

Faculty Teaching Award

Each year the outgoing chief residents select one attending surgeon who they feel has had the greatest impact on their collective residency training. In June of 2013, the departing chief class selected Dr Michael Bolognesi as the recipient of this departmental honor. It is the highest award given from the residents to our faculty, and given the sheer number of wonderful teachers scattered throughout the department of Orthopaedic Surgery here at Duke, it is both a highly-selective and a prestigious honor.

Dr Bolognesi has spent nearly his whole life in North Carolina. By way of education, Dr Bolognesi began his career at UNC, where he played varsity football as an undergraduate student and completed college in 1993. He then came to Duke for medical school, graduating in 1998. Afterward he joined the Duke Orthopaedic housestaff and completed his residency in 2003. After a year in Utah for adult reconstruction fellowship under the guidance of mentor Dr Aaron Hoffman, he returned to Duke as a junior faculty member and has now spent nearly a decade on faculty where he since has become the chief of adult reconstruction and already begun to assert himself as a national leader in total joint replacement.

At the time of the chief dinner in this past summer, the outgoing residents regaled the audience with personal stories of their interactions with the one we all affectionately call ‘Bolo’—whether it was the patience with which he walks each junior resident through their first total knee replacement, his availability for anytime intraoperative consultation in the case of a ‘surgical misadventure’ or emergency room arthroplasty consult or his general affability and collegial-yet-instructive manner of interacting with nearly every single house officer to come through the program over the last decade. As Former Chief Resident Jordan Schaeffer stated, ‘Dr Bolo is one of those rare attendings that is able to effectively teach a resident how to perform a case without compromising patient safety...and the rare combination of teacher, leader, researcher and friend.’

On a personal note, I first had the chance to meet and work with Dr Bolognesi nearly 5 years ago as a third year medical student, at which time he offered to serve as my research mentor. Since then, I have come to appreciate Dr Bolognesi as many others do—a genuinely outstanding role model for both professional and personal interactions alike. He is a great teacher who truly inspires others to try and reach his exceedingly high standard for excellence, a task not easily accomplished.

When asked for comment on the award, Dr Bolognesi was quick to credit his mentors— ‘I have always felt so strongly about the teaching I got at Duke. It was the reason I took a job here after a handshake from Dr Urbaniak. I felt like I owed Duke Ortho an effort to educate residents.’ He further said ‘in academic medicine it is easy to fill your CV with awards, publications, committee positions, editorial boards and grants. But this teaching award will always hold a special place to me.’

Dr Bolognesi’s professional mantra as learned from Dr Hoffman, recited often in his operating room, is ‘Same Way Every Time’. As said by such an excellent teacher and innovator in his field, such a phrase is not so much a statement on repetition as it is a comment on his constant search for perfection with his patient and resident interactions alike.



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