

College of Medicine alumni, faculty join UF's 40 Gators Under 40 2025 cohort

Honorees have made contributions to the fields of neurology, medical physics and more

By Emily Mavrakis, Kayleigh Gallo, Jori Rzepecki

April 16, 2025 — From the clinic to the classroom to the boardroom, University of Florida College of Medicine alumni are making a difference in the lives of others through their careers.

Since 2006, outstanding UF alumni under age 40 have been recognized for their achievements and impact on their organizations and communities. This year, four college alumni and one current faculty member who completed his undergraduate degree at UF were recognized for going greater in their professions.

Meet the College of Medicine's 2025 40 Gators Under 40 honorees:



Pouya Ameli, M.D., M.S.

The son of hardworking parents who fled instability and conflict, Pouya Ameli, M.D., M.S., immigrated to the U.S. from Iran at age 3. Now an assistant professor in UF's Department of Neurology, he credits both luck and determination for his success.

Ameli obtained his undergraduate degree in philosophy from UF before earning a Master of Science in Biotechnology and his medical degree at the University of Central Florida. He then completed an internship in internal medicine and a residency in neurology at Vanderbilt University, followed by a neurocritical care fellowship at Emory University.

His background in philosophy shaped his approach to neurology, a field he describes as existing in “the gray zone,” where clear answers aren’t always available, so creative and abstract thinking are often required to provide the highest level of care.

“In neurology, you need to be OK with not always knowing the answer and not get frustrated by having to say, ‘I don’t know,’” Ameli said. “I love the field because of how humbling it is.”

Since joining UF’s faculty in 2020, Ameli has focused on neurocritical care in the intensive care unit, treating patients with brain and spinal cord injuries, seizures, tumors, bleeds and strokes.

Beyond clinical work, he co-founded the [Medi-Gators Virtual Shadowing Program](#), providing UF undergraduates insight into health care careers. He also serves as physician director of quality for the Department of Neurology, where he leads efforts to improve the processes behind patient care. He is also assistant director of the neurology clerkship, teaching the fundamentals of neurology to medical students and serving as a mentor to future neurologists.

“I’ve enjoyed working with students and helping them figure out their careers,” he said.

“Seeing more students choose neurology has been satisfying because we have a massive deficit in neurologists. There’s a big focus on fixing what’s broken in health care, and I feel privileged to help in that process.”



Lindsay DeWeese, Ph.D.

Lindsay DeWeese, Ph.D. '13

During an introductory engineering class at UF, Lindsay DeWeese, Ph.D. '13, learned about the field of medical physics for the first time and became captivated by the idea of spending her career as a clinical scientist. The growing field encompasses radiation therapy, diagnostic imaging and nuclear medicine, focusing on the safe and effective use of radiation and other technologies in medicine.

"I had been very interested in math and science from a young age, and I liked hearing about this nontraditional route to health care," she said. "It was not necessarily patient-facing but

more behind the scenes, helping with patient safety and quality as a critical member of the team.”

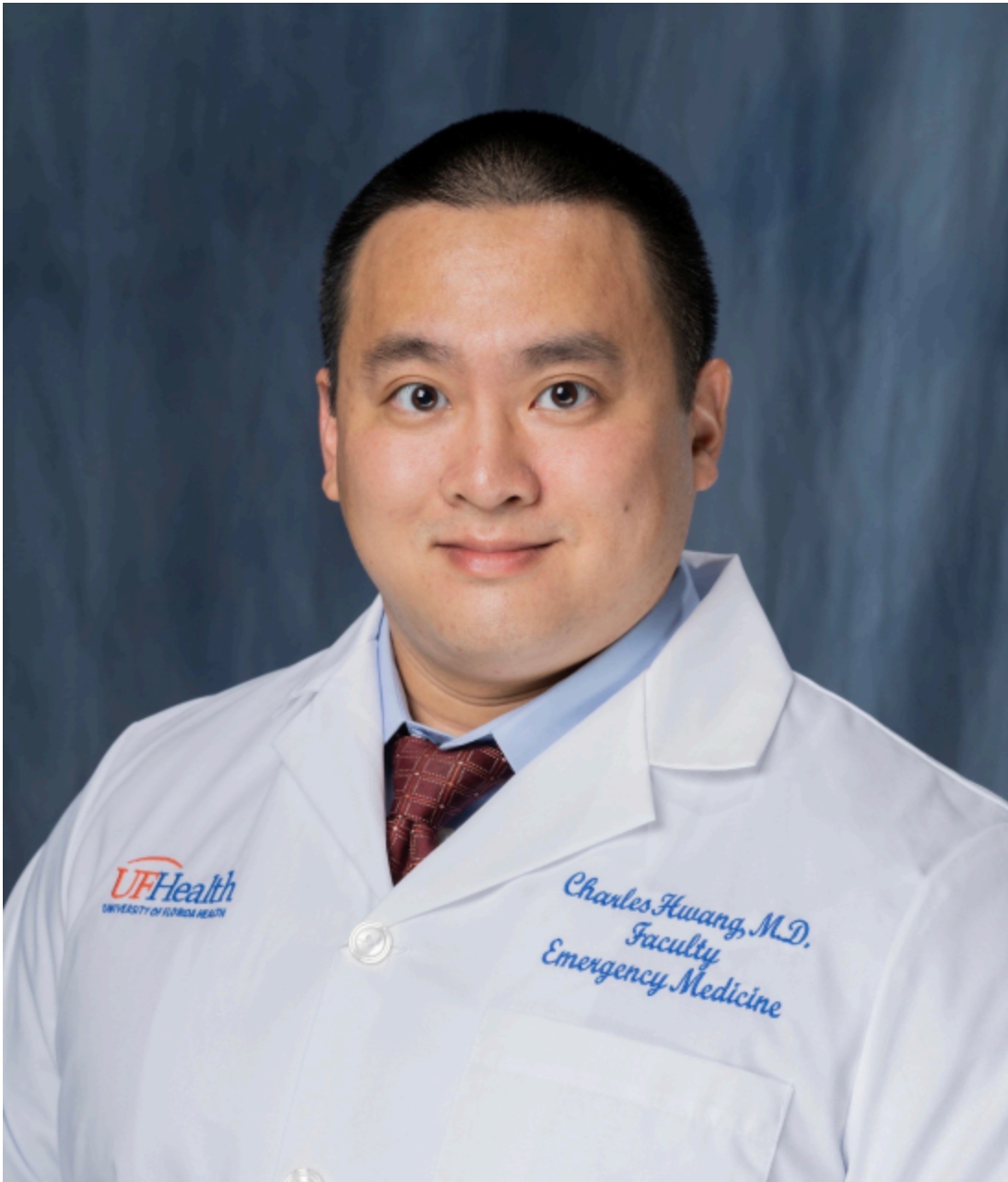
Keen on becoming involved with research, she began working with teams at the colleges of Medicine and Engineering during her undergraduate years, first joining the research lab of Wesley Bolch, Ph.D. Manuel Arreola, Ph.D., DABR, assistant director of the UF medical physics graduate program, took her under his wing and served as a mentor while she continued to pursue her undergraduate, master’s and doctoral degrees at UF.

“He just really cared about you as a person,” DeWeese said. “He started every meeting with, ‘OK, how are you?’ And I would go into my research update for that week, and he would say, ‘No, no. How are you as a person?’ That really helped me to finish the Ph.D. without burning out and made it such a better phase of my life.”

After graduation, DeWeese pursued a career in academic medicine. She joined the faculty at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, where she serves as assistant director of the medical physics graduate program, director of the medical physics residency program and section chief of imaging physics for the Clinical Department of Radiology.

DeWeese said it’s important for her to help other students experience the same opportunities she was exposed to, whether it’s becoming involved in research early on or taking on leadership roles.

“I try to model Dr. Arreola as a mentor and give back to the students and residents I work with and continue to be a resource for them,” she said.



Charles Hwang

Charles Hwang, M.D. '13

Charles Hwang, M.D. '13, didn't initially plan to become a doctor. The Winter Park, Florida, native and clinical associate professor in the UF Department of Emergency Medicine began his journey toward the health profession in high school when he shadowed a VA surgeon, who later became his mentor. Encouraged to explore medicine, Hwang completed a summer research project for the National Institutes of Health before beginning his studies at UF.

While studying biochemistry, Hwang applied for and was accepted to the junior honors medical program, a program at UF where students could complete their undergraduate and medical studies in seven years.

Specializing in emergency medicine, Hwang remained at UF for his residency and fellowship. During his training, he worked with the UF Athletic Association, gaining firsthand experience in emergency medicine for large events. His time as a student, resident and fellow solidified his passion for both emergency medicine and teaching, leading him to return to UF as faculty

Hwang's expertise in emergency medicine is extensive. After graduation, he served as medical director of emergency medical services for Levy County, a rural area without hospitals. To improve patient outcomes, he implemented initiatives to enhance survival and resuscitation rates, ensuring proper procedures before intubation.

For Hwang, teaching offers career longevity and the chance to give back. He provides students with hands-on experiences while ensuring they have the opportunity to ask questions in a learning-focused environment.

"Being able to see the students' wheels turn as you impart knowledge, whether it's medical information or just wisdom about life or guidance about careers, it really shows how much depth there is in medicine," he said. "Teaching gives the ability to guide and mentor relationships and guide careers."

Additionally, he is training as an emergency physician in the Air Force, where he will care for critically ill patients overseas and facilitate their return to the U.S.



Patrick Lynn, M.D. '12, M.B.A.

Patrick Lynn, M.D. '12, M.B.A., never imagined his path would lead him to become the beating heart of rural health care in the South.

Born into a family of Georgia Tech engineers, Lynn initially followed tradition, earning his undergraduate degree in biomedical engineering. Influenced by childhood experiences with doctors and volunteer work shadowing physicians, he was drawn attend to medical school. While studying at the UF College of Medicine, he discovered his true calling in the trenches of primary care, where he could build lasting relationships with patients and communities.

As the medical director of a rural hospital in northeast Alabama, Lynn splits his time among the emergency room, hospital medicine and directing a local urgent care clinic. But his impact extends far beyond his official duties: For nearly a decade, he has volunteered as medical director of the Free Clinic of Rome in Georgia, which provides free medical services to uninsured patients. His dedication earned him the Family Physician Community and Volunteer Services Award from the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians, a recognition he calls “one of the great honors of my life.”

“I realized early on that medicine isn’t about titles or hierarchies,” Lynn said. “It’s about showing up for people, especially those who’ve been left behind by the system. In rural areas, you don’t have specialists down the hall. You’re it — and that’s a responsibility I take seriously.”

Beyond clinical work, Lynn is a passionate advocate for innovation in rural health care. He piloted artificial intelligence-powered medical transcription tools to reduce administrative burdens and now advises tech companies on implementing solutions for frontline providers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he earned an M.B.A. to better address systemic challenges with a long-term goal of bridging the gap between clinicians and administrators.

A devoted husband and father of four, Lynn credits his family for keeping him grounded. Whether resuscitating a patient with a brain aneurysm in his small ER or mentoring residents, he measures success not in accolades, but in lives touched.

“The best part of my job is knowing that in places people forget about, we’re providing great care,” he said. “It’s not the flashiest path, but it’s the one that matters.”



Christopher Tien, Ph.D.

Christopher Tien, Ph.D. '11

Drawn to the grounded field of physics and the idea of helping people, Christopher Tien, Ph.D. '11, was interested in exploring the world of medical physics, one of the most contemporary medical specialties.

Taking a chance, he applied to UF's doctoral program in medical physics, one of the earliest and most renowned in the nation.

“I also had a specific research project in mind, and the adviser I was hoping to work with ended up being at the University of Florida,” he said. “So, it was a natural step to apply here and hope for the best, because it is a really big name in medical physics.”

Over the next three years, he worked hard in his program while forming lifelong friendships and cheering on the Gator football and basketball teams during standout seasons. Like medical students, medical physics graduates pass board exams and apply to residency programs in diagnostic imaging, radiation oncology or nuclear medicine. After Tien completed his residency at Brown University, he relocated to Chicago for private practice, before returning to academic medicine. He is currently appointed as an associate professor of therapeutic radiology at the Yale University School of Medicine and an adjunct associate professor of radiation oncology at the Brown University Warren Alpert School of Medicine.

His work at Yale spans from the clinic, where he treats cancer patients at Yale-New Haven Hospital, to the classroom, where he teaches medical physics to the next generation of medical students, graduate students and residents. He was also chosen to serve on the National Medical Physics Education and Training Council, which establishes teaching curricula used nationwide in radiation oncology residencies.

Tien also spends time in the lab, where he’s an expert in brachytherapy, a specialized form of medical radiation that has been effective for targeting prostate and cervical cancers.

“Medical physics has been very instrumental in the field of radiation oncology, and it is really encouraging to play a role on the treatment team,” he said. “It is especially fulfilling when we get positive results with our patients. I’m glad I chose to come to go get my education at UF — I literally use foundational knowledge I got in Gainesville to help treat cancer! That’s something I’m proud of.”

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[Charles Hwang, Chris Tien, Lindsay DeWeese, Patrick Lynn, Pouya Ameli, UF 40 under 40](#)**ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

**Emily Mavrakis****Assistant Director of Communications, UF College of Medicine**

As Assistant Director of Communications, Emily collaborates with the communications director to drive strategy, development and publication of communications initiatives to accomplish short-term and long-range objectives across the missions of research, teaching and patient care of the College of Medicine and UF Health. In particular, Emily leads the efforts and objectives of the college's editorial, storytelling and digital communications strategy. She serves as managing editor for the college's flagship publication, Florida Physician magazine.

Prior to joining the UF Medicine staff in 2021, she served as the business reporter for the Gainesville Sun newspaper and interned as a science writer with the Florida Museum of Natural History. She holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from UF.

[View Full Profile](#)**Kayleigh Gallo****UF College of Medicine Communications Intern**

Kayleigh is studying public relations with a concentration in political science at the University of Florida. Upon graduating this upcoming spring, she hopes to share her love for advocacy and nonprofits with the world, striving to make everyone feel heard and seen. Since 2020,

Kayleigh has indirectly volunteered with UF Health Shands as a participant in Children Miracle Network's Dance Marathon, where she has raised funds for research and life-saving equipment aimed at ending pediatric illness.

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Jori Rzepecki

Communications Intern, UF College of Medicine

Jori is studying public relations with a concentration in communication studies at the University of Florida. Upon graduating this August, she aspires to begin her career in communications and public relations.

Before joining the UF College of Medicine communications team, Jori gained valuable experience through involvement in multiple on-campus organizations and in-house internships across various industries.

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