaving badly. Medical residents have been accused of gun violations, child endangerment, assault, drug theft, substance abuse, and other inappropriate behaviors. The lesson is clear. Possession of an

advanced degree is not a prophylactic against any normal human condition.

Slips in professionalism may be major or may be minor. Talking to colleagues in detail about a patient's condition and treatment plan in public areas; leaving printouts of patient records or test results in public places or taking them out of the hospital; bullying junior residents, medical students or medical staff; suggesting that hospital policies are fine for others but "don't apply to me," or misuse of patient information are all examples of lack of adherence to the principles of professionalism.

In the medical setting, residents and other medical personnel encounter individuals at one of the most vulnerable times of their lives. These individuals place their trust in the belief that every resident is ready and able to provide the best medical care possible and it is not compromised by any impairment.

Professionalism is not only based on our own behavior and taking care of ourselves but

also of others and of our circumstances. It is taking initiative when something goes amiss – to not stand by, but to intervene in the most appropriate way. Recognizing the lack of professionalism in others and involving appropriate faculty or supervisors to address issues before the situation becomes untenable.

The GME Office and Upstate provide a wealth of support options for individuals or to help others. Some of these options like BalanceWorks are provided at no charge to residents for up to six sessions. Because residents do not live in isolation, the service is made available to significant others and families, too. If any individual has a question or a need, he or she may contact the GME Office or many of our resources directly in a confidential setting.

Professionalism is hard work. We must keep at it every day. Patients, colleagues, family and each individual deserve the best ethical interactions.

## Resident helps medical students gain appreciation for anesthesiology

As the resident liaison to Upstate's Student Anesthesiology Club, Dr. Michelle Kromas tries to get Upstate medical students interested in the field.

Second-year student Aluko Gift is proof she's succeeding.

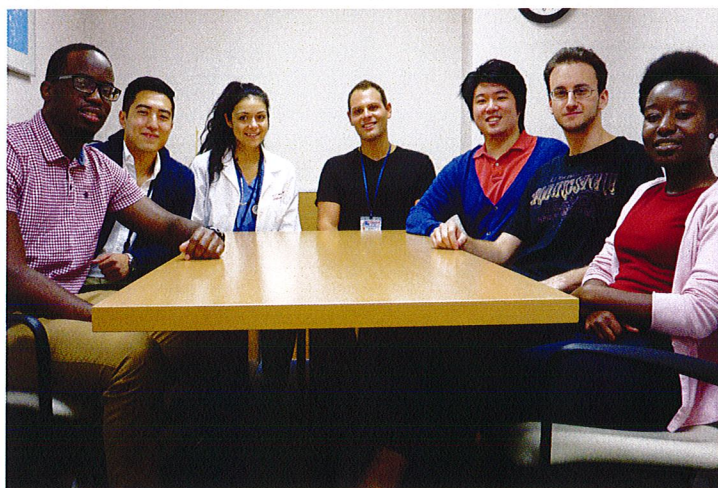
Aluko didn't have any experience with anesthesiology until he joined Upstate's Student Anesthesiology Interest Club and started attending presentations. He did so, he said, to gain knowledge and experience that will help him choose a specialty.

Anesthesiology is "moving up on the list," Aluko said.

That's what Dr. Kromas likes to hear.

"My goal is to foster an interest and appreciation for the field of anesthesia as a medical specialty," she said. "We start the year off with the annual meeting where students have the opportunity to meet residents and ask questions about our field, our resident experience, or anything that may help and guide them during their journey to becoming doctors."

Dr. Kromas said students observe presentations involving basic clinical scenarios,



Dr. Michelle Kromas, third from left, with MS IIs in the Student Anesthesiology Interest Club. From left, Aluko Gift, Jonathan Lee, Dr. Kromas, Ben Khechen, Hua Liu, Alex Ronis and Akosuah Agyei.

and then problem-solve cases appropriate for their level of education.

Club president Jonathan Lee, a second-year medical student, said the intubation clinics at Upstate are so popular among students, there's a waiting list.

"Through our hands-on workshops, shadowing opportunities and talks by guest

lecturers, the club does a great job in encouraging the exploration of the field and in providing a different perspective in the OR," Jonathan said.

And the welcoming atmosphere helps.

"The resident and attending anesthesiologists have also been incredibly supportive in involving students. The nurturing environment that they create has really been key to the club's success," said Jonathan, who gained some exposure to anesthesiology during an internship at Weill Cornell Medical Center.

Early exposure to the field can influence a career choice in anesthesiology, which is what happened with Dr. Kromas. When she was an undergraduate, she had a roommate whose father was an anesthesiologist.

"He often spoke about his experiences in different cases which initially drew me to the field," she said. "During my clinical years as a med student I enjoyed the balance between procedural

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## Neurosurgery residents earn accolades for their research

Dr. Gentian Toshkezi was awarded a \$40,000 grant from the Neurosurgery Research and Education Foundation (NREF) for his work studying the role of hematopoietic factors in the subacute phase of traumatic brain injury.

His Young Clinician Investigator grant was one of 10 given by NREF. The foundation supports neurosurgical residents and young neurosurgical faculty in North America conducting basic science, patient-oriented clinical, and outcomes research.

NREF-supported research -- on neurosurgical disorders ranging from brain tumors and epilepsy to spine disorders and Parkinson's Disease -- seeks to improve patient care and quality of life through advances in disorder diagnosis and treatment.

The grant will allow Dr. Toshkezi to continue his research into the role of hematopoietic growth factors in the subacute phase of traumatic brain injury.

According to Dr. Toshkezi's abstract, the subacute phase of TBI is a unique period when both the secondary damage and repair process occur in the brain after injury. The lack of pharmaceutical therapy for subacute TBI remains

a crucial medical challenge. This study is significant because it targets a critical need in developing treatment for brain repair and protection in subacute TBI.

Dr. Hoon Choi received the Best Research Award at the Annual New York State Neurosurgical Meeting in June.

In collaboration with the National Cancer Institute, Dr. Choi is developing a predictive algorithm for survival for patients with brain tumor (specifically glioma) based on disease and patient-based prognostic factors.

The algorithm predicted with 98 percent accuracy the survival of the over 27,000 glioma patients. The goal is to make this into a clinical tool, in the form of a smartphone app and a web-based calculator.

Dr. Choi presented his research at the annual Congress of Neurological Surgeons meeting in New Orleans this fall.



Dr. Gentian Toshkezi



Dr. Hoon Choi

The New York State Neurosurgical meeting was attended by programs from throughout the state, including Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, NYMC, Columbia, Cornell, Memorial Sloan Kettering, NYU, Mt. Sinai, Einstein and Long Island Jewish North Shore.

## Upstate library system a resource for residents

The Upstate Health Sciences Library in Weiskotten Hall offers residents full access to our resources and services. The Library licenses electronic journals, e-books, and databases that are available both on and off campus. When off campus, use your universal password to access all licensed Library resources via the Library website <http://library.upstate.edu>.

For physical items (books and media) the Library employs a purchase-on-demand model. If there is something you need, please let us know by emailing [library@upstate.edu](mailto:library@upstate.edu). We will direct your request to our Information Resources Team.

Our Reference & Outreach Librarians save valuable time by expertly searching the biomedical literature. We can also tailor subject guides that provide quick access to relevant Library resources. Popular guides include Writing & Publishing Support, Mobile Resources, and Evidence Based Practice.

Librarians offer customized instructional sessions demonstrating effective search skills, discovering evidence based information, finding full text, and using citation management tools. Visit our Reference & Outreach page for a full listing of services.

Our Document Delivery Team obtains articles outside of our subscriptions at no cost to you. Items are requested and delivered through the ILLiad system. Most electronic articles are available for download within 24 hours. Print materials can be delivered to your campus address or picked up at the Library Services Desk. More information about ILLiad and document delivery services visits our website.

Visit the Health Sciences Library in Weiskotten Hall and enjoy our Scholar's Den, Meditation Room, fresh coffee and hot water, rotating art exhibits and therapy dog visits.

### Fall & Spring Hours:

#### Contact Us:

Monday -Thursday 7:30am-Midnight  
[library@upstate.edu](mailto:library@upstate.edu)

Friday	7:30am-10pm 315-464-7091
Saturday	10:00-9pm
Sunday	10am-Midnight

The Health Sciences Library has two satellite locations:

Family Resources Center @  
Golisano Children's Hospital

Family Resources Center @ Cancer Center