

# A year later, AMA Research Challenge finalists see impact

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Medical students and residents can help contribute to the health of the nation in the realms of clinical care and scientific research. That is the basis for the AMA Research Challenge, the largest national, multispecialty research event for medical students, residents and fellows, and international medical graduates. The challenge offers young and aspiring physicians a chance to showcase their research on a significant stage.

Taking place Dec. 8 with a broadcast on YouTube, the finals of the 2021 AMA Research Challenge will feature a group comprised of five finalists—three medical students and two residents, including an international medical graduate—presenting their research posters to a panel of four expert judges. The winning entry will be awarded a \$10,000 grand prize from sponsor Laurel Road.

Before the 2021 event kicks off, finalists from last year's event provided an update on where their work and their careers stand.

*How did your experience as an AMA Research Challenge participant influence your career?*

**Eli B. Levitt, a fourth-year medical student at Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine:** “The project helped me realize my passion for medical education research. Medicine changes so fast, and medical education is in a position to continuously adapt to account for the strongest evidence. I hope to stay involved in academic medicine and orthopaedic surgery throughout my career.”

Levitt's interest in medical student burnout and its contributing factors, resulted in a poster presentation—“High Emotional Intelligence is Associated with Lower Medical Student Burnout in the Clinical Year”—that earned Levitt a spot in the AMA Research Challenge.

*What's the biggest lesson you took away from interacting with judges?*

**Shamsh Shaikh, a fourth-year medical student at Boston University School of Medicine:** “I believe that Dr. Clyde Yancy’s comments were the most inspiring, as he clearly recognized the potential impacts of our research to impact public policy around what many would define as a ‘vape epidemic.’ For example, we saw in recent years the advent of sudden and critical respiratory illnesses that arose in children who were exposed to potentially counterfeit vape products.”

Shaikh’s interest in the workings of the heart and how it may be impacted by the surge in e-cigarette use among younger Americans, spurred him to create a poster presentation—“The Effect of Pod-based E-cigarettes on Endothelial Cell Phenotype: Preliminary Results”—on the topic. The work earned him a spot as co-winner of the event.

*What comes next for you on the research front?* **Victoria Danan, a third-year medical student at Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine at Florida Atlantic University:** “Our research was on scarce resource allocation during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have written it up as part of a bigger article and we are hoping to be able to publish it soon. It inspired me to pursue other research opportunities in various fields and not be afraid to submit to various conferences.”

Looking at the potential worst-case scenario during an unprecedented pandemic, Danan’s project—“Winning the Ventilator Lottery: A Comparison of Five Scarce Resource Allocation Protocols in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic”—examined limitations on ventilators hospital systems faced, using published research on scarce research allocation protocol. She was a co-winner of the 2020 challenge.