RESEARCH ROUNDUP

Hackensack Meridian *Health*

WINTER 2026

HMH RESEARCH NEWS

MESSAGE FROM THE **PRESIDENT OF ACADEMICS, RESEARCH, AND INNOVATION**

Our ecosystem of research and innovation continues to blaze new trails. This newsletter highlights our impact, from our fungal lab's global recognition to major cancer research presented at ASH. We are fostering future leaders through unique educational programs and driving patient-centered solutions via our internal Bear's Den challenge, while pioneering many other new developments.

Ihor Sawczuk, M.D., FACS

NOTE FROM THE **VICE PRESIDENT**

From looking back at progress in research accomplishments and awards, we view the present breadth and depth of our groundbreaking work at the HMHRI as we look forward to the Annual HMHRI Symposium on May 28 - be sure to register soon.

Cheryl Pinto, RN, MBA, CIP
Vice President of Research and Regulatory Affairs

CDI Scientist, Colleagues Author Review of Global Burden of Fungus Candida auris

The recent review paper by the CDI's Neeraj Chauhan, Ph.D., and colleagues on Candida auris has prompted some great media coverage across the world.

Media coverage highlights include Fox News and affiliates, CBS News and affiliates, Yahoo! News and AOL.com, Newsweek, The New York Post, iHeartRadio and affiliates, The Las Vegas Review-Journal, and UK's The Sun, for a total reach to a potential global audience of more than 80 million.

Hackensack Meridian *Health* Researchers Awarded Multiple Grants from New Jersey Health Foundation for Crucial Projects

Hackensack Meridian *Health* was recently awarded several grants of varying magnitude from the New Jersey Health Foundation (NJHF) for vital research and community health projects.

The grants will support work across the state's largest and most comprehensive health care network, benefitting basic and clinical research at the Hackensack Meridian *Health* Research Institute, as well as research at the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine and other sites around the Garden State.

The research topics to be supported by the grants include improving cognitive wellness in senior citizens, utilizing acupuncture for symptom management in cancer patients, harnessing light to treat hematological malignancies and various other critical health-related subjects.

Hackensack Meridian *Health* and the Hackensack Meridian *Health* Research Institute have steadily obtained NJHF grant awards dating back to 2023.

Read more

JCDI Scientist Joins NIH Group to Improve Post-Stem Cell Transplant Patient Evaluation

An international task force of medical experts recently proposed major revisions to the way doctors measure treatment success for a common–and often severe–skin complication of stem cell transplantation.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Consensus Project Task Force recently published a report of their refined approach in the journal, Transplantation and Cellular Therapy.

CDI Faculty Member Rachel Rosenstein, M.D., Ph.D., co-authored the report. With her colleagues, she helped present ways to develop better response criteria for clinical trials evaluating impact of treatment on skin involvement in graft-versus-host disease.

Cutaneous chronic Graft-Versus-Host Disease (cGVHD) occurs when cells derived from stem cell donor immune cells attack the recipient's skin. This is a debilitating complication affecting about half of all patients on at least a mild basis

Read more

Bear's Den Backs Staff Ideas to Humanize Patient Care

Three groundbreaking ideas are winners at the "Bear's Den Internal Challenge: Making Patient Care More Personal" innovation challenge.

The three new clinical strategies could work in concert to greatly improve network-wide patient care at Hackensack Meridian Health (HMH) in the near future.

A panel of evaluators—including CEO Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, HMH senior executives, HMH board members, and outside investors—heard three finalist presentations, ultimately deciding all three were winners.

The three winning concepts were narrowed down from a pool of nearly 70 submissions and will be further developed and piloted at HMH locations to determine their effectiveness in enhancing patient-centered care.

"Our yearly Bear's Den challenge draws from the experience of more than 30,000 team members in real-world health care practice," said Garrett, the CEO. "Steadily coming together with new ideas for improvements great and small is how we make our biggest strides as an organization."

The Bear's Den Innovation Program is Hackensack Meridian *Health*'s unique change accelerator, designed to turn promising health-care concepts into reality. The program convenes a panel of experts—from venture capitalists and industry leaders, to HMH's own team members—to vet new ideas and provide strategic partnerships for resources needed to launch.

Through thought-provoking quarterly meetings, the Bear's Den challenges the status quo to set higher standards of care for New Jersey, and beyond.

Read more

JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute Leads Nationwide Study Using Teletherapy to Improve Emotional Health After Brain Injury

Hackensack Meridian JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is leading a nationwide, multi-site study funded by the U.S. Department of Defense that uses teletherapy to improve the lives of service members and civilians who have experienced a traumatic brain injury.

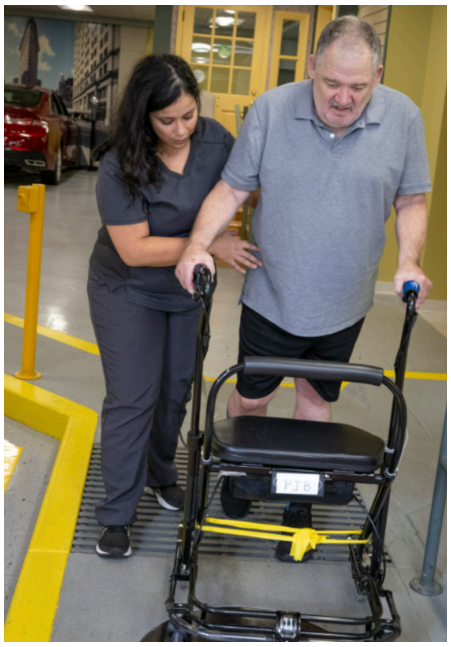
The $4.3 million study will test an intervention — called Building Emotional Self-Awareness Teletherapy (BEST) — that is designed to strengthen emotional health and resiliency in people with mild traumatic brain injury who experience alexithymia, a condition marked by difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions. The goal is to improve emotional regulation and resilience and lessen post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and anger.

The research builds on a study, published in December 2025, that found that 83% of participants in BEST reported a noticeable improvement in their functioning. Researchers called for a larger trial with more rigorous designs to test the true impact of BEST.

"People must be able to recognize their emotions in order to manage and effectively work through them," said Dawn Neumann, PhD, FACRM, Principal Investigator and Manager of Brain Injury Research at JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute. "Individuals with alexithymia often struggle with anxiety, anger, depression, and post-traumatic stress. This treatment aims to help them regain emotional self-awareness, a key step toward psychological health and resilience."

The research into mild traumatic brain injury, such as concussion, has the potential to enhance readiness and recovery on the battlefield, during training, or in resource-limited environments.

Read more



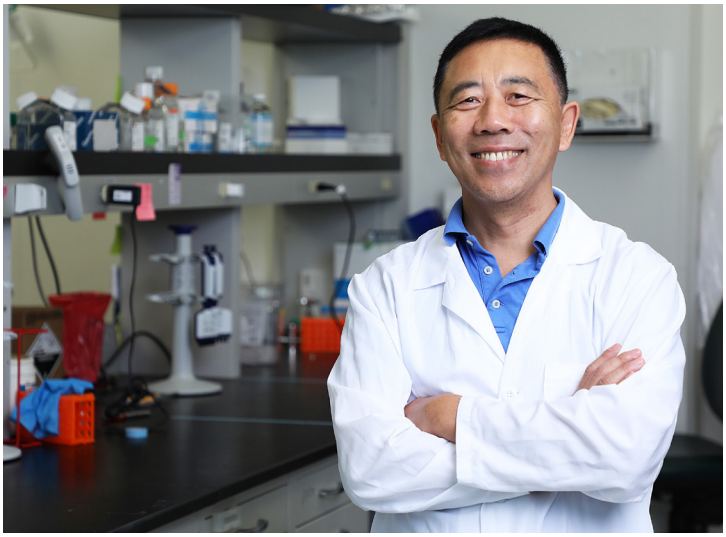
JTCC Unveils Research at the 67th Annual ASH meeting

Investigators from Hackensack Meridian John Theurer Cancer Center (JTCC)—a leading research partner of the NCI-designated Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center at Georgetown University, and number one Cancer Center in New Jersey—presented 65 studies at the 67th American Society of Hematology (ASH) Annual Meeting, from December 6–9, 2025, in Orlando, FL.

This represented one of JTCC's largest and most diverse scientific contributions to ASH to date, highlighting innovations in cell therapy, targeted agents, AI-driven diagnostics, stem cell transplantation, and real-world evidence across virtually every hematologic disease area.

"John Theurer Cancer Center continues to help shape the future of blood cancer care," said André Goy, M.D., chair, physician-in-chief and vice president of oncology at Hackensack Meridian Health. "Our teams are redefining transplantation, advancing CAR-T science, and co-leading trials testing next-generation targeted therapies and immunotherapies. The depth and breadth of our ASH presentations underscore our mission: to bring transformational science rapidly to the clinic for patients with blood cancers and other serious blood disorders."

Highlights of JTCC Research presented at ASH 2025 can be found here.



CDI's Xue Publishes in Nature

T cells are incredibly complex, and incredibly promising.

As technology has become better equipped to accurately classify and properly apply diverse datasets, immunologists now have the opportunity—and some would say, the duty—to produce clear classification and organization of their types.

The CDI's Hai-Hui "Howard" Xue, Ph.D., joined a global team of experts to propose a new, more descriptive "language" to more precisely name these crucial immune cells in a field that has now outgrown its historical palette of naming conventions.

This clarity is crucial for accelerating research in cancer, infectious diseases, and autoimmunity, according to the experts.

Read the Nature Magazine article co-authored by Dr. Xue here.

HMH Meets with Georgetown Partners

We were pleased to host our partners from Georgetown University in December 2025 for a tour of Hackensack University Medical Center in the morning, and the Center for Discovery and Innovation (CDI) in the afternoon.

Depicted here at the CDI are, left to right: Dr. David Perlin, chief scientific officer, CDI; Dr. Norman Beauchamp, executive vice president for Health Sciences, and Dean, School of Medicine, Georgetown University Medical Center; Dr. Louis Weiner, director, Georgetown University's Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center; and Dr. Ihor Sawczuk, HMH president of Academics, Research, and Innovation.

At HUMC, left to right: Dr. Beauchamp; Christopher Gazdick, administrative director at HUMC; Dr. Lisa Tank, president and chief hospital executive at HUMC; Dr. Weiner, Kyle Tafuri, vice president of Sustainability at HMH; and Dr. Sawczuk.

Dr. Quadri Introduces Strategic Planning in Health Care class with Guest Speaker Dr. Sawczuk

We are proud to launch the third cohort of our Healthcare Strategy and Future of Health Elective at the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine. The program kicked off with an inspiring session from Dr. Ihor Sawczuk, President of Academics, Research & Innovation.

HMH VP of Strategy VP of Strategy for Academics, Research, and Innovation introduced the launch on LinkedIn.

This interprofessional elective unites students from medicine, nursing, and health administration, developing them into emerging leaders. The curriculum is designed to foster critical thinking about how healthcare is shaped, delivered, and transformed through innovation.

Our goal is to bridge the gap between clinical excellence and strategic leadership. We are building a new generation of leaders prepared to navigate industry changes and shape the future of health, from the bedside to the boardroom.

Read More

Researchers at Work to Make a Difference in Preventing C. Diff

A large-scale, multi-center trial sponsored by Pfizer to investigate a Clostrioides difficile (C. difficile) adjuvanted vaccine will be opening at Hackensack University Medical Center and Jersey Shore University Medical Center. C. Difficile is a bacterium that causes severe inflammation of the colon (colitis) and gastrointestinal distress and often affects individuals taking antibiotics, which disrupt normal gut flora. It spreads through spores in contaminated environments and is a major cause of healthcare-associated infections.

This study will recruit patients 65 years of age or older who are at high risk for contracting C. difficile, which includes any individual who has been hospitalized for at least two nights, has made two trips to the emergency room in the past year, has taken oral or systemic antibiotics for greater than 48 hours in the past three months, has at least ten outpatient visits in the past year, or has a planned surgery requiring inpatient hospitalization. This study will include a two-dose regimen (six months) of an adjuvanted vaccine for preventing C. difficile in an older population. Participants will be followed for 3.5 years and will complete e-diary check ins and answer questions about their interim health and medications.

Dr. Balani, of the Center for Infectious Diseases, is the Principal Investigator at HUMC and she will be working with Drs. Kang and Sarkar. At Jersey Shore University Medical Center, Dr. Kufelnicka, Dr. Fune, and Dr. Lazo-Vasquez will be the sub-investigators overseeing the study.

RESEARCH UPDATES & EVENTS

WINTER 2026

Registration Now Open for the 5th Annual HMHRI Research Symposium

The Hackensack Meridian Health Research Institute (HMHRI) will be celebrating another strong year of research accomplishments throughout the network with its fifth annual research symposium.

Each year, the symposium features some of the most forward-thinking and impactful research that has taken place over the past year. This time, the focus will be on emerging technologies and how they can be leveraged for better patient outcomes.

Some of the highlights will include a panel featuring studies involving cutting-edge technology, presentations by research awardees, and individual presentations by researchers from throughout HMH. The event will also include networking opportunities during breakfast and lunch.

The symposium will take place on May 28, 2026 from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the School of Medicine in Nutley. A zoom link will be provided for those who cannot attend in person. The event is open to all HMH team members who are interested in research and is free of charge; however, registration is required.

Click here for more information about, and to register for, the symposium.
Any questions can be directed to ora@hmhn.org.

Launch of New Clinical Trial Research Dashboard Offers Opportunity to Increase Efficiency

The new Clinical Trial Research Dashboard, a powerful tool designed to provide comprehensive insights into our clinical trial portfolio, offers a suite of specialized dashboards to enhance research and operational efficiency.

The main landing page, the Clinical Trial Research Overview, acts as a navigation center, featuring an "Alerts and Announcements" section for important updates and providing access to the following key reports:

- Subject Accrual: Track the journey of subjects through all stages of a clinical trial with dynamic visualizations that update based on the selected trial status. Key features include charts showing cumulative and periodic subject counts, performance by individual study sites, and distribution across therapeutic areas.
- Subject Demographics: Gain a clear understanding of the demographic and geographic makeup of trial participants. This dashboard visualizes where subjects are located and provides a breakdown of the participant population by ethnicity, race, and sex.
- Accrual Portfolio: Identify active clinical trials that have yet to enroll any subjects. This tool helps pinpoint studies that may require intervention, showing the distribution of these trials by department and detailing each protocol's principal investigator, sponsor, and the number of days it has been open.
- Protocol Portfolio: Get a high-level "bird's-eye view" of the entire clinical trial landscape. This dashboard categorizes all protocols by their current status—Active, Pipeline/Start-Up, and Closed—using clear visual charts and detailed tables.
- Protocol Target & Accruals: Analyze enrollment performance against set targets. A color-coded system from red to blue provides an immediate visual assessment of accrual success, with detailed breakdowns by therapeutic area, individual trials, and study sites.
- Protocol Overview Metrics: Monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) for the entire research network. This dashboard tracks metrics such as total protocols, trial types, and multi-site trials with year-to-date comparisons. It also breaks down the portfolio by research area, region, therapeutic area, and sponsor.
- Top Performers: Discover the most successful investigators, sponsors, and trials based on subject enrollment. This section highlights the top 10 contributors to subject accrual across various categories, including protocol types, therapeutic areas, and study phases.

Researchers are encouraged to explore the new Clinical Trial Research Dashboard and leverage its capabilities to inform their work.

Information on how to access the dashboard can be found here. To access it directly, researchers can click here.

Updated Research Misconduct Policy Aligns with New Federal Requirements

HMH's Research Misconduct Policy has been comprehensively updated to align with new federal requirements effective in 2026.

This policy is fundamental to our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of scholarly integrity, research quality, and patient care.

The updated policy outlines the procedures for addressing allegations of research misconduct, defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. It underscores our collective responsibility to ensure that all allegations are handled in a prompt, effective, and equitable manner to protect public trust and the integrity of our research enterprise.

What You Need to Know:

- Your Responsibility to Report: All members of the Hackensack Meridian *Health* community, including faculty, staff, and students, have a responsibility to report any observed, suspected, or apparent research misconduct.
- Who to Contact: The designated Research Integrity Officer (RIO) for Hackensack Meridian *Health* is the Research Compliance Officer, Dr. Michelle Benson (michelle.benson@hmhn.org). If you have a concern, you are encouraged to report it immediately to the RIO or anonymously to the HMH's ComplyLine. For informal, anonymous, or hypothetical discussions about a potential concern, you may also contact the RIO.
- Research Integrity Officer: Michelle Benson, Ph.D. (michelle.benson@hmhn.org)
- HMH's ComplyLine at 877-888-8030.
- Cooperation is Key: All individuals are expected to cooperate with the RIO and other institutional officials in the review of allegations and the conduct of any inquiries or investigations. This includes providing evidence relevant to the allegations.
- Protection for Whistleblowers: The policy includes robust protections against retaliation for complainants, witnesses, and committee members who act in good faith. Any suspected retaliation must be reported to the Research Integrity Officer immediately. The policy details the formal procedures for assessment, inquiry, and investigation of any allegations. It also affirms the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved, including the complainant and the respondent, ensuring a fair and thorough process. We encourage all researchers to familiarize themselves with the updated Research Misconduct Policy and review Research Compliance's website for more resources.

Upholding the principles of research integrity is a shared responsibility that is vital to our mission.

Click here for more on the Federal Office of Research Integrity policy updates.

Pathways to Science Workshops Inspire and Empower New Jersey High School Students

The Pathways to Science Workshop Series, an educational initiative funded by the New Jersey Health Foundation (NJHF), was held recently through a collaborative effort between the Center for Discovery and Innovation (CDI) and Hackensack Meridian Health Research Institute (HMHRI).

The series was led by the CDI's Madhuvika Murugan, Ph.D., and Elli Gourna-Paleoudis, Ph.D., MS, of the HMHRI. Designed to introduce high school students to careers in medicine, healthcare, and scientific research, Pathways to Science combines hands-on learning, mentorship, and professional skill-building to inspire and empower the next generation of healthcare and research leaders.

The series has trained more than 100 students from New Jersey high schools, with representatives ranging from Bergen to Warren counties. The workshops provided students with early exposure to the breadth and excitement of biomedical science while highlighting diverse pathways into scientific and medical careers Most recently, workshops featured talks from eminent scientists who brought complex concepts to life.

CDI Scientist Barry Kreiswirth, Ph.D., introduced students to "The World of Microorganisms," exploring infectious agents, the origins of epidemiology, the rise of antimicrobial resistance, and modern strategies for the treatment and prevention of infectious diseases. Stanley R. Terlecky, Ph.D., associate dean of Research and Graduate Studies at the Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine (HMSOM), guided students on "A Trip into a Mammalian Cell." In his lecture, Dr. Terlecky highlighted often overlooked organelles—such as peroxisomes and lysosomes—and their critical roles in cellular health and disease. Hands-on experience has remained a cornerstone of the program. Students toured medical teaching facilities, interacted with simulation mannequins used in medical education, examined fungal pathogens under the microscope, and conducted mass spectrometry experiments to detect caffeine levels in beverages based on their chemical signatures. The workshop series emphasized important practical and professional development skills. Sessions included discussions on alternative career opportunities within science and medicine, a seminar on effective scientific communication, and a resume-writing workshop tailored to students interested in biomedical and research careers. By fostering curiosity, confidence, and a clearer vision of future possibilities in medicine and research, these experiences offered students a comprehensive, immersive introduction to the scientific enterprise.

Learn more introductory and contact information about the program here.

How the Research Education Team Can Help

The research education team within the Office of Research Administration (ORA) would like to remind the research community that they offer a broad range of services designed to support investigators and research staff in meeting regulatory requirements and conducting high-quality research.

Examples of available services include the Clinical Research Orientations for new team members, as well as one-on-one orientation for principal investigators. Other services include ongoing educational opportunities, such as the Investigator Training Lecture Series, and the Biostatistics Education Series.

The Division of Research Education and Communications also provides access to lecture recordings, event calendars, continuing education resources, and community forums to facilitate further learning.

For additional information, please refer to the education webpage on ORA website.

FEATURED RESEARCHER

WINTER 2026

The CDI Experts: Adam Mayer, M.D., M.S.C.E.

When **Adam Mayer, M.D., M.S.C.E** joined the Center for Discovery and Innovation (CDI) on Aug. 1, he brought a rare combination of skills: he treats both children and adults with arthritis, and he is also trained to study large groups of patients to understand disease patterns and improve care.

"I've had a long, winding road to get here," he says. "But every step brought me to this exact area—IBD-associated arthritis—where patients really need better answers."

"Adam Mayer is a promising physician-scientist, and this is an important niche that has such potential to improve young lives," said David Perlin, Ph.D., chief scientific officer and executive vice president of the CDI.

An Overlooked Condition

Dr. Mayer spent 12 years at the University of Pennsylvania and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, completing training in internal medicine, pediatrics, adult rheumatology, and pediatric rheumatology. He also earned a Master's in Clinical Epidemiology, which teaches doctors how to use data and research to study health problems.

That combination allows him to care for a unique patient population—and to help build something new in New Jersey.

Throughout his training, Dr. Mayer has cared for children, teens, and adults with a type of inflammatory arthritis linked to inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). These patients often struggle with joint pain, swelling, and stiffness that can affect their spine and major joints. Many are not diagnosed for years.

"It's an area of medicine that doesn't get enough attention," he explains. "And because it's overlooked, many people develop damage that we can't undo."

He remembers a teenage athlete who came to him in severe pain and unable to walk without crutches. "She was at risk of needing major surgery at a very young age," he says. "We diagnosed her quickly and started the right treatment. Today she's in college, running again, and doing incredibly well."

Stories like this motivate his work—especially because early diagnosis and treatment can drastically change a young person's future.

A New Center, New Promise

At CDI and Hackensack University Medical Center (HUMC), Dr. Mayer is building a new IBD Spondyloarthritis Center—a program where patients can receive coordinated care from rheumatologists, gastroenterologists, dermatologists, and pediatric specialists.

Because he treats both children and adults, Dr. Mayer is uniquely positioned to create a hub to care for patients throughout their lives, including during the tricky transition from pediatric to adult care.

"This center will help us diagnose patients earlier, treat them better, and understand their disease in a much deeper way," he says.

He and Alyssa Parian, M.D., director of the IBD Program at HUMC, are creating a group—or "cohort"—of patients who agree to share health information and samples for research. This will help scientists study the disease more closely and create new ways to diagnose and treat it.

Their work recently received support from a grant from the Spondylitis Association of America, helping the team begin building the program.

Read More

FEATURED RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR

WINTER 2026

Caitlin M. DiBello, MBA, CRCP

Manager, Clinical Research Budgets and Contracts
Office of Research Administration at HMHN Research Institute

Caitlin DiBello's role as manager of Clinical Research Budgets and Contracts in the Office of Research Administration is central to the world of clinical research. Her team reviews every study that is conducted at HMH, whether big or small, and often spends hours guiding study teams and negotiating with other institutions every day. Caitlin's field is also quite specialized. She and her team need to be knowledgeable in both scientific and legal concepts and terminology. Despite how ubiquitous her involvement is in the research process, science-focused researchers might not realize how critical a strong budgets and contracts team is to the successful deployment of each and every study. Caitlin sat down with us to share more about her work and to give some pointers on how researchers can set themselves up for success by preparing the relevant documents and information that she and her team will need to operate as smoothly and quickly as possible.

What does an average day look like for you?

I usually have between four to eight meetings with study teams each day. I also try to attend as many division meetings as possible, where I give updates on progress on the contracts for their studies. Many of my meetings involve answering questions and providing guidance to PIs, who often have questions. I also meet with study sponsors to bring negotiations to a close. While the budgets part of my role is typically more straightforward, it may involve some back-and-forth. The proposed compensation amount can sometimes be too high for the sponsor or too low for HMH and then when we try to meet in the middle, the contracts end of things can get trickier. For example, in order for HMH to work with sponsors, the sponsors need to have certain types of insurance, such as cyber liability insurance, and we need to ensure that they do and if not, how they can obtain them. Another sticking point is indemnification. We do the initial negotiations with the sponsors, but if we reach a standstill with them, we escalate the discussions to senior leadership and the legal team and determine how and if we can move forward to partner with them. We often are able to reach an agreement.

My day also involves working closely with my team of specialists and helping them problem solve. I also work with the legal team to create templates and develop playbooks and guidelines. Finally, I connect dots for researchers. There are so many people working on any given study: start-up specialists, contracts/budgets, pharmacy, purchasing, etc. There are also a lot of moving parts to agreements. Sometimes, I encounter studies where I can help all of the right people to get on board. That is the project management part of my job.

What led you to your current role?

After graduating college, I knew I wanted to do something in the legal field. At the time, though, I wasn't sure I wanted to incur the high cost of going to law school. I decided to get a paralegal certification first and get a feel for law firms. In my first job as a paralegal, I worked at a firm that did patent work. I helped file patents for ideas and studies, which was really my foray into the research field. I was exposed to the administrative and commercialization aspects of research and became aware of research protocols.

After a few years, I wanted to move out of the city and switched to a law firm in Lyndhurst. There I worked with Maureen Mahoney, who later became general counsel for HMH. She was the one to suggest that I consider joining her at HMH, since research was really growing. It seemed really interesting, and I liked that there was room for growth in the research contracts department. I started off as a contracts specialist and eventually became a manager. I've been at HMH for about ten years at this point.

What are some of the greatest areas of misunderstanding in the contracts process?

I think it can get tricky if there are a lot of departments involved in the study besides the actual research team, such as the information technology team, purchasing, and others. There are times when numerous approvals are needed for various parts of the study, and researchers can be uncertain about who exactly to work with. If researchers anticipate that that might be the case, then their best bet is to reach out to me early so I can help get them answers and find them the right people.

Other areas of misunderstanding are often related to researchers' prior experiences. Sometimes we encounter researchers who are new to the process, so they need a little more time to learn the ropes. And sometimes we encounter researchers who are very experienced but used to their previous institution's way of doing things. My team just needs to figure out their knowledge gaps and frustrations, so we can help them out.

Can you offer tips to the research community for the most expeditious and compliant approach to the contracts process here at Hackensack Meridian *Health*?

What holds things up are incomplete submissions on the Institutional Review Board side and on the Agreements side (in eResearch). The more detailed and accurate people are in the common forms for both applications, the faster the process is going to go. We need to know what types of funding will be utilized, whether anything will need to be purchased, whether the investigational product is commercially available, and more. If there are a lot of blanks in the application, the more follow ups we'll need to make and the more delayed the approval will be. The more detailed and accurate a submission through agreements, the faster your agreement will be off the ground. We are trying to get the word out about this and have worked on outreach for new PIs. I recommend that they attend the PI orientation offered by the education team at the Office of Research Administration for an overview of the process.

Another good tip is to come to my team and me early. Talk with us when you are in the planning stages of a project. Set up a quick call to say "hey, this is what I'm thinking of doing." We can often include several members of the Office of Research Administration in the meeting, so researchers can get feedback from investigator initiated research team, the operations team, and the contracts team early on in the process. It is so much easier if researchers involve us in the process early on.

What changes have you seen in the research landscape since joining Hackensack Meridian *Health*?

Institution-wise, the changes have been pretty drastic. The Office of Research Administration used to have a small huddle in a conference room, and now our huddle includes over 100 people and is held virtually because we have team members in numerous locations throughout the state. Research has grown by leaps and bounds during my time here.

With respect to research overall, I have seen a lot more concern and protection with data security. Years ago, it wasn't common to have data use agreements. A lot of institutions didn't do it; a lot of things were down with a handshake. Things are a lot more standardized now with data sharing. Data security affects many components of the study, so it's important to lay out how the data will be shared and who will have access to it. Data security has grown exponentially.

What do you most enjoy about your position?

I am always learning, and there is always something new. The new thing now is navigating AI and its effects on clinical research. It's a constant intellectual challenge, which I really enjoy.

Additionally, I have a background in History and English and have always been good at taking a lot of information and organizing and disseminating it. I really enjoy untangling things in my role. I like gathering all of the information and problem solving to figure out the next steps.

What keeps you busy outside of work?

My six-year-old son keeps me very busy. I am definitely a sports mom. I also have a German Shepherd whom I take on walks. Finally, I love gardening, being outside and growing food.

ACADEMICS BULLETIN

WINTER 2026

Experts at HMH Bioethics Symposium Confront AI's Ethical Crossroads in Health Care

It was an insightful and engaging discussion at our Bioethics Institute symposium, "Ethics at the Interface: The Future of AI in Health Care."

Keynote speakers included AI Ethics & Quality Director Charles Binkley, M.D., FACS., and Harvard Law School Deputy Dean I. Glenn Cohen, J.D., and were joined by Meg Young, Ph.D. of the Data & Society Research Institute, with moderation by HMH VP of Bioethics Hannah Lipman, M.D., MS.

Together they tackled the complex ethical, legal, and clinical questions surrounding AI's role in health care—emphasizing the need for thoughtful, real-world implementation that preserves the humanistic core of medicine.

Read More

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS ROUNDUP

WINTER 2026

Academic Affairs Hospital Corporation Board Report
February 2026
David S. Kountz, M.D., MBA, Chief Academic Officer

Network

Hackensack Meridian *Health* Sponsoring Institution accreditation status maintained with no citations

Central Region Assistant Chief Academic Officer recruited; April 2026 start

North Region

New HUMC ACGME Medical Toxicology Fellowship gained initial accreditation; recruiting first fellow for July 2026

HUMC Psychiatry awarded NJ Community Grant to cover 1 Resident FTE over 4 years (460K)

JTCC/Hematology Fellowship awarded ABIM Grant Building Trust: Advancing Health Equity (40K)

South Region

Ongoing search for Pediatrics Program Director and Dental Chair/Program Director

JSUMC and OUMC Psychiatry awarded NJ Community Grant to expand each program by 1 Resident FTE over 4 years (460K per campus)

QUARTERLY QUESTION

WINTER 2026

Which of the following is NOT an example of a source document?

a. Progress note
b. History and Physical
c. Case Report Forms (CRFs)
d. Laboratory results

To answer the question, please click here.

The first person to submit the correct answer will receive a Hackensack Meridian *Health* gift.