

EDITOR'S PAGE



The Mentor's Mentor

The Life of Galen Wagner



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We lost a wonderful colleague recently due to chronic illness, Dr. Galen Wagner (Figure 1), Professor of Medicine at Duke Cardiology. Galen spent his whole academic life at Duke from 1957 as an undergraduate through the end of his journey. He had the fortune of studying under Dr. Eugene Stead and Dr. Andrew Wallace as his mentors during fellowship. Subsequently, as a faculty member, he helped develop the Duke Data-bank, served as the first director of the coronary care unit, and led the Duke Clinical Research Institute ECG Core Laboratory for 3 decades. He set the model for using clinical databases to answer important questions. Most importantly, however, he mentored over 1,000 students, residents, fellows, and faculty members, including the current FDA commissioner, Dr. Robert Califf, and myself. Galen struggled to cover his salary as an 80% clinical investigator and educator, but he accumulated thousands of EVUs (educational value units) per year. His mentorees have gone on to publish over 10,000 papers, hundreds of grants, and even a number of PhD theses. These have led to significant advancements in the care of acute cardiovascular patients.

Perhaps one of his most memorable unpublished nonrandomized controlled trials, which included me as a research subject, was the exposure of fellows to 2 years of research first, followed by the next 2 to 4 years of clinical training, versus the clinical training first and then research which was the norm at that time. The outcomes were accumulated over several years and were highly significant in favor of early exposure, with significantly more fellows entering academic medicine in the early exposure group ($p < 0.01$). This nonrandomized clinical study changed the cardiovascular fellowship, and led to a significant number of fellows entering academic medicine and making important contributions to their field.

FIGURE 1 Dr. Galen Wagner



Galen Wagner watercolor by Chris Wagner.

Mentoring is a skill that requires being taught by outstanding role models in order to one day be a mentor. Health systems must value the time committed to being a mentor. In this world of the increasing clinical enterprise and encroachment on other missions, let us uniformly adopt EVUs to complement other work units in order to support our mentoring efforts. The legacy of Galen Wagner should be one that we continue to foster that is becoming known as the Mentor's Mentor.

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