

## COVID-19 Community Update

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# Resident Spotlight: Matthew Khayata, MD

*Thursday, April 9, 2020*



*For Matthew Khayata, MD, a lifelong interest in working with infants, toddlers, and adolescents, combined with the complex, problem-solving nature of neurology led him to pursue a residency in child neurology at Duke. Now during his residency year with the Neurology Department, he's rotating throughout our hospital system, treating adult and child neurology patients, and navigating the COVID-19 crisis as it unfolds. For this week's Spotlight interview, Khayata talks to us about why he takes inspiration from both his colleagues and Dr. Seuss in difficult times. He also discusses his long-term career plans, why he'd be in NASA if he wasn't a doctor, and his being a Florida State football fan.*

*What are your current responsibilities as a neurology resident? What does a typical day for you look like?*

There is no such thing as a "typical day," and the unpredictable nature of each day is what makes my job exciting. My responsibilities as a junior neurology resident vary and depend on the rotation I am on. These include acting as consultants to answer questions raised by other providers, responding to and running stroke codes and/or caring for patients admitted to our general neurology, stroke or neuro-ICU services. I also have the privilege of caring for pediatric patients as the pediatric neurology fellow. Other responsibilities include educating interns and medical students about neurology.

*How and when did you first get interested in neurology? How did you decide to focus on child neurology in particular?*

I became interested in working with the pediatric population at a young age, and my desire to become a pediatrician remained firm throughout medical school. It has been a passion of mine to help infants, toddlers and adolescents live happy and healthy lives. My fascination with neurology began in year one of medical school. The complexity and problem-solving nature of neurology was both fascinating and humbling. I have always considered neurology as medicine's last frontier, and this is very exciting to me. The decision to pursue a career in child neurology was easy. My interest in neurology, along with my desire to care for children makes the child neurology specialty a perfect combination for me.

*How has the coronavirus affected your residency so far? How are you and your colleagues working to compensate for this?*

These are challenging times, and as medical professionals we have to trust our training in this period of uncertainty. I have been inspired by my colleagues – as a team we have been able to accomplish amazing things, and continue to provide excellent care for patients. In the words of Dr. Seuss – "When something bad happens you have three choices. You can either let it define you, let it destroy you, or you can let it strengthen you." I expect this experience to be difficult, however, I know that our team will come out stronger. I am proud to be part of this team.

*What plans (if any) do you have for after you finish your residency? If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?*

My long-term career plans are still in development. I am very open-minded and considering additional fellowship training. If I could have any job in the world, I would work for NASA. I am extremely fascinated by our universe, and I think it would be interesting to better understand the impact space travel may have on the central nervous system.

*You earned your undergraduate and medical degrees from Florida State University. What do you miss most about Florida? What was the most interesting or pleasant surprise about living in the triangle?*

Go Noles! I am extremely proud to be a Seminole and to have earned undergraduate and medical degrees from the Florida State University. I look forward to visiting my alma mater in the future. I miss my family and friends that I left behind in Florida. Luckily, I get to see them on occasion. The kindness of a stranger and the southern hospitality that I have experienced in the triangle have been very pleasant surprises. I also love the weather in the triangle.

*What other passions or hobbies do you have outside of the Department?*

As you may have guessed, I am a huge FSU football fan. I love college football season. I am also an avid fan of the New York Yankees. I enjoy the outdoors, as well as attending local restaurants or coffee shops with my beautiful girlfriend.

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