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**Lower Bucks Hospital's
Cardiology Fellowship
Program strengthens
community ties and
cultivates the next
generation of leaders
and innovators in
cardiovascular medicine.**

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Dr. Shahzad Ahmed
(center), director of
cardiology at Lower
Bucks Hospital, with
Drs. Pejman
Eftekharzadeh and
Madeeha Subhan
Waleed



Dr. Shahzad Ahmed (center), director of cardiology at Lower Bucks Hospital, created the Cardiology Fellowship Program as an incubator for the next generation of leaders and innovators in cardiovascular medicine, including Drs. Pejman Eftekharzadeh and Madeeha Subhan Waleed.

Priming the Pump

Shahzad Ahmed, M.D., FACC, FSCAI, grew up with a strong desire to help other people. His desire led him to medical school and the decision to specialize in the field of interventional cardiology. In the process of honing his clinical skills, he discovered he had a passion for another facet of his work: teaching.

Dr. Ahmed, who began his medical education at Allama Iqbal Medical College in his native Pakistan, came to Philadelphia to build on his clinical expertise. In 2010, he completed his internship and internal medicine residency at Drexel University at Hahnemann University Hospital. He then enjoyed one of the most influential experiences of his career by completing a fellowship in cardiovascular medicine and interventional cardiology, also through Drexel.

“My fellowship at Drexel is where I became passionate about teaching,” says Dr. Ahmed, director of cardiology at Lower Bucks Hospital

Led by Dr. Shahzad Ahmed, Lower Bucks Hospital’s Cardiology Fellowship Program strengthens community ties and cultivates the next generation of leaders and innovators in cardiovascular medicine.

in Bristol, as well as a clinical associate professor of cardiology at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine.

“Having a fellowship at any hospital changes the culture and improves the education for residents, medical students—everyone. It also improves patient care and strengthens ties to the community.”

When he joined Lower Bucks Hospital in 2019, Dr. Ahmed was already thinking of formalizing ways to share his expertise with younger peers. His ultimate goal: to create a fellowship program through which Lower Bucks Hospital could become an incubator for the next generation of well-trained leaders and innovators in cardiovascular medicine, while delivering exceptional and compassionate care to an increasingly diverse patient community.

Dr. Ahmed realized the fruits of his labor in January 2024, when the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education approved Lower Bucks Hospital’s application to create a fellowship program

rooted in cardiovascular medicine.

From more than 600 applications, Pejman Eftekharzadeh, D.O., was chosen for the class of 2027 cohort of Lower Bucks Hospital's Cardiology Fellowship Program. Madeeha Subhan Waleed, M.D., was chosen for the class of 2028. When each of the doctors began the three-year fellowship—July 2024 for Dr. Eftekharzadeh, July 2025 for Dr. Waleed—they were already quite familiar with the Bristol campus; both completed their residencies at Lower Bucks Hospital.

Each fellow in the program works closely with faculty to develop essential skills in cardiovascular medicine. The academic curriculum includes rotations through noninvasive echocardiography, electrophysiology, and cardiac catheterization, as well as cardiac ICU care, noninvasive nuclear medicine, and non-invasive cardiac imaging. Fellows benefit from Lower Bucks Hospital's investments in staffing and facilities alike. For example, the hospital's state-of-the-art cardiac catheterization lab, which opened in 2024, helps specialists diagnose and treat cardiac patients more effectively.

"As program director," Dr. Ahmed says, "the fellows give you a new challenge every day, so you have to be prepared to learn new technology and undertake new research. It's time consuming, because it's difficult to start a new program. You have to make sure you have enough patients and enough volume so the fellows can work on their education. That has not been a problem for us; our procedure volume has more than doubled over the past six or seven years."

In addition to clinical settings, fellows attend faculty-led didactic sessions and participate in morning reports. They also engage in scholarly activities such as morbidity and mortality lectures, journal clubs, and research and case reviews. Fellows enhance their professional development by attending national

conferences and pursuing opportunities for original research.

Dr. Eftekharzadeh has learned a great deal in the fellowship's first two years. Perhaps the most inspiring lesson of all: "The sky's the limit."

"You don't know what you can do until you push yourself to do it," he says. "I've learned that my limits are high; all I have to do is be willing to put in the work. I've also learned that there's a lot we can do to continue building the program, not only in clinical settings but through community service. ... This is the happiest I've been in my whole life. Any time I get to learn, give lectures, or participate in research, it reinforces my decision to go into this field."

For Dr. Waleed, the fellowship has helped her grow in an environment she considers both challenging and inspirational.

"No two days are exactly alike, and we all feel encouraged and supported to grow," she says. "What I like most about it is the continuous learning, the ability to manage complex cases, and the opportunities to participate in procedures. No matter how busy the days are, seeing someone recover from a cardiac event or manage heart failure makes every day worthwhile."

She particularly enjoys opportunities to conduct and present new research, often pertaining to advanced procedures and innovative technology that plays a profound role in managing a patient's disease. Last year, for example, she attended a national conference where she presented her findings in a case involving a patient with Takayasu arteritis, a chronic inflammatory disease affecting the aorta and its primary branches.

Dr. Waleed refers to Dr. Ahmed as "a compassionate mentor," "someone who never rushes the learning process, even on the busiest days," and "the cornerstone of

my cardiology training."

"I think my next step is going to be an interventional cardiology fellowship," she says. "I love the patient population here [at Lower Bucks Hospital]. If given the opportunity, I would love to stay in the area and practice so I can continue to help people."

Dr. Eftekharzadeh has had a similarly positive experience. He credits Dr. Ahmed, as well as fellow cardiologists Manoj Khandelwal, M.D., and Mohamad Taha, M.D., for what he describes as a "phenomenal" fellowship experience.

"They have opened the pathway for us to explore what we want to do," he says. "I have enjoyed learning more about the subspecialties, but I think I'm going to go into noninvasive general cardiology. In the long run I'd like to focus on advanced imaging and maybe have my own practice, likely somewhere in the Northeast."

Dr. Ahmed has been delighted with the fellowship's results so far. He's excited about what the future will bring, hoping the physicians in the fellowship program will inherit his passion for teaching.

"Personally, I'm very glad I took the initiative [to create the fellowship]," Dr. Ahmed says. "We have a diverse patient population here, and by training these doctors locally, we're hoping they will come back and continue to serve the local community. No matter where they go from here, we hope they become future leaders themselves, as doctors who want to use what they have learned to help others." ■

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