



UCSF Department of Medicine

ZUCKERBERG SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL

A Lens on What Matters: Bringing Meaning in Work into Focus



Those of us who work at ZSFG choose to work here united by a shared sense of mission that emanate from our true north values. This powerful unifying drive also creates organic community at ZSFG across the divisions in the Department of Medicine; while we come here for the meaningful work, we stay because of our amazing and inspirational colleagues. The most recent 2026 ZSFG Department of Medicine Professional Well-being Academic Consortium (PWAC) survey on Physician Work Experience highlights these strengths.

In the ZSFG DOM, professional fulfillment, collegiality, personal-organizational values alignment, and belonging exceed national benchmarks for other internal medicine attendings who took the survey at academic medical centers across the country. Additionally, the proportion of faculty who feel that concerns are regularly discussed and changes are being made has increased,

highlighting the work many leaders in the department are doing to take action and close the loop on important faculty priorities.

While we continually work to further reduce burnout across our divisions from the current rate of 31%, the survey showed that burnout has improved compared to prior surveys and is currently at the national benchmark for internal medicine as a specialty. At the same time, the survey's findings on efficiency of clinical practice, which showed that our department scores lower on perceptions of clinical efficiency and resources, align with what we know from faculty feedback: resource limitations and workflow inefficiencies remain a significant threat to clinician well-being in

the ZSFG DOM (Figure 1).

The PWAC survey results were discussed at the August Faculty Experience Town Hall and further details are available in Box. Clinical efficiency specifically will be further explored in upcoming focus sessions organized by Larissa Thomas MD director of faculty experience in the DOM@ZSFG and Neil Powe, MD Chief of Medicine. These remain an area of advocacy at the departmental level with the Vice Dean's Office and the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

The 2026 Gallup Staff Engagement Survey provides a complementary perspective on the experience of staff across the ZSFG Department of Medicine. The results

ZSFG DOM Results for the Professional Well-being Academic Consortium

Compared to all attending physicians in internal medicine who took the survey nationally.

KEY : — Benchmark Mean ■ Strength ■ Neutral ■ Opportunity for Improvement

Domain	Measure	Score ^a (Standard Deviation)	Standard Deviation to Benchmark ^b
Outcome Measure	Professional Fulfillment	7.11 (2.04)	0.21
	Burnout *	2.41 (1.72)	0.17
Workplace Efficiency	Efficiency of Clinical Practice	5.34 (2.34)	-0.04
Culture of Wellness	Collegiality	7.52 (2.27)	0.22
	Personal-Organizational Values Alignment	6.13 (2.58)	0.32
	Belonging	7.14 (2.25)	0.31
	Teamwork Climate	7.60 (1.95)	0.10
	Supportive Leadership Behaviors	7.84 (2.36)	0.18
Individual Factors	Self-Valuation	5.96 (2.09)	0.17

Figure 1: ZSFG DOM Results for the Professional Well-being Academic Consortium Compared to all attendings physicians in internal medicine who took the survey nationally. Areas in green represent strengths and areas in yellow are similar to national averages.



2026 Gallup Results

Reinforce the Strength of Our ZSFG Community

The Gallup Staff Engagement Survey reflects what makes ZSFG such a special place to work—our mission, our people, and our shared commitment to our patients and community.



Figure 2: ZSFG DOM Results for the 2026 Gallup Staff Engagement Survey.

continue to show strong overall engagement, with some of our greatest strengths reflecting what we value most about working at ZSFG: a strong connection to mission and purpose, colleagues committed to doing high-quality work, supportive supervisors and leaders, and clarity about expectations.

The survey also showed an encouraging increase in staff who expect to continue working at the organization, while highlighting opportunities to improve the staff experience through greater support for career development, more effective administrative processes, transportation and commuting support, and the resources and systems people need to do their best work. Together, these findings help us understand both what makes ZSFG a meaningful place to work and where continued attention and investment can strengthen the experience of our staff (Figure 2).

While the PWAC and Gallup staff experience surveys provides important quantitative and qualitative data, stories paint the picture of how and why our community makes ZSFG such an extraordinary place to work. For this issue,

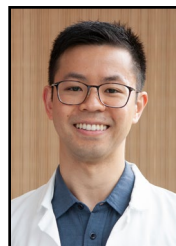
we hear from three individuals in the DOM who discuss how the shared sense of mission, supportive community, and outstanding clinical care make working here such a cherished experience for clinicians and staff.

Neil Zhang, MD, MS Hearing Patients' Stories At The General

Neil Zhang, MD, loves to hear people's stories.

When Dr. Zhang, now a cardiologist at ZSFG, was a medical student at UCSF, one of his mentors, Beth Harleman, MD, Vice Chief of Medicine at ZSFG, taught him that in primary care, "you see a patient over time, you learn their story, and you're part of their story," Dr. Zhang recalled. "I'm a stories person. I carry the spirit of primary care with me into cardiology. I love having the relationship with the patient. I love hearing their story."

That medical school rotation also cemented the notion that ZSFG is "a really special place," he said. He relished the chance to



work with "really amazing doctors who are just very dedicated to their patients and were role models for me, especially as a medical student who wanted to work with underserved populations."

He returned to ZSFG last August as a faculty member, now working alongside some of those same doctors he looked up to as a student—too many to name, although he singled out Joannie Addington-White, MD, his program director who was instrumental in his career development as a resident and remains a close mentor today.

"There's a shared mission," Dr. Zhang said. "We care for a lot of patients, many of whom are disadvantaged, and by restoring their health, we're often able to restore at least partly their agency."

Dr. Zhang and his colleagues "work on the many social and structural factors that impinge on the lives of our patients, and it's very inspiring to be among people that are doing similar things."

A few months ago, Dr. Zhang saw a patient who was very sick, and it was unclear whether they could really make decisions for themselves. There was a very challenging family dynamic as well, creating a very challenging situation, he said.

"I really did not know what to do," he said. He received invaluable support from several mentors from his med student days, including psychiatrist David Elkin, MD, co-director of the Consultation Liaison Service at ZSFG, and Mary Gray, MD, chief of the Division of Cardiology at ZSFG, as well as the ethics team and the risk management team.

"It was a very stressful situation, and it made it so much easier to feel like I have all the support, and people are there for me," he said.

Dr. Zhang also loves conducting research and working with trainees. "For many of them, this is their favorite site to rotate at,

and so that's a palpable kind of excitement," he said. "It's nice to feed off of that energy."

One added bonus of working at ZSFG, Dr. Zhang said, is seeing how the work can resonate around the world. "I think global but act local," he said. "There are many people who work at SFGH who are also acting globally, and so that's really inspiring to be around and to see people's names in The New York Times. That's really cool."

Kelly Kiser Using Administrative Skills To Support the Most Vulnerable

As a business major at the University of Washington, Kelly Kiser did not find topics like supply chain management particularly inspiring. She knew she wanted to pursue a career oriented toward social justice.



When she graduated, job postings at ZSFG drew her to the mission of helping people at the margins of society.

Nine years later, Ms. Kiser is now the assistant division manager in the Division of General Internal Medicine and enjoys using her business skills to deliver on that mission.

"It has been really incredible to work here with people that are extremely focused on closing disparity gaps for our community in San Francisco and are dedicated to improving the lives of the most vulnerable populations," she said. "I really am inspired by the doctors that I work with, the staff that I work with, and everyone is really driven by the mission here at the General."

Ms. Kiser said she and the division manager do "all the administrative operational aspects of keeping things running."

"We're behind the scenes," she said. "We don't do direct patient care and I'm not fully

out in the field or in the community, but I touch a lot of different teams within the division."

She initially worked in Building 10, one of the old brick buildings where now DOM central administration and the Divisions of Cardiology and Hospital Medicine are temporarily housed, and she loved feeling the General's 150-year history in its walls. In 2023, her team moved into the brand-new Pride Hall, and she loves that, too—with its modern technology, more conference rooms, and more spaces to meet colleagues and exchange ideas.

Work at ZSFG does have its challenges. "We work in an academic medical center and a public hospital, so there's a lot of regulatory requirements and financial responsibility that can create complexities in our work," she said. Having to follow so many processes just to push work forward can be time-consuming.

"I understand it and I know it's very important that we are good stewards of our funding," she said. "But sometimes it can be very hard, especially when we have a very lean administrative team."

A new software system is getting installed, which Ms. Kiser hopes will make things more efficient. Like many people working in the safety net, Ms. Kiser would also love more resources, including more people to help get the job done faster.

"We do our best because we want to work with our community and make life better for vulnerable patients," she said.

A great example came during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. "It was just fire after fire," she said, yet so inspiring to see doctors take leave to work for the San Francisco Department of Public Health and step up to take on extra clinics and urgent care shifts.

"It was a wild, wild time," she said. "From

the administrative perspective, I just get to watch and be like, 'Okay, how can I help?' We worked through everything that needed to be done, new contracts and whatever else, to try to keep it going."

Tessa Kaplan, MD Presence and Advocacy for Patients in the Hospital

ZSFG's reputation had reached Tessa Kaplan, MD, when she was a medical student in New York City.



"At that time, I was really interested in HIV/AIDS," she said. ZSFG was famous as a leader from the earliest days of the epidemic. In addition, she knew the lore of the General as a place where people are tremendously dedicated to taking care of patients who otherwise might not get that same level of intensive care elsewhere.

"When I was applying for residency programs, part of my interest in coming to UCSF was because of the General," she said.

Dr. Kaplan's career has pivoted and, instead of specializing in HIV, she is a hospitalist at ZSFG. She's been on faculty the past four years and is now starting a new role as a coach for medical students, as well as stepping into a leadership position in the clinical operations of the Division of Hospital Medicine.

As a hospitalist, Dr. Kaplan said, "we get to see it all and do it all, and I find that very intellectually rewarding," she said.

"One of the special things about the General is that it is both an academic hospital and a community hospital at the same time, and I think those are melded together really well," she said. "We have access to the same top-notch physicians and consultants and radiologists that we would have at our academic center at Parnassus, but it also feels like a small hospital that's serving the

community at its core. So I feel like it's the best of both worlds."

The most rewarding features of the job are tied in with the most challenging. Dr. Kaplan gets gratification working with people who desperately need quality care, including those who lack housing or suffer from mental illness or drug addiction. Yet she also gets frustrated knowing the systems are not in place to give these people the care they truly need and deserve.

"We can't really provide the best health care for the whole health of a person unless our hospital is running at its absolute best, and the rest of our society that we live in is running at its absolute best," she said. "That can be the biggest challenge, and it can be hard to see that impact on your patients that you really want to help and support. Sometimes even the most we can do is still not enough to make a longer-lasting impact."

Dr. Kaplan said many professionals choose to work elsewhere, where they don't have those constraints and frustrations. "But we're all choosing to be here because we really care about taking care of these patients and we like doing that as part of a larger team," she said.

That extends to everyone at ZSFG, from doctors to staff members. "There is this sense of, we're all in this together and we're all trying to serve the same goal, which is taking care of these patients who really need our help and advocacy," she said.

- Dan Fost, Larissa Thomas, Leonard Telesca
Editors: Neil Powe, Ali Cunningham

ZSFG was named by US News as a best and high performing hospital in leukemia, lymphoma and myeloma care. Kudos to our Division of Hematology and Oncology!

SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to the ZSFG DOM staff recipients of the 2026 UCSF STAR Achievement Award! The award recognizes employees with sustained outstanding performance and meaningful contributions that support the UCSF mission.

- **Melissa Akers**, Program Manager, Action Center for Health (ARC)
- **Brian Aldana**, Biostatistician, Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care, Allergy, and Sleep Medicine (not pictured)
- **Robin Craig**, Communications Specialist, Division of Health and Society
- **Robin Fatch**, Research Data Analyst, Division of HIV, Infectious Diseases & Global Medicine
- **Gato Gourley**, Division Manager, Division of Health and Society
- **Vera Hsu**, Biostatistician, Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care, Allergy, and Sleep Medicine
- **Raeni Miller**, Research Administration Manager, Central Administration
- **Kelly Musoke**, Deputy Director, Curry International Tuberculosis Center (CITC), Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care, Allergy, and Sleep Medicine
- **James Nolan**, Community Engagement Manager, Division of Occupational, Environmental, and Climate Medicine
- **Kenny Perez**, Director of Research Operations, Division of Health Equity and Society
- **Neonila Pytel**, Administrative Assistant, Division of Nephrology
- **Kristina Toma**, Clinical Research Coordinator, Division of HIV, Infectious Diseases, and Global Health (not pictured)

