

David C. Leach Award



Named to honor the ACGME's former Executive Director, Dr. David C. Leach (1997 – 2007), and his commitment to resident education and physician well-being, this award recognizes resident/fellow-led projects and innovations.



Anai N. Kothari, MD

Team Members: Ashley Aaroe, MD; Han Cun, MD; Dristhi Ragoonanan, MD
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About the project:

“Dr. Kothari is a second-year Complex General Surgical Oncology fellow and was elected President of the House State Senate (HSS) for 2020-2021. Dr. Han Cun (Vice President) is a second-year Gynecologic Oncology fellow, Dristhi Ragoonanan (Secretary) is a second-year Pediatric Hematology/Oncology fellow, and Ashley Aaroe (Member-at-Large) is a second-year Clinical Neuro-

Oncology fellow. This nomination is in recognition of the tremendous leadership and accomplishments of the HSS Officer team during this academic year.”

“The House Staff Senate is the self-governing and representative body for the over 300 GME fellows and residents at MD Anderson Cancer Center. The HSS officers have demonstrated exceptional vision and leadership through these efforts. It is particularly commendable that they have been able to develop and implement multiple initiatives in spite of the challenges from COVID this year.”

“The overarching objective of this trainee-led project was to improve trainee engagement in the clinical learning environment by restructuring the MD Anderson House Staff Senate. This was a broad effort focused on redesigning the infrastructure to promote broad trainee representation to institutional leadership. Additionally, the House Staff Senate was reimagined to be a tool for trainee-driven advocacy and for promoting initiatives focused on improving trainee-specific elements of the learning environment. This project was independently conceptualized and driven by the HSS Officer team.”

“For each initiative built out of the House Staff Senate, one of the officers served to lead the effort in conjunction with relevant HSS subcommittee members. For example, Dr. Kothari led the Well-Being subcommittee to building a program for identifying gaps in trainee access to crucial health maintenance and opportunities to improve utilization of PCP and dental care. Dr. Cun worked closely with the other trainee members of the Global Oncology subcommittee (a new committee for this academic year) to help steer their efforts and ensure programmatic support. Dr. Ragoonanan represented the trainee voice on an institutional level to broaden availability of lactation facilities and secure financial support for parental leave.

Dr. Aaroe led efforts towards creating a research task force focused on educational outcomes and pandemic impact on trainees.”

“The HSS Officer team meets biweekly to evaluate and assess the progress of on-going projects. The restructuring and expansion of the HSS has been a tremendous short-term success. Using trainee engagement as an outcome metric, the HSS has built a community of 30-40 representative trainees that consistently attend meetings and actively participate in growing HSS initiatives. The HSS Officer team also has emphasized the importance of succession planning and establishing a structure that continues after their individual terms as leaders complete.”