

O. Monifa Sawyerr

Student Doctor Passionate about Equitable Healthcare
for Underserved Communities | Committed to
Culturally Competent Care | Dedicated to Mentoring
and Inspiring Underrepresented STEM and Medical
Students

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Education

MD Candidate

July 2021 – Present

University of California, Davis School of Medicine

Doctor of Medicine (Anticipated Graduation December 2025)

Bachelor of Science

June 2014 - June 2018

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Bachelor of Science in Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics

Licenses and Certifications

Certified Phlebotomist Technician (CPT I)

California Department of Public Health (Active)

July 2023 – July 2025

Basic Life Support for Healthcare Providers

America Heart Association (Active)

April 2023 – April 2025

Awards, Fellowships & Achievements

UC Davis APA Student Travel Award

February 2024

MacKenzie Foundation Scholar

October 2023 – Current

Jackie Robinson Foundation Extra Innings Fellow

September 2021 - Current

APA Foundation Ambassador & Scholar

March 2024 – Current

Horatio Alger Scholar

September 2014 - June 2022

Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholar

June 2014 – May 2018

Professional Memberships

Student National Medical Association (SNMA)

Association of Black Cardiologists (ABC)

American Psychiatric Association (APA)

The Association of Medicine and Psychiatry

American Medical Association (AMA)

American College of Cardiology (ACC)

Black Psychiatrists of America (BPA)

Research Experience

January 2024 – February 2024

UC Davis Health - Department of Neurological Surgery

Collaborated with the neurosurgery department to research and write a case report on Cerebral Proliferative Angiopathy (CPA), focusing on a previously healthy 2-year-old female presenting with acute left-sided weakness, rightward gaze, and head deviation. The patient rapidly progressed to an inability to walk, a rare presentation for CPA which is traditionally observed in young adult females. Through detailed angiographic findings, we identified a diffuse vascular malformation within the right frontoparietal region with prominent draining veins. Following surgical intervention, the patient experienced significant improvement, ultimately regaining her ability to walk without recurrence of symptoms. Our study underscores the importance of considering surgical intervention for children presenting with debilitating ischemic symptoms associated with CPA, with indirect revascularization showing promising outcomes in facilitating neovascularization and alleviating symptoms.

April 2023 – Current

UC Davis Health – Department of Emergency Medicine

Engaged in a quality improvement global health project focused on pediatric intubations in Vietnam. Collaborating with pediatric physicians in Vietnam, surveys to assess various aspects of intubation practices, including reasons for intubation, methods utilized, medications administered, and the success rate measured by the number of intubations attempts per patient were collected. As part of the intervention, the pediatric providers were introduced to the implementation of a bougie—a flexible, slender instrument—to aid in intubation procedures. Subsequently, providers underwent a post-survey to evaluate patient health outcomes and assess any reduction in the number of attempts required for successful intubation with bougie use. In addition to data entry and analysis, I assisted in writing a research paper based on our findings. This project addressed crucial clinical practices and contributed to enhancing patient care and procedural efficiency in resource-limited settings to improve patient outcomes.

July 2022- Current

UC Davis Health - Department of Palliative Medicine

Conducted comprehensive research and chart review within the Palliative Care Department, focusing on patients referred to the Supportive Medicine Clinic (SMC) for heart failure. Spanning from September 1, 2021, to August 30, 2022, this review entails data from 240 visits involving 94 patients. The primary aim was to gain a thorough understanding of the patient profile referred to the SMC, encompassing demographic details, prior healthcare utilization, comorbidity burden, duration from referral to outreach, and the presence of advance care planning documents pre-referral. Furthermore, the project seeks to evaluate the impact of SMC visits on patient care, analyzing parameters such as changes in Code Status, Edmonton Symptom Assessment System (ESAS) scores over time, patients' comprehension of their medical condition, and modifications in pharmacological management. This research endeavor not only contributes valuable insights to enhance patient care pathways within the Supportive Medicine Clinic but also lays the groundwork for potential expansion to support a broader patient population beyond heart failure.

May 2022- October 2022

Kaweah Health Medical Center - Department of Emergency Medicine

Undertook a research endeavor focused on addressing the critical issue of foot care awareness among unhoused individuals residing in Visalia, CA. The study was designed to evaluate the baseline understanding of foot care practices among participants through a pre-survey assessment. Subsequently, a comprehensive foot care education program was implemented, tailored to the unique needs and challenges faced by the unhoused population. This educational intervention aimed to equip participants with essential knowledge and skills to maintain proper foot health and prevent common foot ailments associated with homelessness. Following the educational session, a post-survey assessment was conducted to gauge the effectiveness of the intervention and measure the extent of knowledge retention among participants. Through this initiative, we aimed to raise awareness about the importance of foot care and also to empower unhoused individuals with the resources and information necessary to improve their overall health and well-being amidst challenging circumstances.

August 2017- September 2018

UCLA Department of Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics

Collaborated as a student researcher in a laboratory, investigating the potential utilization of bacteria and bacteriophage as biological therapy agents. Under the mentorship of my PI, I performed wet lab experiments on a novel bacteriophage to assess its efficacy in infecting *Mycobacterium smegmatis*. Additionally, I employed bioinformatics tools and computational analysis software to elucidate the

genetic composition of the bacteriophage, exploring the feasibility of genomic modifications for its potential use as a therapeutic agent.

Publications

- Pierson C, **Sawyer O.M**, Watanabe R et al. Environmental and genetic analyses indicate potential use of temperate Mycobacteriophages OmegaMRC and SgtBeansprout as genetic vectors [version 1; not peer reviewed]. F1000Research 2019, 8:1010 (poster) (<https://doi.org/10.7490/f1000research.1116977.1>)
- **Sawyer, O.**, Wang, J., Watanabe, R., Wu, S., Chen, A., Kazane, K., . . . Parker, J. M. (2019). Genome Sequences of Cluster K Mycobacteriophages Deby, LaterM, LilPharaoh, Paola, SgtBeansprout, and Sulley. Microbiology Resource Announcements, 8(2). doi:10.1128/mra.01481-18
- Pierson C, **Sawyer O. Monifa**, Watanabe R, et al. Mycobacterium phage SgtBeansprout, complete genome. National Center for Biotechnology Information. [cited 2018 Aug 27]. In: NCBI [Internet]. Bethesda (MD): National Center for Biotechnology Information (US). [2018] - . Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/nuccore/MH020245> PMID: MH020245

Work Experience

MESA Program

Teacher

July 2022 – August 2022

University of California, Davis, Davis, CA

- Developed engaging science lesson plans tailored to middle school and high school students, with a focus on hematology and cardiology
- Collaborated with fellow MESA teachers to devise innovative teaching methods and instructional materials, aligning with students' interests in math, engineering, and science
- Organized and spearheaded after-school activities aimed at fostering physical and mental development among students
- Fostered a collaborative learning environment by actively participating in the creation and implementation of interdisciplinary teaching strategies
- Monitored and assessed student progress, adapting instructional methods to address individual learning needs
- Cultivated a passion for science and mathematics through hands-on, experiential learning opportunities

Phlebotomist

May 2020 - May 2021

San Joaquin General Hospital, Stockton, CA

- Collaborated with patients and medical staff to efficiently collect and process COVID-19 tests, contributing to timely and accurate diagnostic outcomes
- Proficiently obtained and processed blood and bodily specimens from diverse patient populations, ensuring precision in routine blood work and diagnoses
- Executed a variety of medical laboratory tests on specimens, facilitating accurate diagnoses and treatment plans
- Recorded and meticulously entered test results, supporting clinical research studies with comprehensive and reliable data
- Played a crucial role in the delivery of blood products and assisted the mass transfusion team during trauma patient care, demonstrating adaptability in high-pressure situations
- Adhered to strict protocols and safety measures to ensure the integrity of specimens and the well-being of patients throughout the collection and processing procedures.

Phlebotomist

May 2019 - March 2020

San Gabriel Valley Medical Center, San Gabriel Valley, CA

- Proficiently and compassionately obtained blood samples from diverse patient populations using venipuncture and capillary puncture techniques, ensuring accuracy in medical testing and transfusions.
- Demonstrated meticulous attention to detail in the preparation of blood-collecting equipment, consistently following infection-control and safety procedures, thereby upholding the highest standards in phlebotomy practices.
- Sustained a patient-focused approach, emphasizing clear communication and empathy throughout the phlebotomy process, fostering a positive and reassuring experience for individuals undergoing blood collection.

Health Education and Outreach Intern
June 2019 - September 2019

Peer Advisor
September 2015-September 2018

Community Medical Centers, Stockton, CA

- Developed a manual delineating federal guidelines, practices, and requisites for the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, showcasing a profound understanding of regulatory compliance and program intricacies.
- Spearheaded the creation and implementation of a robust referral system and workflow for providers, significantly streamlining the process of linking patients to lactation specialists and services, thereby enhancing overall patient care.
- Provided support services to patients through the Ryan White Program and Lactation Services Referral Program, demonstrating a commitment to improving health outcomes and ensuring seamless access to essential resources.
- Proactively engaged in shadowing opportunities within Women's Health, acquiring hands-on clinical experience. Interacted directly with patients, participated in diagnostic processes, operated ultrasound machines, and observed various patient procedures, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of healthcare practices.
- Actively sought out learning opportunities to expand knowledge and skills, reinforcing a commitment to ongoing professional development in the healthcare sector.

Financial Aid Advisor, UCLA Financial Aid and Scholarships, Los Angeles, CA

- Provided confidential and expert counseling to over 900 undergraduate and graduate students, addressing financial aid inquiries and academic concerns seamlessly at the financial aid counseling desk and through telephonic communication, showcasing strong interpersonal and problem-solving skills.
- Collaborated extensively with federal and state agencies to ensure verification of student citizenship, certification, and disbursement of student loans. Applied a comprehensive understanding of FAFSA and Dream Act guidelines to allocate aid effectively, contributing to the efficient and accurate distribution of financial resources.
- Played a key role in community outreach initiatives by delivering presentations to prospective students and their families, effectively communicating complex financial aid information and fostering positive connections with the student community.
- Led engaging financial aid workshops and presentations, demonstrating a thorough grasp of the intricacies of FAFSA and Dream Act processes. Effectively conveyed complex information to diverse audiences, enhancing financial literacy and empowering students to navigate the financial aid landscape with confidence.

Institutional Service

Interviewer
August 2023 – Current

UC Davis School of Medicine Admissions

- As an interviewer for the UC Davis School of Medicine application cycle, I play a critical role in assessing and selecting candidates who embody the values and qualities sought in future medical professionals. My responsibilities extend beyond conventional interview processes, involving comprehensive evaluations to identify individuals with not only academic excellence but also a strong commitment to community service, leadership, and cultural competence. By actively contributing to the selection process, I contribute to shaping a diverse and talented cohort of medical students, ensuring that the next generation of healthcare professionals reflects a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences. This engagement has deepened my understanding of the holistic qualities that make for exemplary medical professionals within the UC Davis School of Medicine community.

**Ranking
Subcommittee
Member**
May 2021 – Current

Council Member
February 2022- Current

**Panelist and
Presenter**
February 2022

Lead and Mentor
October 2021- October
2022

**Admissions
Ambassador**
November 2021 – April
2022

UC Davis School of Medicine Admissions

- As a dedicated subcommittee member for the UCDSOM admissions ranking committee, I meticulously assess student applications, submitting thorough evaluations and votes grounded in a comprehensive review of applicant files. Engaging collaboratively with fellow subcommittee members, I actively contribute to in-depth discussions to further scrutinize applicant files. Subsequently, I play a vital role in casting final votes and providing insightful recommendations for applications, ensuring a thorough and equitable admissions process.

UC Davis School of Medicine - Diversity Advisory Council

- As a student officer for the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), I hold a pivotal role as a council member on the Diversity Advisory Council at UCDSOM. This council serves as a robust representation of student groups historically underrepresented in medicine. In this capacity, I actively engage in brainstorming sessions, event planning, and the shaping of perspectives that impact academic policies. Through my involvement, I work diligently to ensure that UCDSOM fosters a safe, inclusive learning environment for all students. This entails advocating for and contributing to initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusivity, reinforcing the medical school's commitment to embracing the richness of varied experiences and backgrounds within the academic community.

Stockton Health Education Conference (SHEC)

- The annual SHEC (Student Health Education Conference) is a flagship event hosted by UCDSOM specifically tailored for high school students residing in the Central Valley. This conference serves as a pivotal platform, offering not only educational resources but also inspiration and mentorship to students aspiring to enter the healthcare profession. My involvement in SHEC extended beyond participation, as I took on the role of a panelist for the medical student panel, providing firsthand insights into my medical journey and addressing questions from the students. Additionally, I led a workshop on Growth Mindset, aiming to instill resilience and a positive mindset among attendees. My involvement underscores my commitment to fostering the next generation of healthcare professionals by sharing knowledge, experiences, and encouraging a mindset conducive to continuous learning and growth.

UC Davis School of Medicine Health Equity Academy

- The Health Equity Academy, an initiative created by the UC Davis Office of Student and Resident Diversity, is a transformative program designed to uplift high school students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. Within this impactful program, I have taken a leadership role, actively contributing to the development of specialized workshop tailored for high school students. My responsibilities extend beyond workshop creation, as I also serve as a mentor within the program. This dual engagement allows me to directly impart insights, guidance, and support to these aspiring students, fostering an environment of inclusivity and equipping them with tools to navigate the intricacies of healthcare education and profession. Through my commitment to the Health Equity Academy, I am dedicated to bridging gaps and promoting diversity within the healthcare landscape, advocating for the empowerment of students facing unique challenges.

UC Davis School of Medicine Admissions

- In my role as an Admission Ambassador at the UC Davis School of Medicine, I have delivered an immersive and welcoming experience to interviewing students. Going beyond the conventional, I have curated and presented insightful, medical student-led sessions that provide an in-depth glimpse into life at UCDSOM. My dedication to fostering diversity shines through with my efforts to promote inclusivity during these presentations, emphasizing the rich tapestry of backgrounds and perspectives within the School of Medicine. As a trusted liaison, I have actively engaged with prospective students, serving as a representative of the School of Medicine, and providing valuable insights into the educational enrichment opportunities available at UC Davis. Through this role, I have

contributed to shaping a positive and inclusive narrative for the School of Medicine, creating an environment that not only attracts diverse talent but also nurtures a sense of belonging and community among prospective students.

Extracurricular Activities

Volunteer

April 2024

Physicians Medical Forum – Doctors on Board Pipeline Program

- As a medical student, I had the privilege of volunteering for the Physicians Medical Forum's "Doctors On Board Pipeline Program," an initiative aimed at empowering underrepresented minority students aspiring to pursue careers in medicine. Serving as a workshop leader, I facilitated sessions on suturing skills and surgical knot tying, providing participants with hands-on experience and valuable insights into surgical techniques. Additionally, I actively engaged in speed mentoring sessions, offering guidance and support to students navigating the complexities of medical school preparation. Through this experience, I not only contributed to fostering diversity in the medical field but also honed my leadership and mentorship abilities, further solidifying my commitment to equitable healthcare access and education.

Volunteer

August 2023

Food Literacy Center

- I dedicated my time to the Food Literacy Center in Sacramento, CA, actively engaging in preparing nutritious meal kits for underserved children to take home and cook with their families. This hands-on volunteer role extended beyond meal preparation, as I also participated in cultivating the community garden at the Food Literacy Center. By contributing to both aspects, I aimed to not only promote healthy eating habits among children but also actively participate in fostering sustainable and community-driven initiatives.

Volunteer

September 2022 –
Current

Flu Crew

- I took an active role in strengthening community health by administering flu vaccinations to members of the Sacramento community. This involved organizing and conducting vaccination clinics, ensuring accessibility and outreach to diverse demographics.

Volunteer

July 2022 - Current

Imani Clinic

- Under the supervision of a medical preceptor, I delivered comprehensive preventative and primary care services to community members. This encompassed a wide range of healthcare practices, including conducting thorough physical exams, performing blood draws, addressing women's health needs, and administering vaccinations. This hands-on experience not only honed my clinical skills but also deepened my understanding of providing holistic healthcare to diverse populations, emphasizing the importance of preventative measures in fostering community well-being.

Student Mentor

July 2022 – April 2023

MAPS Medical School Mentor Match

- I offered personalized monthly one-on-one mentorship to underrepresented students navigating the medical school application process. This comprehensive support extended beyond mere guidance, encompassing tailored assistance in interview preparation, aiding with secondary applications revisions, and providing ongoing coaching throughout the entire application cycle.

Student Mentor

September 2022 – April
2023

UC Davis MAPS X UCDSOM SNMA Mentoring Program

- I provided monthly one-on-one mentorship to undergraduate students who expressed interest in pursuing a career in the health profession. This mentorship included personalized support tailored to their specific aspirations within the healthcare field. By actively engaging with these students on a regular basis, I aimed to not only share insights into the health profession but also provide advice, fostering a supportive environment conducive to their academic and professional growth.

Guest Speaker

SSVMS Future of Medicine Summer Program

June 2022

Volunteer

June 2022- July 2022
September 2023

Volunteer

March 2022 – January
2023

Co- President

January 2022 –
February 2023

Volunteer

September 2021

Mentor

September 2021

- SSVMS, a medical society advocating for physicians in the Sacramento area, invited me as a guest speaker for the Future of Medicine Summer Program. Addressing a group of high school students, I shared insights into my personal journey in pursuing a career in medicine, elaborated on the prerequisites for medical school admission, and provided guidance on navigating the challenges of high school and college.

Street Medicine Mobile Clinic

- I played a role in delivering essential medical care to the unhoused population in Visalia, CA, demonstrating a commitment to equitable healthcare access. This included conducting comprehensive health assessments, including blood pressure checks, finger sticks, and providing medications to address both new and pre-existing medical conditions. By actively engaging in these healthcare interventions, I aimed not only to address immediate health needs but also to contribute to the broader goal of improving the overall well-being of the unhoused community in Visalia.

Sacramento Food Bank

- To address food insecurity, I volunteered at the food bank packaging and distributing meals for children in Sacramento County. This hands-on involvement showcased my commitment to community welfare and my dedication to alleviating hunger among vulnerable populations, particularly children. Additionally, by directly contributing to this initiative it highlights my passion for making a meaningful impact on the well-being of our community's youth.

Student National Medical Association (SNMA) – UC Davis School of Medicine Chapter

- In my capacity as the Co-President of the UC Davis SNMA chapter, I held a pivotal role as the primary liaison between our chapter and the regional and national sectors of the association. Serving as the vocal representative of student opinions, I actively contributed to shaping the discourse and direction of SNMA initiatives on campus. Beyond representing our chapter, I assumed a leadership role in overseeing event planning, ensuring the successful execution of impactful programs and activities that resonate with our diverse student body. Notably, I played a crucial role in revitalizing the campus chapter post-pandemic, spearheading efforts to reignite engagement and foster a sense of community within the SNMA.

Vaccine Clinic

- As a volunteer, I actively participated in the COVID-19 vaccination initiative in the greater Sacramento area. I took on the responsibility of enrolling patients into the vaccination database, demonstrating my commitment to community health. Additionally, I played a hands-on role in administering COVID vaccines to both children and adults, contributing directly to the broader public health campaign against the pandemic.

MiMentor

- With MiMentor, I provide comprehensive mentorship and specialized guidance to underrepresented students preparing for medical school interviews. Going beyond the traditional mentorship role, I offer tailored support and strategic advice to empower students in their interview preparations. Through MiMentor, I contribute to a collaborative learning environment, ensuring mentees master interview techniques and gain a holistic understanding of the medical school admissions process. This engagement reflects my commitment to fostering the success of aspiring medical professionals and making a meaningful impact on their journey toward a career in medicine.