

MedStaff Update

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MEDSTAFF SPOTLIGHT

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As a minimally invasive surgeon who specializes in bariatric, foregut and endoscopic surgery and Director of Community Engagement and Outreach for the Department of Surgery, Dr. Micaela Esquivel is passionate about minimizing disparities to ensure everyone has access to the care they need, when they need it. She has worked to promote health equity within our health system and in our community - forging lasting collaborative partnerships with local community-based organizations and helping promote an inclusive culture within her department.

Q: Please tell us a little bit about your work at Stanford Medicine.

I'm a minimally invasive surgeon who specializes in bariatric, foregut and endoscopic surgery. I strive to ensure everyone has access to the care they need, when they need it. As the director of community engagement and outreach for the department of surgery, my goal is to minimize disparities, promote health equity and form long lasting collaborative partnerships with local community-based organizations. Many patients need the care that Stanford offers, but they cannot access it for a variety of reasons – I want to change that. As a part of these initiatives, my goal is that within the Department of Surgery at Stanford we intentionally train socially responsible surgeons through education, research, advocacy and service.

Q: When you think about your work at Stanford Medicine, what are you most proud of?

I am most proud of my role as the co-chair for our department of surgery's Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (J.E.D.I.) council. We work to recruit, retain and promote people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. We strive to promote an inclusive culture within the department of surgery, and we recognize that equity and social justice in our communities is essential to public health. Being a part of the advancement of the J.E.D.I council has been incredibly rewarding. It is made up of residents, faculty and staff who share a common vision and live by a common mission. I am continually inspired by the amazing people I work with each day.

Q: What challenges have you faced?

As a Hispanic female surgeon, I frequently get asked by patients, "wait, YOU are my surgeon?" Or when rounding with my team, patients will look to the Caucasian male first-year intern to answer their questions, rather than me, their actual surgeon. Thus, my greatest challenge still remains in handling implicit bias with grace and positivity. I hope to be a part of the change not only in medicine, but within surgery. We are now seeing more female surgeons in training and in practice, though we need to continue to foster, mentor and recruit underrepresented minorities in the surgical field. As the saying goes, "If you can see it, you can be it."

Q: Why do you work at Stanford Medicine? What is it that drew you here and keeps you engaged and inspired?

I was a general surgery resident here, a Minimally Invasive and Bariatric Surgery Fellow here, and chose to stay on as surgery faculty here. I clearly love Stanford! I choose to be here each day in part due to the culture – I feel seen, heard and valued here. Stanford Medicine inspires a culture of innovation and positive change, where new ideas and initiatives are welcome. I truly believe that my professional hopes and dreams can come true at Stanford – that I can make a lasting impact not only for my individual patients, but also for the broader community.