

Third year students had a do-over of their virtual White Coat Ceremony—this time in person.



JOHN ALTDOEFER

Rites of Passage, Remixed

Two coats of white

Pitt Med's Class of 2024 matriculated like no other. They came to school at the height of the pandemic, in summer 2020. If it had been a more typical time, they would have marked their entry into medical training surrounded by family and welcomed by their instructors in a "coating" ceremony. Instead, they communed on Zoom and their white coats were delivered directly to wherever they were living at the time.

The tone of the nation wasn't one of pageantry. That simmering summer, just a few months after the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, Pitt Med deans challenged the incoming class to write its own Oath of Professionalism. Their final draft recognized and pledged to address structural racism plaguing the United States, among other inequities. For their efforts to modernize what it means for physicians to "do no harm," the class garnered national media attention from outlets such as CNN and NPR, even before starting coursework. Now, every incoming med student class at Pitt drafts its own oath—those too have stressed the importance of advocating for others.

The Class of 2024 is not afraid to speak up for itself, either. This past year, as they embarked on their clinical rotations, the students asked for a do-over of their White Coat Ceremony, this time in person. School leaders happily complied, combining a formal reissuing of the coats with the traditional pinning ceremony for third-years. The big day was May 6.

Jim Withers of Operation Safety Net, which offers street medicine to people experiencing homelessness, delivered the keynote. And Varun Mandi, of the MD/PhD program, won the Sally Miller Award for the medically underserved.

Nicolás M. Kass, president of the Class of 2024, acknowledged the imposter syndrome many of them felt going into rotations. But, he said, "I would argue that our class has a unique skillset based on all we've been through for the past two years."

Alda Maria Gonzaga, MD associate dean for student affairs, offered these words of wisdom:

"Comparison is the thief of joy. And imposter syndrome doesn't make doctors; we make doctors. Pitt Med makes doctors. And we make excellent ones. We are proud of you." —MFC



Clockwise from top: keynote speaker Joseph Betancourt; professor of surgery Giselle Hamad hoods Michelle Zhang; Dean Shekhar.



Together Again

Class of 2022 Send Off

School of Medicine graduates and their friends and loved ones came together at Carnegie Music Hall on May 23 to celebrate the first in-person School of Medicine Diploma Day since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Keynote speaker, Harvard's Joseph Betancourt, who joined virtually, advised students to show grace with their patients. See the "Difficult Patient" story on the right to learn about his case in point.

Dean Anantha Shekhar, Provost Ann E. Cudd and Chancellor Patrick Gallagher also spoke at the ceremony, praising the 2022 graduates' resilience and grit as the pandemic disrupted their lives in the middle of their studies.

FREYBERG AND SPERRY HONORED

Zachary Freyberg, an MD, PhD, and **Jason Sperry**, an MD, MPH, of Pitt's School of Medicine are among 95 newly elected members of the American Society for Clinical Investigation (ASCI).

ASCI, founded in 1908, is one of the most esteemed honor societies of physician-scientists. Membership recognizes a researcher's significant contributions, at a relatively young age, to the understanding of human disease.

Freyberg, assistant professor of psychiatry and of cell biology, focuses on improving our understanding of the mechanisms associated with disorders such as addiction, schizophrenia and Parkinson's disease.

Sperry, professor of surgery and of critical care medicine, focuses on prehospital trauma care and sex-based outcome differences following injury or surgery.

They were formally inducted in April. —Staff reports

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