

The Gale L. Mendeloff, MD, Visiting Professor Lectureship



On March 6, 2010, we lost an outstanding physician, scientist, mentor, and friend when Gale L. Mendeloff, MD, passed away unexpectedly at the age of 77. Cherished by his wife, Sunny, his large extended family, and numerous friends, Dr. Mendeloff's dedication to medicine inspired the creation of the Gale L. Mendeloff, MD, Visiting Professor Lectureship Fund.

Launched by his family, friends, and many former colleagues, the fund serves to remind us of his distinguished career as a doctor and educator.

Dr. Mendeloff led a life unparalleled by many. He began his career in 1963 as a staff physician at Columbia Hospital, where he remained until his retirement in 2002. During that time, he served as Chairman of the hospital's Department of Surgery, Director of the Vascular Laboratory, and Chief of Staff. He also served as President of the Milwaukee Surgical Society, the Milwaukee Academy of Surgery, and the Wisconsin Surgical Society.

Dr. Mendeloff was a master educator. His distinctive tutorials to medical students and residents were legendary. Whether it was his "Tubes" presentation or his classic teaching around "Who do you trust?", he was always trying to enlighten others regarding the many nuances of patient care.

The "Tubes" session focused on all the types of drains and tubes that were inserted into patients during surgery, the indications for placing these, how to monitor their output and when to remove them.

"Who do you trust?" emphasized the incredible privilege and responsibility a physician has when a patient entrusts them with their health care. A covenant that requires complete ownership by the physician.

To this end, Dr. Mendeloff stressed that every patient's x-ray, lab value, flow sheet and medication must be personally reviewed by the physician on a daily basis. It was not sufficient to rely on others to tell you these results. His point was very clear: when a patient gives over their health care to you, it is ultimately your responsibility as their physician to know everything about your patient's clinical condition.

Dr. Mendeloff's incredible passion for teaching was recognized by the Medical College of Wisconsin. He became a Clinical Professor of Surgery, an appointment seldom achieved by a surgeon in private practice.

Dr. Mendeloff's educational prowess was equally matched by his clinical acumen. He cared for his patients deeply, embodying the concept of understanding the patients' clinical and emotional needs. His ability to empathize was an incredible gift, often creating a connection with his patients that lasted a lifetime.

Frequently, he would be out for dinner with his family and a patient would approach him to say hello and thank you. It seemed as though the patient was just discharged from the hospital. Yet when asked by someone who that person was, Dr. Mendeloff would say "that is someone I took care of 10 years ago."

"Dr. Mendeloff was a talented surgeon and inspiring leader who dedicated his career to the care and treatment of his patients. He will truly be missed," said Stuart D. Wilson, MD, Professor in the Department of Surgery. "We are incredibly grateful for the establishment of these funds to benefit our medical students, residents and faculty. I think that is something Gale would be proud of."

Past Speakers

2023

Roy Phitayakorn, MD, MHPE, FACS
Associate Professor of Surgery
Vice Chair of Education,
Director of Medical Student Education and Surgical
Education Research
MGH Department of Surgery

2016

Steven Kappes, MD
Chair, Department of Surgery
General and Vascular Surgery
Aurora Advanced Healthcare
Clinical Professor of Surgery
Medical College of Wisconsin

2022

Adnan Alseidi, MD, EdM
Professor of Surgery, Division of Surgical Oncology
Vice Chair for Education, Department of Surgery
University of California San Francisco

2021

Benjamin T. Jarman, MD
Gundersen Health System General Surgery
Residency Program Director;
Immediate Past President of the Association of
Program Directors in Surgery;
Gundersen Health System Board of Trustees

2020

Rachel Kelz, MD, MSCE, MBA
The William Maul Measey Endowed Professorship
of Surgery
University of Pennsylvania

2019

Brian J. Dunkin, MD, FACS
Vice President of Medical Affairs
Boston Scientific Endoscopy

2017

Layton F. Rikkers, MD
Emeritus Professor of Surgery
University of Wisconsin-Madison