

175 Total Students for 2023 Class

26 Students (15% of class) Completed the Honors Program

3 Students Received Distinctions

12% of the Honors Program Students Received Distinctions

Bioethics & Professionalism Honors Program

SSOM 2023 Class

****Note:** These students received a distinction for their capstone projects.

McKinzie Arnold

Title: "Applying a Bioethics Framework to a Soft Opt-out Program for Organ Donation"

Description: Through my first three years of medical school, I built a capstone project with the guidance of my mentor Dr. Emily Anderson in the Bioethics Honors Program. The title of my project was “Applying a Bioethics Framework to a Soft Opt-out Program for Organ Donation” where I reasoned through six steps of bioethics analysis relevant to this potential public health policy. Through an extensive literature review, I analyzed the current evidence detailing how effective a soft-opt out program might be and utilized my bioethics training to detail the potential burdens and benefits of this program including the implications for the bioethics imperatives of Autonomy and Justice. By the end of the Honors Program, I had written a twenty-five-page conceptual capstone paper and presented a poster of my work to my peers and program directors.

Mahuya Barua

Title: "Patient Portal Interest, Barriers, and Group Differences"

Description: This study sought to better understand barriers to online patient portal utilization and to increase online patient portal utilization among patients at primary care clinics affiliated with an academic medical center in the Chicagoland area. Among patients without internet, the strongest perceived benefit of signing up was becoming more engaged with their healthcare; however, concerns over the safety and security of private information prevented signup. For those with internet access, the most important factor was easier access to their healthcare providers and barriers to registration included a lack of understanding of the portal’s benefits, concerns over safety and security, as well as a perceived lack of convenience while using the portal.

Shawn Choe

Title: "Ethical Consideration of Social Media Use in Healthcare: Consideration of Misinformation and Social Media Utilization"

Description: This bioethics honor project was a theoretical project focused on utilization of social media and the effect of misinformation. The case was focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and how utilization of social media, influence of social media and its interaction with legacy media had a large impact in public health and on the patient's perspective in healthcare. This study consisted of both literature review and case studies outlining the need for ethical standards when it came to information sharing. The work ended with scenarios and actions that physicians should take to optimize sharing healthcare information and to effectively fight against misinformation in healthcare.

Nicolette Codispoti

Title: "Bridge to M4 (B2M4): Development of an Innovative Residency Application Preparation Curriculum"

Description: Developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bridge to M4 curriculum was designed to help medical students navigate an exclusively virtual residency application process, under the guidance of experienced faculty. This project elucidated the need for equity in advising, mentorship, and professional development as it relates to the residency application. Despite a variety of unique past experiences, Bridge to M4 empowered all students with similar resources, which in turn addressed the foundational issue of equity. Additionally, Bridge to M4 promoted student wellness by alleviating stress associated with a daunting application process.

****Cindy Cruz Alvarez**

Title: "Evaluating a program to increase medical students' confidence and skills in addressing vaccine hesitancy among Spanish-speaking patients"

Description: One of today's significant problems is the high prevalence of minorities who lack COVID-19 vaccination, including underserved groups. Therefore, I created a program to empower future physicians through skills training, patient-centered scenarios, and collaboration between providers to increase cultural awareness. As a result, the intervention increased competency among medical students and it received particular interest in adding this type of intervention into the medical curriculum. More importantly, it increases cultural sensitivity and advocacy for Spanish-speaking patients.

Mark deBettencourt

Title: "Trust in the Patient-Physician Relationship"

Description: My capstone project was a qualitative research study examining the attitudes and perceptions of our medical school's physician-educators regarding their experiences cultivating trust with their patients and teaching this skillset to medical students in both clinical and classroom settings. The project entailed creating an online survey, conducting a qualitative thematic analysis of the responses, sharing the findings with our school's physician leadership, and presenting the findings at the end-of-the-year Bioethics Honors Capstone Presentation. I chose to conduct this research study because I have a passion for nurturing strong interpersonal connections with my patients, a skillset I think is incredibly important in my desired residency: Internal Medicine.

Rebecca Feltman-Frank

Title: "Ethical Ambiguity: A Pilot Study Identifying Vulnerability in Medical Student Slippery Slope Decision Making"

Description: For my bioethics project, I created and conducted a pilot survey that identified medical student vulnerabilities in ethical decision making complicated by fear and political pressure. The results demonstrated lapses in medical student ethical judgment. This served as a reminder of the potential of all health professionals for wrongdoing and underscored propensity towards repetition of immoral historical events. The pilot study sets the stage for future survey administration at a larger scale to ultimately highlight underemphasized ethical topics and guide areas of focus in bioethics education.

Cayla Guerra

Title: "Open Notes: A rare opportunity to reach vulnerable populations."

Description: As OpenNotes becomes the standard, physicians can learn to use it as a tool for advocacy and improved care with a focus on patients who are members of vulnerable populations. A comprehensive literature review elucidated the fact that people with low socioeconomic status, minority backgrounds, and people whose first language is something other than English all disproportionately report positive impacts on their healthcare via utilization of OpenNotes. This presents our healthcare system with an uncommon chance to help narrow the gap in healthcare equity that exists in our country's system. A compilation of resources has been prepared and made available, including a brief instructional video, with the intent of helping students and providers assist select patients, namely those who could most benefit from reading their medical notes, access them on various platforms.

Kristin Hardy

Title: "An Exploration of the National Football League's Response to Concussions and Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy"

Description: My capstone project is a conceptual essay in which I investigate the National Football League's (NFL) response to head injuries and concussions. My analysis includes a discussion of the early research which suggested a link between concussions sustained through

football and Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), the NFLs initial reaction, and the health consequences resulting from years of negligence. Additionally, I explored the role of guiding ethical principles, especially with regards to the physician-patient relationship, that have been threatened due to an overwhelming love of the game.

Jane Harter

Title: "Role of In-Group Favoritism in Clinical Empathy"

Description: For my Bioethics Honors Capstone, I explored the impact of in-group bias on clinical empathy in the physician-patient relationship. I recognized and reviewed the benefits of clinical empathy on patient satisfaction and outcomes, but also addressed the limitations, particularly with respect to the role of bias when physicians and patients come from different backgrounds. I argued that in diversifying the physician workforce to better represent the diversity of the United States would benefit our patients by better facilitating clinical empathy at both an interpersonal level as well as in representation in medical and public health leadership.

Anneka Johnston-Dumerauf

Title: "Advancing Substance Use Disorder Education in Medical Schools"

Description: The purpose of this project is to reconstruct substance use disorder education at Stritch School of Medicine through: 1. Implementing DEA-X waiver training so that all students are certified to prescribe medication assisted treatment (MAT) on a non-restricted basis following full medical licensure and; 2. Updating the language currently embedded in Stritch's curriculum to reflect dignity and respect to individuals with substance use disorders. Stritch is a justice-centered and forward-thinking institution, with the opportunity to be at the forefront of addiction education. Advancing medical pedagogy regarding substance use disorders will lead to the production of harm reduction trained physicians with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to fight the opioid epidemic.

****Meredith Kushner**

Title: "Transgender Healthcare Equity: The Power of Medical Student Education"

Description: Meredith focused her Bioethics and Professionalism Honors capstone project on LGBTQ+ health disparities and our power and duty as healthcare providers to eliminate barriers for LGBTQ+ patients and promote health equity. Her goal was to prioritize gaps in medical student education on LGBTQ+ healthcare and propose feasible changes that would train future providers with the necessary clinical knowledge and skills to provide equitable care to patients of all gender identities and sexual orientations. In this project, she examined the current state of LGBTQ+ health education at Stritch School of Medicine, determined areas of improvement through qualitative analysis, and proposed curricular reforms to integrate LGBTQ+ health in preclinical medical education at Stritch. Since presenting her findings to the Neiswanger Institute for Bioethics, she is working with faculty members at Stritch to integrate her recommendations for LGBTQ+

educational reform into the required medical student curriculum at Stritch. Meredith earned a distinction for her capstone project.

Ester Masati

Title: "Strengthening Albanian-American Collaboration in Medicine to Promote Advocacy for the Health and Wellness in the Albanian-American Community"

Description: For my bioethics project, I co-founded the Albanian American Medical Student Society (AAMSS) at Stritch SSOM along with Ermelinda Ndoka and Sebastian Kolaj in the fall semester of 2020, and have continued to serve as the co-president. Through this organization, we created a professional medical network between medical students, practicing physicians, local Albanian-American cultural societies and the Albanian-American patient community in Chicago. These relationships and collaborations allowed us to serve as an advising body to future medical students, raise awareness among medical students at Stritch about the intricacies of Albanian culture and their effects on the health of Albanian-Americans, and advocate for health and wellness of the Albanian-American community by organizing free medical clinics.

Kevin McKenzie

Title: "VeggieRx: Addressing Stress Through Access to Fresh Produce and Peer-learning Nutrition Discussions"

Description: Kevin led a project titled "VeggieRx: Addressing Stress Through Access to Fresh Produce and Peer-learning Nutrition Discussions" that explored the effect of increasing fresh produce availability and hosting discussions to improve the health of individuals in food insecure communities in Cook County, IL. Kevin volunteered weekly at VeggieRx, an organization that distributes free or low-cost locally grown produce as well as nutrition education and community discussions surrounding food. He led cooking demonstrations, education, and discussions and collected surveys that measured participant's stress, self-reported health, and other health metrics. His analysis showed participants in the program had lower reported stress, increased perceptions of health, improved food access, increased access to fresh produce, and therefore programs like VeggieRx are a benefit to food insecure populations.

Elizabeth Miller

Title: "Assessment of Patients' Social Needs during COVID-19 pandemic and Policy Recommendations for Addressing These Social Needs"

Description: The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated socioeconomic disparities and intensified social care needs. With Loyola University Medical Center's (LUMC) Department of Community Health and Wellbeing, we took a proactive approach by screening low-acuity, ambulatory patients with recent COVID-19 diagnoses for concerns including housing instability, food insecurity, transportation, financial strain, access to healthcare, and domestic violence and subsequently referred patients to appropriate community resources. The study aimed to identify patient

populations with the highest concentrations of social care needs, and the most prominent social needs within the communities that Loyola serves to improve the efficacy of future patient outreach efforts. Since social care needs are powerful determinants of population health outcomes, the results from this study may help guide future responses to a pandemic by health systems, as well as inform conceptual policy recommendations and ethical implications of addressing patient social needs in a healthcare setting.

Cesar Montelongo Hernandez

Title: “Examining the U.S Policies that Allowed Undocumented People to Become Physicians”

Description: Undocumented people in the U.S. lack much of the documentation that allows U.S. citizens and legal residents to be educated and work. Despite this at present there are now undocumented people that have been trained in the U.S. as physicians. Undocumented physicians are a paradox, a result of the aggregation and interaction of policies enacted over decades at the federal, state, and institutional level. This project outlines the major U.S. policies that resulted in undocumented physicians.

****Tyler Morad**

Title: "Disability Healthcare: A Novel Curriculum for an Innovative Elective"

Description: My capstone project involved the creation of a novel curriculum that focuses on integrating disability education into preclinical training. My passion for disability advocacy began as an undergraduate, and it was further cemented while working for a disability nonprofit organization during my gap year. The *Disability Healthcare* elective, beginning in Fall 2022, will allow students to gain valuable perspectives and insight from physicians, community leaders, and people with disabilities from the community. The course will culminate in a first-of-its-kind standardized patient experience where students will have the unique opportunity to apply communication methods learned throughout the course and elicit a history from a standardized patient with a disability.

Alexander O'Hara

Title: "The Impact of Social Determinants of Health in Patients Undergoing Pancreatic Resections."

Description: Little research has been done investigating the relationship between social determinants of health and surgical outcomes specifically for pancreatic resections. Much of the available literature has been conducted with large population-based databases that lack detailed data crucial in understanding the factors underlying these disparities in health care. Our project was centered on identifying sociodemographic factors that may impact surgical outcomes in patients with pancreatic cancer. Loyola University Medical Center is uniquely positioned to investigate these factors as a tertiary medical facility with a dedicated cancer center providing comprehensive care to a high percentage of minority and underserved patients. Our work helped

to identify several key disparities that exist in the post-operative outcomes of a cohort of pancreatic cancer patients undergoing surgery at our home institution. Future work can now address these identified disparities with the intention of providing equitable, impactful care for patients with pancreatic malignancy.

Kathleen Osea

Title: "Cada Paso: Determining Efficacy & Utilization of a Community-Based Intervention"

Description: Cada Paso is a community-based program that encourages physicians and volunteers to actively connect with community members at their community centers and organizations. Over the last 3 years, Cada Paso- Berwyn has introduced Berwyn community members to resources, with no evaluation of subsequent utilization of these resources by the community members. My capstone was a quality improvement project evaluating the effectiveness of Cada Paso as a potential model for community-based preventative healthcare outside the clinical office setting. In assessing the efficacy of Cada Paso- Berwyn, our team is working directly with community groups to provide concrete data to improve the quality of community-based preventative healthcare with the goal of reducing health disparities in the city of Berwyn.

Laelle Peterson

Title: "Medical Student Perceptions Regarding the Use of Mannequins for Remote Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic"

Description: The early months of the Covid-19 pandemic challenged educators to integrate alternative learning methods into medical education. Medical schools were tasked with creating a cost-conscious solution that allowed for standardized and interactive physical exam instruction without compromising the quality of education. Faculty at Stritch ultimately decided to implement standardized mannequins to help aid in learning of pre-clinical physical exam skills. Stemming from my interest in Academic Medicine, my capstone project investigated second-year medical student perceptions regarding the use of these mannequins in the virtual learning environment.

Jacob J. Pozin

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J. Alex Randall

Title: "Social Contract Theory: An Argument for Health Care Nationalization"

Description: This conceptual capstone project adapted Jean Jacques Rousseau's Social Contract Theory as the basis for an argument that the United States government has an ethical responsibility to provide health care for its people. The argument was contextualized within the U.S. conflicts of individualism vs. collectivism, freedom vs. duty to protect, capitalism vs. cooperation, and the definition of protection. Using historical precedent (ACA expansion, *parens patriae*, and mask mandates) and the foundation of a mutual agreement between individuals and their collective whole as a basis for a government's purpose, I argued that the U.S. government must provide health care to maximize the protection of its people and ultimately fulfill its part of the social contract.

Gabrielle Schweitzer

Title: "MedEd Mentoring: A Semi-Structured Mentoring Program in the setting of COVID-19"

Description: Given the declining number of physicians entering careers in academia, combined with the limited understanding of medical student perceptions of academic medicine, the Academic Medicine Mentorship Program (AMMP) aimed to increase first-year medical student understanding of and exposure to various aspects of academic medicine. This was accomplished by facilitating one-on-one mentoring relationships between students and academic faculty members through matching of personal and professional data points. Evaluation of the pilot year, through qualitative and quantitative analysis, revealed that a combination of personal and professional factors, defined expectations and consistent meetings, with engaged participants may increase exposure to and understanding of various aspects of academic medicine. The AMMP is a student-led initiative that may be readily implemented at other institutions to assist in addressing the shortage of individuals pursuing a career in academics.

Lindsey Staszewski

Title: "Learning the physical exam virtually: assessing student competency and confidence in blood pressure measurement"

Description: For her Bioethics and Professionalism Honors Program Capstone presentation, Lindsey collaborated with the American Medical Association (AMA) to assess medical student performance and preparedness in learning physical exam steps during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Titled, “learning the physical exam virtually: assessing student competency and confidence in blood pressure measurement”, her study utilized a module created by herself and the AMA in order to assess its effectiveness as a possible adjunct to the current curriculum at Stritch School of Medicine. Her results were statistically significant for improvement in student competency, and it is one of few studies in literature that emphasize the student perspective of virtual education and how modules like this one may supplement the current level of assessment and practice of the physical exam at medical schools.

Chloe Williams

Title: "Trans-Inclusive Language in Healthcare: An Ethical and Practical Necessity"

Description: After incorporating primary accounts of and data surrounding experiences transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) patients have in healthcare, the need for inclusive language is clear. This project created basic training on the ethical implications and practical impact that language has, up to and including inequitable healthcare for TGNC patients. The material was delivered as an interactive lecture and is currently being incorporated into different parts of the curriculum at Stritch School of Medicine to make steps toward improved healthcare access, comfort, and trust for a widely disadvantaged community. With the success of this program's establishment, students and healthcare providers will continue to build understanding on its foundation for years to come.