



Dedication to Richard D. Lackman, MD

Eileen A. Crawford, MD



It is truly an honor to have such a forum for sharing my respect, admiration, and gratitude for Dr. Richard D. Lackman. I am just one of the countless residents whose lives and careers he has shaped. Speaking for all of them is not possible, though I hope my words will convey a small portion of our mutual appreciation for Dr. Lackman.

It seems especially fitting that the UPOJ be dedicated to him this year because it encompasses so much of what he loves about orthopaedics—teaching, thinking through problems, and learning from one another.

As Dr. Lackman's research fellow, I had the pleasure of seeing him on a daily basis during that year. It surprised me at first to learn that my desk sat back-to-back with the Chairman's desk in his Pennsylvania Hospital office, but in the hierarchical realm of orthopaedics, Dr. Lackman remains humble and grounded. This location made me the beneficiary of his audible thoughts and observations, often spurned by a recent patient encounter but backed by decades of experience. "Smother 'em with kindness," he said, when he met a patient who announced that she hated all doctors as he walked into the room. That same patient left the exam room with a softer expression and scheduled another appointment with him. He taught me that when you have a waiting room full of patients and you're running far behind schedule, you need to treat each patient like you have all the time in the world. Somehow he would still manage to finish by 6 o'clock and then sit with me patiently to work on manuscripts and presentations.

By watching him work, I saw what characteristics were needed to be an effective leader. Even when he had disagreements or had to push to get something done, his discussion ended with a cheerful voice and polite conversation that made you think his mother was listening. He taught me the "3 A's of success" for a physician—affability, ability, and accessibility. The first came naturally for him, the second through focus and preparation, and the third because he made it so. His accessibility certainly makes him a standout among his patients. It is not unusual for Dr. Lackman to give his cell phone number to a patient. I have been told that he even went out to a patient's van once to remove staples so the patient's family didn't have to go to the trouble of hauling the wheelchair out when they were passing through town. As an orthopaedic oncologist, he is also acutely aware of the urgency that his patients feel. Even when the medical reality tells him it can wait, he believes that the patients should not have to wait.

Now as one of his residents, I've been privy to knowing Dr. Lackman, the surgeon. He has at least as many pearls and sayings for the operating room as he does in clinic. Any resident who has operated with him has heard his famous "Go, go, go, go, go... STOP!" when he teaches us how to balance efficiency with attention to detail. We are left timid and sweating in the unfamiliar territory of musculoskeletal tumor surgery that is so clear in his mind. At his annual OITE tumor reviews, he quips that diagnosing tumors

is a piece of cake, ignoring the fact that residents from all over the Philadelphia area come each year to pick his brain and hopefully absorb some of his knowledge. He welcomes anyone who wants to learn about tumors, regardless of program, specialty, or level of training. Dr. Lackman also practices the multidisciplinary approach to treating patients that is often encouraged but rarely pursued. He holds weekly conferences with pathologists and radiologists to get his patients answers and treatments as quickly and effectively as possible. He listens intently to his medical colleagues, valuing their opinions and expertise. He treats everyone he encounters with this respect and attention, which is why those who work with him willingly do whatever he asks of them.

During his time as Program Director at Penn, Dr. Lackman harnessed the wealth of potential that existed among the faculty and residents to greatly elevate the residency's prestige. He understands people and intuitively knows where simple guidance is needed to make huge improvements. Since he established a mentorship program and had his residents develop portfolios just like the faculty, the number of Penn residents to pursue an academic career has increased substantially. The sense of loyalty he instills can be seen in how many of these residents choose to return to Penn to teach. He facilitates resident research any way he can and expects all of us to publish and present at national meetings. Dr. Lackman started his own early morning tutoring sessions to help us shine on the OITE. In return for the high expectations he holds us to, he offers 24/7 support for the inevitable crises of resident life. His easy, fatherly nature brings comfort no matter how weary the soul.

Of course, Dr. Lackman has been an influential figure in orthopaedics and academia since long before I knew him. Though fellowship-trained in orthopaedic oncology, the field has changed so much since he started that many of the techniques he now uses are self-taught, honed on cadaver dissections performed the night before the surgery. He has served as a tumor specialist at numerous institutions in the Philadelphia area, where his reputation as a highly capable and compassionate surgeon grew. So many of his colleagues and former residents send patients to him that it is sometimes difficult to remember that musculoskeletal tumors are rare when you're working with him. As those closest to him note, his professional success never changed his character or heightened his ego. He worries about his patients when at home because he is genuinely concerned, not because he does not want a complication on his conscience. He is one of the few who still sees his profession as a vocation. I think Dr. Lackman was so beloved as program director because he reminds us of both the selfless doctor we vowed to be as idealistic medical students, and the successful, prolific, and talented surgeon we have come to venerate.

Endless thanks from the bottom of my heart, Dr. Lackman.

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