

Training future leaders, influencing the future of health care



“Dr. Saini taught me to listen,” said HMS student Marc Walker who trained with Dr. Vikas Saini at the Lown Center.

Marc Walker is one of a small but growing number of medical students simultaneously working toward a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree. In the past decade, the number of US medical schools offering MBAs doubled from 33 to 65, and a recent survey showed that the vast majority of MD-MBA graduates remain involved with patient care, take on a leadership role in their first jobs, and rate making a difference in medicine as a high priority.

“My experience at the Lown Center offered a dimension of comprehensive care that I would never have seen in an inpatient service, where you have specialists and technology at your fingertips. I wanted to see patients more than once and take care of them over a longer period of time. And though I assumed that patients in a community practice like the Lown Center don’t present with acute issues, in fact they do and I was able to see how they are treated in an outpatient setting, which is where most medicine takes place.”

During his Lown Center training, Marc reports that he learned more than clinical skills and cardiovascular expertise. “Dr. Saini taught me to take the time to listen and build a comprehensive picture of the patient, and then use that for diagnosis and management rather than just jumping to radiology or invasive procedures. Issues in the patient’s life may be contributing to their health problems. For example, chest pain can be associated with stress or an unhealthy diet. Taking the time to listen to people’s personal struggles, then counseling them on exercise and good nutrition, makes it easier for patients to comprehend and comply.”

Surveying health care systems from a business perspective, Marc feels that the Lown Center is at the forefront of the new wave of medical practice. “If you compared outcomes at acute care facilities with those at outpatient centers that focus on listening and comprehensive care, I think you’d find that the time invested on the front end by the physicians at the Lown Center will more than pay off in the long run. This model

will probably be much more successful at treating the patient, managing cost, and producing an acceptable level of reimbursement given the care that is being provided.”

Training the next generation: A Lown Center tradition

Thirteen Harvard Medical School students trained at the Lown Center during the 2009-2010 academic year.

Also completing their year-long Primary Care Clerkship at the Lown Center were Walter Lin, who trained with Dr. Fred Mamuya, and Ibrahim Khansa, who worked with Dr. Brian Bilchik.

The Lown Center also provides intensive training to one HMS student each month through its Clinical Cardiology in the Outpatient Setting course, which has been directed for more than a decade by Dr. Charles Blatt. In addition to spending each day seeing patients with Lown physicians, these students attend weekly Lown Center clinical conferences; develop and present a seminar; and accompany Lown Center physicians to Grand Rounds and medical conferences at Brigham and Women’s Hospital.

Russell Goodman worked alongside Dr. Blatt every day during the month of June. “I’ve never before had the opportunity to work alongside someone all day, every day—and to receive so much one-on-one teaching,” he said. “The Lown Center’s outpatient setting gave me the opportunity to see the strength of the relationships people have formed with Dr. Blatt, sometimes over decades, and observe how he interacts with them.”



Dr. Charles Blatt and Russell Goodman, one of ten HMS students who completed Dr. Blatt’s “Clinical Cardiology in the Outpatient Setting” course in the past year.

“One of the biggest lessons I learned is that often the best medicine is gentle and conservative, that you can be a great physician by watching the patient closely and making small, gradual changes. At other facilities, patients often receive interventional procedures that are unwarranted. The Lown Center taught me that you don’t always need to send the patient to the operating room.”