

2012 Harkins Surgical Symposium for Resident Education: Surgical Innovations

Presentations at this year's Harkins Surgical Symposium were focused on surgical innovations and included presentations from this year's two distinguished alumni. Topics and presenters were:

"Pre-Hospital Intubation: Does It Lead To VAP?"

Heather Evans, MD, Assistant Professor, Division of Trauma & Critical Care

"Laparoscopic Surgery for Crohn's Disease: Tricks Of The Trade"

Alessandro Fichera, MD, Professor, General Surgery

"Etiology and Prevention Of Esophageal Leaks"

Peter Wu, MD, Associate Professor, General Surgery (VA)

"Complex Abdominal Wall Reconstruction"

Hugh Foy, MD, Professor, Trauma & Critical Care

"Strengthening Care for Trauma and Other Surgical Conditions Globally"

Charles Mock, MD, Professor, Trauma & Critical Care

"The Military Health System"

Karen Guice, MD, 2012 Department of Surgery Distinguished Alumni presenter

"Optimizing Resources for Children's Surgical Care in the U.S."

Keith Oldham, MD, 2012 Department of Surgery Distinguished Alumni presenter

"From Swords to Plowshares: Front Line Golden Hour Care"

Matthew Martin, MD, Madigan Army Medical Center

"Robotic Hepatectomy: A New Standard"

James Park, MD, Associate Professor, Division of General Surgery

Jeff Avansino, MD, Assistant Professor, Pediatric General Surgery

I always appreciated the impromptu invitations to dinner after clinic when Dr. Pellegrini's wife was out of town. My favorite part of dinner was the many stories that he shared with us. What impressed me the most were the stories he told about talking his way out of speeding tickets. I never realized there were so many good excuses for going fast.

Kristine Calhoun, MD, Associate Professor, General Surgery

When I interviewed (for my position here), Dr. Pellegrini made me drive his boat of a BMW from UWMC to the Roosevelt clinic. All I could think was "don't crash the chairman's car" the whole time I was driving it. I tried to turn him down and he said "you aren't saying no to your chairman already, are you?"

Elina Quiroga, MD, Assistant Professor, Vascular Surgery

My first strong impression of Dr. Pellegrini was his love for dogs and his deep relationship with Dublin (his dog at the time). I remember when a residency applicant asked him if he had kids. His answer: "three kids, the youngest is six (Dublin), and he is a handful."

I admire how centered Dr. Pellegrini is; he is the best example of "having a strong anchor from which to launch your adventures," as he describes in his Asa Yancey lecture. Kelly (his wife), a good meal, a cold beer, a nap, and good friends seem to be as essential building blocks of his leadership as are his values, skills and network.

When I started writing this I scribbled a line saying that Dr. Pellegrini has a unique ability to build bridges between the mundane and the meaningful; between the individuals and the organization. But it is more than bridges - I think he sees them all as one and the same: the transcendental in daily excellence, and the success of the group in the growth of each individual. I feel like living proof.

I always thought I wanted to do laparoscopic surgery and do research in esophageal motility. I was almost ready to apply for my fellowship in this area when I got exposed to and fell in love with vascular surgery. I was afraid of talking to him; I was worried he was going to be disappointed about my change of heart and I knew that he only needed to ask me to reconsider and I would have, instantly. Few can elicit such trust and loyalty. But, the conversation was very different than imagined. It was a relaxed dialogue. His closing line, for which I am eternally thankful, was: "you will be good at anything you do, but you will only be excellent at doing what you love."