

## Scripps Mercy Family Medicine Residents – Class of 2024



**Karen Dueñas Ruiz, MD**  
**University of Illinois Chicago**

Karen was born and raised in Otavalo, Ecuador, and immigrated to Miami, Florida as a teenager. Karen's passion for medicine is rooted in her multifaceted upbringing where she developed an interest in serving minority communities in both urban and rural areas.

Her passion for global health further developed at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign through working with the organization MEDLIFE setting up sustainable mobile health clinics back in Ecuador and Peru. She studied molecular and cellular biology with minors in global studies and chemistry; and her love for mentorship, education, and science led her to work as a chemistry teaching assistant for the Merit Scholars Program.

She obtained her medical degree from the University of Illinois in Chicago. She was actively involved with the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) as a medical educator for underrepresented high school students, co-president of the UIC LMSA chapter, and as a national advocacy co-chair.

Her interests have led her to pursue projects in women's health, abortion services, food insecurity, nutrition, homelessness, mentorship and education. She was drawn to Chula Vista for the amazing community of patients and doctors and their commitment to social justice and health equity.

When she is not at work, Karen enjoys volunteering at local pantries, cooking new recipes, spending time outdoors with friends, and visiting her family back in Miami, Florida.



**Estefania Larrosa, MD**  
**UC Davis School of Medicine**

Estefania was born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela.

Being witness to significant health disparities from a young age, she became passionate about underserved communities. Prior to medical school, she worked for the Scripps Research Institute and the NIDA focusing on substance use disorders. During medical school, Estefania committed to provide primary and urgent care services to marginalized communities by partnering with local organizations in the greater Sacramento area. She has also advocated for legislative change to better serve victims of intimate partner violence.

In her free time, Estefania enjoys woodworking, camping and listening to podcasts.



**Damaris Garcia Sandoval, MD**  
**University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Medicine**

Damaris was born and raised in the best city in the world- Los Angeles! More specifically, she grew up in Inglewood, CA. She is the daughter of Central American immigrants; her dad is from Guatemala and her mom is from Honduras. They both left their respective home countries due to political instability and made a home in Southern California with Damaris and her brother Arnold.

Damaris had the privilege of calling Chicago home during her four years at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). At UIC, Damaris was the community service chair for the Latino Medical Student Association, was part of the Urban Medicine Program, and conducted research on the imperative role of minority pipeline programs. She was also a MOLA Research Scholar and was inducted into the Gold Humanism Honor Society.

Prior to medical school, she attended the University of Southern California where she studied health promotion and founded the student organization Chicanos/Latinos for Health Education (CHE). After college, she worked in a translational Parkinson's disease research lab at the Keck School of Medicine and as an HIV/ Hep care coordinator on Skid Row.

On her time off, Damaris likes to go on long walks with her doggie PupTart, drink fancy lattes, and go to brunch with her friends. As a daughter of immigrants, she is fiercely passionate about creating a more equitable world, and healthcare is a great place to start. She feels extremely privileged to be at Chula Vista, and she still can't believe she matched into her dream program!



**Kathleen Maher, MD**  
**Rush Medical College**

Katie grew up in Poway, California.

She knew she wanted to be a doctor from a young age and her passion for medicine is rooted in service and social justice. In high school she volunteered with a non-profit serving unhoused individuals in San Diego and coordinating a water filtration project in Tanzania. During her undergraduate years at UC Davis she studied binational health in Oaxaca, Mexico, volunteered at a free clinic in a rural farm working community, and worked as a whitewater rafting guide. After completing her B.S. in Exercise Biology, she worked in outdoor education and international public health before moving to

Chicago for medical school. In Chicago she volunteered at a substance use treatment center and led a community cooking club. Her areas of interest include reproductive justice, LGBTQ+ care, and working with Spanish-speaking patients. She is thrilled to be back in sunny California at her dream program for residency.

When she's not working, Katie loves to be outside. She especially enjoys hiking, biking, snorkeling, gardening, and cooking.



**Brianna Martinez, MD**  
**Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine**

Brianna was born and raised in Vista, California.

She attended Loyola Stritch School of Medicine in Chicago. At Loyola she taught medical Spanish to her peers as an M1, was a member of the medical Spanish board, volunteered as an interpreter for the Loyola Access to Care clinic, helped establish the Loyola COVID-19 hotline, and helped lead the Loyola COVID-19 Student Response Team. Throughout her time at Loyola, she developed a passion for health education, working with underserved populations, and addressing disparities in access to care. She was inducted to the Gold Humanism Honor Society for her service.

Brianna attended the University of New Mexico as an undergraduate where she majored in biology with minors in chemistry and psychology. She was a member of the UNM Women's soccer team. She was also a general chemistry TA and volunteered with Child Life at the UNM Hospital.

Brianna enjoys the beach, playing soccer, working out, gardening, spending time with her friends and family, and going to Disneyland with her husband, Mark.



**Filiberto Morales, MD, MPH**  
**University of Colorado, School of Medicine**

Filiberto grew up in Denver, CO.

Filiberto was part of an eight-year health professions pipeline program at the University of Colorado Denver (BA/BS-MD program). During his undergraduate years, he developed a variety of community partnerships that instilled in him the importance of becoming a physician that is integrated into the community. Filiberto has had the privilege of directing a food donations program, developing a health and science curriculum for elementary students, and coaching high school soccer.

During medical school, Filiberto was a member of the Urban Underserved Track (UUT) and completed all of his clinical rotations through a longitudinal integrated clerkship at Denver Health—the city's safety net hospital and clinic system. Filiberto was a member of the Gold Humanism Honor Society. He was a three-time Kaiser Permanente Diversity Scholar and recipient of the Florence Sabin Commitment to Community Health Award. In between his third and fourth year of medical school, Filiberto was selected as a Zuckerman Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School-Center for Public Leadership. This allowed him to pursue a Master of Public Health degree at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health before returning to Colorado to finish up his last year of medical school.

In his free time, he enjoys the outdoors, playing soccer, and spending time with family.



## Christian Perez, MD

### Keck School of Medicine of USC

Christian's understanding of, and commitment to underserved communities stems from the need he saw in his own community of El Monte, CA, and the recognition of his responsibility to help others in similar situations. As a medical student at Keck School of Medicine of USC, he helped pioneer programs that nurture community ties while filling gaps in health services for Los Angeles County's most vulnerable patients. These include a strength training course for the elderly in the community, a Students for a National Health Program student group, and a yearly Día de Los Muertos festival. As a National Health Corps Scholar, Christian is committed to serving at a Federally Qualified Health Center when he graduates as a Family Physician.

He studied psychobiology at UCLA as an undergraduate where he connected with others who were similarly driven to give back to their community through medicine. Programs like Chican@s Latin@s for Community Medicine allowed him to envision himself as a physician. Through Best Buddies he fostered friendships with adults with intellectual delay, sharing joy, laughter, and just plain having fun.

Outside of medicine, Christian is likely cooking and eating, tending to his collection of plants, hiking through local trails, running, or spending time with family.



## Cindy Valverde, MD

### University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine (UNR Med)

Cindy grew up in Santa Ana, CA. As a medical student, Cindy served as the Co-Chair for the Latino Medical Student Association, Medical Spanish Student Interest Group, and the Student Wellness Committee. Passionate about human rights, Cindy co-authored and presented a lecture series on Identifying Human Trafficking Victims in Healthcare Settings. She received a Scholarly Concentration in Service Learning for her participation in the 5-2-1-0 Healthy Living Program at an FQHC, where she discovered her passion to work with underserved communities and diminish health disparities through advocacy and education.

Using her own experiences as a first-generation student, Cindy co-founded The PreMed Clinic, a mentoring program for first-generation and/or low-income pre-medical students at UNR Med. The program provides numerous resources, such as volunteer and shadowing opportunities, free MCAT books, and paid scribe positions. During her last year of medical school, Cindy received the Richard C. Inskip and Norma McCormack scholarship awards for her dedication to family medicine.

As an undergraduate, she studied physiology & neuroscience and minored in psychology at UC San Diego. Prior to starting medical school, Cindy was a substance abuse counselor intern who worked with patients recovering from opiate addictions. In her free time, she enjoys hiking with her dog, participating in yoga or spin classes, gardening and creating (but mostly eating) charcuterie boards.



## Josue Reynaga, MD, MA

### University of California, Riverside - School of Medicine

Josue was raised in Whittier, CA and is the son of Mexican immigrants who taught him the value of hard work and education. Raised with the social justice teachings of the Catholic faith, Josue has always felt a duty to help the marginalized.

Upon completing his undergraduate education at UCLA, Josue joined the social services field as a case manager/social worker where his focus was on housing chronically unsheltered veterans while addressing their healthcare needs. He also helped start the UCLA chapter of Flying Samaritans – a group whose mission was to provide healthcare support in Tijuana, Baja California. He participated in Flying Sams

until his move to the Midwest where he completed a M.A. in Medical Sciences at Loyola University Chicago.

At UCR School of Medicine, Josue earned his MD with a Designated Emphasis in Medical Humanities. Josue was involved in curriculum development where he created courses in LGBT+ Health and HIV/AIDS. He was also co-chair of his school's Latinx Medical Student Association chapter and was elected by his peers as community engagement representative for three consecutive years. Josue's continued work with underserved populations led to his induction to the Gold Humanism Honor Society. He was later awarded the Dean's Social Justice Award – the School of Medicine's most prestigious scholarship.

Josue is energized to be at Scripps Mercy Hospital in Chula Vista where he will train with the finest, while enjoying the best that San Diego has to offer. In his free time, Josue enjoys going on adventures with his partner where they explore local restaurants, breweries and scenic trails.