



## AU/UGA Medical Partnership, St. Mary's fill all positions in Internal Medicine Residency Program

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Athens, GA – March 18, 2024** – The Augusta University/University of Georgia Medical Partnership Internal Medicine Residency Program (IMRP) at St. Mary's has announced another successful Match Day. The program filled all residency positions to welcome its ninth class of internal medicine residents in Athens.

“We are honored once again to have received so many truly exceptional applicants to our program,” said Dr. Lela Ward, program director for the IMRP. “The supportive medical community, dedicated volunteer faculty, exceptional staff, and commitment of St. Mary’s Health Care System to quality care truly make this an excellent program to learn and to train physicians in Northeast Georgia.”

The IMRP, which received full accreditation from the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education in October 2016, is a joint effort by the AU/UGA Medical Partnership and St. Mary’s. Residents are medical school graduates who are entering the final stage of their medical education: a three-year, hands-on program with progressive levels of responsibility that ends in certification by the American Board of Internal Medicine.

“While we have seen a dramatic decrease in the number of COVID hospitalizations and deaths, the Class of 2026 will be facing new and unprecedented challenges in the healthcare world,” said Dr. Eric Schuck, St. Mary’s chief medical officer. “Continued post-pandemic-related health challenges, along with the need to continue to provide ever-higher levels of quality and satisfaction for patients with more and more chronic illnesses, will be a significant challenge for these new physicians. I have no doubt that this outstanding class of physicians is up to the task.”

The IMRP Class of 2027 and the schools at which they completed their medical education are:

- Safurah Bharwani, MD: Medical University of Silesia, School of Medicine in Katowice
- Luis Cardenas, MD: University of South Carolina, School of Medicine Greenville
- Graham Ferguson, MD: St. George's University

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- Timothy Le, DO: Lincoln Memorial University, DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Batul Momin, DO: Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Sheena Mondeddu, DO: Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Marisela Plascencia, DO: Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Stephane Rivard, DO: Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Aswin Sembu, DO: Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Kinjal Suthar, MD: American University of Antigua College of Medicine
- Noah Tollin, MD: St. George's University

In addition, the program matched a preliminary year intern, Frank Merlino, MD. He earned his medical degree from the Medical College of Georgia.

The new residents will begin practicing at St. Mary's Health Care System on July 1.

"This is another exciting year in the history of the Internal Medicine Residency Program," said Stonish Pierce, president and CEO, Trinity Health of Georgia, which includes St. Mary's. "We are confident this next class will continue the tradition of compassion and excellence demonstrated by their predecessors. St. Mary's is proud to be an integral part of the IMRP and its success in bringing more medical doctors to Georgia and to the Athens region."

"I am so excited to have this group of residents join us. Their experiences, diversity, and talent will continue to strengthen the Internal Medicine Program," said Medical Partnership campus dean, Dr. Shelley Nuss. "I look forward to seeing what these young physicians will do in our community over the next three years."

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