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Reflections on Dr. Cho’s Career and Contributions

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Wael Saad, M.D.
Professor of Radiology, University of Michigan

“Dr. Cho is the ultimate diagnostician. One of the great pleasures is listening to Kyung as he teaches residents, fellows, and faculty. He has been a great friend, mentor, colleague and teacher, and a wonderful person. Congratulations Dr. Cho!”

Thomas Wakefield, M.D.
James C. Stanley Professor of Vascular Surgery, Professor of Surgery and Section Head, Vascular Surgery, University of Michigan

“Kyung Cho is the reason I made the turn into Interventional Radiology. His unrelenting commitments to teaching — how to interpret images, of course, but instilling the urge to conclude the diagnostic trail and permit (and sometimes administer) conclusive treatment — and patient welfare have inspired me and a generation of angiographers at Michigan. We didn’t say, for example ‘No evidence of pulmonary embolism’. We said, ‘No pulmonary embolism.’ That spirit has never left me.”

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The Kyung J. Cho Collegiate Professorship in Radiology
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He immediately entered the Republic of Korea Air Force where he served at a base off the coast of North Korea. As a medical officer, Dr. Cho’s education got him through a dangerous case of placenta accreta (retained placenta) following a complicated breech delivery, but the experience left him certain that his schooling had been incomplete. As soon as he finished his three years of service, his drive to continue to learn and practice brought him to the United States.

“My instant response to him was — I'm not that diplomatic at that time — ‘How come you're offering me a position and you haven't seen me?'” Dr. Reuter said, “Don’t worry about it, come out.” I was so excited to work with him.”

Dr. Cho credits his early hands-on experiences, such as the difficult delivery at the air force base, with his passion for teaching. “What I learned from [not having clinical experience], made me a much better educator. I have to teach all these young people, must really teach, so when they confront something, they’re prepared to face it. … Whenever I go back to Korea, I try to change the education system, to make sure these young students, when they go into the field, are able to perform, because I suffered.”

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Dr. Cho credits his passion for life for his clinical, research, and teaching successes. “I show my students how I care for patients and their families, and then the trainee can see … you practice based on convictions. My core values are respect, compassion, innovation.”

Those innovations have included using carbon dioxide as a contrast agent, which can be much safer than traditional materials that contain iodine, and selective venous sampling for the localization of endocrine tumors of the adrenal, pancreatic, and parathyroid glands. The fact that such research and the resulting clinical work can save lives is, Dr. Cho says, “Why we work hard … I love humankind, particularly someone who needs help. I always give them all.”

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A Dedication to Teaching and Clinical Excellence in Patient Care

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