

Dr. Ted Kohler Retirement



“What can you say when one of our most respected and beloved faculty members is retiring? Ted Kohler first touched base at the UW in 1978 as a Trauma/Burn Research Fellow under Dr. C. James Carrico. It must have made an impression on him, because when he finished his General Surgery and Vascular training at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, he chose a job as Assistant Professor at UW in 1983.

Born and raised in the Midwest, educated in New England, he brought with him the complimentary qualities of brilliance and humility, intellectual rigor and informality, all with a healthy dose of Midwestern irony and self-deprecation. Ted migrated from Harborview to the Veteran’s Affairs Puget Sound Health Care System (VA), where he has led the Vascular Division there for 25 years. He’s never been a self-promoter, so if you haven’t rotated through the VA, worked alongside him as a colleague, or served with him on a committee, you’ve missed the opportunity for direct inspiration. But we have all been beneficiaries of his contributions.

As Vascular Surgery has evolved as a science and a specialty, he has made landmark contributions at each turning point: ultrasound diagnosis of arterial stenoses¹, the pathophysiology of stenosis in arteries and dialysis access^{2, 3}, the holy grail of an endothelialized prosthetic graft⁴, and randomized trials of endovascular versus open abdominal aortic aneurysm repair⁵. And as large as his contributions have been to the science of Vascular Surgery, we all have been touched more intimately by his contributions to our own community as past president of the Seattle Surgical Society and the Henry Harkins Society, and founding member of the Pacific Northwest Vascular Society. Scores of students, residents, and colleagues have experienced his warm, empathetic mentoring and coaching. In our hectic, competitive world of academic medicine, he stands out for his generosity of time, attention, and caring for others. I can tell you that when I’ve found myself in difficulty in the OR, he’s the one I’ve called. With his calm demeanor and incisive thinking, we’ll sort out the situation. Then, in his classical, ironic fashion, he’ll leave the OR with his final comment, “What’s the worst that can happen?” He has always been there for us.

So, it is with sadness and joy that we all wish Ted Kohler the very best in this next chapter in his life. What’s the worst that can happen?”

Michael Sobel, MD
*Professor, Department of Vascular Surgery
University of Washington*

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Dr. Kohler has been my favorite person to work with during my fellowship. I call him “Uncle Ted” and he calls me “Nephew.” He is as wonderful a person as he is a surgeon and despite my best efforts, I couldn’t convince him to stay through my graduation. This will be a hard loss for all trainees and colleagues but he has certainly paid his dues. Operating with Dr. Kohler is the most calming, yet invigorating experience one can hope for in the operating room. He gives you a chance to show what you can do and then he lets you fly. He inspires you with confidence to the point that you out-perform what you believe your limits to be. He says “What’s the worst that can happen?” (his favorite phrase), when in fact, really bad things could actually happen... This always encourages me to think and be alert about the bad things that could happen but never to be afraid of doing what we have to do. Overall, I wish he could stay and graduate with me and go into practice as my senior partner and retire when he is about 100 years old. However, I am really excited for him regarding the next chapter of his life and I am blessed to have been a small part of the conclusion of this chapter. Moreover, he will always be “Uncle Ted” to me.

Always,
Nephew Prince



**Ted Kohler with Prince Esiobu,
2017-2018 Vascular Surgery Fellow**

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Dr. Kohler Retirement

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Ted Kohler in training

“Dr. Kohler was and is, one of the kindest surgeons I have worked with in my training. Not only have I learned a tremendous amount from him, but I also aspire to his surgical humor and I have passed it on to my own residents at Duke.”

**— Dr. Daiva Nevidomskyte, Assistant Professor at Duke University,
UW Vascular Surgery Resident, 2011–2016**



Left to right: Drs. Nam Tran, Ted Kohler, Daiva Nevidomskyte, Mark Meissner, Eugene Zierler, Susanna Shin, and Elina Quiroga

Photo credit: Michael Hilleary

What I Love About Ted Kohler

- He showed me how one can be an awesome mentor who is genuinely warm and caring
- The deep respect by which he treats his patients and the respect he shows his trainees and colleagues even when he disagrees
- His sense of humor which at times can appear when you least expect it.
- His standing response for the the question of “can I... ?” “I don’t know, can you?” (Forever burned in my brain and is the voice I hear when a trainee asks me “can I ...”)

So, I hope you don’t think you are allowed to disappear that easily from our lives .. I can speak for my self when I say my life is richer because of you...cheers!!

— Dr. Sherene Shalub, Assistant Professor, Vascular Surgery Division

**A special thanks to Jane Blomberg,
RN Vascular Nurse Coordinator
Vascular Surgery Seattle VA PSHCS
for gathering photos and
write-ups from colleagues.**