

2020-2021 Golden Stethoscope Nomination

Nominated for: Demonstrating Leadership

Name of Nominee: Dr. David Fox

After I share something he's taught me, or a skill I've learned from him, I look forward to getting asked the question "who is your preceptor?" Nearly every time my answer of "Dr. David Fox" is met with a smile, followed by some variation of "wow, you lucked out!" or "learn everything you can, he's incredible."

When I was first paired with Dr. Fox at the end of my first year of medical school, the reactions to learning who I was assigned to work with were sometimes intimidating; I didn't want to disappoint a person everyone seemed to look up to. But after meeting Dr. Fox and working with him for just one session, I realized that the reactions people gave me weren't based in fear or intimidation, but instead respect, admiration and a desire to emulate his many strengths as a pediatrician and leader.

I have many, many, many memories I could choose from when deciding to write about the reasons that Dr. Fox is deserving of the Golden Stethoscope Award for Demonstrating Leadership. His work with parents and patients alike is inspiring, and his dedication to teaching students, residents and colleagues is effervescent and contagious. But one particular story comes to mind that will always remind me of the leader I hope to be myself someday.

One Friday in 2019, Dr. Fox invited me to join him in the OR. It was a strange request as Dr. Fox isn't a surgeon. But, nonetheless, his patient needed a procedure that would be inhumane and inappropriate to perform at the bedside. After the fact, I came to learn it was a procedure he had done many times. To this day, I don't know if there weren't surgeons available, or if Dr. Fox wanted to complete the procedures himself, but I knew it was an honor to be invited to join.

Before we went to the OR, we went to the patient's room, where Dr. Fox took a private moment with his patient of many years. Putting the patient under the general anesthesia that they would require could be fatal, and both of them knew it. Dr. Fox explained what was going to happen next in just the right amount of detail, and gave his patient a fist bump and gentle salutation: "I'll see you down there, buddy."

We walked down to the OR together, and Dr. Fox asked me if I was ready, and encouraged me to take care of myself both physically and emotionally. He showed me where the scrubs were kept and pointed to the locker room where I could change. He told me what he expected of me, and encouraged me to take breaks as often as I needed them.

We entered the OR to start the procedure to drain and dress broken skin and wounds. Due to the chronic nature of the patient's disease and the misfortune of being bed bound, Dr. Fox's patient was covered in pockets of infection, abscess, and caseating tissue. Nearly every other month, it needed to be addressed. The intact skin left needed to be cleaned, the wounds needed to be dressed, and the patient needed to be transferred to a new bed. I came to understand this time intensive procedure was a symbol of love, humanity and respect between patient and doctor. For hours we worked, sometimes in silence, sometimes in small talk, sometimes with tears dripping down my face. The smell was horrible. The scene was gruesome. The blood was everywhere. The pus was infinite. To keep the patient warm while naked on the

table, heat lamps were turned up high. At the end, we took off our gowns, threw out our hair nets, and met the patient upstairs as if nothing had happened.

After that day, I was changed as a student doctor. I learned from the medicine and the experience, but most of all I learned from my preceptor, Dr. David Fox, a leader, a doctor, and an advocate.

Dr. Fox demonstrated to me that day how to navigate pre-op tension and fear, with grace. He showed me how to say “see you later” to someone I may never see again, or might see in a few hours. He taught me to handle ambiguity and uncertainty of death with professionalism and tact. His encouragement on the way to the OR empowered me, and his kindness helped me to feel prepared to dress and act the part of student doctor. He showed me that a leader sets expectations, but then supports their followers to meet them.

On that day in the OR, he treated every nurse, tech, aide, anesthesiologist, student and patient with respect, empathy and kindness. As a good teacher should, he pushed me out of my comfort zone, but gave me the map and tools to create a new one.

He showed me how to do good. That day he demonstrated leadership – in the hospital room, in the operating room, in the hallway, and in the world. He has continued to do so every day since, and I am profoundly grateful to have been assigned to work with him.

There is no one more deserving of the Golden Stethoscope award than the preceptor I am so proud to tell everyone about, Dr. David Fox.

Written by: Katherine Pemberton