



calm and collected

BRITA MITTAL INFLUENCES OTHERS' LEARNING

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Assistant Clinical Professor of Anesthesiology, Perioperative and Pain Medicine

BY SUSAN LORIMOR
PHOTO BY MARK LEIBOWITZ

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Being an anesthesiologist has taught Brita Mittal, MD, to be calm while under pressure. The typically Type-A Mittal seems to have learned this while under the tutelage of the late Kevin Mallott, MD, clinical associate professor of anesthesiology, perioperative and pain medicine.

“I think I learned from him that you can be calm and be kind and be unrushed ... and even if it is a high-risk situation [with a patient], you can make the person who is learning with you feel comfortable and put them at ease,” says Mittal, who was recently promoted to assistant clinical professor of anesthesiology, perioperative and pain medicine.

She completed her residency at Stanford University three years ago, followed by a fellowship in head and neck anesthesia. Now, she educates residents as they go through their head and neck anesthesia and advanced airway management rotations, as well as surgical residents. She also provides medical students a look at what a career in anesthesia would be like.

Mittal says she tries to get anesthesia residents excited about airway management and all of the tools that anesthesiologists have, in order to affect how they view what they do. She wants them to appreciate anesthesia as an art “in terms of the way to give an

elegant anesthetic and the way to be gentle when placing a breathing tube, and to think about it in an a very planned and careful manner.” She hopes to give surgical trainees an appreciation for the safety and airway concerns that anesthesiologists have.

She also leads a group that treats patients with epidermolysis bullosa, a rare skin disease; patients travel to Stanford from states such as Nevada and Utah for treatment. She has been working to develop anesthetic protocols and train anesthesiologists so that they are familiar with the disease.

Regardless of whom Mittal is teaching, she wants to project a calm demeanor, as it can help provide an ideal learning environment. The engineer-turned-physician from Fremont, California, says that she was attracted to Stanford by reading the blog of residency program director Alex Macario, MD, while she was in medical school. She also did a rotation as a visiting medical student, and liked what she saw.

Stanford provided her the opportunity to learn; now, she is returning the favor by educating others. “It really brings me joy to help someone else learn a new skill and to help them be successful at learning a new skill,” Mittal says. **SA**