

## Illustrating Life at Mount Sinai as a Psychiatry Resident PGY-1



**Daniel Suter, MD**

### **My Background**

Hi everyone! My name's Dan and I grew up in Pittsburgh, PA, which coincidentally is also where I attended medical school. Between those two periods of my life, I spent some time exploring my half-Canadian heritage (my mother's from Quebec), attending the University of Toronto for my undergrad and working for several years in Montreal before coming back and starting this medicine thing. In Montreal, I worked in ecology research studying the emergence of ticks and Lyme Disease in Quebec (damn you, climate change), which meant that I spent my summers out in the forests of Quebec hunting down ticks to test for *Borrelia*. So I obviously love the outdoors, and I must admit that over those years I even developed a bit of a soft spot for ticks. That said, the downside of ecology work for me was the lack of direct human contact—so I asked myself, what science-driven field would allow me to have a more expressly human impact? Hmm. Back to Pittsburgh for medical school I went. During med school, much of my extracurricular work was related to underserved medicine, social determinants of health, and advocacy projects in lower SES neighborhoods. As I explored these areas and their patient populations, I began to understand just how much of poor medical health is due poor behavioral or mental health. Out of all the fields

of medicine, the one where I felt like I was impacting the root causes of illness was psychiatry. And here I am!

## Why I Chose Mount Sinai

At the start of the interview season I had very little interest in coming to NYC for residency. I like the outdoors, I like to have space, I'm not a big fan of subway travel...I wanted to be in a city, but I wasn't sure that I would fit in NYC. That said, I was couples matching and our applying to programs in NYC kind of goes without saying, due to the high concentration of match combinations. I came out of my Mount Sinai interview feeling very torn. I remember saying to multiple people, "well, if it wasn't in NYC, it would definitely be my top program." I loved the relaxed atmosphere at Mount Sinai, everyone I met seemed driven but happy, and the program directors were relatable and human while also being incredibly smart and multi-talented. Most of all, I loved that the program itself felt alive and malleable, not static or stuck in the past like many other programs I interviewed at. At Sinai things are always being tweaked and adjusted, there is constant re-evaluation and improvement. The program directors put a lot of thought into what the psychiatry of tomorrow will look like, and they are constantly working to make sure their residents are prepared for it. Some people don't like change, but I think it is imperative because it creates opportunities. And opportunities are something that Mount Sinai has in excess. I'm still finding my footing in intern year, but I can't wait to start reaching out to mentors and getting involved with all of the projects available to us.

## My Schedule and Life as a First-Year Resident

As I'm writing this at the start of my PGY-1 year, I must admit that I don't yet have a full perspective on life as an intern. Luckily, my class has really come together and is starting to feel like a close, cohesive group. We've been somewhat scattered over different rotations, some on-service and some off-service, but we all try to come together for the multiple didactic sessions that we have throughout the weeks, and we often meet up for happy/venting hour on Friday evenings. It's great to have the group support. I started my intern year in the medical ED, which—I'm not going to lie—was a somewhat taxing rotation. Long, hectic hours over days and nights...it's reputed to be one of the tougher rotations of intern year. That being said, I learned a ton and now feel relatively confident in dealing with acute medical issues, which is super-helpful during call. The C word! Call can be tough but really isn't as bad as I remember everyone making it out to be on the interview trail. There are two different types of call, there's 'short call,' which is Mon-Thurs evenings from 5-10pm before nightfloat comes on, and then there's weekend call, which is either overnight Friday night or during the day on Saturday or Sunday. I've had three shifts so far and neither I nor any of the patients have died! Everyone's first shift is shadowed by a PGY-2 call-veteran, which is super helpful and starts you off on the right foot. And then on subsequent calls, it's all you (with an attending and PGY-3 resident available in the psych ED at all times for supervision and questions)—and that's when it really hits you that you're a doctor and you kind of sort of actually know what you're doing. So call is a pretty incredible experience for that. And the schedule for call here is really quite relaxed. In a month you generally have 4 call days, 3 of which are short call, with one call over the weekend. It leaves times for other things like, for me, exploring this crazy and awesome city!