

# FOCUS ON UCSF FRESNO

July 2020



*Teach*

## UCSF Fresno Physicians Graduating During COVID-19 Pandemic



*Photo: Yosemite Firefall, Sean Meshkin, DO, UCSF Fresno Department of Surgery, Chief Resident, PGY 5*

*By Brandy Ramos Nikaido*

Graduating classes across all levels of education this year, share the common bond of moving to the next phase of their life, education or careers during a pandemic. With more than 100 medical residents and fellows, along with three oral and maxillofacial surgery dental residents and four physician assistants, the UCSF Fresno Class of 2020 is a unique one. UCSF Fresno was recognized as a branch medical school campus during their training, with a dedicated cohort of students in the UCSF San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education that will be trained at UCSF Fresno for two and a half years — longer than any other cohort of medical students. The UCSF Fresno Class of 2020 helped set the standards for this achievement. The UCSF Fresno Class of 2020 also confronted a novel new disease, COVID-19. In addition, they were set to graduate just as the nation erupted in protest rightfully calling for an end to police brutality against Blacks and longstanding systemic racism.

The UCSF Fresno Class of 2020 showed resiliency, determination and courage by utilizing their knowledge, skills and influence to adapt to new ways of learning, provide high quality care and advocate for patients regardless of their background or ability to pay. Many of the graduates are staying in the Central Valley to care for patients, teach future physicians or continue their medical education.

“Regardless of their specialty or sub-specialty, these newly minted physicians and health care providers share the common bond of confronting a novel new disease and as a result, adapting to new ways of learning and caring for patients during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Michael W. Peterson, MD, associate dean at UCSF Fresno. “They are entering the workforce at a time when they are needed most as health care providers and to advocate for patients and address the consequences of poverty, discrimination and health disparities. We are pleased to have helped them fine tune their skills and to see the physicians they are today.”

UCSF Fresno held a virtual commencement to recognize graduates on June 11. Graduates from Community Medical Centers General Dentistry Residency program also were recognized.

Click [here](#) to view the UCSF Fresno 2020 Commencement webpage.

#### **UCSF Fresno 2020 Graduation Highlights:**

- 70% of residents and fellows completing training in the Department of Emergency Medicine are staying in the Central Valley to provide care.
- 44% of residents and fellows completing training in the Department of Family and Community Medicine are staying in the region.
- All three fellows in the Hospice and Palliative Medicine (HPM) program are staying in the Valley. Two are joining the HPM faculty at UCSF Fresno.
- 44% of internal medicine residents (categorical) are staying in the Valley
- 50% of residents completing training in the Department of Pediatrics are staying in the region
- 63% of all graduates are staying in California to provide care or continue their education

#### **The following received awards:**

- Eric Reid, DO, UCSF Fresno Internal Medicine Residency Program, “Outstanding First-Year Resident,” Community Medical Centers (CMC)
- Nicholas Artinian, MD, UCSF Fresno Family and Community Medicine Residency Program, “Outstanding Resident or Fellow Teacher,” CMC
- Liana Milanes, MD, UCSF Fresno Family and Community Residency Program, “Outstanding Attending Teacher,” CMC
- Harlan Husted, PharmD, Community Regional Medical Center, “Outstanding Non-Physician Teacher,” CMC
- Mackensie Yore, MD, UCSF Fresno Emergency Medicine Residency Program, “Borba House Staff Research – Resident Award”
- William Chiang, MD, UCSF Fresno Emergency Medicine, Wilderness Medicine Fellowship, “Borba House Staff Research – Fellow Award”

- Amir Fathi, MD, UCSF Fresno Department of Surgery, “Borba Faculty Research Award”
- Angela Sehgal, MD, UCSF Fresno Internal Medicine Residency Program, “ICare Award,” VA Central California Health Care System
- Tara Brah, MD, UCSF Fresno Obstetrics/Gynecology Residency Program, “Leon S. Peters Resident of the Year Award,” Leon S. Peters Foundation
- Eric Lindvall, DO, UCSF Fresno Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, “Kaiser Award for Excellence in Teaching”
- Tara Brah, MD, UCSF Fresno Obstetrics/Gynecology Residency Program, “Steven N. Parks Leadership Award,” Fresno Madera Medical Society

**The 2020 graduating class includes:**



**Nicholas Artinian, MD**, is the first in his family to go to college and to become a physician. He completed training in UCSF Fresno’s three-year Family and Community Medicine Residency Program.

“Training at UCSF Fresno has been an amazing experience due to all the knowledgeable and eager-to-teach physicians across all specialties,” said Dr. Artinian. “As a family medicine resident, we get to experience different fields of medicine and every positive encounter has shaped how I practice medicine.”

Dr. Artinian was recognized with the Outstanding Resident Teacher award presented by Community Medical Centers’ Jeff Thomas, MD.

His parents, who themselves did not finish high school, worked tirelessly to provide for him and his sister, Dr. Artinian said. He earned his undergraduate degree at UC Santa Barbara and medical degree at St. George’s University. His sister will graduate from veterinary school in Arizona this year.

Dr. Artinian spends his spare time with family and friends, playing soccer with the UCSF Fresno resident team and exercising.

He will practice in Bakersfield and Tehachapi with Kaiser Permanente as an outpatient physician.

“Over the past five years, I had the pleasure of helping patients from Stockton to Fresno while in medical school and residency, respectively,” said Dr. Artinian. “These positive, long-lasting experiences influenced my desire to care for underserved patients in the Central Valley and the proximity to family in LA also played a part in moving to Bakersfield.”



**Sukhjit Dhillon, MD**, completed a four-year residency training program in Emergency Medicine at UCSF Fresno and will stay as Emergency Medicine faculty. Fresno is home, said Dr. Dhillon, and I am excited and grateful to work at the same place that trained me.

A native of Punjab, India, Dr. Dhillon grew up in Fresno, but said instances she recalls in India when her family could not afford quality care motivated her to become a physician who advocates for patients. “Emergency medicine allows me to do that. I get to take care of patients regardless of their ability to pay and I can be there during their most vulnerable time.”

She considers herself fortunate to have matched with UCSF Fresno’s Emergency Medicine Program. It’s one of strongest programs throughout the country, she said. “I love the people who I work with here — co-residents, physicians, nurses and other staff members. Everybody is extremely supportive and always there to help you in any way possible.”

Dr. Dhillon has given back to the community. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, she worked with Rais Vohra, MD, UCSF Emergency Medicine faculty member and Interim Health Officer at the Fresno County Department of Public Health. Dr. Dhillon wrote various guidelines and protocols using Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations, such as testing criteria, risk assessment tool, and screening guidelines for health care and non-health care workers. She continues to help at the health department as time allows and hopes to continue that work.

Dr. Dhillon graduated from Buchanan High School in Clovis and received a bachelor’s in Biomedical Physics from Fresno State. She earned both a master’s in biomedical sciences and a medical degree at Chicago Medical School.

“I would have never made it this far without the support of my family, friends and mentors,” said Dr. Dhillon. “I am very fortunate to have a very strong support system.”



**Ryan Howard, MD**, completed a fellowship in Hospice and Palliative Medicine (HPM) in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at UCSF Fresno. After graduation, Dr. Howard will serve as Medical Director of Kaweah Delta Hospice and Palliative Medicine Services in Visalia.

“Working to aggressively control previously unmanageable symptoms and providing empathetic and compassionate care to folks nearing the end of their lives is just something I felt called to do,” Dr. Howard said. “I am honestly humbled by the grace and courage so many families demonstrate in order to help and allow their loved ones to die peacefully. I wake up and go to work every day just hoping to make a positive impact on the lives of my patients and their families.”

Patients with very serious illnesses are among the most vulnerable patient populations and their families are often equally as vulnerable, he said. He chose to complete a fellowship in Palliative Medicine because of the serious need for such care providers in the region. All three of the Hospice and Palliative Medicine fellows are staying in the Central Valley. Two of them are joining the HPM faculty at UCSF Fresno.

Working alongside faculty was the best part of training at UCSF Fresno, Dr. Howard said. They are passionate about the specialty of medicine in which they work. They are excellent educators and lead by example.

Dr. Howard attended the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, worked as an EMT in Florida and earned a medical degree from Florida State University College of Medicine. He completed residency training in Family and Community Medicine at the University of Arizona. After residency, he worked as a hospitalist at Kaweah Delta and was honored as Outstanding Physician of the Year Award for Compassionate Care.

He and wife, Michelle, own land near Three Rivers, which they are developing. Dr. Howard gives thanks to his wife for her support during his fellowship and residency training. She is my rock, he said.



**Christina Patty, MD**, completed a three-year residency training program in Family and Community Medicine at UCSF Fresno. After graduation, she plans to serve her home community at Visalia Medical Clinic where she was a patient growing up.

Dr. Patty chose family medicine because of the relationships she's able to build with patients over many years. The specialty also allows her to pursue many interests and it is never boring, she said.

The best aspect of training at UCSF Fresno is full spectrum training in both rural and urban settings, she said. And it's allowed her to learn from some of the best doctors in the Valley.

She spends off-time with her two-year old son and husband, Rafael Martinez, MD. Dr. Martinez completed training in Family and Community Medicine at UCSF Fresno last year. He now works for United Health Centers in Parlier. Dr. Martinez and Dr. Patty met in high school and went to prom together. The couple is expecting their second child a few months after graduation.

A graduate of Redwood High School in Visalia, Dr. Patty completed her bachelor's at California State University, Long Beach and earned a medical degree from Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara.

"My path to becoming a physician in the Valley has been even more rewarding because I've shared my journey with my husband all the way from high school through residency," said Dr. Patty.



A first-generation college graduate, **Ivett Garcia Renteria, MD, MPH**, completed her final year at UCSF Fresno as chief resident in the Department of

Pediatrics. She will join the Department of Pediatrics as faculty at UCSF Fresno and see patients as a pediatric hospitalist and general outpatient pediatrician.

“I wanted to help provide leadership, grow my teaching skills as an attending physician in a supportive environment, learn administrative skills in an academic setting and be involved in training the future of medicine by educating medical students and residents,” said Dr. Renteria.

“The reason I was initially drawn to the San Joaquin Valley is the same reason that I decided to stay, said Dr. Renteria. “I want to care for the underserved Hispanic population and provide health education to those who are underserved and empower them to take control of their child’s health care needs.

The best part of training at UCSF Fresno has been the people, the people she trained with, her mentors and the children and families she is privileged to care for, she said.

When not working, she enjoys outdoor adventures with her husband and 17-month old son.

Dr. Renteria attended Glendale Adventist Academy, graduated from UC Irvine, earned a master’s in public health from USC and a medical degree from St. George’s University.

She credits her success to her parents. Her parents came to the U.S. from El Salvador to give her and her brothers a chance at the “American Dream.” The fact that I was able to accomplish my dream of becoming a pediatrician is all owed to them, she said. “They worked hard for me to get to where I am today. I will be forever grateful for their support, love and dedication to me becoming a pediatrician.”



**Manavjeet Sidhu, MD, MBA**, completed a four-year emergency medicine residency program at UCSF Fresno as a chief resident.

Dr. Sidhu will start as Chief of the Fresno VA Medical Center Emergency Department. In addition, he will stay on at UCSF Fresno as emergency medicine faculty.

“I plan to stay in Fresno following residency, though I am not originally from this area,” said Dr. Sidhu. “I want to give back to the city that trained me. There’s a personal satisfaction that comes from providing care in a medically underserved community.”

In addition, he is looking forward to serving veterans, teaching residents clinically and continuing as a practicing physician.

Dr. Sidhu chose to train in emergency medicine at UCSF Fresno because the program offers a unique training experience given the patient volume, diversity of patient population, variety of pathology, and abundance of procedures. In addition, faculty, staff, and fellow residents foster a positive environment, he said.

Dr. Sidhu, a native of the San Fernando Valley in California, graduated from UCLA and earned a medical degree and Master of Business Administration as part of a joint program at New York University where he's also a faculty member. He has consulted for multiple health care related companies and serves on the boards of health care ventures. Some of his interests outside of clinical medicine include advising for medical start-ups, health care finance and medical correspondence reporting. Earlier this year, he worked with ABC News in Manhattan, producing medical segments for World News Tonight, Good Morning America and Nightline.

In his spare time, he enjoys golfing, flying, scuba diving, and traveling with friends and family. "It is difficult to envision what the pinnacle (of my career) will be," said Dr. Sidhu. "But I would like to make a lasting, positive impact on the community. Though the future is unknown, what I do know is that I will enjoy the journey."

[Print Newsletter](#)



# UCSF Fresno Breast Surgeon, Oncologist Provide Care, Support for Male Breast Cancer Patient

*Hanford farmer Bill Tos*

*By Barbara Anderson*

The small lump on Hanford farmer Bill Tos' left chest was breast cancer – something unimaginable.

Three years ago, when Tos, 61, felt the bump on his breast tissue while in the shower, he initially dismissed the thought that it could be breast cancer. Women – not men get breast cancer – he thought. He waited a few weeks for a regularly scheduled appointment with his doctor to have the growing mass checked.

When a mammogram and biopsy confirmed the mass was breast cancer, “to say the least, I was stunned,” Tos said.

Breast cancer is exceedingly rare in men. Less than 1% of men will get breast cancer in a lifetime, as opposed to about 12% of women. And men often delay getting diagnosed for breast cancer because it is so unexpected.

After his diagnosis, Tos prayed, leaned on family and friends for support, and he turned to health professionals for help.

He was referred to Ibronke Adelaja, MD, a UCSF Fresno surgeon whose specialty is breast cancer. Dr. Adelaja took a detailed family history. She examined Tos, performed a biopsy and ordered scans to determine if the breast cancer had spread to other parts of his body. The cancer was in two lymph nodes and a PET scan (positron emission tomography) also showed a small spot on his right hip.

Tos had stage 4 breast cancer. “I was stunned at that too,” he said. “I was thinking I’m going to be a stage 2 (cancer that has grown into the lymph nodes but has not spread to another part of the body).”

Dr. Adelaja offered reassurance.

“He’s a farmer, a great businessman. And I think not being able to figure out what was going to happen was overwhelming to him. And, like a lot of women with breast cancer, we talked to him. We talked to him about counseling and even about anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medicine. And I told him, you are fighting this and you are doing everything you possibly can to fight this with the goal that you are going to survive and thrive.”

Treatment for men with breast cancer follows the guidelines for women, with a few exceptions. The standard treatment for breast cancer that has spread beyond the breast is for chemotherapy before surgery. Dr. Adelaja referred Tos to Haifaa Abdulhaq, MD, the director of hematology at UCSF Fresno and director of the Hematology/Oncology fellowship program at UCSF Fresno.

Dr. Abdulhaq started Tos on two chemotherapy drugs to shrink the cancer. He received four doses of the drugs every two weeks for two months. A third drug was given weekly for 12 weeks. “This is a very standard, aggressive chemotherapy regimen that we give in women,” Dr. Abdulhaq said.

Tos and wife, Linda, felt confident in Dr. Abdulhaq’s treatment recommendations when their daughter, a registered oncology nurse, said “Oh if they’re connected to UCSF, you’re in good hands.”

“It was very much comfort to me to have UCSF here and their reputation,” Tos said.

Having treatment close to home also eased the burden of five months of chemotherapy. “Can you imagine me doing all of this, driving to San Francisco or driving to Los Angeles to get this kind of treatment? When I was getting my infusion, I would just go in and take the infusion and go back to work. I was only a 30-minute drive away.”

Continuing to work throughout cancer treatment was important to Tos. A third-generation Hanford farmer, he is a partner with his brother, son and nephew in Tos Farms, Inc., growing walnuts, almonds, fresh table grapes, peaches, plums, nectarines, apricots, cherries and some corn. Tos Farms was founded in 1912 by his grandfather Joe Tos, a Dutch immigrant.

Tos tolerated the chemotherapy well. “They give you all the pre-meds to keep the nausea down. And the cancer reacted to the chemotherapy. It really knocked it down,” he said. “It was almost dead, gone, nonexistent at the end of the five months.”

The next step was breast cancer surgery. Dr. Adelaja found only a very small area of cancer remained in the left breast tissue. The lymph nodes were negative for cancer. She performed a bilateral mastectomy, removing both breasts. Tos had tested positive for the BRCA2 gene, placing him at an increased risk of developing cancer on the right, unaffected side. Any man with breast cancer gets genetic testing to determine if he is positive for the BRCA genes that increase the risk of developing cancer, Dr. Adelaja said. “Until proven otherwise, it’s assumed a man is BRCA gene positive because cancer in men is so rare.” Men who are BRCA gene positive also are at increased risk of other cancers, including prostate, pancreatic cancer, as well as a special type of melanoma that happens in the eye.

Linda Tos praised the care her husband received before, during and after surgery. For example, Tos is a towering, 6 feet 10 inches tall and Dr. Adelaja ordered a bed in the hospital that he would fit on, she said. The extra-long bed was a small, but important detail, for her husband’s comfort.

Following surgery, Tos received radiation to his chest wall and Cyberknife directed radiation treatment to his right hip. The cancer also had been tested for sensitivity to estrogen. Although men have lower levels of the hormone estrogen, their cancer can be sensitive to it. Tos' cancer was estrogen positive, which made him a candidate for anti-estrogen therapy, Dr. Abdulhaq said.

Since the surgery in October 2016, he has been clear of cancer.

Tos said he learned that many people had prayed for his recovery. "There is something about the power of prayer," he said. "Prayers aren't always answered the way you want them to be answered, but in my case, Our Creator and Redeemer decided to give me some more time."

The experience changed him. "You can't live forever and you know all those things, but there's a difference between knowing it and experiencing it," he said. "When you go through the emotional side of addressing that and dealing with that, it's more difficult than the diagnosis."

Tos recalls he feared he would not be alive to walk his daughter down the aisle at her impending wedding. Dr. Adelaja helped him focus on the positive – the cancer was treatable. (Dr. Adelaja received a photograph from Tos that had been taken at the wedding of him walking arm-in-arm with his daughter).

Linda Tos provided emotional support for her husband throughout the cancer treatment. She sometimes called on the UCSF Fresno physicians when she fell into despair. "I could call Dr. Adelaja and Dr. Abdulhaq and they would pitch in," she said. "I just felt that support was there."

Tos said understanding and support were crucial in weathering three emotional shocks: the diagnosis of breast cancer; that it was late-stage disease and that he carried the BRCA2 gene. "It was boom, boom, boom," he said.

Tos has a message for men. Breast cancer is not just a "woman's thing."

"Accept the fact that it (breast cancer) could happen, and if it does get it looked at. Never, never, never wait or procrastinate. If you feel something in your chest or your breast or whatever, just get to your doctor and get it biopsied. Do not wait. My waiting a month or six weeks may have allowed it to spread to my hip."

[Print Newsletter](#)

*Research*

**UCSF Fresno Pediatric Cardiologist Creates Device to Protect Colleagues from COVID-19**



*Athira Nair, MD, FAAP, displays device*

*By Barbara Anderson*

UCSF Fresno pediatric cardiologist Athira Nair, MD, FAAP, stepped out of her comfort zone of caring for children’s hearts early this spring to create a device to help protect colleagues — emergency department and intensive care physicians from potential exposure to COVID-19.

Dr. Nair concentrated on helping physicians who work within inches of a patient’s face during intubation, a procedure to insert a tube through the mouth and into the airway. As the tube is inserted, microscopic airborne droplets can spread throughout a hospital room, placing health care workers at risk of inhaling potentially contagious particles.

“I felt frustrated and helpless, and I wanted to do something to give some extra protection to physicians and health care workers,” Dr. Nair said.

[She found inspiration on the Internet](#) for creating a plastic aerosol box to trap droplets expelled into the air. On Facebook, a Taiwanese anesthesiologist demonstrated how such a box could stop droplets from spreading. Physicians and health care workers are gowned and masked during intubations – and the aerosol box does not replace personal protective equipment — it adds a layer of protection as the physician is opening the patient’s mouth, looking at the vocal cords and putting in the tube.

“The tube is a direct connection between the person’s airway, which is where the virus resides. So, the box is a physical barrier,” Dr. Nair said. “When the procedure happens, the virus basically hits the plastic and can’t go anywhere else.”

With a concept for an aerosol box in hand, Dr. Nair needed help with construction. She turned to her Clovis neighbor, Jay Russell, a woodworking hobbyist, to see if he could modify the design she’d seen on the Internet to make a special barrier box for physicians at Community Regional

Medical Center (CRMC). Russell, a former Marine and retired UPS worker, agreed to help. “I said, ‘I have never worked with plastic before, but we’ll figure it out.’”

Dr. Nair bought sheets of plexiglass at hardware stores, and Russell bought new blades to cut the hard plastic. Their first box was not a success. “We didn’t have the right glue,” Russell said. He did more research and found a glue that would make a tight bond, like a liquid weld. “And we just sort of went from there,” he said.

Together, they have built four workable 2-foot cubes. Each cube is open at the bottom to fit over the patient’s head and torso and includes an opening for bagging a patient and for the tubing. A shower-like curtain cut into strips prevents droplets from escaping at the one end. A large hole in the back and another in the side allow the physician to fit hands inside to perform an intubation.

Russell is proud of the custom designed boxes. “I came up with the little side doors to protect the medical professionals,” he said

“By using the box, a doctor doesn’t have to worry as much about their safety during a procedure, and the doctor can give the patient full attention,” Dr. Nair said.

Three of the boxes are used at CRMC and a special pediatric box is at Clovis Community Medical Center in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit.

Physicians appreciate the airway aerosol box made by Dr. Nair and Jay Russell, said Stacy Sawtelle Vohra, MD, Emergency Medicine Residency program director at UCSF Fresno. “It is a helpful addition to our personal protective equipment that may significantly minimize physician exposure to infectious droplets from patients with COVID-19 during intubation,” she said. “We are filled with gratitude by the support of our community and fellow physicians as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic in the emergency department.”

In addition to intubation, the box can help protect physicians during other procedures where droplets can be aerosolized, such as CPR, or a bronchoscopy to look at the airway and an endoscopy to view the gastrointestinal tract. “There are a lot of extended uses for it. It all depends on the comfort of the doctor or the health care professional using it,” Dr. Nair said.

Dr. Nair and Russell have made the boxes for the cost of materials – about \$150 per box. CRMC reimbursed them for the boxes. They are willing to make more, if other hospitals want the aerosol boxes. “Whoever needs it can say what they need and I’m sure we can provide it,” Dr. Nair said.

“Jay has this down to a ‘T.’ He can churn one box out in three or four hours,” she said.

Before Dr. Nair approached Russell about building aerosol boxes, he spent time in his shop cutting boards for corn hole games, and other woodworking hobby projects. He takes pride in his new plastic-cutting skills, and the boxes he has built. “My whole intent was, if you can protect one doctor, then that’s what this is all for,” he said.

He praises Dr. Nair for the project's success. "It's all because of the doctor," he said. "She's the one that is driving this. She's a very busy lady, with a small, young daughter, but she got this together. All the credit should go to her."

Dr. Nair is grateful to be able to provide the aerosol boxes. "I hope this helps to keep doctors physically safe and helps to reduce the levels of stress associated with the potential for exposure to COVID-19," she said. "Stress is a real issue. We have to take care of patients, but we also have to take care of our families during this pandemic, and we can be concerned about the potential of exposing them to the virus."

Safety of faculty at UCSF Fresno and residents, who have been providing health care on the frontlines during the pandemic, has been a top priority of UCSF Fresno.

[Print Newsletter](#)



## UCSF Fresno Medical Residents Partner with Fresno County Department of Public Health for COVID-19 Response

*Sukhjit Dhillon, MD*

*By Barbara Anderson*

The outbreak of COVID-19 required adjustments at UCSF Fresno this spring, including curtailing Emergency Medicine clinical rotations to protect medical residents from potential exposure to the coronavirus. With a reduced training schedule, and time on their hands, several residents chose to help at the Fresno County Department of Public Health writing guidelines for response to the virus, and in the process gained an understanding of a community's response to a pandemic they otherwise would have missed.

The first resident to offer services at the health department was Sukhjit Dhillon, MD, who was completing a four-year training program in Emergency Medicine when COVID-19 travel restrictions scrapped plans for attendance at a two-week elective toxicology rotation in India. Dr. Dhillon, who is staying on as Emergency Medicine faculty at UCSF Fresno, instead reached out to Rais Vohra, MD, FACEP, FACMT, interim Fresno County public health officer, to see if she could be of assistance.

During residency, Dr. Dhillon had worked in the emergency department at Community Regional Medical Center (CRMC) with Dr. Vohra, an emergency physician and UCSF professor of Clinical Emergency Medicine and Clinical Pharmacy. This was a chance to work alongside him in a public health setting, which fit perfectly with Dr. Dhillon's interest in health outreach and education.

Dr. Vohra assigned several tasks to Dr. Dhillon, including the formulation of county guidelines for COVID-19 testing, as well as risk assessments for first responders, health care workers and the public. Dr. Dhillon helped write various guidelines such as a screening tool for health care and non-health care businesses. "We used CDC and WHO guidelines and modified them to make them more applicable to the needs of our county" Dr. Dhillon said.

COVID-19 took away an opportunity for Dr. Dhillon to study abroad but gave her firsthand experience in the public health response during a crisis. "I had very limited exposure to public health and what the public health department is responsible for until I had the opportunity to work with them," she said. "They are involved in pretty much every aspect of health care; such as infectious disease monitoring and treatment, emergency medical services, environmental services, public education and so much more that I haven't even had a chance to explore or learn about."

The health department tapped Dr. Dhillon to answer questions and provide education about COVID-19 for county public health workers, first responders, educators, pastors and others. She and other UCSF Fresno residents helped the staff at the county with contact tracing. "It taught us why contact tracing is important and how potentially one person can spread the disease to many individuals – sometimes one individual had 20 plus close contacts that we had to contact and educate."

After Dr. Dhillon, other Emergency Medicine residents showed interest in volunteering and she helped bring them aboard, with approval from Stacy Sawtelle Vohra, the Emergency Medicine Residency Program director at UCSF Fresno.

Scott Goddard, DO, a first-year Emergency Medicine resident, contacted Dr. Vohra about volunteering when his anesthesia rotation was canceled. Dr. Goddard worked with staff at homeless shelters in setting up telemedicine for homeless clients. “Primary care is one of the most helpful things we can do for this population,” he said. “They are such a vulnerable population and they deserve health care the same as any one of us.” The time he spent at the health department was an eye opener, Dr. Goddard said. “It’s been a really interesting adjunct to my education this year.”

Dr. Dhillon, who worked closest with Dr. Vohra at the health department, credited him with the opportunity UCSF Fresno medical residents had to participate in public health. “He was our connection,” she said. “He made it very easy. He would say, ‘come on over and I’ll introduce you to everybody.’”

With Dr. Vohra’s encouragement, she filmed a COVID-19 public service education announcement in Punjabi, her native language. “I was super scared to be in front of a camera but was able to overcome that fear with the support of Dr. Vohra and other staff at the public health department.”

The health department benefitted from the first- and second-year residents’ time spent in public health, said Dr. Vohra. “We are very appreciative of the services that UCSF Fresno residents have contributed to the health department,” he said. “Emergency Medicine residents Scott Goddard, Jesus Martinez, MD, Sofia Froelich, MD, and Samantha Williams, MD, have all been able to rotate with us and help us with setting up protocols and guidelines to respond to exposures and quarantine individuals. We are happy to have their contributions! We hope to continue this really vital connection and create a formal Public Health elective for all UCSF Fresno residents and medical students that may be interested.”

Dr. Dhillon said helping during the pandemic was “an amazing opportunity and helped solidify her plans for community outreach and education.” She hopes to continue the association and become another connection between UCSF Fresno and the Fresno County Department of Public Health. “I have been fortunate to have had the chance to work with such a supportive and hardworking group of people and hope to continue to work with them even after graduating from my residency program.

[Print Newsletter](#)

*Inspire*

UCSF Fresno  
People Spotlight



*Lori Weichenthal, MD*

UCSF Fresno's success and growth are a direct result of the dedication and inspiration of our faculty, staff, residents, fellows, students, alumni, partners, donors and friends. In each issue of Focus, we introduce you to the people who contribute to the greatness of UCSF Fresno through informal interviews.

This month, please meet: **Lori Weichenthal, MD**, assistant dean of Graduate Medical Education at UCSF Fresno.

**What is your name? Nickname?**

Lori Weichenthal. I have never had a nickname, probably because my first name is too short, and my last name is too long and difficult to pronounce.

**What is your title or titles at UCSF Fresno?**

Professor of Clinical Emergency Medicine

Assistant Dean of Graduate Medical Education

Associate Program Director, Emergency Medicine

**Where did you grow up and where did you go to school (high school, undergrad, med school and residency training)?**

I grow up in San Jose and Los Gatos, California. I went to Archbishop Mitty High School in San Jose. I graduated from UC San Diego and earned my medical degree at the UCSF School of Medicine. I did my residency training at UCSF Fresno.

**Who or what inspired you to become a doctor and why did you pick your specialty?**

There were multiple factors that inspired me to be a physician, but one of the big ones was my seventh-grade science teacher, Mr. Koch, who was a medic in the Korean War. He shared his love of science and his stories of saving lives on the battlefield and it inspired me to turn my love of science into a way to help others.

In medical school, I knew I wanted to practice in a field of medicine that allowed me to work with an underserved population and to help people of all ages and backgrounds. The two fields I was considering was emergency medicine and family medicine. I did those two rotations back to back and found that I loved the acuity and constant variety of the emergency medicine department.

**What brought you to UCSF Fresno?**

When I was a medical student at UCSF, they did not have a residency program, so my advisor suggested I come to Fresno to see what it was like. I fell in love with the people, the patient population, the faculty and residents, and the nursing and ancillary staff. Even as a medical student, I felt part of a team. It was my first choice for a residency program, and I am happy to still be part of the team 26 years later.

**What is the hardest aspect of your job?**

As an emergency medicine clinician, knowing that even if you do your best, sometimes the outcome for your patient will not be good and knowing the suffering this causes to the patient and his/her loved ones.

**What is the most rewarding aspect or aspects of your job?**

I enjoy working with patients at a point in their lives that is difficult and hopefully making the situation a little better.

I love working with residents and seeing their development over four years as they mature into compassionate and competent EM physicians.

**Is there a specific project or initiative you developed or contributed to that you are especially proud of?**

I am proud of starting a wellness program and curriculum in the EM residency at a time when physician wellness was not considered to be important. I am also proud to have brought physician wellness to the UCSF Fresno community through the wellness committee and all the great work it does.

**If you didn't take the career path you're on now, what career would you have pursued and why?**

I was an English Literature minor in college, and I love to write. If I could not have been a physician, I would have loved to write novels and to bring joy to people through the written word.

**What do you like to do for fun? How do you find balance personally and professionally?**

I used to be a long-distance runner, but my body has told me I need to take a break so now I enjoy long walks with my dog. I love to ocean kayak, read great books, and eat good food. I also like gardening both flowers and vegetables.

Finding balance between work and personal life is always difficult but I try to remember that work will never be done and that is okay. Time with my family and friends is precious and just as important, if not more. Time on this planet is finite and no one's gravestone says, "I wish I had worked more."

**The zombie apocalypse is coming, which three people at UCSF Fresno would you want on your team and why?**

Tiffany Robinson. She is uber organized and always has a positive attitude. She would make sure we have food and shelter, all with a smile on her face.

Danielle Campagne, MD. She can do almost anything, and everyone loves her. She could probably befriend the zombies and have them working for us in a few days.

Sharon McClain. She is also uber organized and calm and rooted. She would remind us to take deep breaths and stay in the present moment.

**What would you like people to know about your family?**

My parents grew up in working class families in upstate New York and were the first in their families to attend college. They migrated to California in the 1960s and education and social justice were very important to them and they instilled these values in both of their daughters. My father died when I was 21 but my mom still lives independently two houses away from me.

**What's something people don't know about you, but you'd like them to know?**

I have been writing a novel for 10 years now. Someday I will get it done!

[Print Newsletter](#)



## Fuel the Future: Challenge for UCSF School of Medicine Fresno Branch Campus

### *UCSF SJV PRIME Students*

The Fresno Branch Campus of the UCSF School of Medicine is committed to recruiting and training the top medical students in the country and retaining them to practice in the region through our UCSF San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education (SJV PRIME).

Our peer institutions are going to great lengths to make medical education more affordable and accessible. UCSF Fresno must do the same by offering robust financial-aid packages to ensure that our most promising students can afford a world-class medical education at home.

“We recognize the ever-increasing costs of medical education and of living expenses for students. We must offer our extraordinarily talented medical students the comprehensive resources and financial aid necessary to thrive and graduate from UCSF without enormous debt. They are the future of medicine,” said Talmadge E. King, Jr., MD, dean, UCSF School of Medicine.

By making a gift now, you can participate in the Fuel the Future Challenge and double the impact of your giving. Made possible by the generosity of Richard and Kathryn Kimball, this challenge provides a \$1 million matching pool with a goal of \$2 million in new endowed scholarship support over a limited time period. These scholarships will assist our SJV PRIME students with demonstrated financial need.

At UCSF Fresno, medical students benefit from a unique learning experience, training alongside world-renowned faculty members who embrace innovative ideas in clinical care, education, and research. And our public university mission – pioneering health care for the benefit of all – makes UCSF Fresno a magnet for students focused on social justice. However, not all students

who hope to train as physicians at the UCSF School of Medicine Fresno Branch Campus have the financial means to do so. By establishing an endowed scholarship or giving to one that already exists, you can make a difference in the life of a talented student.

For more information, contact Cynthia Harris, director of development, at (559) 499-6425, [charris@fresno.ucsf.edu](mailto:charris@fresno.ucsf.edu) or click [here](#) for more details.