



Department of  
Critical Care Medicine



## A Message from Our Vice Chair for Education

Dear Alumni of the Department of Critical Care Medicine,

In June, we held graduation for our first-ever pandemic cohort. These fellows in our one-year programs—surgery, anesthesiology and neurocritical care—were recruited virtually as COVID-19 raged and graduated as vaccination rates climbed.

What education lessons have we learned throughout this year? Burnout was a constant, nagging presence. Flexibility was indispensable. Wellness and resilience were the panaceas that often seemed in short supply. Yet, we leaned on colleagues, gained strength from each other, and found ways to cope.

In this issue you'll read about the resilience of pediatric fellow Cesar Menchaca, the Singapore connection with REMAP-CAP: COVID, and a slice of the careers of former clinical and research fellows and our pediatric fellowship director.

I look forward to [hearing from you and welcome your ideas](#) for future newsletter stories.

[Lori Shutter](#), MD, FNCS, FCCM  
Vice Chair for Education



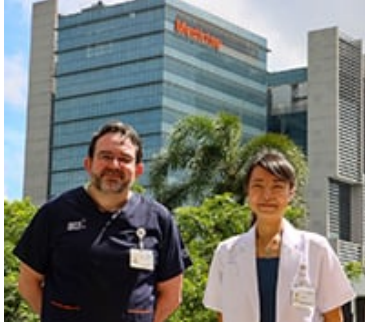
## Critical Care in the Air

[Emily Brant](#) (CCM '19), is an assistant professor of Critical Care Medicine and Emergency Medicine and a first responder at heart. Her interest in prehospital medicine began in the skies over Pittsburgh as a flight physician with STAT MedEvac during her emergency medicine residency. Her time in the skies and riding in the back of ambulances uncovered opportunities to help EMS clinicians identify critically ill patients and begin treatment before arrival at the hospital. Her research focuses on prehospital and emergency care of sepsis patients. Emily believes there's "an opportunity and obligation for us to have better care and tools for treatment in the prehospital setting."

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## COVID-19 Global Clinical Trial

Critical Care Medicine's alumni investigators were some of the first to join to the global REMAP-CAP: COVID



network to test the efficacy of COVID-19 treatments. In Singapore, Matthew Cove (CCM '12) secured two years of funding for lab staff for the clinical trial and expects to begin recruiting patients in August.

“There are so many benefits, where does one begin? Our patients are more likely to receive the most effective treatments, we stay very current on the best practices in intensive care, and the impact of our research is amplified,” said Matt, who is senior consultant at the Division of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, National University Hospital and research director in the Department of Medicine at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore.

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## Meet Cesar Menchaca Third-Year Pediatric Critical Care Fellow

*How have you created resilience throughout your career?*  
My resilience comes from witnessing the hardships my family endured as Mexican immigrants to Chicago's South Side. My parents' sacrifices and persistent drive for a better life have allowed me to pursue an incredible career, far beyond what I could have hoped for. Every day, I'm living a dream and I can't help but feel thankful.

*How has the pandemic affected your resilience?*  
Fellowship can be impossible without the support of family and the camaraderie that grows among your co-fellows. Nothing brings us closer than struggling together. My resilience was most affected at the start of the pandemic by the death of my father from COVID-19. The support from those around me was immediate and profound. My family at home and my work family were incredible and they allowed me to lean on them when I needed it most.

*Why did you choose critical care and what's in your future?*

Critical care medicine is a fascinating combination of pathophysiology and procedures with the opportunity to care for and help support children and their families during some of their most difficult times. After fellowship, I plan to continue my research interests in abusive head trauma and medical education.



## Pitt Training: A Wuhan COVID-19 Connection

Former Pitt research fellow [Zhiyong Peng \(CCM '13\)](#) and his ICU team at Zhongnan Hospital of Wuhan University in China received a Golden Team Award for saving the greatest number of critically ill COVID-19 patients while achieving the lowest ICU mortality and lowest infection rate of medical staff. His [2020 JAMA paper](#) forewarned the world about the realities of the pandemic.



## ELAM Fellow: Melinda Hamilton

Pediatric Critical Care Medicine fellowship director [Melinda Hamilton](#) joined the class of 2022 as a fellow of the prestigious Hedwig van Ameringen [Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine® \(ELAM\) program](#). The one-year program will equip Melinda with additional leadership skills to prepare her for future leadership roles in academic medicine. ELAM aims to place more women in senior leadership positions at academic health centers thereby diversifying leadership and improving cultural and gender sensitivity in health care training and delivery.

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## Quick News

- [18th Annual Safar Symposium](#) breaks gender record: best abstracts awards were all received by women junior investigators.
- [Douglas White's JAMA Viewpoint](#) on a weighted "lottery" for greater access to COVID-19 medications was released to coincide with the American Thoracic Society international conference in May and led to an update to his [Policy to Allocate Scarce Critical Care Resources](#).
- David Ryon (CCM '95) was appointed chairman of the Quality Committee for the Board of Directors of Deaconess Healthcare System in Evansville, Indiana.
- In Memoriam: [Dr. Alyssa Majesko](#) (CCM '11) completed her medical training and Critical Care Medicine/Internal Medicine fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh/UPMC. She became an ICU specialist in critical and palliative care at Emory University Hospital, and was known as a champion of teaching about end-of-life discussions.

Do you have alumni news for us? Please send news items to [CCMcommunications@upmc.edu](mailto:CCMcommunications@upmc.edu).

## Tell Us What You Think

Please [click here](#) to provide us with your feedback and suggestions. Thank you in advance for your time and insight.



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