2020-2021 Golden Stethoscope Nomination

Nominated for: Best Role Model

Name of Nominee Dr. Sarah Michael

I would like to submit my nomination for Dr. Sarah Michael in the category of Best Role Model. Although I have only known Dr. Michael for a few short months, watching her work in the Emergency Department at UCH has already made a significant impact on me. The example she sets for me informs my approach to medicine now as a student and will doubtless help to shape my identity as a physician.

I have long been unwavering in my intention to pursue primary care as a specialty in the future, as I thought meaningful connections with patients would only be possible in such a setting. Dr. Michael, however, has turned my preconception on its head. It's true that in the ED, there is less available time in which to really get to know the patient, and we don't always leave the patient's room knowing the name of their new grandchild or the reason they moved to Colorado. But from the first shift spent with Dr. Michael, I was struck by the relationship she can build with the patient in just a few minutes. One of the first patients I watched her work with was a young woman who had experienced a traumatic event. Dr. Michael was empathetic, kind, and non-judgmental, while being informative and efficient with her care. As I followed the patient through consults with other providers, Dr. Michael's interaction with her stood apart. I have witnessed the same proficient and empathetic care time and time again, whether the patient has experienced trauma, as is not uncommon in the ED, or not.

At this point in my education, clinical reasoning is a concept that has yet to solidify, as the material I learn in lecture slowly coalesces into a diagnostic framework. Dr. Michael has shown me what excellent clinical reasoning looks like, in the decisions she must make, sometimes without complete information. A patient was brought in during a recent shift with an unusual presentation, and Dr. Michael had to move quickly. Although she and I both left for the evening before the resolution of the patient's case, it was a lesson for me on the practice of developing a differential diagnosis that includes both most likely and most serious causes and acting accordingly for the patient.

She is an excellent teacher, encouraging me to see all that I can, ask questions, and push myself to apply what I've learned. It is no surprise that her research is focused on education. At some point during each shift I have spent with her – without exception – someone on the healthcare team in a different profession has approached me, saying "Isn't she great?" She is clearly admired by the teams with whom she works, and they laud her intelligence, abilities, and teamwork.

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been assigned Dr. Michael as a preceptor and to have the opportunity to learn from her. She is indeed a role model.

Written by: Laura Meimari