

# GETTING REAL ABOUT RESIDENCY

**Sahar Bedrood, MD; Brandon Ayres, MD; Dagny Zhu, MD; Valentina Lozano, MD; and Cathleen McCabe, MD**

In a recent YoungMD Connect workshop moderated by Sahar Bedrood, MD, residents, medical students, and other up-and-coming eyecare professionals convened to hear pearls from Brandon Ayres, MD; Dagny Zhu, MD; Valentina Lozano, MD; and Cathleen McCabe, MD. The panelists shared their best practices for surviving and thriving during residency.



**Sahar Bedrood, MD:** “Trying to become friends with your residency class is really important. If you can, try to go to dinner after a big exam to celebrate. Those are the things that will help make you more cohesive, because you know each other’s struggles more than any of your other friends outside of residency. Reach out and meet them before the actual first day of residency.”

## HOW TO BE USEFUL IN THE CLINIC

**Brandon Ayres, MD**

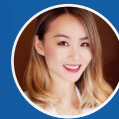


**“Be thoughtful. Be helpful. Work with your co-residents. Be a self-directed learner. Be positive.”**

- It’s essential to be able to learn on your own. You don’t want to only rely on your senior residents to teach you—you want to be a self-guided learner. That is going to make you more effective in clinic and allow you to learn more.
- Expectations change over the years:
  - **First-year residents:** See as many patients as you safely can, gather as much information as is necessary, assess relevant facts, and present to attendings.
  - **Second-year residents:** Get the clinic moving, use your experience, and see patients more efficiently. Doctors will rely on you to perform routine work and teach first-year residents.
  - **Third-year residents:** Be responsible for all surgical sign-ups, and make sure first-year residents are learning and second-year residents are seeing patients.

## SETTING YOURSELF UP FOR COMPETITIVE FELLOWSHIPS

**Dagny Zhu, MD**



**“Always look for mentors and sponsors in residency because they will be your advocates when you apply for fellowship. The distinction between the two is very important. A mentor is someone who is there to give life and career advice; a sponsor is prominent in your field and can connect you to opportunities.”**

- Make yourself a timeline to pace yourself. For example, dedicate the first 6 months of residency to simply acclimating to residency and learning the ropes. You can then focus the second half of first year and all of second year on figuring out your interests and timelines for research projects.
- Be vocal about your interests, and let fellows and attendings know that you’re looking to do a fellowship in their field. You’ll get more opportunities this way.
- Research is an important area to focus on if you want a competitive fellowship. Identify potential projects with prominent attendings in your field of interest. Don’t be afraid to reach out to attendings outside of your institution.

## CHALLENGES VERSUS HAPPY MOMENTS

**Valentina Lozano, MD**



**“It’s not just your professional life that matters, it’s also your personal life. You need to take time, no matter how busy you are, to do the things you enjoy outside of ophthalmology.”**

- Rotations are meant to be short, and it’s OK if you don’t like them all.
- Every experience, whether good or bad, is an experience you can learn from. Take the experiences from different rotations and keep them in mind when deciding where you ultimately want to end up in your career.
- Don’t just power through residency thinking your joy will come later. It’s important to make time for personal happiness during residency.
- Make an ophthalmology to-do list and a personal to-do list. This will help you balance both worlds and find enjoyment during residency.

## LEAVE RESIDENCY BETTER THAN WHEN YOU STARTED

**Cathleen McCabe, MD**



**“Listen to ideas, be collaborative, have grace for yourself and the mistakes you will make, and have grace for your fellow residents. Realize that every day is a new opportunity to do better.”**

- Build a coalition around an idea, especially if there’s something you want to change or improve.
- Too many people are too concerned with being the person who gets the credit. It’s more important and productive to be goal- and intention-oriented.
- It’s important to rely on one another and communicate. The people you meet during residency could be your colleagues for the rest of your career.