

GPSF NEWS

Ghana Physicians and Surgeons Foundation of North America

Fall/Winter 2024 Edition

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FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Welcome to the Fall/Winter edition of the GPSF News!! In this issue, you'll get to hear what the executive board has accomplished towards our three focus areas—strategic partnerships, missions, and the structure of the organization. You'll get to meet our Chapter Leads, the leaders of our Young Professionals Section, and get to know a little about our new administrative assistant, Mr. Nii Ankrah. We spotlight a longstanding non-profit organization and friend of GPSF, International Healthcare Volunteers, and their recent mission trip to Ghana to provide medical, surgical, and preventative care, along with cervical cancer screening, and Pediatric Advanced Life Support training. We also highlight some of the great activities our chapters have engaged in over the last several months.

Check out the upcoming events section of the newsletter to find out what's happening in the coming months and please email ghanaphysiciansusa@gmail.com with any questions.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter and welcome your suggestions and contributions for future editions.









DR. FRANCISCA ABANYIE

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

GREETINGS GPSF MEMBERSHIP,

As the weather changes and the seasons turn, I'm excited to bring you another edition of GPSF News. We have made great progress since the last edition. Here are a few highlights as they relate to the three focus areas for the 2024-2025 term:

Strategic Partnerships

- Partnered with <u>GHLOBAL Diaspora Council</u>- a nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization focused on engaging Ghanaians in the Diaspora and utilizing the strength and diversity of this global network for the purpose of advancing the development of Ghana
- Partnered with <u>Ashesi University's</u> Health and Care Initiative- 5
 GPSF members have committed to serving as advisors for Ashesi
 students' and alumni's medical venture proposals
- Partnership meetings with GCPS Rector, MDC Registrar, and GDDA-UK

Mission Work

- Successful International Healthcare Volunteers Mission Trip
- 10 GPSF members and affiliated members benefited from discount travel through our humanitarian travel agency partner, McAbee Travel
- New Missions Committee Lead started planning 2025 Tarkwa Mission Trip

Structure

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- Implemented permanent license renewal process– successfully processed 38 permanent license renewals
- Hired a Ghana-based administrative assistant to serve as our liaison, assisting with processing of new permanent licenses and renewals, securing rotations in Ghana for medical students, working with our RTCT coordinator to streamline training opportunities, and so much more.

It's been quite a busy quarter; I've had the privilege of representing GPSF at several events; here are a few:



 Reading, hiking, and exploring culinary creations are his favorite pastimes

• Favorite team: Arsenals







Aggrey Memorial Old Students Association (AMOSA) Reunion and Fundraising Dinner Dance in Gaithersburg, MD

At the AMOSA event, our Education Committee Lead, Dr. James Aikins, received an illustrious award for his dedication to Aggrey Memorial Senior High School. I was also honored to receive an award on behalf of my father, Anthony Abanyie, who has also been a staunch supporter of his alma mater. I took the opportunity to join our support with theirs and made a donation on behalf of GPSF towards the building of apartments for Aggrey Memorial Senior High School's teachers.





Atlanta GhanaFEST

In early August, I was joined by three of our Georgia chapter members at Atlanta's GhanaFEST where we partnered with Ghana Healthcare Volunteers of Georgia to conduct health screenings. Our presence was instrumental in providing immediate attention for an unexpected medical emergency; read more about our experience in this issue (page 15).









IHCV Medical Mission

In mid-August, I had the pleasure of joining International Healthcare Volunteers (IHCV) on their annual medical mission, one of my favorite events each year. This was my fourth mission trip with IHCV and for me, the most rewarding. Dr. Ifeoma Anidi, a pediatric hospitalist that has participated in IHCV's missions for more than 10 years, and I conducted Pediatric Advanced Life Support training with feedback mannequins for nearly 50 healthcare providers at Cape Coast Teaching Hospital and Cape Coast Metropolitan Hospital (the hospital my two eldest brothers were born). We were elated to find that by the end of the training the confidence of the trainees significantly increased with many of them serving as impromptu trainers for a group of medical students that joined the training on the last day. You can read more about the mission trip and the testimonial of two other participants in this issue (page 11-14).





Partnership Meetings in Ghana

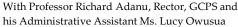
During this mission trip I was able to meet with the Rector of GCPS, Professor Richard Adanu, to discuss plans for this term and ways to strengthen our important partnership. I was accompanied by Dr. Nii Koney who was a vital player in this meeting, as well as the interview process for our new Ghana-based administrative assistant. A lunch meeting with Dr. Divine Banyubala allowed us to sign an updated memorandum of understanding (MOU), receive guidance on how best to navigate the complex political landscape to optimize GPSF's efforts, as well as engage in some insightful philosophical discussions.













With Dr. Divine Banyubala, Registrar, MDC

The opportunity to honor two graduation invitations was a major highlight of this trip. The celebration of 173 medical and dental inductees into the Medical and Dental Council (MDC) led by Dr. Banyubala and concluded by the congratulatory message of the Minister of Health, the Honorable Bernard Okoe Boye, was awe-inspiring and invigorating. The second invitation was for the Ashesi University Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony for the class of 2024. It was a vibrant occasion, filled with great excitement and encouragement despite the dreary weather that threatened to put a damper on the joy of onlooking family and friends. The commencement was immediately followed by a VIP reception hosted by the Founder and President of the University, Mr. Patrick Awuah, Jr.





With Mr. Patrick Awuah, Ashesi University President

Medical Knowledge Fiesta

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The Medical Knowledge Fiesta (MKF), held September 25–27, was a huge success. Though I was unable to attend the Fiesta in person, I provided a pre-recorded goodwill message that was played on opening day. The 3-day event, attended by approximately 400 medical professionals, scholars, and leaders, addressed the threat of antimicrobial resistance and the important role of healthcare providers in safeguarding medications used to treat infections. The keynote speaker for the annual event was Professor Otchere Addai-Mensah, CEO







of Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, who highlighted the grave future that exists if antimicrobial resistance is left unchecked. Dr. Thad Ulzen, former GPSF President, provided a unique presentation on the effect of antibiotic use and resistance on the gut microbiome and its effect on mental health. I'd like to thank Dr. Ulzen and all our members that attended and supported the MKF.

Ghanaian Doctors and Dentists Association of the United Kingdom (GDDA-UK) Annual Meeting

In early October, I attended the 19th Annual Conference and Dinner Dance Fundraising Event of the GDDA-UK. I was accompanied by Dr. Teye Adusu, a longtime member of GPSF. The theme of the conference was "Empowering Lives, Managing the Sickle Cell Disease Patient" and featured two scientific presentations—'Current trends in the management of sickle cell disease' by Dr. David Allotey and 'Dentofacial manifestations of sickle cell and their management' by Professor Sandra Hewlett. The meeting was also a celebration of the accomplishments of GDDA-UK on the one-year anniversary of signing their MOU with MDC. I was intrigued to learn that the focus of their efforts is mainly on dentistry, with plans for the first of its kind Dental Conference in Ghana in 2025. My hope is that our two organizations can partner to advance both medical and dental training in Ghana. I had the opportunity to meet the outgoing executive board and welcome the incoming new leaders of the organization; I look forward to our partnership to advance healthcare in Ghana.

Ghana Medical Association (GMA) Annual Meeting in Ho, Ghana

In early November, I was invited to attend the 66th Annual General Conference at the University of Health and Allied Sciences in Ho, Volta Region. The theme for the conference was "Fostering Technology, Entrepreneurship, and Professionalism in Ghana's Health Sector". The conference and dinner dance were attended by over one thousand physicians from all regions of Ghana. I was invited to share a solidarity message and took the opportunity to promote the Resident in Training Educational Stipend (RITES) program. Highlights of the event included a heartfelt presidential address by Dr. Frank Serebour, sharing the accomplishments and challenges the organization has faced over the last year; a compelling keynote address by Dr. Agyeman Badu-Akosa, which happened to be presented on the 25th anniversary of his election as



Dr. Frank Serebour, Chairman for GMA Annual Meeting







the GMA President; conferment of Fellowship to four highly decorated physicians, including the Minister of Health, the Honorable Bernard Okoe Boye; and the excitement generated by the highlife songs performed live by the Ghana Police Band and Dr. Isaac Adu-Poku Antwi at the dinner dance that served as a culmination of the festive event.



With Dr. Frank Serebour, GMA President



With Dr. Nsiah Asare, Presidential Advisor on Health to President Nana Akufo-Addo



Honorable Bernard Okoe Boye, MOH



GMA Executive Board Members

UPCOMING EVENTS

I was immensely encouraged to see nearly 60 members in attendance at our <u>General Membership</u> meeting in September. I encourage you all to stay engaged and get involved in the various activities we have coming up, including our Annual Conference in Atlanta, Community Health Fair (more info to come), the 2025 Mission Trip to Tarkwa Hospital (sign up <u>HERE</u>), GPSF Mentorship Program (sign up <u>HERE</u>), and webinars. Our next General Membership meeting will be January 12, 2025. Please consider submitting an abstract for our <u>Annual Conference</u>. New this year, the executive board felt it was important to incentivize our members that go above and beyond to make our annual meeting a success, therefore, oral presenters will receive a \$100 discount off the annual conference registration fee. Make sure to also take advantage of the discounted <u>Hotel Group Rate</u> and discounted <u>SkyTeam (Delta, KLM, etc.) Airfare</u>.







As the Thanksgiving holiday draws near, I am grateful for our executive board members and our administrative assistants who work tirelessly to meet the mission of the Foundation. I am also thankful for our two Senior Advisors, former presidents, Dr. Nathaniel Lawson and Dr. James Aikins, who continue to provide great insight and historical knowledge for the executive board as we make informed decisions that help us to move the mission of the Foundation forward. Lastly, but certainly not least, I am abundantly appreciative of the support and engagement of you all, our GPSF membership; this organization is everything it is because of you. I pray you enjoy the holidays with family and friends.

I look forward to engaging with you at our next membership meeting on <u>January 12, 2025</u>; until then don't forget to <u>renew your membership</u> and please consider making a tax-deductible <u>donation to GPSF</u>.

If I can ever be of any help to you, please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or ideas you may have—thegpsfpresident@gmail.com.

Yours in service,

Dr. Francisca Abanyie 2024-2025 GPSF President







YOUNG PROFESSIONALS' CORNER

Empowering Future Physicians: Our Residency Mock Interviews

 ${f A}$ s part of GPSF's ongoing commitment to medical education, the Young Professionals Committee is thrilled to highlight one of our most impactful initiatives this year: the 2024/25 Residency Application Mock Interview Project. This initiative, launched to provide valuable support to residency applicants, has been a testament to the power of community, mentorship, and volunteerism within our organization.

Over the course of a month, we coordinated a series of mock interview sessions designed to help residency applicants hone their interview skills, boost their confidence, and gain insights into the interview process. From mastering their narratives to handling challenging questions, participants received practical

feedback and guidance tailored to the high-stakes environment of residency applications. Each session was crafted to mirror the intensity and rigor of real residency interviews, allowing applicants to refine their responses and navigate the pressures they will encounter in actual interviews.

A remarkable aspect of this project was the dedication of our volunteer interviewers. We were fortunate to have a robust team of program directors, attendings and residents generously contribute their time and expertise. Their involvement allowed us to provide personalized feedback to each participant, ensuring a more personal experience that extended beyond simple Q&A sessions. Additionally, the project would not have been possible without the dedication and support of the Young Professionals Committee e-board, who worked tirelessly to successfully coordinate a total of 29 mock interviews.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to empowering the next generation of physicians. Through projects like these, we're not only supporting aspiring doctors but also strengthening the future of healthcare. To every interviewer, organizer, and participant—thank you for making this initiative a resounding success.

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MR. DAVID AGYAPONG Young Professionals' Vice President of Clinical Affairs

Testimonials from participants

"'Tell me about yourself', is probably the most important *question in any interview and I* realized I was answering wrong." - Albert, Internal Medicine

"The interviewer gave me constructive feedback on my response to interview questions, which provided me better insight about answering residency interview questions."

- Asante, Pediatrics applicant









MEET THE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS' LEADERSHIP





MICHAEL MENSAH-MAMFO PRESIDENT



MICHELLE AMANKWAH CO-VICE PRESIDENT OF PRE-CLINICAL AFFAIRS



DAVID AGYAPONG CO-VICE PRESIDENT OF CLINICAL AFFAIRS



SHEILA-ALICE TAYIE
SECRETARY



MATILDA OWUO
COMMUNITY OUTREACH CHAIR



CHELSEA OPPONG SOCIAL MEDIA CHAIR



DANIELLE MENSAH, MD PRESIDENTIAL LIAISON















NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION SPOTLIGHT International Healthcare Volunteers (IHCV)

Established in 2001, IHCV is a nonprofit organization headed by Dr. James K. Aikins, Chief Gynecologic Oncologist at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey. The organization was created after the tragic loss of Dr. Aikins' niece in childbirth. IHCV is dedicated to providing healthcare to women and their families in underserved areas like Ghana and Jamaica, as well as continuing medical education to healthcare professionals in these areas. This year 27 volunteers attended the mission from August 16 to 31. As in prior years, the team was divided in two, with one team heading to Kumasi and the second team heading to Cape Coast. In total 475 adult and pediatric patients were evaluated, 27 surgeries and 20 cervical cancer screenings were performed, 48 healthcare providers were trained in Pediatric Advanced Life Support, and 12 lectures were provided by the two teams. Additionally, the Kumasi team conducted 350 medical screenings at the Jubilee Health Fair.

The mission trip usually culminates with a celebratory event in Accra. This year's closing celebration was a chocolate and tea tasting hosted by <u>57</u> Chocolate, an African women-owned luxury chocolate brand that evokes 1957 — Ghana's independence. If you are interested in participating in next year's mission or donating to the organization please email: ihcvinfo@gmail.com and check out more information about the organization on their website.

Continue reading to learn more about the IHCV trip from two first-time attendees to the mission.





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MS. AMY BORDOGNA
Medical Student (MS-4)
Cooper Medical School
of Rowan University



IHCV Mission Trip Reflection–Medical Student Experience

It was a privilege to join the International Health Care Volunteers on their annual medical mission to Ghana. Over the course of two weeks, I gained invaluable insight into both the Ghanaian healthcare system and the rich, vibrant culture of the community. I had the opportunity to rotate through several disciplines, including medicine, surgery, OB/GYN, and pediatrics, encountering a wide range of diseases—many of which were either less common or more advanced than what we typically see in the United States. Something I found fascinating was the astute physical exams skills each Ghanaian provider has, as they focus much less on laboratory and imaging studies due to affordability and access to resources. In fact, the medical students perform their exams on real patients with physical exam findings in contrast to the standardized patients we see in the US.

A particularly impactful resource we provided on the OB/GYN service was an HPV screening clinic for the hospital staff, many of whom had never had a pap smear. This clinic hopefully serves as a way in which we can empower women to take charge of their own health and begin to reduce the high rates of cervical cancer seen in Ghana.

Visiting the historic Cape Coast Castle and enjoying the region's beautiful rainforests and beaches were tremendous experiences. The relationships I built with our group, as well as the hospital staff and patients, will stay with me forever. I am deeply humbled by the kindness of the Ghanaian people and am grateful for the many lessons I learned from them. I know this experience will remain with me throughout my career.





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DR. VAISH MEHTAObstetrics and Gynecology Resident
Rutgers–Robert Wood Johnson
Medical School

IHCV Mission Trip Reflection-PGY3 Resident's Experience

Keflecting on my experience with International Healthcare Volunteers as an OB/GYN resident in Cape Coast, Ghana, I am profoundly moved by the challenges and rewards of providing gynecologic care in this vibrant community. During my time at local hospitals, I managed cases involving abnormal bleeding, pelvic pain, and reproductive health disorders. Collaborating with dedicated local nurses and healthcare workers was inspiring and invaluable, as we worked together to meet the community's needs. A key focus was contributing to cervical cancer screening initiatives. Despite available services, many women and some healthcare providers do not utilize them due to cultural beliefs, fear, and general lack of awareness. I participated in outreach programs to educate women on the importance of early detection and empowering them to take charge of their health through education was truly rewarding. I also learned from local family planning services, observing how community health workers effectively discussed contraceptive options while respecting cultural sensitivities. This was another reminder that sustainable change must be rooted in a community's values and beliefs.

However, working in a global health setting as a doctor presented ethical dilemmas, particularly in balancing immediate care with long-term systemic issues. The stark realities of limited resources meant making difficult decisions about prioritizing patients, reminding me that while I aimed to make a difference, I was also a temporary presence in a complex system.











Outside of clinical work, I enjoyed exploring Cape Coast, particularly the poignant Cape Coast Castle, which reminded me of the region's complex history and the resilience of its people, as well as the beautiful nearby rainforest and beaches.





As someone who has engaged in the global health sector in various ways before becoming a provider, this experience has profoundly shaped my perspective as an OB/GYN resident. It has reaffirmed my commitment to addressing disparities in reproductive health and to the pursuit of equitable healthcare.







GPSF CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT- GEORGIA

ATLANTA GHANAFEST

The Georgia chapter of Ghana Physicians and Surgeons Foundation had the opportunity to collaborate with Ghana Healthcare Volunteers of Georgia at GhanaFest in August 2024. The event, held annually in metro Atlanta, provides an opportunity for Ghanaian organizations in the state of Georgia to connect and network with one another while showcasing Ghanaian culture.

As medical professionals, we were honored to be designated as first aid providers for the event in addition to providing blood pressure and blood glucose screening for all comers. We put our expertise to good use, managing an episode of syncope secondary to hyperglycemia and dehydration as well as attending to minor injuries during the event. Amidst the music, food, dancing and festivities, our chapter members connected with medical students and other medical professionals who were previously unaware of our organization. Our presence at GhanaFest 2024 allowed us to provide a service to our community while connecting with medical students and other professionals eager to join the foundation. Additionally, we enjoyed the festivities, plentiful food and warm sunshine and look forward to participating in more community events in the future.







DR. ERNESTINA FRENCH



DR. PATRICIA AMPADU









DR. ELFRIEDE AGYEMANGChapter President

GEORGIA CHAPTER MEETING

On October 19th, the Georgia Chapter gathered at Cafe Songhai in Peachtree Corners, GA for a meet-and-greet of members, new and old, over delicious Ghanaian cuisine. Ten Georgians from various specialties including internal medicine, psychiatry, orthopedic surgery, orthodontics, obstetrics and gynecology, and infectious diseases/pediatric infectious diseases enjoyed laughter, good company, and some delectable food. Several participants were new to GPSF, so Drs. Abanyie and Agyemang took the opportunity to share the history, vision, and benefits of being a GPSF member. One member shared his appreciation for the MOU between GPSF and the Ghana Medical and Dental Council in assisting him with obtaining a permanent medical license, after much difficulty in applying for the license on his own. The group discussed potential future events for the chapter, including the upcoming Annual GPSF Conference in May 2025.

We were grateful for our corporate sponsor, Ms. Dorothy Bota, a financial advisor from Mass Mutual who engaged our members by sharing important financial planning pearls.



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DR. SHIRLEY OCLOOChapter President

GPSF CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT- CAROLINAS

CAROLINAS CHAPTER MEETING

On October 26, the GPSF Carolinas Chapter held a membership meeting sponsored by Novo Nordisk and Dr. Alexandria Atuahene Opata, a board-certified Clinical Endocrinologist. Dr. Opata provided a presentation on the topic "Understanding the Impacts of Cardiovascular Outcome Trials on Diabetic Guidelines". The 23 chapter members met at Rooster's Wood-fired Kitchen in Charlotte, North Carolina, where they received a report of their last fundraising event, collection and shipping of medical supplies to a new Pediatric Oncology Hospital in Sehua, Ghana. They also received updates on prior projects from the Chapter President, Dr. Shirley Ocloo, including the purchase of equipment for the University of Health and Allied Sciences' Analytical Laboratory and purchase of two automated external defibrillator (AEDs) for Kotoka International Airport. The meeting was a time of reconnection and celebration of the success of the chapter, one of the most active chapters of the Foundation.













MEET THE CHAPTER LEADS





SHIRLEY OCLOO, MD CAROLINAS (NC, SC)



KWABENA BOAKYE, MD NEW YORK



JOSIAH K. HALM, MD TEXAS



NEW ENGLAND (CT, RI, MA, ME, VT, NH)



CAROLINE A. POKU, MD



MAMLE MANTE, DMD DELAWARE VALLEY (PA, NJ, DE)



ELFRIEDE AGYEMAN, MD GEORGIA



YVETTE APPIAH, MD VIRGINIA







RECENT EVENT GPSF/GCPS-HOSTED WEBINAR



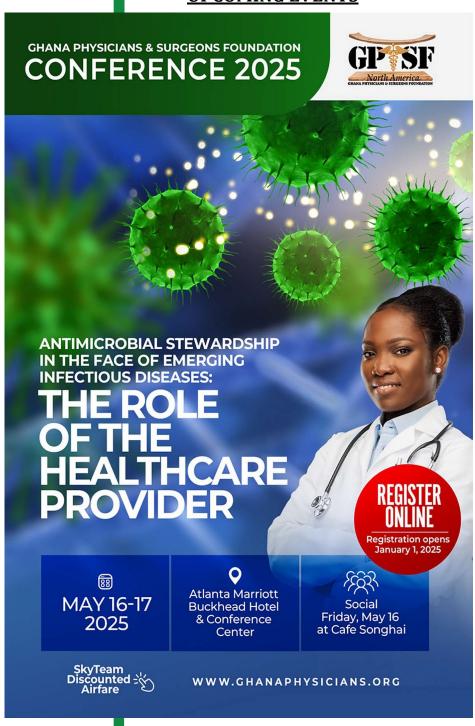
 $oldsymbol{0}$ n November 17, 2024, GPSF in collaboration with the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons (GCPS) hosted a highly anticipated webinar entitled Starting a Healthcare Business in Ghana: A Conversation with HeFRA. The attendance of over 100 participants was evidence of the fervent interest in the topic. The panel discussion included a U.S.-based interventional cardiologist and one of GPSF's distinguished lifetime members, Dr. Collins Kwarteng, CEO of City of Hope Hospital and Cardiovascular Center; a Ghana-based physician and healthcare business owner, Dr. Edem Hiadzi, an internationally recognized obstetrician gynecologist and fertility doctor, and Founder and CEO of Lister Hospital and Fertility Centre; and Dr. Philip Bannor, U.S.-trained, board certified internal medicine physician appointed as the Registrar for the Health Facilities Regulatory Agency based in Ghana. Participants acquired substantial insights into the licensing and monitoring of healthcare facilities in Ghana. Future opportunities to delve deeper into this topic are in discussion.







UPCOMING EVENTS









Annual Conference Abstract Submissions

- > Opened: September 1, 2024
- **➤ Closes: January 15, 2025**
- > Submit abstracts to gmail.com



Annual Conference Theme



ANTIMICROBIAL STEWARDSHIP IN THE FACE OF EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES: THE ROLE OF THE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

SUGGESTED TOPIC AREAS BY SPECIALTY (NOT LIMITED TO THESE SPECIALTIES OR TOPICS):

NEUROLOGY- MENINGITIS AND ASSOCIATED NEUROLOGIC SEQUALAE

<u>NEPHROLOGY</u>- COVAN (COVID-ASSOCIATED NEPHROPATHY) OR HIVAN (HIV-ASSOCIATED NEPHROPATHY)

INFECTIOUS DISEASES/INTERNAL MEDICINE - MONKEYPOX

CARDIOLOGY- ENDOCARDITIS, POT'S SYNDROME

ONCOLOGY - LYMPHOMAS (HIV-ASSOCIATED), HEPATOCELLULAR CARCINOMA, KAPOSI SARCOMA, ANAL CANCER (HPV)

GYNECOLOGY- VULVAR MALIGNANCIES (HPV)

GASTROENTEROLOGY- GASTRIC CANCER (H. PYLORI)

<u>PAIN MANAGEMENT</u>- INFLAMMATORY NEUROPATHY; POST-HERPETIC NEURALGIA

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DEADLINE APPROACHING-DECEMBER 31, 2024



RITES PROGRAM



(RESIDENT IN TRAINING EDUCATIONAL STIPEND)

APPLY TODAY!!

- GPSF-funded program
- Partnership with Yale University School of Medicine
- Applicants must be resident physicians in training in Ghana
- Opportunity to experience and learn from the healthcare delivery system in the United States for 6-8 weeks (~June-August)

Send applications to **ghanaphysiciansusa@gmail.com**



Application Deadline: December 31, 2024 **Notification of applicants:** by February 28, 2025 **More info and application here: RITES PROGRAM**









THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTER

