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MDS Mentorship Summary

I had the great opportunity of spending my clinical elective time with Dr. Arturo Saavedra at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Harvard Medical School Combined Dermatology Residency Program through the Medical Dermatology Society Mentorship Experience. I would like to thank the MDS and Dr. Saavedra for making this experience possible. The time I spent with Dr. Saavedra and the dermatology faculty at Harvard will be invaluable in my path of becoming a better academic medical dermatologist.

The main goals for my mentorship experience were three-fold: (1) to acquire additional knowledge in the diagnosis and management of cutaneous graft vs. host disease; (2) to further explore the practice of complex medical dermatology with a focus of immunobullous, connective tissue diseases and inpatient dermatology; and (3) to discuss career paths with Dr. Saavedra and other faculty members. I am extremely grateful for the mentorship experience as this experience allowed me to accomplish my academic goals and at the same time I received great advice from the dermatology faculty.

Under Dr. Saavedra, we devised a plan for me to attend his Complex Dermatology, GVHD and General Dermatology clinics on a weekly basis. In his GVHD clinic I had the opportunity to solidify my knowledge about GVHD, the variety of presentations from mild acute to sclerodermoid disease, and learned an approach to clinical management. Dr. Saavedra spent significant time explaining the rationale of various conditioning regimens and their relationship to disease prognosis and GVHD. During his General and Complex Medical Dermatology Clinics I was exposed to his approach for patients with newly diagnosed immunobullous disease. I learned how Dr. Saavedra devised a personalized treatment according to patient's current state of disease and the response to medications. In addition, I had the opportunity to see and further discuss dermatoses that I had not yet personally encountered during my clinical training including rosacea fulminans, eosinophilic fasciitis, urticaria vasculitis and paraneoplastic scleromyxedema. One of the most rewarding aspects of working with Dr. Saavedra was seeing one-on-one his dedication and "*we are going to win*" approach to patient care, as well as his commitment to resident education. During his clinics and inpatient rounds he always allowed and encouraged residents to ask questions and he spent time highlighting the relevant histopathology expected for the morphology. He also shared diagnostic or therapeutic pearls from his years of experience and challenged me and the other residents to go above and beyond and continue to strive for outstanding patient care.

Besides working with Dr. Saavedra, I had the opportunity to work in the Connective Tissue Disease Clinic with Dr. Vleugels, Rheum-Derm Clinics with Drs. Merola, Smith and Lin, Pigmented Lesion Clinic with Dr. Tsao, and High Risk Skin Cancer Clinics with Drs. Carter and Cummins. I also participated in inpatient rounds and pediatric clinics with Dr. Kroshinsky. During the inpatient rounds we saw a number of interesting cases including cutaneous leishmaniasis, acute GVHD, calciphylaxis, and others. Having the opportunity to work with a variety of attendings in their clinics provided a different perspective on how to approach diagnosis and management and challenged some of my own standard approaches to treating patients with complex dermatologic diseases. During the elective I also had the opportunity to work closely with Harvard Dermatology residents. I am thankful to the residents for being so welcoming and helpful in integrating me to their teaching conferences, grand rounds, and dermatopathology sessions.

Lastly, I was highly encouraged by Dr. Saavedra to continue on my career path. He took time during my rotation to discuss career goals, share his views of resident education and the challenges of graduate medical education in the coming years. He also left open the door to assist me in the future with my academic endeavors. Once again, many thanks to the MDS and Dr. Saavedra for giving me such a fantastic learning experience. I come back to my home program with new perspectives and energized to continue on my path to become an academic medical dermatologist.