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Tom Dodds, a 1982 graduate of DMS and a member of the faculty since 1988, was just named the chair of anesthesiology.

New chair of anesthesiology finds that, yes, you can go home again

Even though Tom Dodds was the son of a doctor, while he was in high school and college he didn't plan to go into medicine. He pictured himself running a company rather than a department at the medical center where he grew up.

Little did he know. He was recently offered a chance to use all his skills—as a manager of people and assets, as a researcher, and as the physician he did end up becoming—in just such a role. In September, DMS and DHMC named Dr. Thomas Dodds chair of anesthesiology.

Options: “As an undergraduate, I truly thought I was going to go into the business world,” says Dodds, whose father, ob-gyn Dr. John Dodds, is now an emeritus member of the DMS faculty. “But obviously, my dad being a physician, I was familiar with the medical world.” So although he majored in economics at Wil-

liams, he also took the premed requirements. “I wanted to keep my options open,” he says.

In the end, he headed not into business but back to DMS, where he earned his M.D. in 1982. And in 1988, after a residency in anesthesiology (including a year as chief resident) at Columbia-Presbyterian in New York, he headed “home” again, to join the DMS faculty.

In addition to practicing, he's spent many years researching and promoting the perioperative use of beta-blockers—a class of drugs that reduces the risk of cardiac complications during and after surgery. And he was one of the first anesthesiologists to join the renowned Northern New England Cardiovascular Disease Study Group, which tracks the management of cardiac conditions at eight medical centers.

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He also, in 2002, earned a certificate in business administration from the American Society of Anesthesiology. That came in handy when he was asked to be vice chair and director of clinical affairs for the Department of Anesthesiology and collaborated with his predecessor as chair, Dr. David Glass, on managing the finances of the department and on promoting technological and logistical innovations. In addition, Dodds has served on the Hospital Board of Trustees and the Clinic Board of Governors.

All while keeping up with the exploits of three athletic kids. And finding time for his own sporting passion: coaching and competing in ski jumping.

Model: But he had a good role model after John Dodds moved his family to Hanover in the ear-

ly '60s. “I knew about the phone calls and trips into the hospital at all hours,” Tom Dodds says of his father. “But he was able to maintain a balance.”

Now that his own kids are “pretty well grown up,” what better time to take on the leadership of the department that he's seen undergo considerable growth? Today, anesthesiology at Dartmouth offers training and treatment in more than 20 subspecialty areas.

“Now,” Dodds says, “we have niches, like the use of transesophageal echocardiography during surgery or the use of ultrasound to guide the placement of nerve blocks, that we could barely imagine 20 years ago.”

Scholarly: Indeed, back when he joined the department, “it was more a choice of lifestyle, a place I wanted to live and raise a family,” Dodds says. “Even back in the '80s, the clinical care was superb [but] I hadn't anticipated the growth of the academic side . . . the new campus, the number of physicians, the . . . scholarly productivity.”

It's an institution whose not-too-big, not-too-small size works to its advantage, he believes, in pioneering and implementing medical advances. “We're a little more nimble,” Dodds says. “One of the benefits of this institution is the collaborative nature of our practice, the ability to move across disciplines,” compared to places that “are set up like huge, independent silos where it's hard to get together on anything.”

It makes Dodds glad he ended up back “home” after all.

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