

Illustrating Life at Mount Sinai as a Psychiatry Resident PGY-2



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My Background

Hello everyone! My name is Zebib K. Abraham, and I am a PGY-2 resident. How do I sum myself up? I grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, raised by Eritrean immigrant parents. As a child I was excited about EVERY subject in school and pursued them all. I loved art because my dad was a former painter (turned social worker); I loved theater because I got to bond with castmates and express myself; I loved English because I grew up reading constantly; I loved biology and medicine because I wanted to help people and I saw my older sister become a doctor. Most of all, I wanted to connect with people and help them, in some great profession. I ended up going to University of Maryland, in the honors college and with a full scholarship, majoring in Biology and minoring in English. Eventually, I realized I wanted to pursue medicine. I went straight through to medical school, embarking on a new phase in my life in NYC at Weill Cornell Medical College. I managed the major leap in work load by still pursuing my interests: writing in my blog, experiencing theater, wandering around this amazing city. I knew from the beginning of medical school that I wanted to do psychiatry. I loved talking with people, exercising empathy, and exploring how our current circumstances and histories and personalities relate to our thought processes and to mental illness.

Why I Chose Mount Sinai

There were many great residency programs I applied to, and choosing a program was initially overwhelming. I wanted to be near family and stay in NYC longer, and within NYC there are numerous great psychiatry residencies. Mount Sinai stood out because it felt welcoming, academically rigorous and inventive. The program had a great balance of people wanting to do research and get excellent clinical training, and also have a work/life balance. Everyone I met was smart, creative, multifaceted, down to earth, and passionate about psychiatry. Our program directors were the most accessible I had ever met. Specifically, I liked the global mental health opportunities, the significant exposure to outpatient psychiatry in our 2nd year, and the balance of rotations. The hospital is beautiful, and the environment is collegial. New York is an endlessly rich place to live, and in our quiet corner of the Upper East Side, we get to enjoy Central Park!

My Schedule and Life as a Second-Year Resident

Now that I am a PGY-2, I have started my half-year rotation at the VA medical center doing outpatient psychiatry. Every PGY-2 does one half of the year in outpatient at the VA, and the other half doing rotations in inpatient psychiatry, ER, etc. PGY-2 is great! I have the unique opportunity to treat less acute patients and manage them chronically. We really are the primary providers for our patients, and with supervision we assess patients and make treatment decisions. We talk with patients at length and exercise our knowledge of the psychotherapies. I have already learned so much about therapy and pharmacology and about the experience of being a veteran. We also have great didactics this year and read psych papers/books weekly which we discuss. The hours are very reasonable, and I still have time to come home and cook, run in Central Park, see a movie, and go to happy hour with my co-residents. The calls can be more challenging, as we do 24-hour calls at the VA several times per month. However, I have found these surprising manageable. Calls are often when residents do the most learning. I sincerely feel Mount Sinai has lived up to my expectations, and I am learning every day. I am excited about the psychiatrist I will become here!