



DAVID HASS, MD: TURNING PHYSICIANS INTO LEADERS

Jen Matteis, Editorial Assistant • Contact Reporter

Doctors are likely some of the best educated among us—but many important skills, such as leadership, are not part of their training. David Hass wants to change that.

For the past 12 years, David has worked at the Gastroenterology Center of Connecticut, based in Hamden. It's a division of the Physicians Alliance of Connecticut (PACT), a group focused on excellence in healthcare in the New Haven area.

Both inside and outside of his practice, David is a keen advocate for physician training. Primarily, he does this through the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS). Based in North Haven, the organization's goal is to turn Connecticut physicians into effective leaders and clinicians. It also runs social services programs and helps raise money for worthy institutions and individuals. Last year, David was CSMS's Membership Chair. Today, he's Vice-Chair of the Council and Speaker of the Annual Meeting.

CSMS currently has more than 5,000 members. "There's members from every county," says David, who is also a former president of the New Haven County Medical Association, one of the counties that makes up CSMS. "We do a lot of advocacy work to help people take care of more effectively and treat the underserved."

Through CSMS, David founded the Young Physician Leadership Curriculum (YPLC) at Yale. Today, he's the program's director. For the past four years the curriculum has provided skills David believes are lacking in physicians' training: emotional intelligence, decision-making, leadership skills, and patient advocacy. "There are instances when you're practicing medicine where the way that patients or colleagues or staff interact with each other, it can affect the quality of care," David says. "You have to understand how to channel that energy and learn how to not let it affect your level of care."

David is also very active in Project Access-New Haven. The nonprofit connects uninsured patients with urgent medical needs, often in inner city New Haven, with free medical care and services. Those services are generously donated by over 300 physician volunteers—including David—alongside Yale-New Haven Hospital and other providers and partners. "We give free care to many, many people in the area," says David, who's been involved with the group for more than a decade. "It's for anyone in Connecticut that doesn't have insurance."

Also active with the American College of Gastroenterology (ACG), David served on its Training Committee, National Affairs Committee, and spearheaded its Mentoring Program. He received the ACG Community Service Award in 2016 for his volunteer service and dedication to serving and educating the community. He was also selected as a 2016 Connecticut Magazine Top Doc, and in 2014 received the Connecticut Medicine Health Care Leader and Innovator (HLI) Award for founding YPLC.

In his spare time, David enjoys playing piano with his three kids—he's been playing for about 40 years. "I trained playing classical piano, but I now play popular stuff I like: Broadway and Billy Joel," says David, who started out at Cornell University as a music major before switching to biology. "My kids all play the piano. I keep my skills fresh by playing duets with them."

Beyond the satisfaction gained from training physicians, David enjoys his own work as a physician. Being a gastroenterologist means his work has variety, and he sees a wide range of patients as well: old, young, male, and female.

But most important, "It's a field where you can really help people," David says. "I think there are very few professions in life where you can wake up every day and feel like you're making a difference in people's lives. My days are filled with seeing people in different stages of their lives, whether happiness or despair, and I have the ability to impact that in a certain way and it's just a blessing."

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