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“Me and my shadow” is mantra for a new medical student elective

Good doctor-nurse relationships are essential for good health care. But such relationships—often forged in a hectic and stressful environment—have historically been a little rocky. DMS recently established a nurse shadowing program that aims to help medical students build strong relationships with nurses, so they can collaborate more effectively.

The elective course was started by Joseph O'Donnell, M.D., senior advising dean at DMS, and Ellen Ceppetelli, R.N., director of nursing education at DHMC. They got the idea when they co-taught a session of a DMS course called Health, Society, and the Physician. “One of the things that we realized as we were talking to the fourth-year students,” says O'Donnell, “was that they really didn't have a good picture of what nurses did and how they added to the health-care team.”

Caring: “I started thinking in my mind how could we get these wonderful, caring, holistic young people to think about what role a nurse plays in health care,” adds Ceppetelli.

O'Donnell and Ceppetelli wanted the program to be as collaborative as a real doctor-nurse relationship should be. So it was left to the nursing directors, nurses, and participating DMS students to determine how best to structure the shadowing experience. “I think we were afraid of

Zwolak: now a political “operator,” too.

into the iliac arteries. Now, says Zwolak, “more than 50% of [elective AAA surgery] patients at Dartmouth—and I think that's pretty representative of major medical centers across the country—are getting these minimally invasive grafts.”

Though lobbying is a new role for Zwolak, he's found it relatively easy because, he says, he “can obviously speak with great sincerity and experience.” He and the NAA got a boost in their campaign when earlier this year the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force endorsed AAA screening for men aged 65 to 75 who smoke or have smoked. “For . . . men smokers they got it right on the nose,” says Zwolak. “But I really think they dropped the ball for women,” he adds, and “for people with family histories that are positive.”

Soon: But armed with that recommendation, and bipartisan support, the NAA hopes to get its legislation before Congress soon. “We're cautiously optimistic that before they go home for Christmas this year, we'll get this passed,” Zwolak says.

JENNIFER DURGIN

ROLE CALL FOR MENTORS

It was unusual as student gripes go: these fourth-year Dartmouth medical students weren't belly-aching about their course load or bemoaning a boring lecture. Instead, they were lamenting, “Isn't it sad that really good role models sometimes don't get recognized?” Each year, the DMS graduating class picks two faculty members and one resident to receive teaching awards at Class Day, but these students wanted to show their appreciation for the *many* clinicians whose bedside manner and compassionate care they seek to emulate. “So then I said, ‘Why don't we recognize them somehow?’” recalls Julie Young, DMS '05.

Initially, the group intended to honor just a few clinicians, but when they opened the idea up to the entire class, the nominations swelled. Not wanting to turn it into a competition, the students chose to honor all of the nominees—25 attending physicians, four residents, and one optometrist. “Thank you for your part in our educations,” the students wrote in a memo explaining their Outstanding Physician Role Model Award. “Due to your efforts, we have had plenty of wonderful people who have shown us how to become ‘good docs.’”

J.D.



TEACHING TECHS IN THE LAB

There isn't a day I go home that I can't say I learned two new things,” says Jill Polito. A technical specialist in DHMC's clinical laboratory, she's speaking to a group of University of New Hampshire (UNH) students who are visiting DHMC. Next, Polito helps the students gaze through a multiheaded microscope, so they can see slides of spinal meningitis and acute leukemia. Playing an important role in patient care by helping to make such diagnoses is what Polito “loves about being a med tech,” she adds.

Polito was one of several DHMC technologists who met recently with UNH sophomores to cultivate their interest in the field of medical laboratory science. The two institutions collaborate to offer a degree in the field, with UNH providing the classroom work and DHMC the clinical training in a six-month internship. During the internship, students complete rotations in the four subsections of the clinical pathology lab—the blood bank, hematology, chemistry, and microbiology—and become integrated into the often hectic workflow. “Stat' is one of [the students'] major words,” Polito noted.

J.D.





RYLING SQUIRREL GRAPHICS

Jessica Ash, left, was one of the nurses shadowed by medical students like, here, Rusty Phillips and Laura Shively.

it being too structured—that it would almost be a barrier,” Ceppetelli says.

In the course’s first offering, this past spring, each medical student had six shadowing experiences—each one lasting between two and four hours. After every two experiences, all parties involved met to share information and reactions.

“The biggest asset a physician has is a wise nurse by their side,” says Donna Brown, R.N., nursing director of medical specialties, who helped recruit nurses to take part in this initiative. “The nurses were extremely thrilled to know that young med students would be interested in learning about the work of a nurse.”

Side by side: Students observed the range of duties that a nurse performs, from monitoring the condition of patients to ascertaining when a palliative-care team should be brought in. “The medical students were encouraged to work side by side with the nurse and to ask as many questions about what was happening with the patients as well as [about] the processes . . . in-

involved in nursing,” says Brown.

Students had a variety of reasons for enrolling in the elective. First-year student Laura Shively was aware of poor doctor-nurse relationships. “I come from a family of doctors and nurses so have heard experiences from both sides,” she explains.

“I knew it was going to be clinical time in the hospital, and so I wanted to be able to interact with patients,” says Shively’s classmate Rusty Phillips. Normally, first-year students don’t have a chance to work with hospitalized patients.

Upon completing the six experiences, all participants attended a dinner hosted by emeritus professor Frances Field, M.N. “She was the first nurse on the faculty at DMS and has always been a great advocate of nurses and doctors working together to produce good outcomes,” says O’Donnell. “At the dinner, I was blown away by the comments the nurses and students made.”

“There was no negative, absolutely no negative—they were just delighted because they had this opportunity to work together,” says Ceppetelli.

“I thought it was very useful. I would like to see it as a part of a [required] class versus part of an elective,” says Shively.

The nurse shadowing experience will be offered again next year as an elective. “You cannot collaborate with people unless you see them as competent,” says Ceppetelli. “This is an opportunity to communicate with people and develop trust.”

SION E. ROGERS

DMS memorial service makes the news on NPR

Each spring at Dartmouth Medical School, first-year students hold a memorial service for the families of the cadavers they’ve studied all year. It’s a way of honoring the body donors who’ve become the students’ silent teachers.” The voice saying these words was familiar—Scott Simon, host of *Weekend Edition* on National Public Radio (NPR), was introducing a segment reported by Susan Keese of NPR’s Vermont affiliate.

“During the months they spend dissecting the cadavers,” Keese explained, “the students know only their age and cause of death. In the spring, when the cremated remains are returned to the relatives, they learn more.”

Held in Dartmouth’s Rollins Chapel, the service was attended by students, faculty, and friends and families of the donors. “This memorial service is in recognition of your loved ones’ generosity and in celebration of their lives,” read the program. “We en-

courage you to remember your loved one by lighting a candle at the front of the chapel.” As family members filed up to light candles, the evocative sounds of Pachelbel’s Canon in D Major echoed through the chapel.

“I cannot put into words how much we have all learned, benefited, and grown from the contributions of your loved ones,” began Nathaniel Link, a first-year student. Next at the lectern was Dr. Martha McDaniel, chair of anatomy. She told the families a little about the students, pointing out that although the service is obviously meaningful to the families, it’s amazing how important it is to the students, too.

Poignant: Heather Sateia, the first-year student who organized this year’s ceremony, read a work by Henry David Thoreau. The poignant words told of completing a cycle and returning to something greater—like a blade of grass to the earth.

Next was a time for reflec-



ANDY NORDHOFF

Sateia, in yellow, and Link pause amid the crowd after the service in Rollins Chapel.