

News

Andrew Barnosky, DO: Maximizing a physician's impact

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Andrew Barnosky's, DO, MPH, FACEP, career is impossible to squeeze into one page, and the alphabet soup of acronyms in the wake of his name only begins to tell the story.

Having previously served as a hospital chief of staff, the chairman of an emergency medicine department, president of the Washtenaw County Medical Society and in many other administrative and public health roles, Doctor Barnosky's blended career has taken many turns over the years. Now he is firmly focused on the work he finds most meaningful -- teaching medical students.

But even that is varied.

As an associate professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine of the University of Michigan Medical School, Doctor Barnosky's academic efforts are divided between teaching in two starkly different areas, anatomy and medical ethics.

"I love teaching both subjects, for different reasons. Medical ethics is often focused around the elements of doctoring dealing with empathy, compassion, and humanism in medicine, and those things are difficult to teach because the answers aren't always concrete. Whereas with anatomy, the answers are known and unambiguous. It's a fun challenge to be engaged in two subjects that are on opposite ends of the spectrum," Doctor Barnosky says.

Despite the dichotomy, there's no question Doctor Barnosky is now doing what he loves best.



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"When I reflect on my career, it's clear there has always been an educational component to my work," he says. "And as time went on, I found myself wanting to make that a larger part of my life. Watching medical students grow in their academic and clinical development is a great source of professional satisfaction for me, and being able to contribute to that in some way is incredibly gratifying."

Viewed through a broader scope, it is no surprise Doctor Barnosky ended up here. If there's a theme driving this narrative, it's that Doctor Barnosky has always sought to leverage his ability to make a positive difference.

"I chose to pursue a Master's degree in public health and positions in medical administration -- and, ultimately, medical education -- because they presented opportunities to make an impact in the lives of many people," Doctor Barnosky says.

"Whether it is working to improve the practice environment for physicians or preparing the next generation of practitioners, work that has potential to make a difference in the lives of a large group of people is an honorable endeavor."

In Doctor Barnosky's view, medical education presents the best opportunity to make that lasting impact.

"I've come to believe the greatest way to affect the health and the lives of the people in the next generation is to actually prepare the next generation of physicians, and I plan to devote the rest of my career to that effort," he says.

And for Doctor Barnosky, that goes well beyond helping students gain a mastery of the material covered in their textbooks. Just as important is conveying the importance of maintaining compassion in the doctor-patient relationship, and that is reflected in the work Doctor Barnosky does as the inaugural faculty advisor for the University of Michigan Medical School's chapter of the Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS), which recognizes students, residents and faculty who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to providing compassionate patient care.

"We were able to bring a chapter of GHHS to the University of Michigan three years ago, and I'm immensely proud of our member students and residents who all have demonstrated outstanding qualities of compassion and humanism in their clinical work and delivery of patient care," Doctor Barnosky says. "A strong sense of empathy is a trait we should be actively fostering in our future physicians, and I'm proud of our efforts to promote and incorporate that philosophy into our training here the University of Michigan."

Doctor Barnosky's effort to impart knowledge and improve the practice of medicine extends beyond his interaction with medical students. As a long-time, active member of the Michigan State Medical Society who has served as the conference chair for the MSMS annual bioethics committee and as a member

of the House of Delegates many times over the years, Doctor Barnosky's positive impact has been felt by his colleagues throughout the state.

"I've always been happy to be involved in the administrative side of medicine and MSMS has provided a great opportunity for sustained engagement on that front. The organization does a fantastic job of advocating on behalf of physicians here in Michigan, and the ultimate, downstream manifestation of those efforts is improved care for the patients we serve."

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