2020-2021 Golden Stethoscope Nomination

Nominated for: Fostering curiosity

Name of Nominee Dr. Chi Zheng

If I could nominate Dr. Zheng for more than one Golden Stethoscope category available I would. However, I feel that the best educators foster the most curiosity in their students, therefore I believe this category is fitting. As a first-year medical student during COVID, all my initial experiences in the hospital, if not medicine, have been under the guidance of Dr. Zheng. Every day I have left Denver Health after preceptorship, I have left more knowledgeable, yet more curious, and motivated to engage with my studies.

Several moments come to mind wherein Dr. Zheng has fostered curiosity. On my first day at preceptorship, Dr. Zheng was auscultating a patient's back to listen to their lungs. Given that I had little idea what to do, I stood in the corner treating the day as if it were a shadowing opportunity. While auscultating, he gestured me to come over with my stethoscope and listen to the patient's lungs as well. He took the diaphragm and placed it in various spots on the patient's back, with each movement asking me what I was hearing. If it corroborated with what he had heard he would approve, if not, he would ask me to listen closer while never being dismissive if incorrect. He repeated this for the next few patients, effectively turning auscultation into a game or quiz. I was instantly curious and eager to get the right answer. He then asked questions such as why were some sounds only heard lower on the back, or what the absence or presence of sounds could mean. This piecemeal way of feeding me information made it seem as if I were connecting dots, however, in retrospect, it was an incredible way to push me to consider physiology in the context of the physical exam and come to the answers myself.

Another time, Dr. Zheng was ready to conduct a paracentesis on a patient with ascites. He began by connecting a portable ultrasound to his phone, and imaging how much space he had to insert the tube into the patient to prevent injury. While doing so, he would question what I was seeing, why the liquid ejected appeared the way it did, and what could lead to the ailment in the first place. I did not know the correct answers, but given the open environment Dr. Zheng created in the clinic, I never felt uncomfortable throwing out a wrong answer. I left that day with homework (why would someone's urine be foamy and also have ascites?) and came back with answers. While researching what to present to him, I did not pay attention to the time spent (much unlike studying for classes).

When it struck me I did not notice the time spent researching and that I had felt happy doing so, I realized that Dr. Zheng had fostered curiosity within me so that I would consider the story and reasoning behind a diagnosis, to connect the dots, rather than just attach a label while feeling engaged to do so. Dr. Zheng's openness in the clinic, patience, and incredible capacity to teach all make me confident nominating him for the Golden Stethoscope for Fostering Curiosity. Perhaps the most valuable lesson he has taught me is to find joy in the process of learning medicine.

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