Every year, 3 residents serve on the Harvard Derm Alumni Selection Committee. A separate team of residents is responsible for all of the logistics in welcoming applicants during the recruitment season. These two groups play a vital role in shaping the next generation of trainees in our program.

Nancy Habib, PGY 3 resident, helped organize this year’s recruitment. “Recruitment season, regardless of the outcome, is always a fun and striking reminder of how fortunate we all are to be part of a residency program like Harvard Dermatology. Aside from the relief of knowing that brutal interviews, transcontinental flights, and match-day anxieties are a part of the past, I often cannot help but feel so lucky knowing that every day I get to work with inspiring and dedicated faculty, as well as my stellar co-residents,” writes Nancy. “It is not often that someone has the pleasure of working with people whose intellectual passions are contagious, and whose humanistic approaches to dermatology serve as a constant reminder of why I became a doctor,” she adds.

Elena Hawryluk, PGY 4, was a senior resident on this year’s selection committee. “It was fantastic to share my experiences at Harvard Derm and the many impressive aspects of our program - from the size and scope of our faculty and clinical training, to the depth of dedication to our didactic curriculum, in addition to the support and opportunities to pursue personal career interests. I have truly enjoyed my time in our residency program and it is fun to share my experiences and enthusiasm with a future class of trainees!” she shares enthusiastically.

Steven Chen, PGY 3, also served on this year’s selection committee. “I am always struck at the amazing caliber of applicants we have the opportunity to meet and interview. I am not only blessed by seeing the types of things that our applicants bring to the table, but am even more grateful for the opportunity to train at a place like Harvard, knowing full well how difficult it can be to get here. The fact that residents are an integral part of the admissions committee speaks volumes to the commitment we have to recruiting not only great applicants on paper, but also those that are able to contribute in a meaningful interpersonal way as well. It has been a great learning experience,” he shares.
At the heart of our clinical training in the Harvard Dermatology program are the countless patients we take care of each day. Each patient's presentation provides a valuable lesson for our trainees.

Lessons Learned: Memorable Patients

Su Luo, a PGY 2 resident, was one of the organizers of the Harvard New England Derm Society meeting this year. “I really enjoyed the opportunity I had to help organize NEDS as a first year. Not only did I get to see such interesting cases, I had an opportunity to connect with these amazingly gracious patients, who are so willing to give time and effort to share their conditions with us,” writes Su. One patient she met had been a lifelong patient in one of the Harvard Dermatology clinics and really expressed her gratitude with the wonderful care he had received, much of which had been from our current alumni.

Sharma Biru, one of the current PGY 3 residents, started her Harvard Dermatology experience with her very first rotation on consultations at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. “During my first year of dermatology residency, I was exposed to a great variety of pathology both in clinic and on the consult services. During my first consult rotation, we were consulted for a pseudolupus eruption in a 27-year-old male with ulcerative colitis, fevers, and joint pains, on multiple antibiotics. After our initial assessment and biopsy results revealed sterile neutrophilic folliculitis on the spectrum of Sweet’s disease, the patient was treated with prednisone with a quick improvement. I had the opportunity to present this patient during the AAD Gross and Microscopic session at the 2012 Annual AAD meeting in San Diego,” shares Sharma.

Another consult patient who provided a memorable learning opportunity was taken care of by Ami Sharma, PGY 2 resident. “While on the Brigham and Women’s Hospital dermatology consult service, I cared for a patient with an unclassified T-cell lymphoma, who presented with paraproteinemia,” writes Ami. The patient had been seen at grand rounds the year prior, when, after several biopsias, it was thought that he had had bullous pemphigoid. Ami’s consult team made the initial diagnosis of T-cell lymphoma and guided its management while the patient was in the hospital.

Beyond Boston

Harvard Derm residents make a difference around the world.

Taking advantage of research and elective opportunities around the world, Harvard Dermatology residents have expanded their role in clinical care well outside the confines of Boston. Read on for exciting updates from resident projects across multiple continents.

Kudakwashe Maloney, PGY 4

Kuda trained healthcare workers to screen the most at risk populations for developing Hansen’s disease in Trinidad, using a smartphone-based teledermatology application. This created access to dermatologist expertise for people in even the most remote locations on the island, with increased detection of Hansen’s Disease and earlier initiation of treatment.

Esther Freeman, PGY 4

For her 2+2 program (321 teaching grant) this year, Esther has been working with the East African International Epidemiologic Databases to Evaluate AIDS (EIDEA), with research on Kaposis sarcoma survival and treatment in Uganda and Kenya. She’s also been keeping busy consulting for the World Health Organization, providing key insights on HIV Dermatology Guidelines, which are being developed for the first time.

Terry Farsani, PGY 3

Terry traveled to the FACES (Family AIDS Care and Education Services) Clinic in Kisumu, Kenya to pursue her interests in Global Health and Dermatology with a focus on vulvar dermatoses and general dermatology. Terry sought out to determine the burden of vulvar disease in HIV-infected women and possible correlation among vulvar disease, cervical dysplasia, and CD4 count. She also aimed to improve the capacity of clinicians in Kisumu to diagnose and treat patients with vulvar dermatoses and to assess patient willingness to discuss vulvar issues.

Vinod Nambudiri, PGY 3

During his PGY 2 year, Vinod spent one month working at a hospital in Bombay, India on multiple projects related to internal medicine, dermatology, and quality of care. Working with the hospital administration, he performed a needs assessment and educational initiatives around hand hygiene and patient safety. In the dermatology clinic, he had the chance to care for patients with cutaneous TB, Hansen’s disease, and HIV in a resource-poor setting.

Residents Partner with National Eczema Association to Create Educational Videos

Two of our residents, Susan Huang and Lilit Gardyban (both PGY4), have been working with the National Eczema Association to help educate patients with eczema. They have been active bloggers for the National Eczema Association in addition to attending and contributing to the NEA Boston support group. Drs. Gardyban and Huang strongly value the fact that patient education is the cornerstone of effective patient care. Education is a very important factor in ensuring that patients comply with treatment plans. “Patients need to understand the disease condition and treatment to be able to comply with recommendations,” they write.

In association with the National Eczema Association, Drs. Huang and Gardyban will lead the project in developing a video media education resource for eczema patients and their families to empower them with the knowledge and the understanding necessary for improving compliance and ultimately disease outcome. The goal of this project is to create video media education resource to be easily accessible by any eczema patient or parent through the National Eczema Association website.

Residents share memorable patient encounters

Brooke Eastham, PGY3 resident, recently received the dermMentor scholarship from Beiersdorf which granted her the opportunity to present her research on the clinical presentation and management of ptyriasis rubra pilaris at the annual Winter Dermatology conference in Kauai, Hawaii. “This was an excellent opportunity to share my research and meet many of the most esteemed faculty in the field of dermatology,” says Brooke.

Amit Sharma, PGY 2 resident, had bullous pemphigoid. Amit’s consult team made the initial diagnosis of T-cell lymphoma and guided its management while the patient was in the hospital.

Care Delivery and Advocacy

James Click, PGY 4

James is interested in exploring the role of dermatology in the growing concept of Medical Homes and has begun working on a project in that area. On the research side, he recently had a publication accepted by the JAAD regarding the use of mephrate to treat dermatomycosis.

Jason Franos, PGY 4 / Alice Watson, PGY 4

Senior residents Jason Franos, Susan Huang, and Alice Watson recently attended Professor Michael Porter’s “Value Based Healthcare Delivery” course at the Harvard Business School. “It was a pretty eye opening experience and gave me a lot to mull over thinking about dermatology’s place in the new world of accountable care organizations,” writes Jason. “It was very thought provoking, especially in the face of likely payment reform” notes Alice.

Shruthi Das, PGY 2

Shruthi received a resident scholarship to participate in the annual AADA Legislative Conference on Capitol Hill. She discussed with congressional staffers the dangers of indoor tanning and asked for support of HR 1676 calling for reclassifying indoor tanning bed and for S 716, the Melanoma Research Act of 2012 maintaining NIH research funding. “It was exhilarating to dive head-first into my first grass-roots advocacy endeavor, and I’ve had the support of the AADA to continue my efforts at a more local level.”