



## Featured: COVID Deployers

# UTHealth

## Resident Wellness

### Newsletter

Adriana Dyurich , PhD

## From the Counselor's Desk

### *What I ask for in 2021*

2020 is over and we are already two months into 2021, dealing with new and surprising challenges. Life is influenced by this new normal that we like so little because it reminds us how fragile our lives can be. We gave in to the temptation of blaming that pair of repeated figures – 2020 -- for everything that we did not like in the previous 12 months, and now we wonder how wrong we were. For some, 2020 was a tough year; it was tragic for others. Some will say that it was not bad, that the balance was good. Years are like this: the container of our works, the land on which our decisions build destinies, the sea in which our insecurities make dreams wreck.

I saw so much this past year. I worked with people who lost their job and some who found a better one, who lost loved ones and discovered that no one dies completely if they are in our hearts. I accompanied men and women who graduated, improved their relationships, stood up to addiction or imposed themselves on a depression. They shook off an anxiety disorder, they took steps in the hard task of raising children, they put limits on abusive relationships or turned ideas into a reality that before only lived in their minds.

Last year, I saw so much and knew so little. However, I came to know some things with firm certainty, and many of them are a result of witnessing YOUR work and dedication.

I learned that meeting needs, reaching goals or materializing projects are activities that involve work. The more complex the needs, the more work they require, and the more we need the skills to be resilient and persevere. Perhaps the greatest of my certainties is that human beings are the builders of the reality they inhabit, the forgers of the meaning of their existence. But we don't do it at will like the simple gods of mythologies - no! We achieve it in a close communion with our communities. We can do it in a responsible, ecological and transcendent alliance with our fellow beings and the environment in which we

evolve; it is a negotiation with existence. We are constantly building with the enormous number of decisions we make, consciously or not, every day. These decisions are all the wiser if they are guided by congruence, optimism, kindness and the determination to work for the greater good.

Personally, this year has shaken me hard. The pandemic has taken much from me. I have never been so scared and so close to losing people I love. And I had to go through it without having the physical nearness of my most essential support system. However, I learned new ways of being close. I received the subtle care and loving company of the people I am supposed to care for. I have given comfort to others with love and have helped many people who have trusted me throughout this time. All things considered, I received so much!

My best advice for 2021, and all the years to come, is that we don't expect it to be a good year -- we don't believe that the things we long for will come or appear. Luck exists! But we have seen that there is a force a thousand times more powerful: the constructive capacity of human beings when they work with responsibility and determination, when they cooperate with enthusiasm and love.

We have another 365 days or 52 weeks or 8,760 hours. However you count it, it's only time, a container for our decisions, a territory for what we can build. Of this new year I only ask for health, love and energy to continue creating a better world. I say it tongue in cheek, because I know we need to procure for OURSELVES, through self-care and self-compassion, most of that health, energy and love.

--Adriana

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## About Our Featured Residents

For our first newsletter of 2021, instead of a specific program, we chose to feature some of our residents who have been deployed to assist during these difficult times. We reached out to program directors and coordinators who introduced us to residents willing to share their wellness strategies in the times of COVID-19. In thanking them, we want to thank all of you - each and every one of our trainees, residents or fellows, for all the work you do. We hope you continue to feel inspired to take care of yourself and others.



My name is Grace Hopp, I am a PGY-3 Internal Medicine Resident. I completed four weeks of VA COVID wards in July 2020, 2 weeks of VA COVID MICU in December and another week of VA COVID wards in January 2021. Additionally, I have intermittently taken care of

many COVID patients during rotations at UH over this year.

### How has COVID affected your well-being?

This year has been incredibly trying. I have felt many emotions working through this pandemic: sorrow, anxiety, loneliness, anger and grief. Unfortunately, I have seen more patients die this year than I had anticipated. A patient who said goodbye to his wife of 50 years over a Zoom call, a 32-year-old with so much life left to live, an older man who spent every night on the phone with his wife because they had never spent a night away from each other. The list goes on. The death this year has been so unpredictable, ravaging and nonsensical. As a resident, I often felt helpless and defeated. We did everything in our power to support each patient through this virus, and still, some would quickly deteriorate. Of course, there are many patients who left the hospital to go home to their loved ones. I held onto each of those victories so tightly.

Outside of the difficulty in caring for COVID patients, the isolation has been challenging. I have been spending time with my family and friends through a screen for almost a year. The success of many vaccines has brought me hope that we may soon gather in person safely.

### What are your coping mechanisms, self-care activities, spiritual practices, etc. that help to promote your wellness?

I am sure there are others out there with far better coping mechanisms. I consider myself an extrovert and prior to this year, my wellness always involved the company of friends and family. Of course, this year's unique challenge for us has been the limitations in how we can gather together. Like most, I have finally figured out how to angle my computer during my Zoom sessions with family and friends. Additionally, I am now a Zoom happy hour professional!

In all seriousness, this year forced me to try some new hobbies. I have started cooking on a far more regular basis, with the help of Half-Baked Harvest Super Simple, Tieghan Gerard's most recent cookbook. I listen to Heather McMahan's weekly podcast. She is a comic who shares listener voicemails each week and responds to them on the podcast. It has served as a welcome laugh midweek and a reminder that we are not alone in this pandemic. To care for my physical well-being, I started following @bodybytrainor on Instagram. Meghan Trainor (not the pop-star) is so high energy and you cannot help but laugh while you sweat with her. It has proved to be such a wonderful stress relief. Lastly, I have an incredible husband, family, friends and Internal Medicine Residency Program who have supported me this year through the tough months. It doesn't hurt that my dog is always down to cuddle!

### What do you want other residents and fellows to know about wellness in these difficult times?

If you are struggling, reach out to those around you. Sometimes it can be hard as medical professionals to say we need help or support. Your mental, physical and emotional wellbeing matter. We need to be well to take care of our patients. It has been tough on all of

us, no matter your specialty or direct care in COVID patients. We are all feeling the effects. Remember to give yourself grace during these uniquely difficult times, and determination to work for the greater good.

Everyone needs to find what works for them. Laughing is essential! Lastly, check out the *Half Baked Harvest* cookbooks, the *Absolutely Not* podcast and @bodybytrainor on Instagram. A cuddly pup doesn't hurt! If you need a good dog walker for your new pup, email me!

My name is Erika Brigmon. I am a PGY-5 General Surgery Resident. I have taken care of COVID patients while cross deployed to our COVID Green ICU team as well as with the "Dream team" during cross department deployment on the holidays. Additionally, I have intermittently been involved in the care of many COVID patients during other rotations at UH over the last year.



*Dr. Brigmon and her family*

#### **How has COVID affected your well-being?**

In order to reduce the spread, we all have taken measures that have drastically changed our routine and limited the joy in doing things that we like. To me, it has been very challenging not to be able to see my fellow residents' faces without a mask. It was interesting the first time I realized that I was recognizing the new interns by their glasses or things they usually wear because I have never seen their faces. The consequence of this is a more impersonal relationship with people that we see and work with every day. They are my family at work but it's hard when you don't even know what they look like.

#### **What are your coping mechanisms, self-care activities, spiritual practices, etc. that help to promote your wellness?**

The way I have been coping with this is getting together with small groups of fellow residents. Like meeting every two months or so with the ones I have rotated with during that time. I have also been exercising more and losing some extra weight. That helps me to feel good about myself, which decreases any feeling of sadness. Getting into more healthy habits with my husband have brought us to learn a bevy of new things like new cooking techniques, preparing my own coconut milk, making bread, and more recently making my own soaps and body lotion. Doing all these multiple activities helps my brain to stay active and going all the time so I don't have much time to feel lonely.

#### **What do you want other residents and fellows to know about wellness in these difficult times?**

Wellness is what you do to help you feel better, to make you feel stronger, enjoy every day at work and have a well-balanced life. More than that, it's what you have actually figured out what works for you. Wellness is very personal; taking care of ourselves allows us to be the best version of ourselves, so we can give the best to our patients.

**Highlight *YOUR* Program!**

**We would love to highlight the wellness activities your program is doing in our quarterly newsletter.**

**Please send your request to:**  
**[dyurich@uthscsa.edu](mailto:dyurich@uthscsa.edu)**

## “What do you do for Wellness?”

### Learn what our faculty members REALLY do to stay well

*My idea of wellness is positive acceptance of life's events. In order to achieve that, I meditate and chant every day. I also sing, teach music and play an instrument called Veena. I love taking long walks and complete my 10,000 steps. I am involved in many community activities. I draw my energy being around people and being part of their lives in some positive way.*



Dr. Veena Prasad, PhD, LPC.  
Behavioral Health Consultant  
Wellness Programs for GME

## GME Resident Wellness Services

Residency and fellowship training is one of the most exciting times in life, but it can also present a variety of challenges to personal and professional well-being. Being a physician in training can be challenging. It is difficult to juggle working long work hours, caring for your patients, feeling the pressure to excel within your program, all while trying to maintain a balanced and fulfilling personal life. Stress, if not addressed adequately, can lead to an array of issues such as burnout that can interfere with caring for your patients, family and friends, and yourself.

We are here to be your safe haven with our services being completely confidential. Counseling records are maintained in files separate from the resident files and cannot be accessed by faculty, staff, administrators, or other residents without the individual's written permission. Additionally, there is no need to diagnose or bill your insurance. All individuals are treated with respect, regardless of age, color, ethnicity, gender, marital/parental status, national origin, race, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, veteran status, or counseling concern.

Our resident wellness program strives to ensure that residents are both emotionally and academically successful. Our goal is to promote work-life balance and overall wellness by providing tools to reduce burnout, depression, relationship stress and other problems.

### Through the GME Wellness Services you can take advantage of:

- Confidential and private counseling in person or via phone
- Wellness presentations and guidance on how to implement wellness curriculum in your program
- **Neuro-psychological screening at no cost (new)**

**Online self-screening for depression, burnout, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The screening is voluntary and completely anonymous. Visit [www.uthealth.caresforyou.org](http://www.uthealth.caresforyou.org) to take the assessment**

### Contact us if you are experiencing:

- The need to improve your overall emotional wellness
- Symptoms of depression, anxiety, other mental health concerns
- Burnout, imposter syndrome, career doubts, job stress
- Lack of work-life balance
- Love loss and other relationship problems
- Anger / Stress
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicidal ideation
- Substance abuse



# GME Resident Wellness Services

- Sleep disturbance
- Perfectionism
- Adverse event (needle stick, traumatic patient outcome, illness in your family, etc.)
- Harassment by a partner or work colleague
- Conflicts with faculty, attendings, hospital staff
- Issues related to test taking, time management, and other academic challenges

**\* NEW \***

To help you function at your very best, we can refer you for free to **psychiatric services**.

## Cost & Hours

All services are free to residents and fellows. In an effort to be more responsive to your needs during these difficult times, we have expanded our hours to Monday through Saturday, including some evening times. Knowing you are busy, we will make our best effort to accommodate you and your schedule.

## Location

We are now located in the basement of the Academic Learning & Teaching Center (ALTC B-109). Our offices are private to preserve confidentiality. Please call or email for directions.



## Tele-Behavioral Health Services

Now offered by GME Wellness Program through the use of Zoom Video Communications technology, we are able to follow up with residents and fellows who can't make it to campus for a wellness appointment!



After downloading Zoom's free app, the process is as simple as clicking a link to open a secure, HIPAA-compliant private online meeting. You can download the app here:

<https://zoom.us/download>

***We'll meet you where you are!***

To schedule a counseling appointment or find out about our Wellness Services, please contact:

[gmewellness@uthscsa.edu](mailto:gmewellness@uthscsa.edu)

You can contact Behavioral Health Consultants at:

Dr. Dyurich:

[dyurich@uthscsa.edu](mailto:dyurich@uthscsa.edu) - 210-450-8734

Dr. Maldonado:

[maldonadol3@uthscsa.edu](mailto:maldonadol3@uthscsa.edu) - 210-450-8341

Dr. Prasad:

[prasadv@uthscsa.edu](mailto:prasadv@uthscsa.edu) - 210-450-8734

# Wellness Activities Around Town

Our very own, always-in-the-know Dr. Peel informs us of San Antonio Parks and Recreation's "Home Bodies" feature, streamed live on Facebook. They have a new series called Resolution 21, a workout that will challenge you and get you motivated to get fit in 2021! All who are seeking a cardio-based workout are invited to Resolution 21, which will take less than 40 minutes!

You can follow it live on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/SAParksandRec/>

Here is an example of what you might find:

<https://fb.watch/3KCrubY3J2/>



You can also book an event with a retrofitted vehicle complete with fitness equipment and a health kiosk for screenings such as blood pressure and Body Mass Index (BMI).



The Mobile Fit San

Antonio unit offers free fitness classes to include a variety of exercise activities such as boot camps, aerobic based exercise, yoga, Zumba and others.

For more info go to: <https://www.sanantonio.gov/ParksAndRec/Programs-Classes-Fun/Programs-Classes/Fitness/Mobile-Fitness>

For some outside, on-your-own activities check:

<https://www.sanantonio.gov/ParksAndRec/Programs-Classes-Fun/Fun-On-Your-Own>



**IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR  
FREE YOGA CLASSES:**



**Mobile Om offers yoga classes throughout San Antonio-** <https://www.facebook.com/MobileOm/>



I highly recommend online yoga classes by Austin-based, celebrity yogi, Adriane. In "Yoga with Adriane" you'll find a monthly calendar with links to YouTube videos to follow each day. She is also now offering a free 30-day BREATH yoga journey <https://yogawithadriene.com/breath-a-30-day-yoga-journey/>

**And of course, you can join Dr. Adriana Dyurich (GME Wellness Consultant) each second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. for a live reflection and yoga class. Follow @uthealthgme on Instagram for a monthly reminder and Zoom link.**