

# THE INSIDE SCOPE

## IMPORTANT DATES

### November

11/13: New Rotation Starts

11/23: Thanksgiving

11/26: Preferences Open

### December

12/2: Admissions and Training Committee Apps Open

12/20: Preferences Due

### February

2/17: DCA Apps due

2/18: Last Day of Rotation



## A Message From Program Management

Dear Care Extenders,

We'd like to extend a warm welcome to all of our Care Extenders. Thank you for choosing to dedicate your time and energy to helping others in our community. Your generosity and compassion will make a positive impact on the lives of many, and we are grateful for your support. As a Care Extender, you are part of a team of volunteers who provide a variety of services and support to those in need. Whether you are assisting patients, families, or staff, your contributions are invaluable and greatly appreciated. We recognize that volunteering can be a demanding role, but it is also a rewarding one. Your commitment to making a difference in the lives of others is an inspiration to us all, and we look forward to working alongside you to create positive change in our community.

Thank you again for your dedication to our organization, and we are thrilled to have you as part of our team.

Sincerely,

Silva Thomas & Osanna Tosunyan



# Care Extenders of the Rotation!

Winter 2023



*Wasila Sun*  
RRH- 5 ICU



*Pierra Moise*  
RRH- 7 East



*Michael Du*  
RRH- Peds B



*Ian Lee*  
RRH- ER B



*Morgan Croshal*  
SMH- CCU



*Cassidy Wolfe*  
RRH- 5 East



*Isabella Torosian*  
SMH- PP



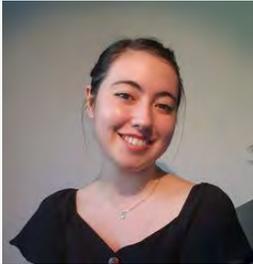
*Katherine Sierras*  
RRH- 7 West CTU

## Advice from CEs of the Rotation

- *Every interaction matters and is important! Even the smallest conversations or simplest tasks, like bringing a patient water or a blanket, can greatly improve their hospital experience and comfort level. What may not seem like a big deal to us could be the best part of a patient's day! -Cassidy Wolfe*
- *Providing excellent patient care speaks volumes—it's what we stand by with our mission at UCLA Health. Be that bright light, that patient, kind-hearted Care Extender because, believe me, it doesn't go unnoticed. -Pierra Moise*
- *Make an effort to interact with the nurses and care partners. All the nurses and care partners that I have talked to have been so generous and kind, taking the extra time to answer all my questions about their profession. Because of them, I have a much stronger idea upon the overall healthcare field from when I first started as a care extender -Michael Du*
- *It may seem daunting at first to step into an unfamiliar environment; however, reaching out to healthcare professionals and asking questions will make this a rewarding and insightful experience. - Isabella Torosian*

# Care Extenders of the Rotation!

Spring 2023



**Nadya Higgins**  
SMH- Geriatrics



**Rohan Ghosh**  
SMH- Surgery Center



**Sabrina Wang**  
RRH- 5 ICU



**Hannah Hoang**  
RRH- 7 East



**Ekaterina Sakhartova**  
RRH- MICU B



**Aayzhia Cruz**  
RRH- Geriatrics



**Lorena Gonzalez**  
RRH- 5 East



**Ohsun Kang**  
RRH- 8 West



**Pierra Moise**  
RRH- Gonda



**Lily Do**  
RRH- ER B

# Care Extenders of the Rotation!

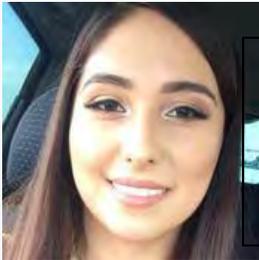
Spring 2023



**Aden Goolsbee**  
SMH- PP



**Nadia Sorych**  
SMH- Radiology



**Zuleima Tenorio  
Monterrosas**  
RRH- 7 West CTU



**Vivian Lau**  
RRH- Greeters B



**Acharya  
Ranawat**  
RRH- 8 ICU



**Brendan  
Gonzalez-  
Murphy**  
SMH- GI Lab



**Gregory  
Seright**  
SMH- Greeters B



**Natalie Nguyen**  
RRH- 8 West

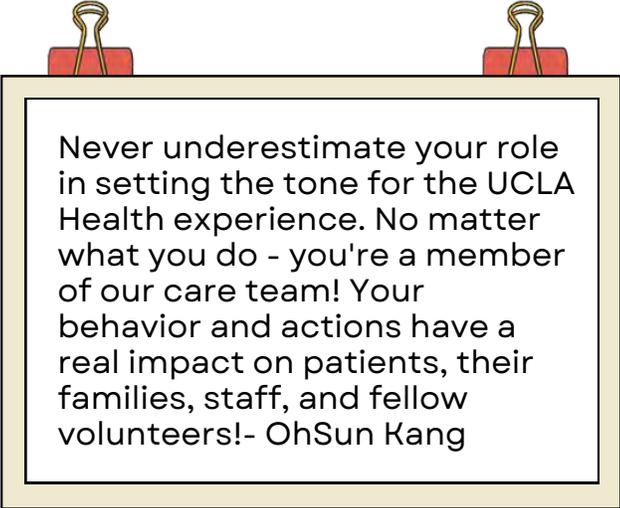


**Halle Villalobos**  
RRH- Greeters B

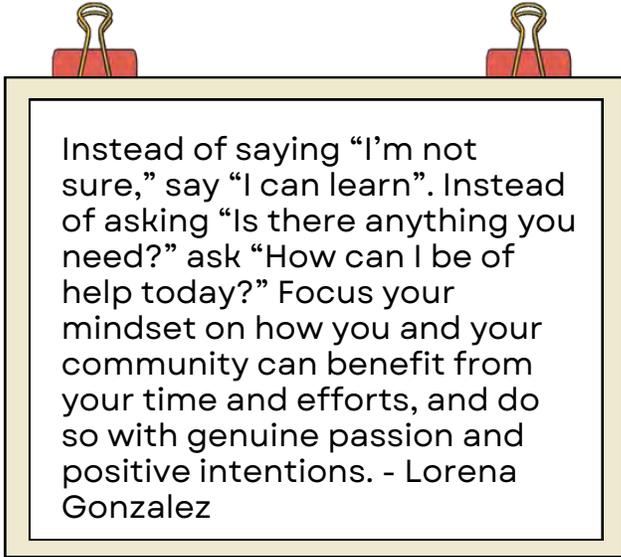


**Marat  
Gevorgyan**  
RRH- ER B

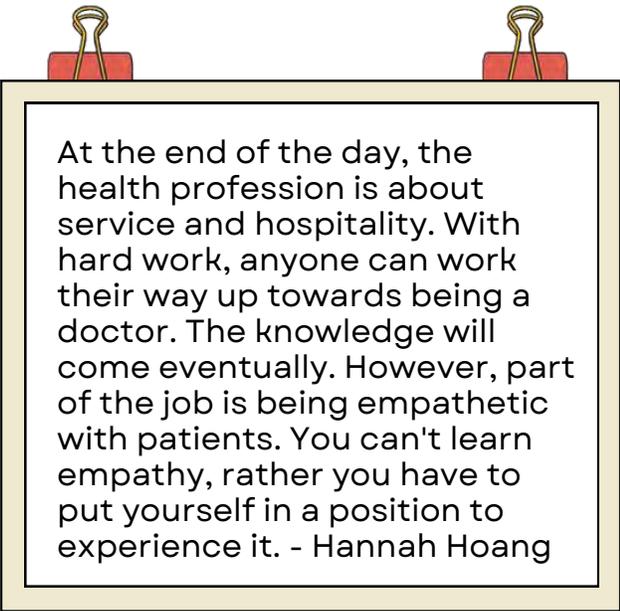
# Advice from CEs of the Rotation



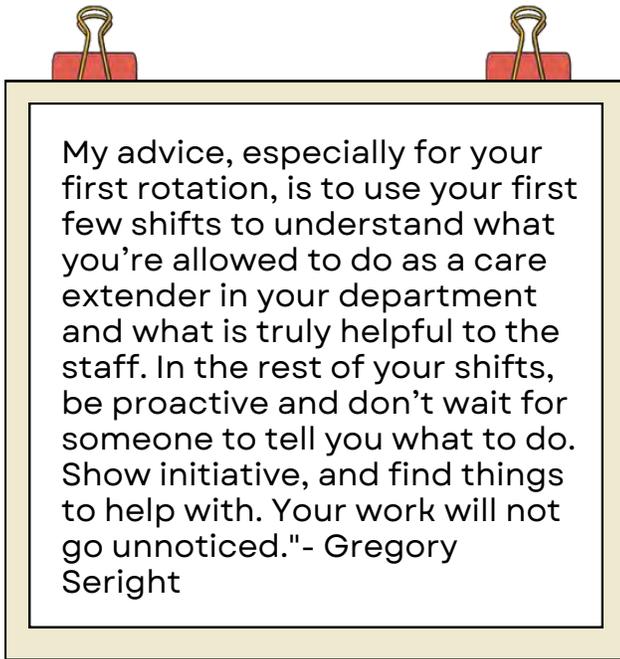
Never underestimate your role in setting the tone for the UCLA Health experience. No matter what you do - you're a member of our care team! Your behavior and actions have a real impact on patients, their families, staff, and fellow volunteers!- OhSun Kang



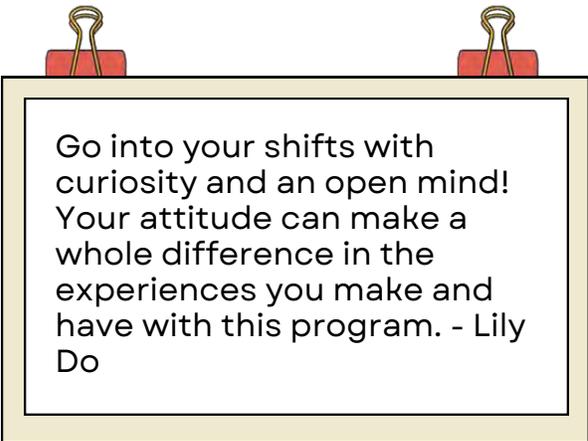
Instead of saying "I'm not sure," say "I can learn". Instead of asking "Is there anything you need?" ask "How can I be of help today?" Focus your mindset on how you and your community can benefit from your time and efforts, and do so with genuine passion and positive intentions. - Lorena Gonzalez



At the end of the day, the health profession is about service and hospitality. With hard work, anyone can work their way up towards being a doctor. The knowledge will come eventually. However, part of the job is being empathetic with patients. You can't learn empathy, rather you have to put yourself in a position to experience it. - Hannah Hoang



My advice, especially for your first rotation, is to use your first few shifts to understand what you're allowed to do as a care extender in your department and what is truly helpful to the staff. In the rest of your shifts, be proactive and don't wait for someone to tell you what to do. Show initiative, and find things to help with. Your work will not go unnoticed."- Gregory Seright



Go into your shifts with curiosity and an open mind! Your attitude can make a whole difference in the experiences you make and have with this program. - Lily Do

# The CE Perspective

## Q: How long have you been a Care Extender?

**A:** I have completed two rotations as a care extender.

## Q: What has been your favorite department so far?

**A:** I loved my experience last rotation in RRH- Geriatrics! The staff was super friendly and always tried their best to give me tasks to do!

## Q: In your opinion, what's the best part of the Care Extender program?

**A:** Personally, I find that the ability to work with other healthcare professions is the best part. The staff is very kind and helpful to Care Extender volunteers. They answer our questions and help you understand the procedures and protocols that take place in the department. While it might have been a little intimidating to approach them at first, they're very approachable. They also go out of their way to show volunteers interesting things, which I'm grateful for.

## Q: How has the Care Extender Program changed your view of healthcare?

**A:** Care Extenders has changed my view of healthcare by expanding on my knowledge of the hospital setting and the differences between departments. I get a closer look on the interactions between health care professionals, patients, and volunteers, which is extremely fascinating. Care Extenders has shown me the behind-the-scenes work that goes on for nurses, secretaries, and physicians in the hospital setting, which is not something you can see from being a patient.

## Q: What has been a particular shift/event that has been memorable for you?

**A:** While I was shifting in Geriatrics, there was this patient that reminded me of my own grandfather. He was always respectful to me and the staff and I really enjoyed interacting with him during my shifts. I didn't think I was helping him that much to be honest, but on the day he was discharged, he took the time to thank me and said that his family was far away and unable to visit so he really he cherished my interactions with him. It was really touching and reinforced my desire to be an empathetic physician in the future.



## Q: Why have you chosen to stay with the Care Extender Program?

**A:** Every department is different in terms of how they're run and how they work. I want to continue in the program because I'm looking forward to shifting in other departments.

## Q: What skills have you learned as a Care Extender?

**A:** As a care extender, I have learned how to better interact with others in a healthcare setting. By being on the floor, I have learned how to better my sense of professionalism, communication, and empathy. It's so important to be able to adapt the way you speak and interact based on who you are talking to, which is something I've gotten a lot of practice with while shifting. While you should always treat everyone with respect, it's critical that you understand that everyone has a different story and personality, and that certain methods of communicating may be more comfortable and effective depending on the person.

## Q: How has Care Extenders helped you reach your future goals?

**A:** Care Extenders has helped me towards my future goals by helping me gain clinical experience and reaffirmation that the medical field is the career for me. From what I have learned and witnessed as a Care Extender so far, I am further motivated to work towards med school and a career in the medical field. Being able to see the work that doctors, both in terms of patient interaction and procedures, has ignited my passion to also be in that position.

## Q: How do you balance school and the Care Extender Program?

**A:** It's harder than I thought, but it is manageable! I am busy with extracurriculars, a part-time job, and research, so combining those with Care Extenders can be tricky. Honestly, I try to recognize when I have the most time for volunteering, and I pick my volunteer times depending on if I am a morning or night person and when in the day that I like to finish my work. That way, I can focus on my volunteering while giving myself time for my classwork.

**Alvin Lai is currently a fourth-year psychology student at UCLA.**

# Outside the Unit- MCAT Workshop

Many Care Extenders are on the pre-medical track, meaning that they will need to take the MCAT at some point in their lives. However, taking the exam can be daunting, which is why the Care Extender program decided to host a MCAT workshop that covered everything from study methods to test day.

Taking place on October 23, 2023, the virtual workshop was planned by Care Extenders special events and alumni coordinator, Rebecca Brown.

“Being pre-med is difficult, and the MCAT is a very hard and stressful exam,” Brown said. “So with this workshop, we wanted to provide the CEs with the information and resources that would help them be successful in planning, prepping for, and taking their MCAT.”

In addition to Brown, CE staff members Ryan Lee, Steven Pham, and Charlie Zheng were panelists. The panelists were chosen due to the fact that they had already taken the exam.

The workshops began with an overview of the logistics of the MCAT, including how it's scored and what to expect during test day.

Panelists then discussed how best to prepare for the exam, outlining a step-by-step plan on how to study most effectively. They recommended that testers start by taking a diagnostic exam and building a study plan around the results of that exam.

As for what should be in a MCAT study plan, the panelists described three types of study methods: pure content review, practice problems, and practice exams. They provided the names of a mix of free and paid resources that fit into each category, explaining strategies for how to best utilize each. For example, for practice exams, the panelists recommended making flashcards for missed material.

The speakers then discussed alternate online resources, like Reddit; however, they cautioned that testers should not fall into the trap of comparing themselves to others posting on these sites.

Then, classes at UCLA that teach content related to topics on the MCAT were delineated. The panelists

emphasized that when taking these classes, one shouldn't just aim for a good grade— they should also attempt to internalize and gain a deeper understanding of the material.

The speakers concluded this section by emphasizing that it is important to keep one's well-being in mind in the midst of studying. The speakers recommended that one should spend a max of 7 hours a day studying and take the rest of the day to do something that brings joy and relieves stress. While it might be difficult to stop studying, it is critical that one keeps up healthy habits during this time period, like sleeping for eight hours a night. Though it might be tempting to read one more chapter or do one practice set, maintaining a healthy body and mind will help ensure that one's brain is able to retain as much information as possible.

The workshop then wrapped up with a brief panel session, where the panelists went more in depth about their own experiences with the MCAT. Participants were also allowed to pose questions to the panelists.

“I really enjoyed hearing about each person's experience, especially Ryan since he's in the middle of his cycle right now and was able to offer some first-hand advice,” Pham said.

Brown said she hopes that the panel was able to give Care Extenders some insight into the MCAT.

“It was great being able to answer CEs' specific questions, calm any anxieties, and give more targeted advice,” she said.

## MCAT Workshop

Brought to you by Care Extenders

# Department Highlights

## SMH- Surgery Center



The Surgery Center at Santa Monica Medical Center, located across the street from the main medical center building, is a bustling department that gives Care Extenders a rare view into the world of outpatient surgery.

According to Sarah Yang, who was department coordinator for the department for two rotations, the center provides a good balance of patient interaction and procedure observations for Care Extenders due to its outpatient nature.

Unlike inpatient departments, patients usually only come into the department for a surgery and leave the same day, creating a face-paced environment with new patients and procedures every shift.

After watching a training video, Care Extenders are given the ability to schedule observation shifts during their shift to observe these procedures. This allows volunteers to split their shift between helping out in the pre-operation area and observing procedures, a system which is not common in other departments.

Examples of procedures volunteers have observed in the past include inguinal hernia repairs, arthroscopic shoulder stabilizations, functional endoscopies, and Achilles repairs.

Moreover, the staff is always willing to

answer questions about the procedures, Yang said. In fact, her favorite memories from the department involve circulating nurses and surgeons explaining procedures step-by-step and allowing her to see from the camera they were using for the surgery.

Furthermore, in addition to the large number of procedures, another interesting part of the department is the varied patient population.

“(Volunteers get to interact with) patients of all ages, from a five year old child all the way to someone around 70-80 years old,” Yang said.

As a result of these two factors, the Surgery Center would be a good fit for any Care Extender who is interested in surgery, as the wide variety of procedures and patients give volunteers a broad view of the field. Volunteers also can network with staff and ask about their experiences to see whether the career is a good fit for them.

As Yang also emphasized that Care Extenders who are very proactive would also do well in the department.

“For example, every time you see a patient getting ready to leave, get prepared to help discharge them or even just after the discharge, go help and prepare the room for the next patient,” she said.

Though the shifts may be more limited in the Surgery Center than other departments, Yang thinks that the unique opportunities it affords volunteers make up for it.

“The Surgery Center is really a department where Care Extenders can truly experience multiple facets of the healthcare environment,” she said. “There’s not a lot of departments like it in the program.”

**Care Extenders on their 3rd+ rotation may shift in the Surgery Center. The department is open Monday to Friday and has shifts 7-11 am, 11 am-3pm and 3pm-7pm.**



**Dr. Christine Thang is a general pediatrician at UCLA Health**

**Q:** *How long were you a care extender for? What roles did you take?*

**A:** I attended UCLA from 2007 to 2011. In those years, I was a part of the Care Extender Program as a volunteer and spent a lot of time at SMH. During this time, I also took the opportunity to become one of the department coordinators.

**Q:** *How did the Care Extender Program help you on your career path?*

**A:** It was a lot of different things. One was that the program provided was a community where I made friends and was supported by other students who were pursuing careers in healthcare, like medicine, pharmacy and physical therapy. Being a part of the leadership program taught me a lot about the administration behind the program as well. There were also opportunities for mentorship and advisership from people like the residents, the attendings, and the program leadership. The clinical exposure aspect of shadowing and being able to be a part of all these different departments of the hospital also reinforced my interest in medicine.

**Q:** *What skills did the Care Extender Program help you build?*

**A:** The program helped me learn how to be aware and mindful of all members in a team. Everyone has something that they contribute, everyone's learning something and everyone has a role. Another skill is being able to learn all the words and language medical professionals use. Even though I wasn't far along in my undergraduate science education in my first and second year, people wanted to teach me the basics, which really helped me during my interviews for medical school.

**Q:** *Is there anything you would change about your program experience?*

**A:** Care Extenders offers a breadth of departments. If I could talk to myself back then, I would tell myself to not only focus on departments associated with pediatrics, even though I was interested in working with kids. It's a great experience to be able to see what else there is because that's how it is in medical school, where you rotate through many departments. You won't really know if there's a specialty you like better than all the others if you haven't been through all these different departments.

**Q:** *What advice would you give to current Care Extenders so they can get the most out of their experience?*

**A:** It might sound cliché but, as with any program, a lot of what you take away is what you put in— active learning is really important. Not only will you have the opportunity to see and learn a lot of the medicine that happens around you, but you'll be able to connect with other people who were where you are right now once. There's a lot of networking that can happen. I would also recommend getting involved in a leadership role because that's where you really see what happens behind the scenes. If you're looking to be a student leader, the position can provide you that skillset.

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# What's new at UCLA Health?

## Research- Cognitive Decline and Menopause

UCLA researchers have published a paper identifying a sex hormone by age interaction where the removal of ovarian hormones in middle-aged mice caused symptoms of cognitive decline.

In a previous study, researchers had found that estrogen has a protective effect in women with multiple sclerosis, a disease that causes cognitive issues in women, said Dr. Rhonda Voskuhl, co-author of the study. She added that such results made the researchers interested in studying the effects of menopausal estrogen loss on cognition, as two-thirds of all Alzheimer's patients are women.

“Even before Alzheimer's, there's this aging and cognitive decline associated with healthy women with menopause,” she said. “So now, whether that predisposes to Alzheimer's later is not known yet, but clearly, it's not good to have an abrupt loss of a neuroprotective hormone with menopause and no good treatment for it.”

Noriko Itoh, first author of the study, said that her own experiences with medical professionals dismissing the severity of her menopause symptoms also inspired her to examine sex differences in cognition decline.

“(My healthcare provider) said, it's just a temporal thing so don't take it seriously. Currently, many doctors think menopause problems are temporal. But actually it's very serious,” she said.

“Menopause affects so many people so it's always very important to study it and try and find ways to minimize the symptoms,” said Sophia Wendin, a co-author of the paper.

When female mice in the study had their gonads removed at midlife, they displayed a

decline in spatial reference memory, an effect which was not seen in young female mice with their gonads removed, Itoh said. This means that the effect of sex hormone loss on cognitive decline differs by age, she added.

Moreover, when testing which specific receptors were related to cognitive decline, the researchers found that knocking out estrogen beta receptors in astrocytes, but not neurons caused similar declines in function, Itoh said. However, this negative effect on cognition was able to be reversed by treatment with estrogen receptor beta ligands, indicating that this decline does not have to be permanent.

These results are important because they give insight into how medical professionals should potentially treat the negative effects of menopause, Voskuhl said.

She explained that currently, there is a debate in medicine about whether women going through menopause should be given hormone replacement therapy due to the negative effects of sex hormone loss. While the loss of estrogen has been shown to have many undesirable consequences on women's health, high dosages of estradiol, which is currently used to treat certain symptoms of menopause, increases the risk of breast cancer by stimulating estrogen receptor alpha. However, because estrogen receptor beta was the receptor implicated in the study, researchers could potentially develop a treatment using estriol and estrogen receptor beta ligand, which strongly bind to the beta receptor but not the alpha, to treat menopausal cognitive declines.

“There's so many differences between the brains of males and females so it's important to find treatments that are targeted towards both,” said Sanjana Somepalli, co-author of the study and current Care Extender.

# Making an Impact at UCLA Health

## Medical Aid Initiative:



American hospitals produce two million tons of medical waste annually, with some of this waste being perfectly usable supplies. Due to this issue, the Medical Aid Initiative (MAI) at UCLA has made it their mission to prevent and reduce some of that waste right here in the UCLA Health system.

According to Ginny Ghang, president of the club, the student-run organization collects unused medical supplies from UCLA Health and donates them to clinics and disaster relief efforts.

Every other week, club members go a UCLA Health warehouse in Santa Monica and work in three-hour shifts to help distribute these supplies. This work entails cataloging, organizing and packing extra supplies that are then sent out to local and international destinations.

Without these shifts, these medical supplies would be sent to the landfill, Ghang said. However, MAI's work ensures that they are instead diverted to locations where they can help patients.

"I really enjoy going to the warehouse and completing shifts," said Kaia Evulich, a member of the club. "It's great at the end, when you can look back and see how much we were able to accomplish in just 3 hours."

The club also focuses on raising awareness about medical sustainability, said Rhea McKenzie, co-director of external relations. For

example, the organization has spoken at global health conferences and sustainability festivals, and has even presented a research poster at one of these conferences.

MAI also focuses on raising awareness in other facets of healthcare, including research. Previously, the organization made and sent out a pamphlet for research lab primary investigators on how to make their labs more sustainable.

Angela Harrington, a club member, said that medical waste is a topic that is rarely talked about, adding that being educated about this issue has opened her eyes to the intersection of social issues and healthcare.

"The earth is important, and what the future of the earth is going to look like is important as well," Harrington said. But then, making patients' health outcomes better is also important as well."

Justin An, a member of the club, said that being a part of this organization has helped him gain greater insight into the medical field, which he hopes to work in as his career.

"As future healthcare providers, it's important to be aware of your practice, including the lasting implications you have on not only your patients but also the supplies you work with."

The club holds recruitment at the start of every school year and looks for members that demonstrate a genuine interest in learning about the issue of medical waste.

"I've learned so much about my medical stability and just how wasteful the health practices in certain places are," Ghang said. "I think that's really enlightening, and it's also encouraging because we all (in the club) want to make a change in that."

# ***SPORTS MEDICINE***

## **What is Sports Medicine?**

Sports Medicine is a field that involves preventing and treating conditions in people who wish to be or are active. It is not a medical specialty in and of itself, but healthcare providers who specialize in this field usually receive training in sports medicine, in addition to the basic training required for their career.

## **History of the Field**

While sports medicine has become more standardized in recent years, its origins date back to ancient times, as shown by records of Ancient Greek physicians treating Olympic athletes for sports-related conditions. After the creation of the modern Olympics in 1896, the field began to advance at a rapid rate.

## **Patient Population**

Sports medicine specialists see not only professional athletes, but also anyone who is physically active. Those working in sports medicine can also choose to specialize in a specific population, like children and teens.

## **Examples of Careers in Sports Medicine**

While there are many potential paths in this field, some common careers include physical therapists, athletic trainers, nutritionists, and kinesiotherapists.

# Sports Medicine Q&A



*Calvin Duffaut is sports medicine physician.*

**How long have you been working in Sports Medicine?**

I've been in this field since 2014 so 9 years.

**What is sports medicine, in your own words?**

Sports medicine can get kind of confusing. So, there's 2 different paths for sports medicine. There's the surgical path and then what I do, which is more the primary care side of sports, medicine. So we don't do surgery, but we take care of athletes who have non-surgical musculoskeletal complaints.

**What kind of education and training did you go through to work in sports medicine?**

So I went to undergrad at UC San Diego, and then I went to med school at USC and then I also did my residency at USC. I did a specialty called internal medicine and pediatrics, or Med-Peds for short. After, I came over to UCLA and did my fellowship in sports medicine.

**What kind of settings do you practice in?**

So right now, most of my day to day function is in clinic. So I do sports medicine in the adult/ anyone can come in realm. And then I go to the Orthopaedic Institute for Children, which is affiliated with UCLA, where it is purely pediatric sports medicine. And then one day a week, I actually just do regular primary care. In addition, a lot of us in department take care of sports teams, like those part of UCLA Athletics. Personally, I take care of the men's basketball team and the softball team. So evenings and some weekends, I'm covering games. I also help take care of the the LA Sparks, which is the WNBA team here in LA, and the South Bay Lakers.

**Why did you choose this career?**

I've played sports my whole life— I played college basketball, and then fell in love with medicine after seeing the continuity of taking care of people and seeing them get better. And then I discovered you could do this specialty within primary care that actually got me back into sports and around athletes. So it seemed like a perfect match for me, as I've grown up my whole life playing sports, understanding sports and being injured and trying to get better.

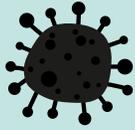
**What motivates user works so much and like, continue in this career path?**

I think it's just honestly being around the players and the team and just seeing them navigate a very difficult undergrad at UCLA and trying to put in all the work to succeed at their sport. I also enjoy being able to help guide them both as a physician, but also sometimes as a mentor. There are people who are interested in doing medicine or some kind of medical position in sports, and it's always good to have someone who's gone there and done that to help guide you along.

**What advice do you have for those who may want to work in sports medicine in the future?**

We have a sports medicine interest group at UCLA where we help undergrads, med students, and residents gain exposure. For example, we have talks on sports medicine, like what it is a day in a life is like. Other times, we help with things like trying to volunteer at a half marathon so people can see what some of the roles of sports medicine are. So I think, I would advise them to seek out what clubs or interest groups are at your institution, especially if you have a sports medicine program like UCLA does. Also, talking to someone involved in sports medicine also helps. When I was a resident, I went to a high school football game with someone doing sports medicine. Getting to talk to that person was very helpful for me to really understand what sports medicine was and whether it was something that I wanted to pursue.

# FLU SEASON FACTSHEET



The flu is caused by influenza viruses. Usually, the virus changes every year due to its fast rate of evolution.



Flu symptoms typically appear two days after infection, but this can range from one to four days.



Flu activity starts to increase in October and this period of heightened activity can last to May, with activity being the highest from December to February.



While most flu cases are mild and go away in one to two weeks, influenza can cause severe symptoms and even death; this is especially true for the very young and old, as well as those with certain pre-existing health conditions.



Influenza is mainly thought to spread through droplets that travel when people talk, cough, and sneeze. This can occur even if the infected person is not symptomatic yet.



The best way to prevent influenza infection is to receive the flu vaccine!



About 3-11% of Americans fall ill from the flu every flu season.



You should get a new flu vaccine each year. It can take up to two weeks to work so plan to get it early every flu season.

# Letter of Rec Tips

## 1 Identify appropriate and familiar recommenders

The most important trait for a recommender is that they should know you well. However, it's also important to consider what role you are aiming for. What specific skills/subjects will help you best fulfill that role? Can your intended recommenders truly attest to your mastery of those areas? If yes, go ahead and ask. If not, you might want to find someone different and start building a relationship with them.

## 2 Ask for a letter early

Asking for a rec letter early will ensure that your recommender has enough time to craft a thoughtful and personal letter. Moreover, this also gives you time to ask them for feedback and guidance on your application, as well as their opinion on how you should present yourself when applying.

## 3 Supply your recommender with your app materials

In any application, it's important that your materials generally share common themes and highlight similar aspects of your life and personality. By allowing your recommenders access to your application materials, they can see what you're emphasizing in your application as a whole and craft their letter based on your presentation of yourself.

## 4 Keep in communication during and after

As you craft your application, keep your recommenders informed of any updates to your resume or life. This allows them to edit their letter to reflect any important changes in circumstance, which can make your application more unified thematically. Even after the letter is sent, continue keeping in touch with your recommenders. They usually want to know the results of your application process and it's a good way to show that your gratitude to them.