

July-Aug 2020 Residency Times

Resident Spotlight: Dr. Beza Sahlie and Dr. Abdullah Hafid

2020 Preventive Medicine Program residents

By 2025, Michigan will be facing a severe shortage in primary care physicians. Research has shown that primary care reduces mortality rates associated with heart disease and cancer, and those states that have higher ratios of primary care providers have lower healthcare costs and better overall population health. Michigan Doctors (MIDOCS) is a state and federally subsidized program designed to encourage medical students to consider primary care by providing educational debt relief for those willing to make a long-term commitment to serve in a state-designated underserved community. It comprises a partnership among the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the medical schools at Wayne State, Michigan State, Central Michigan, and Western Michigan Universities.

Under the auspices of MIDOCS, WSUGME increased its Family Medicine residency program through creation of an **Urban Track** (FM-UT), which began with two residents in 2019 and now has six total. MIDOCS also supports our newly accredited **Preventive Medicine** (PM) Program, with two residents a year starting in 2020. The goal of the PM Program is to train physicians for specialization in preventive medicine and public health and prepare them for leadership roles in academic or clinical preventive medicine, healthcare management, state and local healthcare departments or clinical epidemiological research. During their training, PM residents will work at two ambulatory practice locations: Covenant, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), Health Centers Detroit Foundation, a FQHC-like center in Detroit, and Wayne County and Detroit City health departments.

The FM-UT and PM residency programs will build on the WSUSOM's commitment to urban clinical excellence, providing improved access to quality healthcare for underserved populations. Residents in these programs will experience the opportunities, challenges and rewards of practicing in urban or rural areas while taking advantage of financial incentives to reduce their educational debt. And

the MIDOCS framework will significantly contribute to the creation of a sustainable, high-quality, high-value healthcare delivery system in Michigan.

Our inaugural PM residents are **Dr. Beza Sahlie** and **Dr. Abdullah Hafid**, who have just started their Transitional Year training. Dr. Sahlie was born and raised in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Her desire to become a physician began at a young age. “Growing up in a developing country, I witnessed first-hand the devastating impacts of poverty, health disparities, and civil wars in my community,” she notes. Dr. Sahlie attended Georgia State University as an undergraduate and received her medical degree from Trinity School of Medicine. After moving to Michigan, she provided medical care to uninsured patients in a free clinic in Ferndale. She was excited to hear about the PM Program at WSUSOM, since it “aligned with my passion to promote public health in underserved communities as well as provide medical care to those in need, and it allows me to have a broader reach in the community and make meaningful impact on population health.” Dr. Sahlie is currently in her first month of rotation and has learned much from her preceptor and patients, being fully immersed in clinical medicine and receiving ample support and guidance from the PM Program. She finds the Motor City a “very diverse and vibrant place,” which despite its recent economic comeback still suffers from “significant health disparities unmasked by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately impacted underserved communities.” As such, “Preventive Medicine is now more important than ever to close the health disparity gap that exists in the US.” Upon completing her residency, Dr. Sahlie will continue her commitment to treating those in dire need of medical care, addressing community health concerns by reducing morbidity and mortality associated with chronic health conditions. She may work as medical staff for a public health department in order to address the health disparities gaps at a county or regional level.

Dr. Abdullah Hafid grew up in Northern Virginia, a large suburban region adjacent to Washington, DC. Like Dr. Sahlie, he felt drawn to medicine as a calling to community and public service from an early age. He attended George Mason University for undergraduate studies and then

received his medical degree from the University of Sciences, Arts and Technology in Montserrat. Having a background in Integrative Medicine, Dr. Hafid was fascinated by a YouTube talk by Dr. James Blessman of WSUSOM's Department of Family Medicine and Public Health Sciences, sponsored by CURES (Center for Urban Responses to Environmental Stressors) at Wayne State, about allergies and asthma. When he applied for PM residencies and found that Dr. Blessman was now the PM Program Director at Wayne, he knew he had found a model for just the type of physician and researcher he wanted to be. Upon arriving in Detroit, Dr. Hafid felt very welcomed and sensed both excitement and curiosity from clinical faculty and staff; he was also happy that the weather was warmer than he had expected, although he has yet to experience a Michigan winter. With regard to his future career path, he would like to practice in an academic setting with a focus on Preventive Medicine.

Dr. Blessman is excited about his new role as the PM Program Director. "Our focus will be optimizing lifestyle, problem solving, and effective behavior change through interventions that touch multiple socioecologic levels, including environmental structure, and policy. I could not be more pleased with the Dr. Sahlie and Dr. Hafid, two very promising practitioners with whom to begin this journey," he notes.

Dr. Sahlie and Dr. Hafid are dedicated to the core Preventive Medicine principles of disease prevention and health promotion, particularly salient at this moment when the pandemic may continue unabated without robust public-health interventions. For Dr. Sahlie, the PM Program "will equip residents with the skills and tools needed to have a broader reach in the community so we can prevent a public health crisis in the future." Dr. Hafid commends the PM Program's "unique combination of clinical, academic, research, and public health training, which will equip physicians to be effective healthcare leaders on local, state, federal and global levels."

For more information on the PM Program, see <https://familymedicine.med.wayne.edu/preventive>