



FILLING IN THE GAPS

Community faculty members help develop the next generation of health-care professionals

Sarah Meredith won't forget the first day of her clinical rotation with community faculty member Steven B. Powers, MD.

A woman in labor showed up at the emergency department. She didn't know she was pregnant. The emergency department doesn't normally deliver babies.

In the midst of the ordeal, Ms. Meredith was struck by Dr. Powers' calm demeanor and leadership.

"Even though it was chaotic and stressful, and the emergency department isn't usually the place to deliver a baby," she says. "I have learned to be calm and to improvise."

Dr. Powers, an OB/GYN with TotalCare for Women, a division of Mid-Atlantic Women's Care, is one of roughly 1,300 volunteer community faculty members at EVMS. Ms. Meredith, MPA 2012, worked with more than a dozen community faculty

members during her clinical rotations.

"It's been a huge asset to my career development," she says.

INTEGRAL ROLE

Some community faculty members are full-time. Others work in private practices across Hampton Roads.

They have been an essential part of EVMS since its inception, says Provost and Dean Richard V. Homan, MD. The same kind of community commitment that willed EVMS into existence 40 years ago lives on in the local practitioners who volunteer their time to train the future health-care workforce.

"The school was created by the community for the community," Dr. Homan says. "As a result, the community faculty members, those who are not compensated by the school,

play an integral role in preparing the future physicians and health professionals.

"Without their commitment, time and effort, EVMS could not function," he says.

The school relies on full-time, compensated faculty members, working in coordination with the community faculty members, to teach medical and health professions students and to train residents.

Community faculty members fill a variety of roles at EVMS and are involved in nearly every facet of student education. As "preceptors," they provide practical experience for many clinical rotations. They supervise and instruct students in the operating room, and students accompany

them to see patients in the hospital and in their private offices.

Some full-time, non-compensated faculty members— many of whom are nationally respected— also serve as department chairs, clerkship directors and residency directors, helping to train the next generation of providers in specialties, such as emergency medicine, urology, neurology and radiology. Physicians at Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters, for example, serve as the members of EVMS' Department of Pediatrics.

Community faculty members participate in clinical trials, such as studying prospective medications, and collaborate with the school's full-time researchers. They provide guest lectures and offer administrative guidance via the Institutional Review Board and committees that oversee admissions, student progress, and faculty appointments and promotions.

Some community faculty members have achieved national and international prominence. For instance, David A. Johnson, MD, Chief of the Division of Gastroenterology and a past President of the American College of Gastroenterology, was selected by the American Board of Internal Medicine to serve on the Gastroenterology Subspecialty Examination Committee and has been an invited speaker at the National Institutes of Health.

OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE AN IMPACT

Randy J. Gould, MD, is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Surgery, general surgeon with Sentara Surgery Specialists in Norfolk and a former member of the EVMS Board of Visitors. A 1978 graduate of EVMS, he has been a part of the community faculty since 1984.

“We feel it’s a real privilege to work with the students and residents,” Dr. Gould says. “A lot of people take pride in knowing they’re teaching and have an academic appointment. When you’re a health-care professional, it’s an honor to have that distinction.”

Medical students shadow Dr. Gould in his clinic and observe how he cares for patients. He mentors some as an adviser, discussing patient cases with them. In the hospital, students accompany him on rounds, and, under his supervisions, residents assist in the operating room. The partners in his group perform

similar roles. “It’s learning on the job,” he says. “Yes, it can slow you down, and it takes effort, but your working environment is so much more stimulating. When you’re in an academic environment, it encourages you to stay current.”

Dr. Powers agrees.

“You have to be on your ‘A’ game. The students keep you thinking about why you do things the way you do.”

Rita M. Fickenscher, MPA 2001, serves as preceptor to physician assistant students during their emergency medicine rotations. She has participated in panel discussions at EVMS about her work as a PA, participated on the admissions committee and helped organize mock interviews to prepare graduating PAs for the job market. She does it because she sees it as a contribution to her field.

“The more we promote our profession on campus, the more that spills over to

promotion and recognition of our degrees off campus,” Ms. Fickenscher says. “Everything that I do on campus helps to promote the PA profession. That helps promote my PA career.”

One in four providers in Hampton Roads has some connection to the school — by fellowship, residency or some other tie.

“Many of us in the private practice community realize that health care has been enhanced by the presence of the medical school,” Dr. Gould says. “We want it to be successful because we know how important it is for the future quality of health care in the community.”

With the impending national physician shortage, he sees the role of community faculty becoming even more important. As demand for care increases and aging physicians retire, high-quality residency programs will help attract skilled

practitioners to the region. Likewise, having community clinicians meaningfully engaged at EVMS strengthens the region’s ability to compete for a limited pool of doctors.

“It’s a great opportunity to return the favor of all the mentoring we received over the years,” Dr. Gould says.

PIVOTAL TO EDUCATION

Shannon Poplstein, MPA 2012, was visiting with a patient who had back problems during her rotation with Randall C. Fedro, MD, of Patient Choice. The patient’s symptoms had worsened. Dr. Fedro decided he needed surgery — and fast. He called a surgeon to meet the patient in the emergency department within the next few hours.

“It could mean whether the patient would be able to walk in a few days or be in a wheelchair

LEFT TO RIGHT:

Steven B. Powers, MD, a physician with Total Care for Women in Chesapeake, reviews the results of a fetal stress test with physician assistant student Chris McKenney, left, and medical student Warrick Staines.

Fourth-year medical student Maliha Nowrouz works alongside surgeon Randy Gould, MD, ‘78, as they speak with patient Ben Williams of Virginia Beach.

Physician assistant student Jessica Kennedy examines a patient’s back under the watchful eye of family physician Randall Fedro, MD, a staff physician at the Norfolk office of Patient Choice, a practice of Bon Secours Hampton Roads.

Second-year medical student Amanda L. Russell, left, works with her mentor, Lisa E. Jefferson, MD, with Sentara Family Medicine Physicians in Virginia Beach. Dr. Jefferson is a 1997 graduate of the EVMS Family Medicine Residency Program.



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Richard V. Homan, MD, Provost and Dean



for the rest of his life,” Ms. Poplstein says, noting that Dr. Fedro talked her through the decision he made in the patient’s care.

“What we learned in the community really made things click,” Ms. Poplstein says. “After doing the clinical aspect, it now makes sense. Sometimes you have to experience things to ‘get’ something.”

Community faculty members help make real the sometimes-abstract elements of classroom education.

“They’re taking the time out of their practice to sit down with us and make a difference in our education, to build upon what we learned in the classroom. You can’t just learn how to treat patients in a classroom,” Ms. Poplstein says.

Ms. Meredith, who worked with Dr. Powers for an OB/GYN rotation, says he offered a comfortable learning environment.

“He’s very patient and really makes the learning environment safe, where it’s okay to get things wrong,” she says, adding, “That’s when you want to get things wrong, when you’re a student.”

For Matt Strand, MPA 2012, community faculty members helped him transition sterile book learning to the real world during his emergency department rotation.

“Several times, they had to get me through that initial shock. When you’re reading in the book, you don’t really get, ‘This is life or death,’” he says.

Working alongside professionals helps students understand how to perform in a sometimes-unpredictable care setting — which can be a stark contrast to all-night study sessions.

“There’s a lot more on the line than getting a wrong answer on the test. There’s a lot

more stress in that sense,” Mr. Strand says. “I couldn’t imagine going through rotations without people with confidence and who love to teach. They were able to be so calm in the midst of all the chaos. There’s stuff going on, flying all around the room, and they were as calm as can be.”

Dr. Homan says community faculty members create a legacy by passing on their knowledge and insight to up-and-coming providers.

“It’s a rewarding, intellectually challenging and noble effort to which we all contribute — developing physicians and health professionals, who will, in turn, improve the health of our community, our country and the world,” he says. “Without community faculty, we would not be able to deliver the educational program here at EVMS. Their work, commitment and effort is inextricably woven into the fabric of the school.”