

Q&A with Research Challenge finalist Victoria Danan

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Ventilator access in the first days of the COVID-19 pandemic was troublingly limited. Many wondered how ventilators were being distributed to patients. That question compelled Victoria Danan, a medical student at Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine at Florida Atlantic University (FAU), to look deeper.

Her curiosity on the topic led to a research project and eventual poster presentation—“Winning the Ventilator Lottery: A Comparison of Five Scarce Resource Allocation Protocols in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic”—earned her a spot in the AMA Research Challenge.



Victoria Danan

To advance to the research challenge, Danan’s poster was selected as the top five poster presentations from the AMA Research Symposium, the largest research event for medical students, residents and international medical graduates, this past December.

To get to five, the research symposium began with 1,000 submissions. Approximately 500 of which were selected for presentation in a virtual Research Symposium poster gallery. Of those, the top scored posters were featured in a poster competition and voted on by participants. The final group of

five posters represents the innovative thinking needed to drive medicine forward. The finalists cover a wide variety of topics, including the effects of electronic cigarettes, ventilator access during the pandemic and emotional intelligence in relation to burnout.

The next step in the process—the inaugural AMA Research Challenge—offers the five finalists the chance to present to a group of experts in medicine. The event will premiere on YouTube Jan. 13 at 7 p.m. CT. In advance of that competition, Danan offered some insight on her project.

AMA: What drew you to your research topic?

Danan: The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on everyone's lives and on everything we know. As the pandemic was developing, we started wondering what the protocols were, how they differed, and how fair they were.

AMA: Poster presentations are typically done in-person. As with so many things this year, this event had to go virtual. What was the experience like doing a virtual poster presentation?

Danan: It is my first poster presentation, and having it be online was a huge help for me, as it eased me into public speaking. I spent a whole day doing multiple takes and practicing my presentation skills, watching it back, and improving on it. It was a great first learning experience, but I did miss the in-person interaction one would get at in person presentations.

AMA: How have you managed your workload as a medical student as well as your poster research?

Danan: It has been challenging, but FAU has an amazing support system. This project could not have been done without our mentor, Dr. Luck and FAU residents Dr. Jordy Godinez and Dr. Jared Kelly, who guided me and my colleague, Sabina Fridman, through the project this summer. Medicine, just like research, is a team sport, and without a good and supportive team, nothing can be done on your own.