2020-2021 Golden Stethoscope Nomination

Nominated for: Fostering Curiosity

Name of Nominee Dr. Sana D. Karam

Dr. Karam is a firm believer in basic science research and its ability to not only improve treatment outcomes, but also improve the quality of life of her patients. She encourages you and challenges you to think deeper about the underlying mechanisms of the disease and the possible biological underpinnings of response and resistance to therapy. I do not think that I have had a conversation with her that did not somehow lead to a new research idea or a new hypothesis for recently acquired data from her lab or from a clinical trial that she is running. Her enthusiasm for science, learning, and her patients is evident every day, in every conversation, and in everything that she works towards. I have included some quotes from her team members in this letter.

"She challenges her team members to come up with translational applications based on their basic science, going so far as to contact drug companies to create small molecule inhibitors. Some of these ideas have translated to successful clinical trials." - Dr. Bickett

"Regardless of your apparent seniority on the team, she wants you to contribute your ideas to the conversation and will take the time to have a conversation with you. She will work with you to come up with a hypothesis and experimental design to make it happen." - Michael Knitz, MS

On top of her clinical work, Dr. Karam is dedicated to training incoming graduate students, MD/PhD students, medical students, and clinical fellows. She encourages anyone interested in science to pursue it and always has her lab door open for anyone who wants to get some hands on experience. If she doesn't have experience in the topic that you are interested in pursuing then she will connect you with a top expert in the field to collaborate on that idea with you. On the other hand, she also encourages her lab members to shadow her in the clinic to see the impact that their work has on patients and the challenges that her patient population faces.

As an MD/PhD student myself, I have had the honor of working with her in both the clinic and in the lab. She has pushed me to never stop questioning how we treat patients and how we could treat patients better in the future. She is always encouraging me to follow the data wherever it leads and to find inspiration from my clinical work and my knowledge of the biology. I believe that her ability to foster curiosity in her students and her team members creates a collaborative environment that is pushing the boundaries of therapeutics in head and neck cancer research and practice. One could not ask for a better mentor for fostering curiosity at any point in one's career. I highly recommend her for a Golden Stethoscope for fostering curiosity.

"You bring Sana one idea and somehow you always leave with 30." Jacob Gadwa, MS

Written by: Laurel Darragh

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