

## NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County Launches a Clinical Forensic Medicine Fellowship

*This new fellowship will enhance patient care by training providers to identify signs of violence and gather evidence for legal proceedings*

**(Brooklyn, NY — July 6, 2022)** NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County today launched the Clinical Forensic Medicine Fellowship, a one-year training program designed to build leaders in the field of clinical forensics for emergency medicine. The fellowship will teach clinicians to identify and care for victims of violence and trauma, prevent the destruction of potential evidence, assist in legal proceedings, and recognize and document patterns of violence and abusive behavior.

“Too often, victims of crime are re-traumatized as they receive medical care and seek justice through our criminal legal system,” said **New York City Mayor Eric Adams**. “This new Clinical Forensic Medicine Fellowship will ensure that clinicians identify and care for victims of violence and trauma in a culturally sensitive and compassionate way. As always, NYC Health + Hospitals is paving the way to strengthen the criminal justice system and provide all New Yorkers with the highest level of care.”

“The Clinical Forensic Medicine Fellowship at NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County is a promising initiative that will empower our fellows to become leaders in clinical forensics and enhance our efforts to ensure our patients receive the high-quality care they deserve,” said **NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County Chief Executive Officer Sheldon P. McLeod**. “The Fellowship includes extensive clinical training that prepares our fellows to be adept at forensic interviews, evidence identification, and courtroom testimony, all attributes that benefit our patients and New Yorkers.”

“The time has come to recognize the need for a formal education and training process for providers practicing frontline forensic medicine,” said **Dr. Rajesh Verma, MD, Chief of the Emergency Department at NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County**. “Emergency Medicine physicians with dedicated training in this discipline will improve the initial care of patients who are victims of trauma and abuse and improve their advocacy in the legal system. We are proud to have Kings County pioneer such a program in New York City.”

The fellow will work directly with patients and learn from industry experts in forensic science, law enforcement, protective services, and advocacy groups. This fellowship will expand emergency clinicians’ ability to be trauma-informed, patient-centric, and culturally sensitive when interacting with patients.

The fellowship incorporates evidence collection, crime scene exposure, analyzing witness testimonials, and Sexual Assault Response Team (S.A.R.T.) practices. At the end of the fellowship, the clinicians will be able to better support victims of abuse by recognizing and reporting violent patterns of abuse such as ligatures, strangulation, and bindings. They will be trained to work closely with community groups such as social workers, crisis counselors, patient advocates, and other local agencies to connect patients to relevant services.

NYC Health + Hospitals has specially trained [Sexual Assault Response Teams](#) approved by the New York State Department of Health in every hospital emergency room. Sexual assault victims receive care within one hour of their arrival. The SART staff members at NYC Health + Hospitals' Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) Centers of Excellence have gone through intensive training and are approved by the New York State Department of Health. Their tasks include: properly identifying, collecting and storing forensic evidence; accurately documenting injuries; and attending to the significant emotional needs of rape victims. Forensic Examiners perform a thorough evaluation including a physical examination and medical history to ensure the patient's health and safety and collect evidence of the crime. Rape Crisis Counselors help the patient recover from the physical and emotional trauma of sexual assault. NYC Health + Hospitals' assault recovery teams operate around the clock to minimize trauma to the victim and reduce the risk that critical evidence will be lost, damaged, or overlooked.

The following agencies are collaborating on the Clinical Forensic Medicine Fellowship:

- NYC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME)
- The Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence
- New York Police Department (NYPD) Special Victims Division
- John Jay College of Criminal Justice
- State University of New York (SUNY) Downstate Medical University
- Kings County District Attorney's Office
- CASA-NYC
- Family Justice Center
- Kings Against Violence Initiative (KAVI)

"We have an ethical obligation to fulfill a critical role in safeguarding our patients. When handled by the forensic fellow, the hospital experience for victims of violence will be the beginning of the healing process rather than an extension of the trauma," said **Dr. Brigitte Alexander, DO, Director of Clinical Forensic Services at NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County.**

"As the only active training program for emergency medicine physicians in the country, this fellowship will serve as a conduit for developing highly specialized providers," said **Dr. Elias Youssef, MD, Medical Director of Quality and Patient Safety for the Emergency Department.** "Our goal is that graduates of this fellowship will use this unique skill set to

train other providers and ensure that victims of violence and abuse receive the highest quality of care.”

“As the first fellow of forensics emergency medicine at NYC Health + Hospitals, I have been allowed to be a catalyst of the change that I had always hoped to see in our community,” said **Dr. Keesandra Agenor, MD, Clinical Forensic Medicine Fellow at NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County**. “This fellowship will grant us the resources to unite medical professionals, the medical examiner’s office, district attorney’s office, and the New York City Police Department to deliver time-sensitive care and culturally-sensitive care to survivors of trauma and life-changing experiences. This is only the beginning.”

Fellows will serve a public health role by developing and educating students and the community on strategies aimed at community violence reduction.

#### **About NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County**

NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County is a 639-bed acute care teaching hospital located in Central Brooklyn. Among our highly specialized programs are a Level I Trauma Center, Pediatric Emergency Room, Level 3 Perinatal Center, Heart Health Center, Stroke Center, Sickle Cell Program, Behavioral Health Center, and Diabetes Education Center of Excellence. Many of our programs have received national recognition, including our cardiac, stroke and diabetes services. The hospital offers a broad array of primary and specialty care, including practices in neuroscience, orthopedics, urology and cardiology. Annually, our ambulatory care clinics see well over 500,000 visits, and more than 150,000 visits in the Behavioral Health outpatient program, in addition to close to 23,000 inpatient discharges. NYC Health + Hospitals/Kings County has played a major role in providing health care to vulnerable populations in Brooklyn since 1831, and is part of NYC Health + Hospitals, the largest public health care system in the nation. For more information visit, [nychealthandhospitals.org/kingscounty](http://nychealthandhospitals.org/kingscounty).

#### **About NYC Health + Hospitals**

NYC Health + Hospitals is the largest public health care system in the nation serving more than a million New Yorkers annually in more than 70 patient care locations across the city’s five boroughs. A robust network of outpatient, neighborhood-based primary and specialty care centers anchors care coordination with the system’s trauma centers, nursing homes, post-acute care centers, home care agency, and MetroPlus health plan—all supported by 11 essential hospitals. Its diverse workforce of more than 43,000 employees is uniquely focused on empowering New Yorkers, without exception, to live the healthiest life possible. For more information, visit [www.nychealthandhospitals.org](http://www.nychealthandhospitals.org) and stay connected on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NYCHHealthandHospitals> or Twitter at @NYCHHealthSystem.