

Honoring Top Physicians on National Doctor's Day

UC San Diego Health System Recognizes Physicians of the Year

By Yadira Galindo | March 30, 2015

Doctors ease suffering, save lives and help bring new life into the world. National Doctor's Day on March 30 honors and celebrates these acts and the service of all physicians.

"Our physicians stand among the nation's best for clinical and research excellence and quality of care," said Paul Viviano, CEO, UC San Diego Health. "Their devotion to our patients and their family members helps us fulfill our vision of creating a healthier world – one life at a time."



Dr. Kevin Shah, House Officer of the Year, and Dr. Tyson Ikeda, Physician of the Year.

To acknowledge National Doctor's Day, UC San Diego Health has announced its 2015 Physician of the Year, [Tyson Ikeda, MD](#), and House Officer of the Year, Kevin Shah, MD. Each year, UC San Diego Health recognizes its top physician-scientists for embodying the values of quality outcomes, caring, integrity, creativity and team work.

"Our patients are at the center of everything we do," said Viviano. "Through their daily actions, Drs. Ikeda and Shah are admirable examples of how we can better care for and communicate with our patients."

Physician of the Year: Tyson Ikeda

In 1987, after completing his Bachelor of Science in biochemistry at UC Los Angeles, Ikeda arrived as a student at UC San Diego School of Medicine. He never left. Ikeda completed his internship

and residency in the Department of Family Medicine and Public Health and was elected chief resident in 1993.

“He was an outstanding resident, known then as he is now, almost 20 years later, as a clinician of the first order, devoted tirelessly to the care of his patients,” wrote William A. Norcross, MD, clinical professor of family medicine and public health, in his nomination letter. “If you ask any of his patients, staff or colleagues, they will tell you not only that he really cares, but that he can effectively communicate his caring both in words and meta-communications (the nonverbal, but equally powerful way that humans communicate with one another).”

Ikeda exemplifies the concepts of duty, honor, service and integrity, said Norcross, who recruited Ikeda into the residency program. Ikeda has been named a “Top Doc” by *San Diego Magazine* every year since 2008.

Originally, Ikeda had intended to focus his career in medical research but after his third year in medical school he realized that interacting with patients was the most rewarding part of the job.

“When I got into medical school there was something about taking care of people that really appealed to me more than I expected,” said Ikeda. “I would be excused to go home but I would stay with patients talking to them until 10 o’clock at night. I knew things about them that others didn’t because I spent the extra time with them.”

Choosing to become a primary care physician seemed the obvious choice for Ikeda. In this department he isn’t caring for patients in life-threatening situations but he’s helping to make small lifestyle changes that will shape their lives and, hopefully, reduce the risk of future disease.

“Family and preventive medicine isn’t the one-time big save,” said Ikeda. “It’s like putting a penny in a piggy bank over time and the value of that piggy bank is greater than the big save.”

Ikeda was appointed residency director for family medicine at the time when interest in this specialty had waned at a national level. Under his leadership as a teacher and clinician, the residency program at UC San Diego Health thrived.

“We garnered interest by talking about what was great about UC San Diego,” said Ikeda. “Here, students could work in community health centers or other medical groups to receive a diverse medical training experience in reproductive medicine, public health, epidemiology or research. It was a nicely blended program that pushed residents into the community and gave them experience when it really mattered.”

Ikeda also served as division chief. Today, he is the director of clinical services and vice chief of the Division of Family Medicine, medical officer for the California Tobacco Helpline, physician at UC San Diego Health – Scripps Ranch, and clinical professor.

When not practicing medicine, Ikeda can be found spending time with his wife of 28 years, Lydia, who is a business officer in the UC San Diego Health Department of Reproductive Medicine, and their two children Daryn, 17, and Carter, 13.

Or look for him on a basketball court preparing for his second appearance at the Spokane Hoopfest, where he and two of his UCLA roommates will be playing with 7,000 other teams in a 3-on-3 tournament this summer. More than 225,000 people are expected to watch the event, which takes over 42 city blocks during the two-day tournament.

House Officer of the Year: Kevin Shah

Kevin Shah, MD, UC San Diego Health resident, also has a love for sports, even working as a sports public address announcer for UC San Diego athletics during his undergraduate studies. But it is his devotion to his patients that earned him House Officer of the Year. At the end of his shift, after turning in his pager, Shah takes five minutes to visit with one patient.

“No one ever tells you how little time you’re going to spend with patients and how much time you’ll spend on the computer,” said Shah. “Most of us got into medical school for the patients. I pick one patient and at their bedside I ask what else is going on in life or who’s been visiting. You become more invested in patients because you know them.”

Shah says he picked up the practice of visiting with patients at the end of his busy day while in medical school at UC Irvine. For him, it was a way to reduce burnout and remember why he chose this career.

While studying human biology as an undergrad at UC San Diego, Shah’s choice in career was sealed when his 54-year-old father suffered an undiagnosed heart attack and died three months later. It turns out Shah’s grandfather also died at 54 from heart disease.

“It galvanized my direction. I went from being a college student who thought he knew what he wanted to do to seeing how cardiovascular disease can impact not just the patient but the patient’s family as well,” said Shah.

Shah returned to UC San Diego for his residency. Much of his research has come under the guidance of his mentor, Alan Maisel, MD, director of the Veterans Affairs San Diego Healthcare System Cardiac Care Unit. Shah was one of only five residents to be selected to present his research at the Department of Medicine grand rounds in 2014. That year, he was also selected by third and fourth year medical students to receive the Kaiser Excellence in Teaching Award among house staff.

“He has a calm and compassionate bedside manner that is very much appreciated by his patients,” wrote Simerjot K. Jassal, MD, director of the residency training program, in her nomination of Shah. “He calmly leads interns with wide-ranging skills through care of highly complex patients and relevant procedures and high stress clinical situations.”

When asked to select a clinic for his residency program, Shah chose St. Vincent de Paul Village, where he provides care for the underserved and has been able to put his Spanish language skills into practice.

“There is something rewarding to work for patients who are grateful to finally receive medical care,” said Shah. “You hope they continue to return for their care, but still it’s gratifying to know they received the medical attention they needed at that moment.”

On July 1, Shah will begin a three-year UC Los Angeles fellowship in cardiovascular disease to continue his research in cardiology. He is working toward becoming an academic cardiologist so that he can practice medicine, teach and do research.

“I want to help identify patients, like my father, who are at greater risk of heart disease,” said Shah. “We should be able to predict that this gentleman will have a heart attack and do something early. That would be my ultimate research goal.”

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