

## Illustrating Life at Mount Sinai as a Psychiatry Resident PGY-4



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### **My Background**

My name is Kara, and I hail from Manalapan, NJ, a medium-sized quiet New Jersey town where Friday night fun involved Barnes and Noble, the mall, diners, or some combination of the above (yes, New Jersey diners are definitely a thing!). I attended college at Cornell University in Ithaca, where I studied Neurobiology and Behavior. I later went to medical school at Washington University in St. Louis where I participated in basic research in alopecia and atopic dermatitis, for which I received my masters. However, my favorite project during this time was definitely my role as Theme Issue Editor for the AMA's Journal of Ethics, Virtual Mentor. I explored how physicians can ethically approach patients' use of complementary and alternative medicine, and (somehow) was able to get Deepak Chopra and Michael Shermer of Skeptic Magazine involved. I continue to try to find ways to keep writing, and I remain fascinated by difficult ethical questions, which incidentally abound in psychiatry. I have always loved that pursuing psychiatry elevates these kinds of interests. Care of psychiatric patients demands of us ongoing interpersonal growth, curiosity, mindfulness, and philosophical thought – endeavors that are not necessarily exalted in other medical fields. I genuinely cannot imagine doing anything else, and wouldn't want to!

## Why I Chose Mount Sinai

One of the first things I noticed while interviewing here, was that Mount Sinai Psychiatry strikes a delicate balance between rigor and flexibility. There is a kindness and attention to well-being and community that stems directly from the residency directors and that gives the program its soul. But there is also a clear mission of striving for excellence and precision, clinically and in the cutting edge research being accomplished here. It is difficult to find a residency program defined by these qualities in equal measure, but as a fourth year looking back at my experience, it's obvious to me that Mount Sinai fits that bill. In addition, I genuinely believe there is no better place to become a psychiatrist than in New York City. NYC has a rich history of producing world-class psychiatrists, and Mount Sinai's strong ongoing relationship with the famous New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute certainly furthers the richness of offerings. What's more, the diversity of the NYC patient population is unquestionable. I have been able to treat patients from varied socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Some examples include recent immigrants from the Dominican Republic struggling to set down roots, former physicians now with early-stage dementia, investment bankers, and members of LGBTQ community.

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

The PGY-4 year at Mount Sinai is incredible. This is the year where it all comes together, and we are able to tailor our own schedules to bolster our education in areas we feel passionate about. This is a year focused on elective time, and it is up to each of us to determine our own curriculum by stitching together a schedule defined by our individual career goals. This can mean working in one or more outpatient clinics, participating in research (you would have no difficulty finding exciting clinical, basic, and translational projects), developing and leading therapy groups, and/or writing meaningfully about a topic you've always been itching to explore further. As PGY-4 residents, we also spend time honing our skills as teachers/mentors by dedicating several hours a week to advising and mentoring junior residents. Furthermore, we continue with a chosen handful of our outpatients from our PGY-3 year, and we work for two months on the psychiatry consultation liaison service. As during previous academic years, we have a full day each week for didactics, which deepen our knowledge of therapeutic modalities (e.g., CBT, DBT, psychodynamic, schema, mentalization, etc.), neuro-psychopharmacology, addiction, career development, and other fascinating topics. It is a year of exploration intended to help each of us carve out our own niches in this rewarding field, and it has been thrilling to witness my peers develop their well-earned confidence and distinctive areas of expertise in psychiatry.