

UI HEMATOLOGY/ONCOLOGY

Connections

News from the University of Iowa Hematology/Oncology Fellowship Program

Spring 2019

Texas Doctor is Never Too Far from Iowa Home



Randall T. Davis, MD

They say you can't go home again.

Well, at least one Iowan has, again and again.

Former Iowa fellow Randall Davis, a hematologist and medical oncologist with Texas Oncology in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, grew up on a farm in Ainsworth, 25 miles south of Iowa City. He learned early in life that farming was not his forte. "I would say that I was bad at it. I don't think that's controversial," he said with humor in his voice. He comes home to visit every few months.

Davis earned a medical degree from the University of Iowa in 1982 and completed a fellowship in medical oncology from the UI in 1989. During his fellowship, his role models were legendary Iowa doctors Gerry Clamon and Patrick Burns. He liked how they interacted with patients and worked with them to make decisions about their care. "They could take a particular problem and sort out various options but once options were discussed they were definitive on what the best thing would be," he said.

Another thing that stands out to him from his fellowship is that the physicians at Iowa never ever hid anything from patients. He'd seen others elsewhere hide side effects, toxicities, and adverse outcomes. Everyone at Iowa, however, was

upfront with the patients. Davis learned to become comfortable with difficult conversations and to deliver bad news with sympathy and caring.

Such qualities undoubtedly contributed to fellow physicians voting him a "Top Doc" in Fort Worth, Texas magazine in 2014. They voted for the kind of physician they'd want to have. That's a high honor. Another honor is when patients bring family members for Davis to treat. He's seen multiple people from the same family and sometimes a husband and wife, both patients, in the same room.

One lesson that Davis did not receive at Iowa was about geography. Patients travel to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics from all over. As a general practitioner in private practice, however, Davis travels closer to them. In a typical week, he works three days in the Bedford office and two days in the Grapevine office. "I have hospitals in each of those cities so depending on the day I'll round at two hospitals with patients," he said.

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But while he's in Texas, he sees Iowa in the faces of colleagues. He works with James Turner, who was a fellow with him at Iowa. They recently hired Iowa fellow Ravi Patel. Davis would undoubtedly work with more Iowans. After all, he knows how they were trained and he still has friends on staff, including doctors Daniel Berg, Mark Karwal, and Donald Macfarlane. He also likes the fact that Iowa gives fellows the opportunity to explore a variety of possibilities, such as clinical patient care, his area; protocol writing; multi-institutional groups; or laboratory scientific research.

His appreciation for Iowa has led him to give generously to the fellowship and the Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center. "A lot of the benefits I have now I wouldn't have without Iowa," he said. He wouldn't have known that when struggling with his "U bills" when younger. Nor would he have predicted giving back when he finally made his last university payment. "As you mature you realize the benefits you got and you got them cheaply," he said. He received a cost-effective education that set him up for life. "Plus," he added, "It's home."

Sneha Phadke Moves from Fellowship to Faculty at Iowa

Growing up, Sneha Phadke, DO, always loved the sciences and loved talking with people. The Kansas City native entered medical school at Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences planning to become a primary care osteopathic physician.

Rotations in hematology and oncology during her internal medicine residency at the University of Kansas in Kansas City changed her mind. They were her favorite rotations by far, especially when working with leukemia patients. "For four weeks, I would see these people every day. I'd get to know them. I'd get to know their families. I really liked that continuity and how strong these patients were in the face of so many scary unknowns. That really appealed to me as a person and as a physician," she said.

When applying to a hematology oncology fellowship at the University of Iowa, she planned to work with leukemia patients. Then she found a mentor in breast cancer specialist and former faculty member Alexandra Thomas, MD, FACP. Phadke worked in her clinic and did research with her. She loved the women's health aspect of breast cancer and the fast-moving science. "Breast cancer is housed under this one category but really there are so many subtypes of breast cancer. It sounds like you're treating one disease but really you're treating so many different individual diseases." When Thomas left a couple years ago, Phadke took over most of her patients. Phadke is now a clinical assistant professor at UI and has certifications in internal medicine, hematology, and medical oncology from the American Board of Internal Medicine. She is working on a master's degree in public health at UI.

She has many research interests. One of them is on "chemo brain," which some patients report after chemotherapy as causing difficulties with thinking, concentrating, and memory. She is collaborating with a neuroscientist at the UI on a study, which hopes to create definitive diagnostic criteria for it.

She is the junior principal investigator on a study run out of the University of Wisconsin that is testing two targeted treatments for patients with metastatic breast cancer. A trial will open at Wisconsin soon and will come to Iowa over the summer. Phadke met her collaborator by becoming involved in the Big Ten Cancer Research Consortium.



Sneha Phadke, DO

Other areas of interest include supportive care to maximize treatment for patients during care, survivorship care after treatment has ended, and precision medicine. While medicine has a long way to go to tailor treatments, there's already routine testing to determine which breast cancer patients will benefit from chemotherapy. A majority of patients who have hormone receptor positive breast cancer don't need chemotherapy.

Phadke's professional interests evolved from general medicine to leukemia to breast cancer. The UI, she says, has supported her growth, both as a fellow and as faculty. "They've given me flexibility to figure out how I want to shape my career," she said. Similarly, she encourages current fellows to keep their options open – to look at different kinds of cancers, different types of research and scholarly activity, and different work environments, be that academic medicine or private practice. Her career melds innovative science with daily interaction with inspiring patients and future physicians. Her ultimate goal is to "hopefully grow a practice where I could become the specialty expert in the state of Iowa."

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YOU ARE INVITED

8TH ANNUAL!

The University of Iowa

Division of Hematology, Oncology and Blood & Marrow Transplantation invites you and a guest to a special reception during ASCO 2019

Saturday, June 1, 2019

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

- Welcome Remarks at 6:30

Joliet Room • Hilton Chicago

720 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago

Please RSVP to:

Jana Ringle

319.356.2075

jana-ringle@uiowa.edu

Complimentary hors d'oeuvres and beverages will be served.

Please come and join us while at ASCO!



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