

YORK PA E-NEWS

Program Biannual Email Newsletter



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Program Director's Message

This inaugural newsletter marks another milestone for the York College Physician Assistant Program and will provide another avenue for sharing program updates with all our stakeholders.

The program has settled into our transition to a graduate curriculum, with two full cohorts of students having earned a Master of Science degree in Physician Assistant Studies. The ARC-PA has re-accredited the program through 2028, and our most recent first-time PANCE pass rate is 90 percent. After many years of excellent service, both Dr. Rampersaud and Dr. Davidson retired last year. We have two searches nearing completion for their replacements.

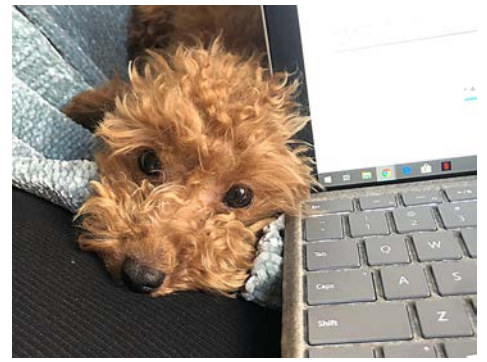
The Coronavirus pandemic has necessitated a shift to online learning, remote proctoring, and development of an alternative online experience for a portion of the clinical phase curriculum. All the PA faculty and current students are working hard to maintain, and even strengthen the program through these challenging times. Our graduates working on the front lines were featured on the York College and CUNY websites.

I will conclude by thanking Professor Shami for spearheading this newsletter project, along with her contributions in increasing our online presence through social media channels.

- *Robert Brugna*

Why an Empty Classroom?

by Summer Anderson (Class President - Class of 2022)



Last September, I started the first semester as a new PA student at CUNY York College. The classroom, full of chatter and learning, quickly became a familiar place especially considering the large amount of time we as a class spent in there. However, with COVID, our program was required to transition to distance learning. When my class first received the news that CUNY schools were closing due to COVID, we were sitting in the classroom on the York campus, listening to a lecture on orthopedic surgery. There was so much nervous chatter behind me as people got twitter updates on their phones. This morning, I took an exam on that very ortho lecture from my living room.

"It's also been nice to work from the comfort of my own apartment--with my puppy on my lap--and snacks whenever I want them."

The once full classroom now remains empty as we all stay home to protect ourselves and each other. While necessary, this transition was a very scary thing for me, as I felt I had just developed a routine that worked. Distance learning disrupted all of the flow I had going, and I was very worried about the impact it might have on my learning. The York PA program worked quickly to ensure that we were able to move our classroom instruction to a virtual classroom literally the next day, which negated some of the fears I had about delays in learning the material.

Our instructors have adapted to the new technology at various rates, but all have provided consistent and informative lectures. Overall we've only missed a few scheduled classes, and that's due to our professors' schedules being changed as well as they work on the front lines as amazing healthcare providers.

The virtual classroom is just as dynamic as the live one; we can raise our hands, ask questions, and discuss ideas with each other in a way that is very similar to what we could do in the actual classroom. I miss seeing my classmates and learning in-person, but I have adapted because now I see them, talk over video chat and texts. I was concerned about studying without my group and not being able to utilize resources, but I actually feel like I have been more productive since moving to distance learning. The program provided our class with access to many online services that have noticeably enhanced my learning, and to be honest, I don't know if I would've taken the time to access them otherwise

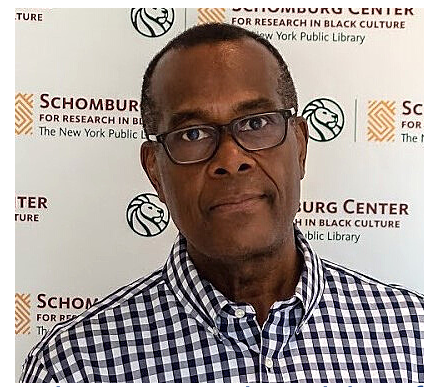
Personally, learning from home has been a huge adjustment for me, but there has been constant support from the program and faculty to make sure that things are going as smoothly as possible. I am able to video chat with my advisor from the program and talk about how things are going for me, as well as what I needed support with. The faculty is constantly reaching out and checking in, and even sending some much needed memes about this quarantine. It's also been nice to work from the comfort of my own apartment, with my puppy on my lap, and snacks whenever I want them. I'm eager to return to the classroom, but for now, York PA program class of 2022 is still going strong from our couches.



*- Summer (and her
furry friend)*

Distance Learning Experience: Faculty Perspective

Pharmacology Professor - Anthony County



Q: How was your *initial* experience with transitioning to distance learning?

"When CUNY transitioned to distance learning, it was absolutely new and sudden for me, as I suspect it was for many others."

Q: Did you find the transition to be challenging? If so, how did you overcome it?

"The transition has definitely been a bit challenging. However, the assistance I got from Dr. Persaud in the beginning of March has proven to be invaluable. I was able to utilize that initial experience to get through my lectures. I have tried on many occasions to follow many of the university's communication on recommendations and resources for navigating the process, but must admit can be a bit challenging at times for me."

Q: How is it different from your usual "in classroom" experience?

"I have found that navigating the slide presentation is not as simple as working through the PowerPoint format. I do miss the interpersonal interactions; not being able to observe expressions and reactions as I teach does not help me in knowing when I should go over or reemphasize a particular point. My feeling is that some students are reluctant to ask questions, while others who tend to ask most of the questions, may be doing so because they also don't have the interpersonal relationship to gauge from. I hope I am incorrect, but I do get a sense that some of the students may feel that they are in an isolated environment, and may be missing the support of being in an environment with their colleagues."

Q: Any plans for the future weeks to come?

"Yes, in fact I will be involved in a 3-week online support workshop provided by the university, and I am looking forward to participating, not withstanding its challenges at this point in the semester. I am hopeful of obtaining knowledge in the workshop that will help me in better mastering the distance learning environment, and provide benefit to the students."

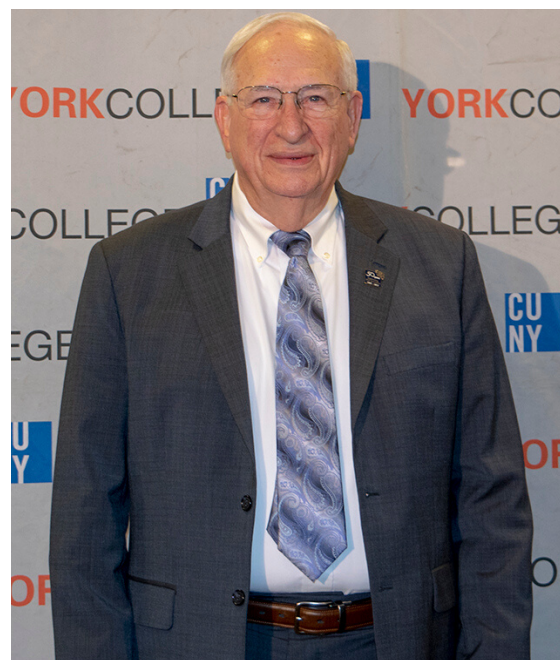


Congrats to the Class of 2020!

The York PA program said goodbye to 24 graduates from the class of 2020, on December 13th.

The following graduates achieved a grade point average (GPA) of a 3.5 or above during their time in the PA Program, awarding them the York PA Honors Scholar Award:

Jessica Brown, Lilliana Coppinger, Daniel Demarco, Noor Ennab, Katrina Feri, Aliza Ginzberg, Elizabeth Katz, Loretta Kuo, Jin Jin Lin, Cara McGuinness, Ling Yi Mei, Punam Patel, Ricci Stessel, Leora Tuchman, and Merin Varghese.



Keynote speaker: Kenneth Ferrell, one of the first PAs to graduate in PA history

We wish you all the best!

Recent Graduate Spotlight

Loretta Kuo - Graduate from Class of 2020



Q: What speciality are you currently working in?

"I am currently a PA in the Emergency Department at NYC Health+Hospitals/Queens. I will also be starting in a per-diem position as a PA in the Psychiatry Emergency Department at NYC Health + Hospitals/Queens."

Q: Did you come in contact with COVID patients?

"I started at the tailend of the COVID pandemic. Although we have definitely "flattened the curve" at our hospital, the ED is still separated into COVID and non-COVID sections. COVID has not been eliminated and we are working to make sure the COVID positive patients do not have contact with non-COVID patients. I have contact with COVID patients, but not to the extent or gravity that my colleagues experienced the last two months. Luckily, my hospital provides all staff with PPE for protection."

Q: How was your experience overall in PA school?

"In the first year, the didactic year provided us with the knowledge and background, but in the second year, the clinical year, provided us with the "people skills" needed in healthcare. I must admit, the didactic year was definitely one of the hardest years of my life. Never have I studied so hard in my life! But, in retrospect, it was completely worth it. I give myself a small pat on the back whenever someone asks a question and I am able to recall the answer. Although I am very organized and efficient to begin with, the intense exam schedule during didactic year helped me hone my time-management skills. This is a necessary skill, especially now that I am working in the ED."

Q: How does it finally feel to be working as a Physician Assistant?

"Unlike other students, I had another career and decided to go back to school to become a PA. I am so thankful that, although my background was not as "medically" strong as other students, that the York PA program took a chance on me! I believe that people should love what they do, and I have finally found something I love doing. It would not have been possible without the York PA program."



Hello to the Class of 2022!

The Class of 2022 started their first semester of PA school back in August 2019. All 30 students have spent a lot of time together studying, creating special bonds, and trying to make the most of PA school by being festive. Most importantly, they all come together learning about each others cultures and backgrounds, something that is especially important being in NY. They never seem to miss each others birthdays as they come into the classroom with balloons and a cake each time. They've even pitched in to have a supply of snacks and comfort foods while they spent literally each day in the same classroom!

We can't wait to see you all back!



Advice for Incoming PA Students



Mariyanthie Linaris is a clinical year student in the York College Physician Assistant Program, and the president of the Class of 2021. This past year and a half in the program for her has been the most challenging, but also an exciting time in her life so far. She mentions PA school being an extremely tough undertaking, but wants to share some tips below in hopes to make it a tad bit easier!

- **Make a schedule**

One of the biggest issues my classmates and I have talked about throughout our time as PA students has been time management. Between lectures, assignments, studying, and obligations at home, it can be really easy to get lost and let things pile up. Make a schedule incorporating study time, assignments, meals, sleep, due dates, and breaks to keep yourself on track. Don't forget to cut yourself some slack though; sometimes you can't stick exactly to the schedule you set up for yourself, so don't feel bad if you can't spend the two hours you designated for that really tough lecture because you are getting frustrated. Switch to a new topic and come back to it later!

- **Do something that makes you happy**

Put down the books every once in a while and do something that makes you happy. Burnout is a huge issue in medicine, so it is important to take some time for yourself and recharge. Go to dinner with some friends, have a movie night, practice an artform, play some sports, or do anything that helps you relax. But be careful not to overindulge so that it gets in the way of your schoolwork. You don't want to spread yourself too thin!

- **Work together**

You already competed for your spot to get to this point, but now you can all work together to finish together. Share study guides, practice questions, mnemonics and resources and support each other.

The PA profession is built on teamwork, and the best time to start practicing that is while you are a student!

- **Start a study group**

Everyone studies differently, but I found that I work best in a group. Being in a study group holds you accountable for keeping up with the material; you do not want to show up to the study group as the one who isn't familiar with the material yet and hold the group back. You might not be so great at heart murmurs, but chances are someone in your group is and can help you out. Plus, a great test of how well you understand a concept is how well you can explain it to someone else, and a study group is the perfect setting for this.

- **Practice, practice, practice**

Whether it is a physical exam skill, an interviewing and counseling technique, or a set of medications, start practicing early and consistently. Enlist your friends, family, and classmates to practice taking their vitals or do an abdominal exam, take a history or give bad news, or quiz you on the medication classes from the last pharmacology lecture. Make sure to brush up on the material even after the exam so you can be the best PA you can be when it is your time to practice!

- **Ask for help**

PA school is one of the hardest things you might do, so it is understandable that you might need some help from time to time. This might mean asking a family member or roommate to understand that you might not be able to wash the dishes tonight, asking your professor to go over a particularly difficult subject with you again, or talking through a personal problem with your faculty advisor. It is okay to need help, but make sure to ask for it early on so you can do as best as you can moving forward.

- **Be kind to yourself**

It is natural to want to be perfect all the time, but accept that this is not always possible. Don't be too hard on yourself if you don't score as well on an exam as you had hoped despite all your studying. Just learn from your mistakes and do better next time.

Alumni Spotlight

by Osman Hossain (Class of 2016)

In January 2020 was when I switched from orthopedic surgery to critical care medicine not knowing about the COVID pandemic that was lying ahead of us all. I was working at a large hospital in the Bronx where more than 50,000 COVID cases were diagnosed between March 17 to May 1, 2020.

Since I graduated in 2016, I was working in orthopedic surgery full-time, but I had also worked in emergency medicine, urgent care, occupational health, and pain management. As a result, I was able to accommodate very quickly in critical care medicine during the COVID pandemic.

While I was working in critical care, I had to take care of very sick COVID patients who were intubated and breathing through a ventilator machine. So many patients were dying on a weekly basis from COVID that we could not even keep count. I recall that in a typical 12-hour shift, sometimes 3-4 patients, out of a 12 bed unit, were dying from the virus.

Lack of healthcare workers and lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) made it even worse. Everyone was so scared as if we were working in a war zone. The COVID pandemic might end soon but its traumatic experience will certainly haunt front line workers for a long time.

With all these experiences, I am glad the York PA program provided me with the necessary knowledge and personal skills to work through these difficult times.



Transition to Psych Telemedicine



Nicholas Obertis Jr graduated from the CUNY York College PA program in August of 2015. After graduating, Nick worked in the Psychiatric ER for three years at QHC and Jamaica hospital. Eventually Nick wanted to branch out in a new and cutting edge psychiatric urgent care setting, **Mindful Urgent Care**, where he would have more autonomy as a medical provider; managing patients in an outpatient setting, and in a proactive way that would prevent patients from requiring the need for inpatient hospitalizations

Being at Mindful Urgent Care since October of 2018, Nick has been able to accomplish his goals with providing quality care to individuals with various mental health conditions, such as bipolar disorder, to eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders, to anxiety and depressive disorder.

Due to the pandemic of COVID-19, Mindful Urgent Care went 100% tele-psych on March 16th 2020. Nick had helped the company transition to complete virtual visits from his home, continuing the care for thousands of patients, which he is still currently practicing as a Psychiatric PA. Keeping the human element of psychiatric care, showing of empathy to his patients, and being able to relate with them during their darkest moments, has been one of the biggest challenges Nick reported with the transition from office visits to telemedicine.

Other challenges he reported were those who weren't as tech savvy, had issues using the video-conference platform, or were not able to secure places to speak in private about their mental health, as well as the insecurities that come with seeking out for help with mental health disorders.

The toughest for him has been those patients who are medical providers reaching out from being in the frontlines. They speak about what they have gone through, and have seen in the COVID wings, as well as the impact their call to duty had left on them, when they left the hospital to go home to their families each day.

Faculty Spotlight

Emily Davidson, Associate Director of the PA Program for 13 years, officially retired at the end of August 2019. She mentioned that she has greatly enjoyed the opportunity to travel more - Northern California, Paris, Southern California, Baja California in Mexico, and a shorter trip to Vermont in 2019. Unfortunately a trip to Europe, and a shorter one to Selma and Montgomery in Alabama, had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

She hopes to take up her traveling ways once it's possible again. Meanwhile, she's learning new skills while teaching as an online adjunct professor during the quarantine period. Dr. Davidson has been involved with conducting sessions for clinical students while they wait to return to the clinical rotations.

Below is a snapshot of Emily and her wife Linda, at a Paris café last April.



Past Year Events



In October of 2019, the York PA Program made it to the finals while competing in the **New York State Society of Physician Assistants (NYSSPA) Medical Jeopardy**. This competition involves many PA programs throughout NY State. Even though York made it to the finals for the very first time, SUNY Downstate took the win. Congrats to everyone who competed!



For the first time during the 2019 summer intersession, students from the York College Physician Assistant program paired with FNE International to bring healthcare to underserved communities in Peru. Ten first year students and two second year students, spent almost a year in preparation for the trip based out of **Urubamba, Peru**. The students were accompanied by **Michael Malavet**, PA-C who is an adjunct faculty member in the Health Sciences Center and an instructor in the Physician Assistant program. Clinics were set up in the town halls of local communities and ran from about 8 AM to 4PM. In total approximately 400 underserved patients were seen and treated over the course of 5 days.

FACULTY NEWS

Keep In Touch:

CUNY York College PA Program
Health Science Bldg., RM SC 112
94-20 Guy R Brewer Blvd.
Jamaica, NY 11345

paprogram@york.cuny.edu



Contact Us:

Do you have newsworthy activity/achievement to share? Please send specific details and related photos to Sarah Shami sshami2@york.cuny.edu

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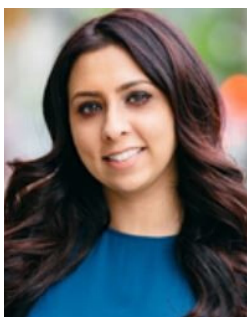


Editor, Design, & Layout:

Sarah Shami, MSPAS, PA-C
Assistant Professor & Clinical
Coordinator



Dr. Harrynauth Persaud, a York PA graduate, transitioned into his role as Associate Director, from Academic Coordinator, in Fall of 2019. He also successfully completed his Doctorate in Public Health from SUNY Downstate last year. He has a recent publication with Dr. Bernard Beckerman in *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, Vol. 46: 2019; 44-46. "Nutmeg Overdose: Spice not so nice."



Sarah Shami, also a former York PA graduate, started her full time role as a Clinical Coordinator in Fall of 2019. She is also working on her doctoral degree in PA education which she will complete this summer, earning a Doctor of Medical Science degree from the University of Lynchburg. She is currently working on some publications related to Women's Health.



Jeanetta Yuan, another former York PA graduate, joined the faculty in Fall of 2019 as a Substitute Clinical Professor and Academic Coordinator. She has many years of experience working in the Emergency Room. Throughout all this, she gave birth to her baby boy Tyler! Congrats!!