2020-2021 Golden Stethoscope Nomination

Nominated for: Best Role Model

Name of Nominee Dr. David Richards

When I was applying to medical school, I'd heard many heroic stories from the Denver Health ED: crazy life saving medical procedures, blood soaked scrubs, and the wild West of the Knife & Gun Club. I had chills every time a med student or doctor told me about their experience. I always twisted my neck all the way around anytime I drove by Denver Health on Speer in order to look at the ED and heliport, secretly dreaming that I might be inside there one day, learning from the best. Immediately after finishing the Human Body block, we received our "Preceptor Match", and mine said: 1) Denver Health - Emergency Medicine, and most importantly 2) Dr. David Richards.

Presently I am a Phase 2 student and in many ways I consider myself the most lucky medical student on this campus. Being assigned to Dr. Richards has been by far the best of what medical school has offered from the perspective of mentorship, education, training in practical skills, and sheer excitement. I struggled a bit when selecting an optimal category for this nomination, as Dr. Richards deserves a nomination in every single category. But perhaps most importantly, Dr Richards is the Role Model for who I would like to become as a physician one day. Clinical knowledge and skills, procedural versatility, patient communication skills, teaching style, and relationships with colleagues are all strengths which Dr. Richards masters with perfection and elegance. I come to every ED shift with 2 goals: learn about clinical medicine and learn how to be like Dr. Richards.

The preceptorship can be in many ways an anxious and humbling experience. Before the very first ED shift we as students do not have much to offer. We have just learned about the branches of the trigeminal nerve and DNA methylation, and now off you go to your first night shift at the Denver Health ED. But it was more than enough for Dr. Richards. Dr. Richards fosters a learning environment where a medical student feels comfortable asking questions, attempting first steps independently, and most importantly proactively asking for feedback. Dr. Richards always explains his take on clinical thinking and philosophy of care and compares it with other perspectives. One of the most powerful suggestions I have received from Dr. Richards was: " Always look beyond the chief complaint". By now I have been a student of Dr. Richards for a year and half, but I will consider myself to be his student for the rest of my career.

Another critical skill of Dr. Richards is his thorough insight into medical student mentality and their aspirations. He is well aware of the stresses associated with studying and he always makes sure he asks about mental health and life outside of school. One last anecdote that demonstrates the type of mentor Dr. Richards is comes from the end of my very first shift with him. Dr. Richards took me to the Denver Health heliport and told me about how it was for him when he was starting as a student at Denver Health. To me this was a true testament to Dr. Richards' thorough understanding of and care for students.

Written by: Michal Schafer, Phase II

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