



## Special points of interest

- Faculty Development - Letters of Recommendation
- Compliments & e-Recognitions
- Accreditation
- Alliances & Partnerships
- Scholarly Activities
- Chapter Leadership
- Awards



## From the Editor

### A Productive Summer for Medical Education!!!

This **September** issue of *Milestones in Medical Education* highlights milestones that were achieved in the months of July and August. As the new academic year is in full swing, this is the time when the pediatric subspecialty fellowship programs gear up for their recruitment season. Another cycle of recruitment to help showcase for applicants the highlights and the strengths of our training programs and what Nicklaus Children's academic environment has to offer.

During this time of the year, and as the ERAS application portal opens up for medical students to apply for core residencies and for residents to apply for specialty fellowships, clerkship leaders, department chairs, residency directors, and teaching faculty are busy

writing letters of recommendations for applicants. This timing informed the topic of this issue's Milestones in Faculty Development.

In this issue of *Milestones in Medical Education*, we highlight several of the achievements of our Medical Education community of faculty and trainees including:

- ◆ Faculty Development topic on writing letters of recommendations.
- ◆ Trainees compliments and e-recognitions by staff, peers, colleagues, and patients/parents
- ◆ NCH Trainees and faculty continue to contribute to the peer-reviewed published literature

- ◆ Trainees' honorable mentions by Medical Students for their teaching skills
- ◆ Highlight of GMEC Peer-Selected class reps
- ◆ Continued advocacy by trainees

I hope that you enjoy this **Milestones** issue. As our academic year is in full swing, we are hopeful that we will have a successful year with milestones of achievements which are always a source of pride. Happy read!!!

Rani S. Gereige, MD, MPH,  
FAAP - DIO

## Inside this issue:

Milestones in Faculty Development	2
Milestones in Humanism and Professionalism	4
Milestones in Accreditation	4
Milestones in Strategic Alliances	5
Milestones in Honorable Mentions of Trainees' Teaching	5
Milestones in GMEC Representation	5
Milestones in Trainees & Faculty Scholarly Activities	6
Milestones in FL Chapter Leadership	7
Milestones in Literacy Promotion Recognition	7

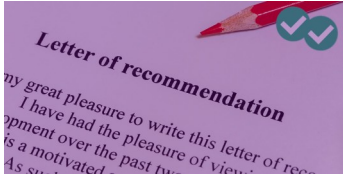
Milestones in Faculty Development

# Nuts & Bolts: Writing Letters of Recommendation: A Winning Effort Begins with Preparation

The *Academic Pediatrics* Journal started a micro-faculty development section called “Nuts & Bolts”. In each of the Milestones in Medical Education Issues, we will begin featuring one of the Nuts & Bolts short articles or snips its from the articles.

## NUTS AND BOLTS

### Faculty Development for the Busy Clinical Educator



Molly C. Broder MD<sup>1</sup>, Megan E. McCabe, MD<sup>2</sup>, and Christopher J. Moran MD<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>BronxCare Health System, Bronx, NY; <sup>2</sup>Hackensack Meridian Joseph M Sanzari Children's Hospital, Hackensack, NJ;

<sup>3</sup>MassGeneral for Children, Boston, MA

## WRITING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

*A winning effort begins with preparation*

### IN THIS EDITION:

- What do you need to be prepared to write a letter?
- What should go into a letter?
- What should not go in a letter?
- How to combat bias in letters.



### Consider this situation...

You have worked with a medical student in clinic for the last 3 months, and they just asked you for a letter of recommendation for their residency applications. You have not written a lot of letters of recommendation in the past.

**How do you organize yourself to write an outstanding letter?**

### What do you need to write a letter?

- Direct working relationship is far more important than title or rank at a hospital
- Willingness to say “No”: if you have not worked with them enough, cannot write a good letter for them, or do not have adequate time to write it



- CV and personal statement draft to review (but not to restate in your letter)
- Schedule meeting to discuss career goals, application criteria, and potential topics to highlight
- Discuss if they waive right to review, and obtain consent, AAMC#, upload website, and clarify timeline/deadline

### What goes in a letter?

- **1-2 pages** written on hospital or practice letterhead
- **Brief context** of your relationship with applicant
- **Assessment of ACGME core competencies based on direct observations as much as possible** (such as medical knowledge, professionalism, communication)
- An **accurate assessment of the trainee’s ability to work with others**
- **Specific anecdotes** highlighting applicant’s strengths
- Conclude with **summative statement** (potentially including Top 25% or Top 5 if applicable) on overall strength of recommendation



## Milestones in Faculty Development (Cont'ed)

## Nuts &amp; Bolts: Writing Letters of Recommendation: A Winning Effort Begins with Preparation (Cont'ed)



## PRACTICAL PEARLS

## Setting Yourself up for Success

- Ensure you have enough information and time to write the letter
- Be aware that bias impacts letters of recommendation
- Employ strategies to reduce bias
- Focus letter on skills and competencies of the learner
- **PROOFREAD!**
- Include a summative statement

University of Arizona Recommendations on Avoiding Gender Bias  
[https://csw.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/avoiding\\_gender\\_bias\\_in\\_letter\\_of\\_reference\\_writing.pdf](https://csw.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/avoiding_gender_bias_in_letter_of_reference_writing.pdf)

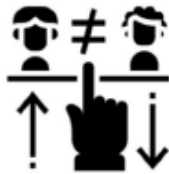
Writing Letters of Recommendation for People of Color  
<https://sora.leekim.org/updates/letters-for-poc>

Gender Bias Calculator  
<https://tomforth.co.uk/genderbias/>

Residency Recruitment Action Team. Guidelines for Writing Letters of Recommendation in Pediatrics. 2023. [Guidelines-for-letters-of-recommendation-in-pediatrics-07.01.2023final.pdf](#).

Zhang N, Blisset S, Anderson D, et al. Race and Gender Bias in Internal Medicine Program Director Letters of Recommendation. *J Grad Med Educ.* 2021;13(3):

## Avoiding Bias While Writing Letters of Recommendation



### Bias

- Racial and gender bias is prevalent in all types of letters of recommendation but can be mitigated if you keep a few things in mind.
- Bias may show up as submission of an overly short letter, focus on effort over accomplishments, more stress on social skills rather than medical knowledge/clinical reasoning, inclusion of doubt-inducing phrases (e.g. appears to be, seems like) and extraneous personal comments.

### Ways to Avoid Bias

Use a standardized letter format or a form letter:

- Use a template
- Follow published guidelines (University of Arizona, Berhe, Kim)
- Highlight research and accomplishments, address skills rather than effort, choose a mix of descriptors that highlight more than compassion, and keep writing!
- Utilize online bias calculator to assess word choice.



### What Should Not Go in a Letter



- Do not recap your CV; this letter is about the candidate and not the letter writer (can briefly personalize your experiences as a preceptor, educator, learners taught).
- Do not include personal information about the candidate unless it is relevant, and they gave permission.
- Recognize that phrases such as "pretty good" or "decent" are weak modifiers (and may convey potentially serious concerns).
- Avoid gendered introductions such as "Dear Sirs."
- Proofread for errors in candidate name and pronouns. Make sure applicant information is correct and consistent throughout the letter.

## Back to your medical student

*You set up a time to meet with the student, about 8 weeks before the letter is due. They send you their CV and personal statement and you discuss with them their goals for residency. You write a letter outlining your professional interactions with the student, highlighting their strengths, and including pertinent anecdotes. You end with a statement that this student is in the top ten percent of all students you have worked with. You finish by running your letter through a bias calculator to ensure the letter is well-balanced. You edit the letter after the calculator notes an imbalance in gender-associated words. You submit on the student's behalf and email them to make them aware.*



Milestones in Humanism and Professionalism

## NCH Trainees Compliments and e-Recognitions



**Jose Ugarriza Mendoza, MD**  
(Ped Cardiology Fellow)

**Samantha Tano, MD**  
(PL1)



**Mildred Franco Linan, MD**  
(PL2)

**Dr. Jose Ugarriza Mendoza** received an e-Recognition from Ms Allyson Gobus, APRN, CICU with **Kudos: Thanks for your help!** Ms Gobus commented: *“On Saturday July 12th Jose went above and beyond to help in the ICU. He came and rounded with the ICU team when he finished rounding on the floor and helped cover the unit while we managed a critically ill baby that was going for an emergent procedure. He then went to the cath lab during the procedure, wrote the cath lab note for them and came back to the unit to help us cover the unit while we withdrew care on the patient. Jose stayed all day to help us manage the unit and provided support to us that was much needed and appreciated. Thank you, Jose! I was grateful for all your help and support!”*. Congratulations Jose on a job well-done!!!!

**Drs. Samantha Tano & Mildred Franco Linan**, along with attending physician **Dr. Natanya Mishal** were recognized by the parent of a patient who sent a recognition note to Dr. Marcos Mestre, SVP & CCO. The child’s parents commented: *“I wanted to extend a heart-felt thank you to NCH for the incredible care and warmth that we experienced this week. Everyone greeted us with professionalism and also empathy for what we were going through.... I already had a love for the hospital, but having experienced it as we did this week with our stay there, I now feel even more grateful that we have a place like NCH in our community.... I want to give a special mention to our care team on the Neurology floor that ensured our time there was a positive experience:.....”*

- ..... Our excellent team of doctors: **Dr. Mishal, Dr. Samantha Tano (resident) and Dr. Carolina Franco**

*(resident) who answered our every questions, and helped us feel in very capable hands”.....*

Thank you for making a difference in patient experience.

**Anushree Malhotra-Hans, MD**  
(PCCM Fellow)



**Dr. Anushree Malhotra-Hans** received an e-Recognition from Ms Monique Tarrau-Davis (Clin Education Specialist) for her display of the **NCHS Values: Collaboration**. Ms Tarrau-Davis commented: *“Thank you for your outstanding teamwork, adaptability, and collaboration during the PICU Mock MTP scenario on July 23. Your dedication, positive attitude, and willingness to go above and beyond were essential to its success. Your ability to prioritize the needs of the unit, support your colleagues, and maintain a calm and focused approach under pressure truly made a difference. We deeply appreciate your commitment and the example you set for others. You exemplify what it means to be a team player, and we are so grateful for everything you contributed—thank you!”*. Congratulations Anushree!!!!

**Nicklaus Children's Hospital**  
Department of Medical Education & Research Institute  
Present  
**FELLOWS' RESEARCH TRAINING MINICOURSE (A Research Bootcamp)**  
PART I TUESDAY October 21st, 2025 8:00am-12:00pm  
PART II THURSDAY October 30th, 2025 1:00pm-5:00pm  
NCHS Corporate 4th Floor Computer Lab 8301 Blue Lagoon Drive Miami, FL 33128  
Info for attendees other than Year 1 fellows to join will be sent prior to the meeting. Sessions will be recorded.

*Save the Date*  
**Fellows' Research Training Minicourse Bootcamp**  
**-Part I-**  
**October 21; 2025 (AM)**  
**-Part II-**  
**October 30th; 2025 (PM)**

Milestones in Accreditations

## NCH ACGME-Accredited Craniofacial Fellowship Program Receives Provisional ASCFS Accreditation



Nicklaus Children’s Hospital ACGME-Accredited Craniofacial Plastic Surgery Fellowship Program achieves accreditation from the **American Society of Craniofacial Surgeons (ASCFS)** under

the leadership of Dr. Jordan Steinberg. The ASCFS Accreditation signifies that a program provides the elements deemed essential for a graduating fellow to provide appropriate care in the area of craniofacial and pediatric plastic surgery.

**ASCFS** is a national society that serves to furnish leadership and foster advances in craniofacial

surgery. To ensure that every fellowship provides a consistent and comprehensive learning experience to fellows, the ASCFS has created a formal structure that enables each craniofacial fellowship program to earn accreditation status. Congratulations!!!

Milestones in Strategic Alliances

## NCH Ranked Among the Nation’s Best by USNWR

In a celebratory signing-in ceremony, **Nicklaus Children’s Health System & FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine** finalized the transformative Pediatric affiliation which is expected to redefine pediatric care, research, and education to better serve the children in South Florida & beyond.

In July 2025, and in preparation for the FIU LCME re-accreditation visit, FIU UME, GME, and Research leaders visited the Nicklaus Children’s Hospital main campus, received an overview of the educational programs, and toured the facility.



Milestones in Honorable Mentions of Trainees’ Teaching

## Several of NCH Trainees Received Honorable Mentions by FIU Medical Students for Teaching Skills

Florida International University (FIU) Group 1 Med III students who completed their Pediatric Clerkship at Nicklaus Children’s Hospital, provided the following NCH Trainees with “**Honorable Mentions**” toward nomination for consid-

eration for the HWCOCM Resident/Fellow Excellence in Clinical Teaching Award:

- |                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. <b>Andres Rodriguez, MD</b>       | 4. <b>Saud Alkhalidi, MD</b>     |
| 2. <b>Estefany Cadavid, MD</b>       | 5. <b>Son-Isha Coetzee, MD</b>   |
| 3. <b>Jose Morales Hernandez, DO</b> | 6. <b>Christian Martinez, MD</b> |

Congratulations!!!!

Milestones in GMEC Representation

## Do You Know Who is Your GMEC Trainee Representative?

The Graduate Medical Education Committee (GMEC) is the committee tasked by ACGME to provide oversight of all the training programs. In addition to Program Directors (PDs) & Associate PDs, chief residents, teaching faculty representation, hospital leadership, quality & safety officers, UME, and research; the GMEC voting membership includes peer-selected trainees representatives. Each year, elections are held to replace previously elected trainees reps who graduated. Below is the list of

trainees reps peer-selected as GMEC members:

**PGY1 Class Reps:**

- ◆ Kimberly Baez Nicodemo, MD
- ◆ Nicolas Benelli, MD
- ◆ Maria Valle-Nodal, MD

**PGY2 Class Reps:**

- ◆ Andres Vargas Espana, MD
- ◆ Paola Torres, DO
- ◆ Alexia Perez, MD

**PGY3 Class Reps:**

- ◆ Janelle Torres, DO

◆ Samantha Shear, DO

◆ Santiago Campos, MD

**Dental Residents Rep:**

◆ Nathalia Hernandez, DMD

**Fellows Reps:**

- ◆ Dianelis Hernandez, MD (Y1)
- ◆ Sushma Kakkerala, MD (Y1)
- ◆ Trenton Rivera, MD (Y2)
- ◆ Kara Gay-Simon, MD (Y2)
- ◆ Victoria Waskiel, MD (Y3)
- ◆ Callie Alt, MD (Y3)



## Milestones in Trainees & Faculty Scholarly Activities

# NCH Trainees & Faculty Continue to Disseminate Their Scholarly Work in Print & on National Stages

## Publications

**Drs Abhinav Totapally, Prithvi Sendi, & Bala Totapally** and first author **Yulia Shtanki (FIU Med Student)** were notified that their RESEARCH LETTER titled: "**B-type Natriuretic Peptide in Critically-Ill Children: Single-Center Retrospective Study of Levels in the First 72 Hours of PICU Admission and Outcome**" was accepted for publication in *Pediatric Critical Care Medicine*. Congratulations!!

**Drs Joselyn Ye-Tay** (Alumnus, Residency Class of 2025) & **Dr. Ana Duarte** & co-authors published their manuscript titled: "**Rapidly Progressive Rash Associated with Systemic Symptoms in a 5-Year-Old Girl**" in *Pediatric Dermatology*. Congratulations!!!!

**Dr. Lina Felipez** (Attending, Peds GI) was first author on a Position Statement titled: "**North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition Position Paper on the Therapeutic Drug Monitoring in Pediatric Inflammatory Bowel Disease**" that was published in the *Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology & Nutrition (JPGN)*. Congratulations!!!

**Dr. Ana Duarte** (Attending, Pediatric Dermatology) & co-authors published their manuscript titled: "**All Twenty Nails Affected: Aripiprazole-Induced Photo-Onycholysis in an 11-Year-Old Boy**" in *Cureus*. Congratulations!!!

**Dr. Ana Duarte** (Attending, Pediatric Dermatology) & co-authors published their manuscript titled: "**Expanding the Cutaneous Spectrum of Nicolaides-Baraitser Syndrome: Eczema and Generalized Hair Loss**" in *Cureus*. Congratulations!!!

**Drs Andrea Montano Ballesteros** (PICU Fellow), **Adam Beaton** (Alumnus, PICU Fellowship), and **Bala Totapally** were notified that their manuscript titled: "**Basics of Mechanical Ventilation for the Outpatient Pediatrician**" was accepted for publication in *Pediatrics in Review*. Congratulations!!!

**Dr. Oscar Arevalo** (Attending, Pediatric Dentistry) published his manuscript titled: "**Pediatric Firearm Injury-Related Emergency Department Visits in Florida: A Regional Analysis by Age Group and Insurance Status**" in *Cureus*. Congratulations!!!

**Drs Madhuradhar Chegondi** (Alumnus, PICU fellowship) & **Manette Ness-Cochinwala** (Attending & Alumnus, PICU Fellowship) and co-authors published their manuscript titled: "**Use and Outcomes of Peripherally Inserted Central Catheters in Hospitalized Infants**" in *Hospital Pediatrics*. Congratulations!!

**Dr. Rani Gereige** (DIO) & co-authors published their manuscript titled: "**Rip Out: Leader- and Team-Focused Strategies for Change During Transitions**" in the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education (JGME)*. Congratulations!!!

**Dr. Flavio Ventemilla-Burgos** (PL1) and co-authors published their manuscript titled: "**The Fellowship of the Little Hearts: A 16-Year Analysis of Pediatric Cardiology Match Outcomes**" in *Pediatric Cardiology*. Congratulations!!!

**Dr. Flavio Ventemilla-Burgos** (PL1) was first author on a manuscript titled: "**Tiny Lungs, Big Decisions: A Meta-Analysis Comparing Minimally Invasive Surfactant Therapy Versus Intubation-Surfactant-Extubation in Preterm Neonates with Respiratory Distress Syndrome**" published in *International Journal of Pediatrics*. Congratulations!!!

**Drs. Joseph Casadonte** (Alumnus, Residency); **Jose Andres Morales Hernandez** (PL2), & **Danyal Khan** (Attending, Ped Cardiology) published their manuscript titled: "**Transcatheter Embolization of Aortopulmonary Collaterals Using Trufill® n-Butylcyanoacrylate (n-BCA) Liquid Embolic System; A Single Center Experience**" published in *Progress in Pediatric Cardiology*. Congratulations!!!

**Dr. Kara Gay-Simon** (Peds Cardiology Fellow) was notified that her Letter to the Editors from Trainees titled: "**I Became Who I Always Hoped to Be**" received an **Honorable Mention** from *Academic Medicine*. Her name will be listed in the December 2025 Issue. Congratulations!!!!



## National Meetings Presentations

**Drs. Melissa Clemente** (PHM Fellowship Director), and **Ellise Cappuccio** along with **Cindy Garlesky, APRN** were invited speakers at the Future of Pediatric Practice FCAAP Annual Conference 2025 in Orlando. They represented well Nicklaus Children's Hospital!!



Milestones in Trainees & Faculty Scholarly Activities

## NCH Trainees & Faculty Continue to Disseminate Their Scholarly Work in Print & on National Stages (Cont'ed)



CICU Fellow, **Dr. Manoj Chakiath** presenting at NeoHeart 2025



Peds Cardiology Fellow, **Dr. Kara Gay-Simon** presenting at the FL Chapter of the American College of Cardiology



Milestones in Trainees & Faculty AAP Florida Chapter Leadership

## Trainees & Faculty Assume FCAAP Leadership Roles

**Dr. Janelle Torres, DO** (PGY3) was appointed by the FCAAP's Board of Directors as one of two Co-Chairs of the **Residents & Trainees Committee** for the 2025-2026 term. Dr. Torres previously held other FCAAP leader-

ship positions including Co-Chair of the Medical Student Committee and Assistant Co-Chair of the Residents & Trainees Committee. Congratulations Janelle!!!!

**Dr. Joanna Perdomo, MD, MPH** (PCC Attending) was elected as the **Region 5 (Miami-Dade) Representative** and inducted into the FCAAP Board of Directors for the 2025-2027 Term. Congratulations!!

Milestones in Literacy Promotion Recognition

## NCH Pediatric Residency & PCC Honored by Reach Out & Read

The Pediatric Residency Program at Nicklaus Children's Hospital was one of 11 Pediatric Residency Programs across the State of Florida honored for their participation in the **Reach Out and Read** program in the PCC continuity clinics. The Residency Program received the award on August 30th at the annual FCAAP Conference in Orlando *"in recognition of the residency program's support of educating and training the next generation of Pediatricians in Early Literacy promotion through the Reach Out & Read Program"*.

In the State of Florida, Reach Out & Read serves approximately 300,000 children, distributing 600,000 books annually at 286 medical sites.

Congratulations!!!!





## Medical Education Birthdays

### September

Kirsten Consing	1
Laura Amador	3
Kimberly Baez Nicodemo	3
Gonzalo Corrado	7
Jordan Hunsberger	9
Emely Vasquez Sanchez	13
Luisa Maria Vasquez Reyes	17
Rashmi Prasad	17
Mariame Shaw	19
Jennifer Francisco	20
Maria Laura Calderon Arizmendi	28
Antonietta Padron Ayala	29



### October

Dana Mysler	8
Carly Stewart	9
Nathalia Hernandez	9
Alejandra Frauenfelder Sanchez	10
Stephanie Ferrer	11
Ahmad Abdulkader	15
Daphne Petit-Homme	23
Christopher Hall	30
Kara Gay-Simon	30



**Alumni Network**  
 MIAMI CHILDREN'S • NICKLAUS CHILDREN'S  
 SINCE 1962



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