

Discover 7 remarkable medical students who moved medicine in 2021

DEC 1, 2021

Brendan Murphy

Senior News Writer

If 2021 is any indication, the future of medicine is bright.

Amid the stressors of a continuing once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, the next generation of physicians did plenty to advance the art and science of medicine over the past year. Here's a look at some of the medical students who moved medicine in 2021.

1 Heather Duplessis and Lauren Bagneris, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center

Early in their first year of training, Duplessis and Bagneris learned basic life support training. They didn't expect to be using those skills during their summer vacation, but that's precisely what happened. En route to Greece, the two rising second-year medical students encountered an emergent situation on a flight and, with no physicians on board, offered support to a sick passenger who fainted. Find out more.

2 Brittany Ikwuagwu, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

Like many people in health care, medical student Brittany Ikwuagwu became interested in medicine because she wanted to help people. She had visions of helping patients individually, but as she discovered more about health care policy, she realized she could further her impact in another way. Ikwuagwu is the AMA Government Relations Advocacy Fellow. Learn how, in that capacity, she aids the AMA’s federal advocacy team on a full-time basis.

3

Edleda James, University Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine

For AMA member Edleda James, pursuing training to become a physician isn’t just her second career. It’s her second career in health care. She worked as a bedside and post-surgical nurse at the University of Chicago Medical Center before enrolling as a medical student. Learn more about her journey and why she wanted to become a doctor.

4

Xena Moore, University of Kansas School of Medicine

For nearly 20 years, JayDoc Free Clinic has offered care to economically or socially marginalized patients in Kansas City. The arrangement is mutually beneficial—working in the clinic allows medical students a chance to enhance their learning opportunities. Moore, the facility’s co-executive director in 2021, has had to think creatively to keep it up and running during the pandemic.

5

Noor Shaik, Thomas Jefferson University Sidney Kimmel Medical College

Separated from family in India, Shaik couldn’t sit idly by while they suffered during a deadly COVID-19 surge. She worked with a medical school adviser and logistics contacts to get nearly two tons of badly needed medical supplies to India.

6

Nicolas Leighton, George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences

As president of the medical student AMA chapter at GWUSOM, Leighton spearheaded an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness in the



nation's capital by distributing care kits. Learn more about the essentials included and the teamwork it took to help people stay safer.

These aren't the only medical students who are making a difference. Read about six medical students whose commitment to health equity led to scholarships from the AMA Foundation. The 2020 AMA Health Systems Science Student, Resident and Fellow Impact Challenge focused on how medical students, residents and fellows across the country applied health systems science to impact patients, physicians and health systems during the COVID-19 pandemic. A book of the abstracts submitted in 2020 (PDF) is available.

And 2020, of course, saw many medical students graduate early to become "COVID interns." During a ChangeMedEd[®] 2021 conference session, some of these early grads reflected on their experiences.