2021-2022 Golden Stethoscope Nomination

Nominated for: Outstanding Role Model

Name of Nominee Dr. Karin Susskind

I was apprehensive about several elements of medical training when I started at the University of Colorado last fall. The path to medical school is littered with grave warnings regarding the demands that it poses: studying is constant, free time is scarce, and stress is inevitable. What worried me most, though, was not tests or classes or burnout. I was scared of the work of doctoring itself – I was afraid of caring for patients. All of this changed when I began precepting with Dr. Karin Susskind at the Boulder Medical Center. She was, from the very first day, exactly what I needed: a role model.

Dr. Susskind's interactions with patients are exemplary. Partially, this is because she has incredible interpersonal skills and a gift for making patients feel welcome and safe at her clinic. Her questions are tactful, and her explanations to patients are crystal clear. Perhaps more importantly, though, she is kind and she is thoughtful. I recall one patient who came to meet Dr. Susskind for the first time. The patient came into the clinic nervous and a little guarded. Perhaps negative past experiences in healthcare had poisoned the field for her as it has for so many others. And yet, a few minutes and a couple jokes later, Dr. Susskind's calm and gentle demeanor had the patient talking, elaborating, smiling, even laughing. It was incredible. Her example showed this fledgling medical student that the trick to caring for patients was just that: caring.

Dr. Susskind's technical knowledge was also fundamental to my development this year. She made a point of giving me practice with physical exam components that I struggled with (the otoscope comes to mind!). She demonstrated these exam maneuvers and explained when and how they would be used, then gave me copious chances to try myself. Soon enough, I was performing the maneuvers on my own. Dr. Susskind prioritized these practice opportunities and in doing so set the skills in concrete better than any lecturer could. Clinical reasoning was also something she fostered: Dr. Susskind asked for my differential diagnoses on each patient we saw together, and helped me to refine ideas towards testing and treatment plans. Each session was filled with teachable moments, and Dr. Susskind found every one of them. Again and again, she modeled perfectly how a physician should think and act.

My fears surrounding medicine from the beginning of this year have been transformed: my apprehension is now excitement and my timidness is now confidence. Dr. Susskind is responsible for these changes and more. It is a great privilege to recommend her for the Golden Stethoscope Award - Outstanding Role Model.

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