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KAISER PERMANENTE TEACHING AWARD FOR CLINICAL EDUCATION

Kenneth J. Pituch, M.D.

*Professor, Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases
Director, Pediatric Hospitalist Service*



Dr. Kenneth J. Pituch is a respected clinician with an extraordinary gift for teaching students.

Dr. Pituch seems to delight in finding simple ways to help trainees, especially third-year medical students, make the most of the clinical opportunities presented to them in the clinics, on the wards, in the nursery and in the emergency department. In each of these settings, he has used and modified styles and techniques he observed from his role models as a U-M medical student, particularly Dr. Faith Fitzgerald, Dr. Mike Ianuzzi and Dr. Michael Klein – all U-M residents or faculty from the 1980s. Often, Dr. Pituch has said, “I hope that, like them, I can help students stay excited about solving clinical mysteries, forming

helpful and warm relationships with families, and continuing their journeys toward becoming medical experts. I never stop finding excellent role models – and some of them are students.”

He obviously has a great respect for each learner as a unique person with something useful to contribute to each patient encounter – and combines this respect with an enthusiasm for learning, discussing, questioning and listening. As one student said, “Dr. Pituch breaks topics down into manageable chunks, targets his speech to his audience, and truly cares about teaching students and teaching them well.”

One colleague said, “M3s glow when they discuss Ken Pituch as a teacher and role model. He demonstrates caring about his patients and their families, a willingness to question dogma and a superb work ethic. He is a wonderful teacher, in one-on-ones, small groups and classroom settings, and makes it a point to seek out students and to bring them into discussions and patient contact.”

In 2004, under Dr. Pituch’s direction, the U-M Pediatric Hospitalist Service became a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week service. Today, the service is a model of smoothly integrated patient care and teaching. Dr. Pituch assembled a team that ranges from young faculty members who are combining service and teaching with career development, to more seasoned clinicians and teachers who contribute to many Hospital, Medical School and department committees. He says his classroom is now the inpatient ward – and that it is a rich environment for learning.

In addition to teaching rounds, Dr. Pituch gives specific group sessions with patient interactions that focus on improving students’ observations, history taking and physical examination skills. By reviewing each case with his students, he actively works to help them improve their medical documentation and decision-making skills.

In 2000, the American Academy of Pediatrics honored Dr. Pituch with its Professional Education Project Award for a teaching technique called the Brief Structured Observation, which provides focused feedback to medical students or residents in busy clinic or ward settings. The technique was developed and tested by Dr. Pituch and two of his former colleagues at Indiana University, and has been taught to IU and U-M faculty, and at national workshops.

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Consistent with his dedication to teaching, Dr. Pituch has helped develop the pediatric palliative care consultation service, with an emphasis on helping staff, students, residents and faculty integrate palliative care concepts into the care of children with life-limiting conditions in all clinical settings. As a model to young physicians, he consistently demonstrates a compassionate commitment to each patient and their family – teaching students, first-hand, the tremendous difference that a thoughtful doctor can make in the lives of chronically ill and terminally ill children and their families.

Dr. Pituch received the Teacher of the Year Award from pediatric residents in 2004, was elected to the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society in 2005, was honored with a Silver Shovel Award from the Galens Medical Society in 2005 and receive the Outstanding Clinician Award in 2006.

Highly respected by his professional colleagues, he has been included in Best Doctors in America-Midwest Region six times since 1996.

Dr. Pituch received his medical degree from the University of Michigan in 1981, went on to do his pediatric residency at U-M and then became chief resident in the Department of Pediatrics.

He joined the University of Michigan as clinical assistant professor of pediatrics and communicable diseases in 1995, became clinical associate professor in 1999 and professor in 2006. In 2003, he was named service chief, Pediatric Hospitalist Service. In 2005, he became medical director for Pediatric Palliative Care Consultation Services and medical director for pediatrics at Arbor Hospice in Ann Arbor.

Dr. Pituch wishes to thank his parents, Walt and Helen, for bringing him up to appreciate the value of enjoyment in hard work. He acknowledges the tremendous support of his wife Mary and his sons Tim and Jeff. And he thanks his long-time friends Jerry and Karen Jennings. Jerry was Dr. Pituch's childhood friend, fellow camp staffer, and his earliest role model as a teacher and child advocate.

In his free time, Dr. Pituch likes to watch his boys play Halo and Guitar Hero on the Xbox 360 (for about 30 seconds). He also enjoys bike riding on the back roads around Dexter with his wife Mary and taking trips with his family. Some day when he is not so busy, he would like to learn to play the fiddle.