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KAISER-PERMANENTE TEACHING AWARD FOR PRE-CLINICAL EDUCATION

Sun-Kee Kim, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Department of Cell and Developmental Biology



Since Dr. Sun-Kee Kim began teaching University of Michigan medical students in 1974, his teaching objective has remained the same: to make certain that future physicians master the fundamental concepts of the structure and function of the human body. The past three decades have seen changes in technology, differences in the way students approach learning and the creation of new curriculums, yet Dr. Kim continues to demonstrate his unfailing commitment to education.

Dr. Kim's major teaching responsibility has been in the medical histology course, and he served as course director between 1997 and 2006. As one former student wrote, "Dr. Kim's teaching skills extend beyond the podium and well into the actual 'classroom of life.' Through his lectures, personal interactions with students, excellent interactive learning materials and testing style, he has made histology not only enjoyable but also unforgettable. But it is not only in his formal role as a teacher ... it is also in the small moments on campus, when he is not instructing but is still around students, that we can see he truly cares about our education."

In addition to classroom, group and one-on-one teaching, Dr. Kim developed unique histology resource materials to serve as both teaching and learning tools for the way students learn today. Working with former and current medical students, Dr. Kim created valuable learning aid programs such as the Review and Look-alike programs, clinical modules, Anatomy-Histology Correlates, and others. As course director, he worked with students and colleagues alike to establish the histology course Web site and the initial collection of some 250 digital images of tissues and organs. Collecting the digital images took literally hundreds of hours. The Web site serves as the central point of the histology learning resources, and the digital images provide the basis for the conversion to a histology course based on virtual microscopy. All of his resources are widely used – and well liked – by the students.

Since stepping down as histology course director in 2006, Dr. Kim has not taken a break. He continues to add to the collection of histology digital images so that the quality and quantity of material available to the students is enhanced continuously. And he continues to be fully immersed in teaching medical students: giving lectures in the histology course, staffing one of the histology labs and still finding time to further develop much-appreciated histology educational resources.

From 1997 to 2002, Dr. Kim also taught gross anatomy, giving several lectures a year, teaching regularly scheduled dissection laboratories and working with students to review materials. In addition, he participated in teaching the prematriculation course.

Since 2003, he has been coordinator of the M1 Renal and GI sequences in the new curriculum. As the sequence coordinator, he has been responsible for overseeing the planning, scheduling and daily administration of the sequences to provide students with an effective, integrated curriculum.

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This year, a group of students representing the M1 Medical Students (Class of 2010) wrote, "Dr. Kim's devotion to the students is apparent in each of the many educational activities he participates in, and his leadership and dedication have greatly benefited our education as a whole. His enthusiasm about teaching shows in everything he does, in turn making students more enthusiastic about learning."

In addition, Dr. Kim taught oral biology for dental and graduate students from 1981 to 1999, and a cell biology graduate course for medical and dental students from 1980 to 1985. He was visiting professor in medical histology at the Dong-A University in Pusan, Korea, in 1988.

Among his honors and awards from the University of Michigan Medical School, he received the Elizabeth Crosby Award for Excellence in Basic Science Teaching in 2007, the Thomas G. Varbedian Award for Excellence in Service to Medical Students in 2006, the Class of 2002 TAMS Award, and an Excellent Teacher in Histology Award in 1995.

Dr. Kim received his master of science in biology degree and his Ph.D. in biology from the University of Rochester, Rochester, New York, in 1964 and 1970, respectively.

Dr. Kim joined the University of Michigan as a research associate in the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology in 1971, and became assistant professor in 1974 and associate professor in 2003. He also was adjunct associate professor in the School of Dentistry, Department of Biologic and Material Sciences from 1983 to 1997.

Between 1968 and 1997, Dr. Kim's primary appointment was with the Ann Arbor Veterans Affairs Medical Center as a research biologist. His research, primarily supported by the Veterans Administration and the National Institutes of Health, dealt with the investigation of age-related changes in secretory protein gene expression. For many years, he also served as the director of the electron microscopy laboratory and co-director of the dental research training program. He retired from the VA in 1997.

Dr. Kim says this award also is recognition of excellence in the medical histology course. This is a team-taught course, and he would like to share this honor with the current and past histology teaching staff.

Dr. Kim wishes to thank his chair, Dr. J. Douglas Engel, for his trust and support, and Francine Hume for her whole-hearted administrative support. He thanks his wife, Sandy, for her unwavering support and for putting up with a teaching-stressed "grump" at times.

Dr. Kim enjoys watching sporting events and playing golf occasionally. He enjoys the time he spends fishing with his family, especially with his grandchildren.