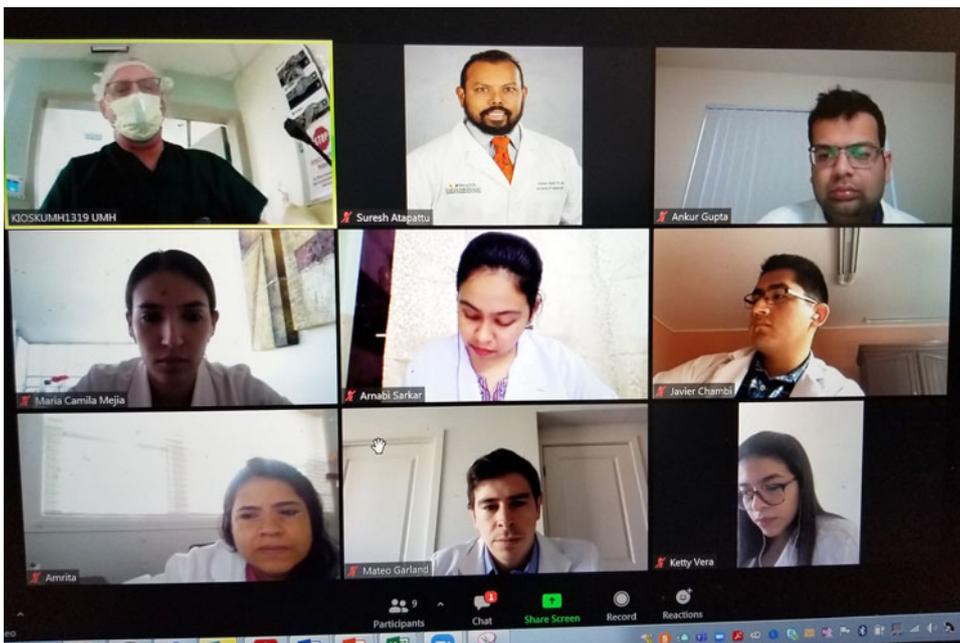


Global Observership Program Focuses on Intensive COVID-19 Patient Care

Indian physician Ankur Gupta, M.D., was able to study U.S. care for critically ill COVID-19 patients at a time when his nation is being tested by a severe resurgence of the virus, thanks to the virtual Global Observership Program by the International Medicine Institute at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.



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“I learned a lot that I can apply in treating patients in intensive care units (ICUs),” said Dr. Gupta, a graduate of Government Medical College in Patiala, India. “Before joining this program I was struggling with my ventilation settings but the information I gained is going to be very helpful.”

Dr. Gupta is among the 380-plus international medical professionals and students taking advantage of the Miller School’s ongoing virtual training program, which covers coronary care, internal medicine, infectious disease and intensive COVID-19 care at UHealth Tower, the flagship of UHealth – the University of Miami Health System.

Back in the game

“When the pandemic struck last spring, we stopped in-person observerships,” said Tanira Ferreira, M.D., chief medical officer of University of Miami Hospital and Clinics. “Now, we are back in the game, providing invaluable guidance and training on how we treat ICU patients.”

Physicians from six continents are observing the morning grand rounds at UHealth Tower, according to Eduardo J. de Marchena, M.D., professor of medicine and surgery, and associate dean for International Medicine.

“Many participants are from India, Brazil and other countries that are being ravaged by COVID, and they are looking for new ways to manage their patients,” he said. “We have received great feedback on the program, which meets the ongoing need for specialized medical training.”

COVID-19 training added

Since last June, participants in the Global Observership Program have been attending clinical rounds through a mobile computer learning system equipped with high-definition video cameras, high-fidelity audio equipment and videoconferencing technology that complies with patient confidentiality requirements. The COVID-19 training was able to be added recently due to a reduction in the patient caseload at UHealth Tower.

Strict protocols are in place to ensure patient safety and privacy, while supporting highly interactive virtual training.

“Observers receive access to medical records, laboratory tests and imaging scans,” Dr. Ferreira said. They view Miller School faculty interacting with the patient, while the mobile computer stays in the ICU common area to minimize infection risk.

Scarce resources at home

“We have seven to 10 observers every morning on the COVID rounds, and they are very engaged with our faculty,” said Daniel H. Kett, M.D., professor of critical care medicine and director of the medical ICU at UHealth Tower. “They ask questions about medications, as well as pulmonary care therapies, such as ventilation. Unfortunately, these types of resources may not be readily available in their home countries.”

“Being able to review patient records and imaging with the support of knowledgeable staff makes the learning process even better,” said Mateo Eduardo Garland, M.D., a graduate of

Universidad de San Martin de Porres in Peru. “The specialties of intensive care and infectious disease go hand in hand, especially in managing COVID patients.”

Ketty Vera, M.D., a graduate of Universidad Catolica de Santiago de Guayaquil, Ecuador, said UM faculty listened carefully to their questions. “They shared their knowledge and helped us analyze the situation, asking what we would do in different scenarios.”

Global training program

Through the William J. Harrington Medical Training Program and the Global Observership Program, the International Medicine Institute (IMI) offers one- to three-month rotations to observe the activities of a particular department, division, center, or institute. The Harrington program, founded in 1967, and the Global Observership Program, which began in 1975, have trained more than 10,000 medical professionals all over the world. The inception of virtual rounds enabled the continuation of this medical education tradition in the COVID-19 era.

“UM has a unique position of outreach and education outside our community,” Dr. Kett said. “We have a long tradition of providing in-person training, and moving to a virtual format allows us to continue our programs. Our goal is to help other medical professionals provide top-quality care throughout the world.”

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