

UC San Diego

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology &
Palliative Care Newsletter



Not subscribed yet? [SIGN UP HERE!](#)

In this edition:

- Spotlight: Teresita Castellanos, LCSW
- What's Happening
- Congratulations
- In the News...



Spotlight: Teresita Castellanos, LCSW



What is your current profession/role?

My current role with UCSD is as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with both outpatient Palliative Care and Geriatric Medicine. In the coming months I will also be supporting our inpatient Palliative Team.

What initially inspired and motivated you to pursue a career in Social Work?

Growing up in San Diego undocumented, I grew up dreaming of one day being able to attend a university. I've always wanted to be in a helping profession. Initially I wanted to be an elementary school teacher; however, quickly learned while working at an after-school program that it was not for me. I then decided to pursue a degree that would allow me to still work in a school as a school counselor instead. Along the way I discovered social work and the many shapes and forms the field has.

What parts of your work have been particularly inspiring or rewarding for you?

Seeing the difference I make in people's lives is the most rewarding. When they feel heard, respected, and validated, that's when I feel I am making a difference. I may not be able to change the situation for that person, but I can walk along with them. While gaining my clinical hours to become licensed, I had different types of supervisors that inspired me and others who fell short. This experience brought me to taking on the position of Clinical Supervisor in order to be the positive mentorship to someone else. My experience helped me see the value of having a good leader and the difference it can make in the shaping of our future therapists. Being in a leadership position was fulfilling; however, I longed for being back to face-to-face interactions with patients. I am thankful for UCSD for giving me the opportunity to learn more about medical social work through Palliative and Geriatric Medicine.

What is your go-to stress relief activity during a busy workweek?

My favorite would be to find ways to laugh, with family and friends. I also enjoy doing my own nails, painting, and binge-watching favorite shows.

If you had to choose a different profession, what would it be?

My first reaction is to say I would choose Social Work again because I feel it's a great fit for my personal values. If I had to choose a different profession, I would choose to be a college professor. It can still happen!

What's Happening

Congratulations to the Hospice & Palliative Medicine and Geriatrics Fellowship Graduates!

Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellows

Anna Astashchanka, MD

Residency: UC San Diego Health (Internal Medicine, Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine)

Medical Degree: University of Colorado

Post-Fellowship: Sharp Health - Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine

Julia Bu, MD

Residency: UC San Diego Health (Neurology, Vascular Neurology)

Medical Degree: Case Western Reserve
University

Post-Fellowship: Scripps Health - Neuro-hospitalist

Lakshmi Kirkire, MD

Residency: Johns Hopkins (Emergency Medicine)

Medical Degree: University of Chicago

Post-Fellowship: University of Vermont Health - Palliative Medicine & Emergency Medicine

Megan Lau, MD

Residency: UC San Diego (Internal Medicine)

Medical Degree: UC San Diego

Post-Fellowship: Stanford Medicine - Hospital Medicine

Vivian Okonta, DO, MPH

Residency: UC Irvine Health (Family Medicine)

Medical Degree: Western University of Health Sciences

Post-Fellowship: UC San Diego Health - Palliative Medicine

Matthew Schoen, MD

Residency: Stanford University (Emergency Medicine)

Medical Degree: Stanford University

Post-Fellowship: Stanford Medicine - Emergency Medicine & Palliative Medicine

Nicholas Tom, MD

Residency: Kaiser Permanente Oakland (Internal Medicine)

Medical Degree: UC Davis

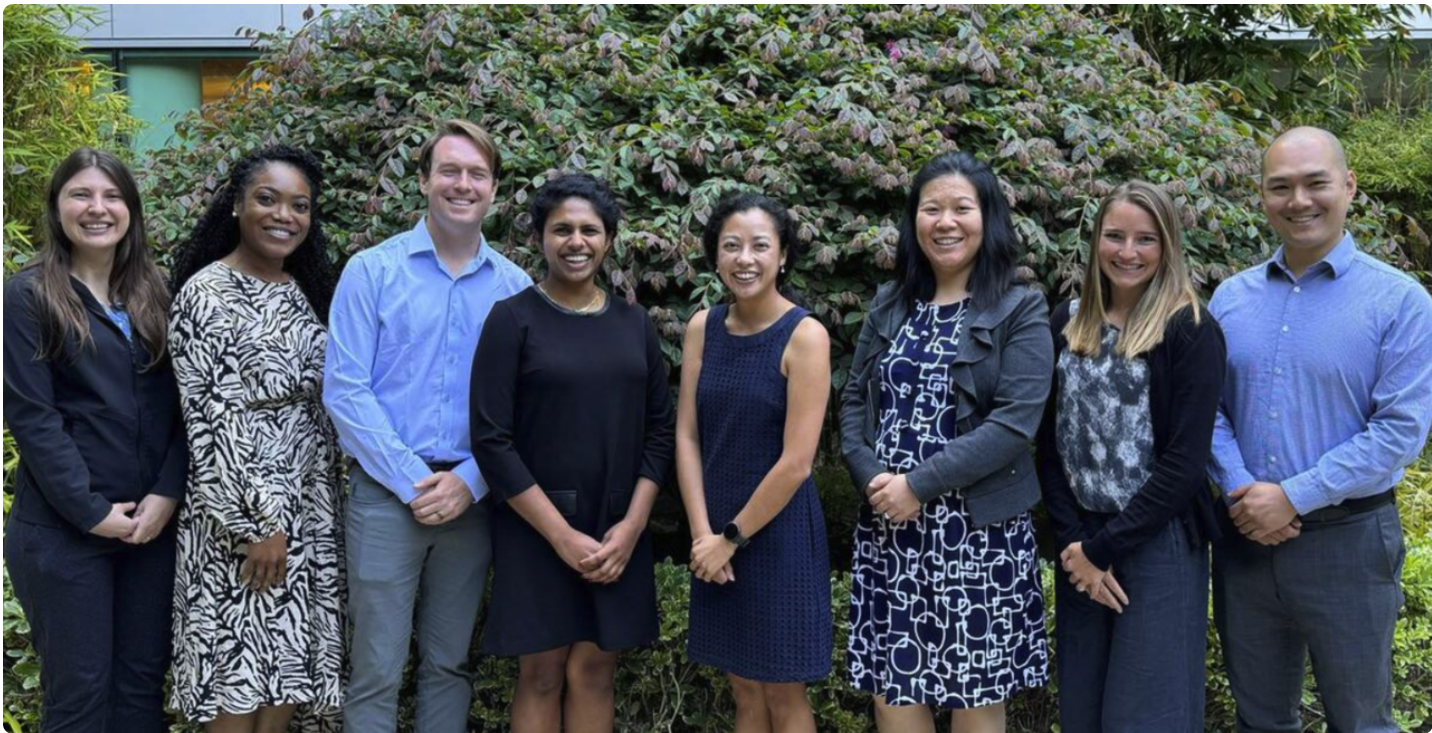
Post-Fellowship: Scripps Health - Palliative Medicine

Julie Wilkins, MD

Residency: UC San Diego Health (Family Medicine)

Medical Degree: New York Medical College

Post-Fellowship: UC San Diego Health - Palliative Medicine



Drs. Anna Astashchanka, Vivian Okonto, Matthew Schoen, Lakshmi Kirkire, Megan Lau, Julia Bu, Julia Wilkins, Nicholas Tom

Geriatrics Fellows

Jaeyoun Choi, MD

Residency: Saint Francis Hospital

Medical Degree: Yonsei University in Seoul

Post-Fellowship: Population Health- UC San Diego Health

Daney Lozano, MD

Residency: Loma Linda University

Medical Degree: Yale
Post-Fellowship: San Diego PACE San Ysidro

Angelica Suarez-Ramirez, MD
Residency: University of Buffalo
Medical Degree: University of Buffalo
Post-Fellowship: Geriatrics Clinic- UC San Diego Health



Dr. EB Sladek, Laura Jimenez, Dr. James Templeman, Dr. Roopali Gupta, Graduating Geriatrics Fellows: Drs. Daney Lozano, Angelica Suarez-Ramirez, & Jaeyoun Choi

More photos from our Geriatrics Fellowship Graduation Celebration:



Drs. Roopali Gupta, Daney Lozano, Angelica Suarez-Ramirez, Jaeyoun Choi



Jennifer Reichstadt, Dr. Roopali Gupta, Laura Jimenez



Drs. EB Sladek & Jeayoun Choi



Family Guest, Dr. Angelica Suarez-Ramirez, Family Guest, Dr. Sarah Bailey, Family Guest, Dr. Jaeyoun Choi, Dr. EB Sladek, Dr. James Templeman, Dr. Daney Lozano, Family Guest



Dr. Alison Moore, Dr. Roopali Gupta, Dr. EB Sladek, Dr. James Templeman, Dr. Daney Lozano, Dr. Jaeyoun Choi, Dr. Angelica Suarez-Ramirez, Dr. Sarah Bailey, Laura Jimenez, Dr. Maile Karris, Jennifer Reichstadt, Dr. Benjamin Han, Dr. Charles von Gunten, Dr. Frank Ferris

[More about our Fellowship Programs](#)

*Congratulations
are in order...*



Congratulations to Dr. Toluwalasé A. Ajayi!

Dr. Ajayi has been named Chair-elect of the American Medical Association Board of Trustees — the FIRST person from our city to rise to this incredible role!

[Read more here](#)

Congratulations to Dr. Jaeyoun Choi!

Congratulations to our Geriatrics fellow Jaeyoun Choi, MD for winning the 2025 CAGI Best Abstract Award among all Fellows at the recent California Academic Geriatrics Institutions Conference on May 30!

Congratulations

TO THE AWARDEES OF THE RUTH COVELL AWARD
IN GERIATRICS – FOR GRADUATES WHO HAVE
DEMONSTRATED COMMITMENT TO GERIATRICS
THROUGH SCHOLARSHIP, LEADERSHIP, AND/OR
PARTICIPATION IN GERIATRICS PROGRAMS.



KIMBERLY GONZALEZ-DAVALOS

Kim Gonzalez-Davalos, a standout UCSD School of Medicine student, has spent the past 4.5 years advocating for marginalized communities—especially older adults—through her work at the UCSD Student-Run Free Clinic and her commitment to providing culturally competent, high-quality care. She aspires to become an internal medicine physician focused on geriatric patients.



LIZ VOLOSHYNA-FARBER

Liz Voloshyna-Farber completed two years in the Ambulatory Care Apprenticeship (ACA) and one year in the Primary Care Clerkship (PCC) under the mentorship of Dr. Ian Neel. She demonstrated a genuine interest in older adults, exceedingly strong clinical skills and will be starting residency in neurology.

UC San Diego

Division of Geriatrics,
Gerontology & Palliative Care

Dr. Aladdin Shadyab was recently featured in The New York Times article, “Can Coffee Help You Live Longer?”
Read the full article [here](#).

Dr. Benjamin Han was featured in the New York Times article titled "Health Risks From Cannabis May Grow as Users Age." Read it [here](#).

Dr. Ian Neel was interviewed on KPBS discussing the recent health violations at an El Cajon skilled nursing facility’s kitchen. Read the full article [here](#).

Not signed up yet? [SIGN UP HERE](#)

Please consider donating to our mission! While we continue to make great strides, we are limited on what we can accomplish with existing funds. We encourage you to become involved with the UC San Diego Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology, and Palliative Care and join us in helping older adults live their best lives longer and improving care for individuals with serious illness. By supporting our efforts, you can ensure that our research, education programs, and clinical care keep pace with the needs of our community and remain strong.

[SUPPORT US](#)



[Contact Us](#)

UC San Diego Health

[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt Out](#) using TrueRemove™
Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.
View this email [online](#).

9500 Gilman Drive MC 0665 | La Jolla, CA 92093-0665 US

This email was sent to .
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.