

# NH Family Physician of the Year

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To arrive at this moment in my life, my journey has been filled with many people who helped me along the way. I would like to take a few moments to thank and recognize some of the folks who have been a part of my life's journey.

Additionally, I will share with you some of the changes in medicine that I have encountered along the way.

Finally, I will share with you the secret of my success. And for my staff, I want to reassure them and the audience that my remarks will be brief, the full version can be shared over lunch in my office any afternoon.

I wish to thank the NH Academy of Family Physicians who has created this award to honor one of their own. We all need applause and this Honor has certainly been worth the effort.

Thank you Paula, who shared with this audience some of the known and little known facts of my life, for your kind introduction. I was blessed to have her as a cherished member of my Call Group over 2+ decades.

I wish to thank the committee for considering my efforts worthy of this award.

I want to thank Alan Stein my partner for 28 years who presented my name to the committee but more importantly I want to publicly recognize him as a faithful supporter of my efforts in family medicine. He has been a part of the fabric of my life that has enriched me as a doctor and as a person. Without him along the way, my life would not have been as much fun and filled with "Big Al" stories that have become legendary.

But as you heard, I had a life before Suncook Family Health Center, a life guided by parents who held education in the highest regard and whose kind nature I have tried to imitate. For those who don't know my Big Brother, Vinny, he was my first teacher. From the time I was 4 years old, he made science and discovery fun. He knows more than I will ever be able to know. He has 4 master's degrees and a PhD. He continues to teach today as a Professor of Psychology at LeMoyne College in Syracuse and will celebrate his 50<sup>th</sup> year as a Jesuit.

My family has been a very real and important part of my journey. Donna, my wife, has supported my commitment to my practice and my professional passions. Without her as a part of my journey it would have been very lonely.

I want to thank my children who tolerated my attempts to "solve" all of their problems with my medical jargon. For Tim, my son, even though it could have taken days to come up with an answer to one of his questions, it was always thought out and finally delivered. To my daughters, Erin and Shannon, who spent many hours coloring at nurse's stations when I brought them into hospitals so I can do "rounds" and my sudden need to leave to care for someone in the hospital or on the phone. My children and my six grandchildren all of whom are here tonight share this honor with me for it has been their love that maintained my motivation to do my best for them and the patients I cared for.

I am profoundly thankful to the Franciscan Brothers who taught me in High School. Their lessons of peace, gratitude and mercy have allowed me to serve my patients especially those with chronic pain and addiction with respect and kindness. For many of these patients who had lost hope and a sense of forgiveness, this "Medicine" opened for some the road to recovery.

My final thanks go to my office staff many of them are here tonight. These are the woman and men who have served me and the families of Suncook over the last 38 years. All of my original staff has either retired or some have died but they all served with purpose and kindness.

My current staff, many who have been with me in the last 10 + years have carried on this wonderful tradition of conscientious care. The Nurse Practitioners, (the PA's and MA's have allowed the challenges of computerized medicine, the many challenging patients and "not enough" time to still serve our patients with care and humor. They all have entered into the Hevern Time Zone. This magical place (something like a Harry Potter Hogwarts) has allowed us to "up our game" but remain thankful for who we are and what we do.

I now want to take a few moments to give a quick overview of some of the changes that have occurred in the 40 years since my graduation from med school and the 38 years of practice in Family Medicine.

Some of the medications that have become the "gold" standard for the treatment of many diseases include the following:

- Lipitor and all the Statins

- Prozac and all the SSRI and SNRI

- All the H2 blockers and PPI

- Insulin like Levemir and Lantus and Novolog and Humalog and all of the oral diabetic medications

- All the Long acting opioids except Methadone

As for technological advances that contribute to communication and diagnosis of disease include the following:

- Computers the Internet (Google MD)

- The Cell Phone

- The Fax Machine

- CT Scans

- MRI's

- Ulltra-sound

- All the Flexible Oscopies, Nose, throat, lung, stomach and colon

- All the Surgical Oscopies, joints, backs, abdomen and chests

- All Cardiac Stents

Some of the controversies I have been involved with:

- As the secretary of NHAFP suing Dartmouth who was denying admitting privileges to Family Practitioners

Confronting a Medical Director of a local Insurance Company who refused to allow payment for services I rendered to a patient with depression because I was not a psychiatrist;

Insurance companies not paying for thin prep pap smears vs the microscopic slides;

Insurance companies demanding that all colonoscopies be done as in patient vs out patient;

The list of controversies that I have been involved with remain too long to present here.

### **Now to share with you the Secrets of my Success.**

I succeeded by Simply **Doing Common things uncommonly well.**  
**And doing so with compassion and passion.**

Two of the common problems that I have chosen to manage and have impacted on so many the families I have manage thru their lifetime are:

#### **Pain and Addiction.**

It is my belief that family physicians can learn to channel the compassion and passion we have brought to our practice of Family Medicine to manage these conditions.

For most of us who entered Family Medicine we did so because of compassion and the challenge to provided comprehensive care to families.

Studies have shown that family physicians have been the most cost effective managers of health care. Despite this fact, the industry has turned medicine into a production business. The concept of “efficiency” has replaced the concept of consistency (continuity of care). We have generated the sub specialty of hospital medicine, and have even divided that into ER docs, Intensivists and hospitalists.

In the past, I did it all with help and guidance of specialist while at times guiding the specialist.

Currently the Elliot hospital is managing approximately 12 in-patients a day with complications of the heroin addiction crisis, the management of this as a primary and chronic disease is not being addressed by any of the subspecialist in Hospital Medicine. As recently stated by the Chief of Police in Manchester, this disease is being managed thru incarceration an occasionally by medical treatment.

For many of us, the compassion to manage these men and woman and in some cases boys and girls have been lost. We as family doctors need to join in the management of this chronic disease by training ourselves to be familiar and comfortable with its management just as I have needed to learn how to use all the new drugs and technologies these past 40 years.

And with that training and re-assurance that we are doing the right thing, we will do our jobs and as always do it well.

The other motivating factor for me and for many family physicians has been the Passion about the care we could provide individuals and families from birth to death.

I have had the privilege to deliver hundreds of babies, care for newborns, managed adolescents thru their athletic injuries and their angst while supporting their parents and grandparents. I have had the opportunity to provide care to the dying so they did so with dignity and comfort.

In all of these interactions, the theme of change and how to direct patients into healthier lifestyles has been consistent. I became aware of a family history or a personal history of addiction and/or pain in the lives.

My passion for wellness in the families allowed me to use the skills necessary to change behavior and I have allowed myself to extend that skill to the disease of addiction and pain. Whether this addiction has been to cigarettes, alcohol, food, drugs or bad decisions, I have chosen to share my insights and my recommendations on how to change these behaviors. I have come to understand that I can be an instrument of change. But, just because I say it or give a medicine to a patient to treat a condition, does not mean the patient would do so. Studies indicate that overall compliance with medical treatment for chronic conditions is about 50%.

However, if we can create Adherence to a treatment mutually agreed upon, the success for change is much better.

So I have learned to be better listener, motivator and creator of plans to help people to change or create a new a path in their life.

In conclusion, it appears to me that all of us as family physicians already possess the tools to manage the diseases of addiction and pain because these diseases are expressions of chronic conditions that our sub-specialty counterparts have not been effectively trained in to manage. We as family physicians can do so because we live in the lives of our patients.

In summary, my success comes from using the compassion that I inherited from my parents and was nurtured along the way in addition to my passion for wellness and change. I offer my patients hope and forgiveness and I do so with kindness and mercy.

If you can follow these simple steps, you will join me at the end of the day to be The Family Physician of the Year to your patients.

Gerard J. Hevern, MD  
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