

Alumni Perspectives  
Why Hopkins?





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**Dr. Maite Del Valle Rolon, Class of 2023**

**Medical School: University of Puerto Rico SOM**

**Current Position: Endocrinology Fellow at Johns Hopkins**

"I knew I wanted a program that allowed me to experience both excellent primary care while at the same time learning to manage complex patients. Although I was initially intimidated by Hopkins' history and prestige, I was pleasantly surprised by the warm and welcoming nature of everyone at the program. It was made clear from the beginning that excellent patient care is the priority. I have really enjoyed using an evidence-based approach while keeping in mind the individualized needs that each patient comes with.

"One of my favorite parts of residency was my continuity clinic at Bayview Medical Center, where I get to serve a mostly Hispanic population. It has been very rewarding to be able to help relief some of the language-barrier issues that can arise with the community. It makes me feel closer to home and part of the community."



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Dr. Natalia Philpott, Class of 2020

Medical School: University of Texas School of Medicine/San Antonio

Current Position: PICU Fellow Lurie Children's Hospital

“I chose Hopkins because I wanted the opportunity to train at a medium-sized program that also served an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse patient population. I felt that few other programs offered the chance to be part of a tertiary referral center while also providing direct care to families of the surrounding community. One of my favorite things about training at Hopkins is that I have the chance to care for a subset of chronically ill children who call Hopkins their medical home, and I have come to know their families very well over my year thus far. My clinic is at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, which was an important draw for me to work with a majority Spanish-speaking population. For fun, my husband (also a pediatric resident), my dog and I enjoy using our annual pass to Shenandoah National Park any chance we get! Baltimore is also home to an amazing food scene, and you can find a festival or neighborhood party nearly every weekend!”

## Dr. Ifunanya Agbim, Class of 2018

Medical School: Howard University College of Medicine  
Pediatrics GI-Nutrition Fellow— Boston Children's Hospital

"I chose Hopkins because of the incredible opportunities to learn and work with amazing faculty and mentors. Hopkins pediatrics is unique by being a stand-alone pediatric hospital connected to a well-equipped and world-renowned adult hospital. The pediatrics department stood out to me during my interview for residency. I was blown away by the warmth and friendliness of the people, especially the program directors, and their enthusiasm about Hopkins Peds. During my time as a resident, I took the opportunity to learn as much as I could in general pediatrics and all its subspecialties. The program directors were very dedicated to diversity. I presided over the diversity council, where I helped with outreach, recruitment, and community programs in the city of Baltimore. One of my GI attendings who also worked with the diversity council played a major role in my decision to pursue a career in pediatric GI. I spent a brief period as a peds hospitalist, practicing inpatient pediatrics after residency, then applied for GI fellowship. All the programs I visited during my fellowship interviews knew the GI faculty at Hopkins and had amazing things to say about the department and the pediatrics program overall. I matched into Peds GI at Boston Children's Hospital, and I recently started fellowship there. My time at Hopkins prepared me extremely well, and the great faculty members and mentors played such an instrumental role in my career trajectory. I truly enjoyed my time at Hopkins Pediatrics, and I am so thankful that I got the opportunity to train there!"



## Dr. Shani Jones Class of 2020

Medical School: University of Florida College of Medicine  
Academic General Pediatrics Fellow- Vanderbilt

"I had the unique experience of gaining insight into Hopkins pediatrics as a visiting medical student prior to my interview day. During these experiences in both clinical and research environments, I was welcomed with open arms by attending physicians, fellows and residents who truly cared about me as a person. I was impressed as a medical student and resident with the dedication to teaching clinical knowledge at every opportunity. During training, I developed a bond with other residents and faculty that I could not have foreseen and the support was palpable. My time in residency showed me the diversity of people in Baltimore as well as those around the country and world who come to Hopkins for treatment. I have a solid foundation in pediatrics thanks to my residency training and I feel well-prepared with the tools to succeed in my next step pursuing a career in General Academic Pediatrics."





## Dr. Robin Ortiz Class of 2019

Medicine School: Loyola University School of Medicine  
National Clinician Scholar, Health Policy Research Fellow,  
University of Pennsylvania and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

"I chose Hopkins for my residency in med-peds because of the unique urban health and primary care curriculum focus of the combined program. However, the med-peds program components, including community engagement, patient centered care, social determinants of health, and intergenerational approaches to understanding disease were already a fundamental part of the Pediatrics residency program and department. In fact, the faculty in both Internal Medicine and Pediatrics shared and embraced the same community engagement interests facilitated by the fact that the campus connects the children's center and world-renowned Harriet Lane Clinic to the internationally recognized adult medicine campus, both across the street from the highly ranked School of Public Health. Further, the faculty understand care as part of a bigger system not independent of the social fabric of Baltimore and the local and national community. This perspective fuels the passions of faculty for teaching and mentoring. For example, because the Pediatric program director knew each of us and our interests personally, she proposed that I along with two fellow residents write a grant to create a curriculum to train our fellow residents in the impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma-informed pediatric practice. We were ultimately successful, and the program continues to this day because of the investment Hopkins Pediatrics makes in ensuring the residents are a part of the foundation and structure of the program. As a president of the diversity council I assisted with recruitment and program development because I was so passionate to enabling others to experience what I had—that my training was fundamental to making me the physician I am today. Not only was Hopkins supportive, but the rich academic environment allowed me to complete numerous projects from community engagement to translational epigenetics research. To this day I continue to work with the mentors I made in residency and I will always appreciate the unique welcoming and supportive environment that is Johns Hopkins."

## Dr. Carlos Salgado Class of 2020

Medical School: University of Maryland SOM

Allergy & Immunology Fellow- Stanford

"Baltimore has been my home for the last 7 years. When it came time to decide where I wanted to do my pediatric residency, Johns Hopkins was a no brainer. I was thrilled about the opportunity to continue to care for the diverse inner-city population that I had come to love and appreciate while living here. Three years have gone by and I still cannot describe what an incredible experience it has been. I shared laughs, meals and tears with co-residents that I now consider part of my family. I was welcomed and given the opportunity to care for some of the most resilient, courageous and thankful families that I have ever met. I advocated for patients to have access to basic necessities to promote their health and was supported by attendings, nurses and other outstanding ancillary staff who were always there to help me grow. My experiences at Hopkins has helped me to become the pediatrician I would be eager to see as a child. What I would give to get to do this all over again."





## Dr. Vanessa Ozamaro Jeffries Class of 2017

Medical School: University of Minnesota SOM  
Emergency Medicine Physician, St. Agnes Hospital

"When I interviewed at Hopkins, I was most impressed by the breadth of experiences that the program offered its residents. From providing excellent primary care, to managing the most complex patients, I was confident that I would graduate a well-rounded physician. My decision to come to Hopkins was further influenced by my attendance at the Diversity Dinner the night of my interview. I was welcomed by residents, fellows, and faculty from diverse backgrounds. As a resident, I served as chair of the Diversity Council, and worked with both my co-residents and faculty to improve underrepresented minority recruitment to our program. I've always appreciated Hopkins commitment to training physicians that reflect the diversity of the surrounding Baltimore community. I currently work as an ER attending at Saint Agnes Hospital, the program's affiliated community teaching hospital. As a graduate from the Harriet Lane Residency, I feel that my training has given me confidence in managing a wide range of patients, despite limited access to pediatric subspecialists at our site. I love that I continue to work with pediatric residents, and I'm always so impressed by their critical thinking skills and by how they serve as advocates for their patients. It's awesome that Hopkins provides such enriching opportunities."



## Dr. Matthew Buendia Class of 2020

Medical School: University of Tennessee College of Medicine  
Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition Fellow- Vanderbilt

"I chose Hopkins Pediatrics because I felt so comfortable on my interview day meeting the house staff, multiple faculty members and program directors. It was evident that the residents were close and seen as a family after leaving my interview, and I am pleased to say my experience is exactly that. The deep-rooted history intertwined with the support from faculty and leadership was clear then and is even more today. The opportunities to work with a diverse and vulnerable patient population constantly challenge me to be a better pediatrician. The leadership team consistently listens, responds and adapts to our rapidly changing medical system and culture to support resident education and wellness. I know that my co-residents will be lifelong friends, as we have supported each other through stressful times, but have also experienced unforgettable memories together as a family — class retreats, crab feast and exploring the city to name just a few. I could not be more proud to learn each and every day from an exceptional and passionate group of pediatricians and look forward to calling them my colleagues."





PEDIATRICIAN LEADERS  
ALUMNI WHO ARE PAVING THE WAY

# DR. LETITIA DZIRASA COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH BALTIMORE CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Dr. Letitia Dzirasa is the first African American female Commissioner of Health for the Baltimore City Health Department, the longest, continuously running health department in the country. She was appointed to this role in March 2019.

She is a pediatrician and public health professional whose areas of interest include advocacy for equitable care access, obesity management and prevention, trauma informed care in children and adolescents, and expanded use of technology to improve health outcomes. Prior to joining the Baltimore City Health Department, Dr. Dzirasa worked at Fearless Solutions, a Baltimore based digital services firm that builds custom software solutions for local and federal government clients. In her role at Fearless as Health Innovation Officer, Dr. Dzirasa was responsible for managing the Healthcare IT portfolio for the company and provided clinical subject matter expertise to HIT projects.

Dr. Dzirasa trained at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in pediatrics from 2007-2010. Additionally, she worked for Johns Hopkins Community Physicians from 2010-2013 as a general pediatrician and served as medical director for school-based health and quality at Baltimore Medical System from 2013-2016. In addition to holding a B.S. from University of Maryland, Baltimore County in biological sciences, Dr. Dzirasa graduated from Meharry Medical College, Summa Cum Laude, in 2007. She chose Hopkins because of its academic and clinical excellence and because of her desire to serve in an underserved community.

# DR. VERONICA GUNN CEO AND CO-FOUNDER GENESIS HEALTH CONSULTING



Dr. Veronica Gunn is CEO and co-founder of Genesis Health Consulting, the only national consulting firm solely focused on improving child health and well-being.

After completing pediatric residency and chief residency at Johns Hopkins, Dr. Gunn obtained a master's in public health with concentrations in health policy and analysis, and injury and violence prevention at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health because she wanted to complement her clinical training with policy tools that would enable her to address root causes of poor health. Her career experiences include research in virology, health outcomes and health policy; as well as service in policy roles at the state and national levels.

Prior to starting Genesis Health Consulting, Dr. Gunn co-founded one of the first pediatric health innovation programs in the nation, supporting the development and implementation of novel models of care delivery that improved child health outcomes and shifted incentives towards investing in health. Her Hopkins experience contributed greatly towards Dr. Gunn's approach to systems change as a means of measurably and sustainably improving child health.

# DR. KEVIN JOHNSON

## INFORMATICIAN-IN-CHIEF, CORNELIUS VANDERBILT PROFESSOR CHAIR OF BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS



Kevin B. Johnson, MD, MS is Informatician-in-Chief, Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor and Chair of Biomedical Informatics, and Professor Pediatrics at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. He received his MD from Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore and his MS in Medical Informatics from Stanford University. In 1992 he returned to Johns Hopkins where he served as a Pediatric Chief Resident. He was a member of the faculty in both Pediatrics and Biomedical Information Sciences at Johns Hopkins until 2002, when he was recruited to Vanderbilt University. He also is a Board-Certified Pediatrician.

Dr. Johnson is an internationally respected developer and evaluator of clinical information technology. His research interests have been related to developing and encouraging the adoption of clinical information systems to improve patient safety and compliance with practice guidelines; the uses of advanced computer technologies, including the Worldwide Web, personal digital assistants, and pen-based computers in medicine; and the development of computer-based documentation systems for the point of care. In the early phases of his career, he directed the development and evaluation of evidence-based pediatric care guidelines for The Johns Hopkins Hospital. He has been principal investigator on numerous grants and has been an invited speaker at most major medical informatics and pediatrics conferences. He also was the Chief Informatics Officer at Vanderbilt University Medical Center from 2015-2019.

He is the author of over 130 publications and books or book chapters. He is a member of the VUMC Academy for Excellence in Education. Nationally, he directs the Board of Scientific Counselors for the National Library of Medicine, is a member of the Council of Councils for the NIH, leads the American Board of Pediatrics Information Advisory Committee, and is member of the National Advisory Committee for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program. He has held numerous other leadership positions throughout his career.

# DR. LANIER LOPEZ

PEDIATRIC RESIDENCY PROGRAM DIRECTOR AND VICE CHAIR OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



Dr. Lopez is an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine. She is the Vice Chair of Education for the Department of Pediatrics and is a Pediatric Hospitalist with a focus on Graduate Medical Education research in the areas of remediation, resident wellness and quality improvement.

She has served as the Pediatric Residency Program Director at the UNM SOM for the past 5 years and served as the Vice Chair of Meetings for the Western Region of the Association of Pediatric Program Directors for 2 years.

After completing her undergraduate degree in Biology with an emphasis in Molecular Biology at Eastern New Mexico University, Dr. Lopez spent 2 years in the Undergraduate Scholarship Program at the National Institutes of Health and then completed her medical school training at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine. She completed her Pediatric Residency training at Johns Hopkins which inspired her pursuit of a career in Hospitalist Medicine and medical education.

# DR. JOAN REEDE

## DEAN FOR DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE AT HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL



Dean for Diversity and Community Partnership and Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Reede also holds appointments as Professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and is an Assistant in Health Policy at Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Reede is responsible for the development and management of a comprehensive program that provides leadership, guidance, and support to promote the increased recruitment, retention, and advancement of individuals from groups underrepresented in medicine, with disabilities, women, LGBT, and from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Dr. Reede is an authority in the area of workforce development and diversity. She has served on the DHHS Committee on Minority Health and the Advisory Committee to the Director of the National Institute of Health, the Board of Governors of the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center, and the External Scientific Panel for NIH's Enhancing the Diversity of the NIH-funded Workforce Initiative. She has also served on the Advisory Committee to the NIH Deputy Director for Intramural Research and is a past Chair of the Group on Diversity and Inclusion (GDI) at the Association of American Medical Colleges, and of the National Academy of Medicine Interest Group on Health Populations/Health Disparities.

Dr. Reede graduated from Brown University and Mount Sinai School of Medicine. She completed pediatric residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, and a fellowship in child psychiatry at Boston Children's Hospital. She holds an MPH and an MS in Health Policy Management from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and an MBA from Boston University.

# DR. LAURA SANTOS

## MEDICAL DIRECTOR NYU PEDIATRIC AND NEONATAL TRANSPORT



Dr. Santos is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the New York University Grossman School of Medicine. She is board certified in Pediatrics and Pediatric Critical Care Medicine. In addition to her roles as attending physician in the Pediatric ICUs at Hassenfeld Children's Hospital at NYU Langone and New York City Health and Hospitals - Bellevue in New York City, Dr. Santos serves as the medical director of the NYU Pediatric and Neonatal Transport Program. Her clinical research interests focus on the prevention of delirium in the pediatric ICU with a particular focus on disparities among families with low health literacy as well as those with decreased English proficiency.

Dr. Santos began her career as an undergraduate at the Johns Hopkins University only to return to Baltimore 8 years later for her residency in Pediatrics at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. She chose Hopkins for residency because, despite it being a world-renowned medical center with an incredibly rich history and legacy, she found the faculty unpretentious, approachable, and eager to impart their vast knowledge to budding Harriet Laners, who repeatedly become leaders in the field of Pediatrics.



# DR. STEPHANIE OMOKARO

DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF MEDICAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT  
U.S. FDA CENTER FOR DRUG EVALUATION AND RESEARCH



As the Deputy Director for the Division of Medical Policy Development, in FDA's Center of Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER), Office of Medical Policy (OMP), Dr. Omokaro, leads a diverse staff of medical, pharmacy, nursing, public health, legal, project management and administrative professionals in development and implementation of new and ongoing policy initiatives across the drug development, post marketing, and drug supply continuum.

Dr. Omokaro holds a B.S. in Biochemistry from Cornell University, and received her M.D. from Boston University. She completed a pediatric residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital and a fellowship in pediatric hematology oncology at Johns Hopkins Hospital and the National Cancer Institute, and then worked on bone marrow failure at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

Prior, to joining the Office of Medical Policy, she held positions at the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research - Office of Blood and Blood Products as a medical reviewer of biologics and hematologic products, then at CDER's Division of Gastroenterology and Inborn Error Products as a lead medical officer, where she evaluated numerous drug development programs for liver drugs.

# DR. EDWARD JUNKINS

## ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES CHAIR, DEPT OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE



Dr. Edward Junkins is a Professor of Pediatrics and is presently serving as the Associate Dean for Assessment and Outcomes, and the Chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at the Western University of Health Sciences.

He has a breadth of experience as a pediatrician, educator, clinical researcher and executive administrator for more than two decades. Besides his board certification in pediatrics, emergency medicine and the public health sciences, Dr. Junkins has teaching interests in best-practices of diversity and equity, cross-cultural communication and social determinants of health. Dr. Junkins has served on multiple professional boards, multidisciplinary committees and task forces, building partnerships and influencing policies promoting wellness. He has been elected to both the Corvallis School Board and to the Corvallis City Council, as well as served on multiple foundations throughout the community. He was recently appointed by the Governor of Oregon to serve on the SB770 Taskforce on Universal Healthcare in Oregon.

Dr. Junkins is a former Robert Wood Johnson Scholar who received his fellowship training and Master of Public Health from the University of Utah School of Medicine, his internship and residency training at the Johns Hopkins Hospital Children's Center, his Medical Degree from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Dr. Junkins lives with wife, who is also a pediatrician, and their five boys in Corvallis, Oregon.

