



Nov-Dec 2022 Residency Times

Faculty Spotlight: Zachary Johnson, MD

Clinical Instructor, Internal Medicine – Ascension Providence Rochester Hospital (APRH)

Residency Times: Where did you grow up, and where did you attend college and medical school?

Zachary Johnson: I am a native Michigander. I was actually born at the facility that I currently work in, although the name has changed over the years from Crittenton Hospital to Ascension Providence Rochester Hospital. I grew up in Oxford, Michigan but attended Lake Orion Community Schools. After high school, I completed a BS in Biomedical Sciences at Central Michigan University located in Mt. Pleasant and received my MD from Central Michigan University College of Medicine. Ultimately I was accepted into the Internal Medicine residency program at APRH and transitioned to a full-time faculty position this fall.

RT: How did you become interested in medicine?

ZJ: I have always been interested in science, particularly biology and genetics. My interest in internal medicine solidified when I helped rescue my brother during a seizure event. On one beautiful summer day, my brother and I set out for an afternoon of fishing. We departed in our small boat, baited our hooks, and repeatedly cast them into the water hoping for a catch. A short while later, I noticed that my brother was exhibiting delayed responses in our conversation. Suddenly, he gazed into the distance and became completely unresponsive. His eyes panned across the sky, and he abruptly collapsed. As he fell, he hit the boat, and rolled toward the water. I immediately grasped him, holding him from the water. By this point, he was frantically convulsing. While holding him, I instinctively maneuvered the boat toward shore and directed a local resident to contact 911. Luckily, my brother entered a postictal phase just before we reached shore. From this situation, I realized that being a physician and making a difference in the lives of others was my passion.

RT: You're the newest member of the Dept. of Internal Medicine, having graduated from the program last May - congratulations! What are your current interests in academic medicine?

ZJ: Thank you. It has been an honor to continue to work with junior residents and watch them transition into their careers! They are all intelligent and skilled Internal Medicine physicians who will deliver compassionate, evidence-based care to their communities.

My current interest in academic medicine is Point of Care Ultrasound (POCUS) Training, recently initiated in our program. I enjoyed learning how to use ultrasound since it was a blend of physical science (the physics of ultrasound technology) and patient care. It is a great tool in that it provides loads of clinical data while the physician awaits the results of other diagnostic testing. Unfortunately, my POCUS training had to be cut short during my residency because the supervising faculty left the

program. However, I recently completed the American College of Physicians' POCUS training course in Chicago and cannot wait to start ultrasound lectures and gel rounds with the residents.

RT: Do you have a teaching philosophy?

ZJ: My educational philosophy involves guiding residents to be independent learners who have a lifelong desire to learn and use a growth mindset. In my view, the ideal teacher/mentor is a leader who has the responsibility to lead by example. During rounds with my team, I provide diagnostic and treatment algorithms for each patient and occasionally also research articles on best practices related to care so that we can discuss evidence-based medicine and changes in guidelines. This allows the learner to see my passion for lifelong learning!

RT: Would you recommend specific practices to residents to help maintain well-being?

ZJ: Wellness is a complex and personal journey for all residents. Our residents not only learn their interest in or preference for inpatient vs. outpatient medicine but also which subspecialties they enjoy and find most fulfilling. I recommend all residents keep an open mind to each specialty rotation as they can learn various things from each for their future practice.

Wellness also extends beyond our work life! I have found that spending time with family and also engaging in exercise such as golf recharges my batteries for the next day at work. In our fast-paced environment, we sometimes forget to take a second to focus on the current situation and to be thankful for our blessings. I recommend all residents take a moment in each day to reflect and be thankful for something in their life.

RT: What was life like for you during COVID?

ZJ: During April/May 2020 of the pandemic, I was completing my residency, and my wife and I were expecting a baby girl that July. This is when case counts were at all-time highs. I got a phone call one evening asking for my help in covering the ICU for the upcoming month. I accepted the responsibility. My wife and I were nervous about possibly bringing the virus home, given she was around 5-6 months pregnant. Since there was no data on how COVID could affect the baby or her or even how the virus was spread, I decided to leave home to keep them safe, moving back home with my parents, who thankfully they didn't live too far from APRH. But they were also worried about contracting the virus and offered me their camper to stay in. They moved the camper next to the house, close to the router so I could access WiFi for work, and connected an extension cord to the camper for power. I spent May 2020 living in the camper while I worked in the ICU to keep my family safe from COVID.

RT: What was the last great nonmedical book you read, one that you believe all residents should read?

ZJ: Given my 20- to 30-minute commute to work, I have gravitated to audiobooks to maximize my time. The last nonmedical book I listened to is Robert T. Kiyosaki's *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, which I recommend all residents should read! As physicians we spend so much time studying evidence-based medicine that we may lose touch with practical, everyday matters such as money management. I think it's important for everyone and especially residents to learn about personal finances given our often onerous situation with medical school debt. Kiyosaki's book teaches the reader how to think about money and generate wealth.