

dear residents

Celebrating the Winter Solstice

December 22, 2024

Dear Residents,

This weekend marks the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year. My daughter Miriam turned 25 on December 21st. Interestingly, she was born on an extraordinary winter solstice—December 21, 1999. This day was notable for the rare confluence of the winter solstice with a full moon and the lunar perigee (the closest the moon gets to Earth). Legend has it that this celestial alignment last happened on December 21, 1866, when the Lakota ambushed US soldiers in Wyoming with the aid of an unusually bright moon.



Stonehenge at night – this prehistoric monument is thought to have been designed to observe the sun's course. The axis of the stones at its center marks the position of the rising midsummer and setting midwinter sun <https://www.britishmuseum.org/exhibitions/world-stonehenge/stonehenge-timeline>.

While Dallas generally experiences mild winters, on the longest night, we have only 10 hours of daylight. The sun rises at 7:25 AM and sets at 5:25 PM. Short days like these, make it challenging to commute before sunrise and return after sunset. I vividly recall these days during my residency, which felt disorienting. Growing up in Karachi's subtropical climate, I was accustomed to a more muted seasonal experience. This contrast intensified when I moved North from Houston to Dallas. Over the years, I've grown to appreciate the brief winters we have here. They provide an opportunity for reflection and introspection as one year ends and another begins, inspiring us to develop new initiatives to advance our residency.

Many of you will be taking time off this week to spend quality time with loved ones, while others will be dedicated to serving our patients who are unfortunate enough to be hospitalized during the holidays. Winter can be a challenging time for the unhoused and those who are hospitalized. It's during these periods that we should be especially compassionate and caring, even as we may be grappling with the shorter days and longer nights ourselves.

Two years ago, during Christmas, Alexis Boulter (Med/Peds class of 2023) and I were on service together at Clements University Hospital. We worked together to arrange for one of our patients living with advanced cancer to spend Christmas Day at home and return the following day. Through our efforts, she was able to spend her final Christmas with her family.

Wishing you all a joyous and fulfilling week,

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