

Mentorship in Urology

Zachary Klaassen, MD

Section of Urology, Medical College of Georgia – Georgia Regents University, Augusta, GA

Cite as: *Can Urol Assoc J* 2015;9(5-6):157. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5489/cuaj.3019>
Published online June 15, 2015.

Mentorship is important for all walks of life, particularly in navigating and advancing through a medical career. As a senior resident, about to finish my first 5 years of training, I have had tremendous mentorship throughout my early career. Starting in high school chemistry and continuing during basic science laboratory work in college, my early mentors were influential in my decision to pursue a career in medicine. Subsequently, my medical school mentors, including my mentors in Urology, were invaluable in successfully obtaining a Urology residency. As I move forward towards the Society of Urologic Oncology fellowship Match Day at the end of June, I have had the opportunity to once again draw on my mentors and reflect on “what aspects make a good mentor.”

There are number of attributes that make a great mentor in Urology. First, providing practical guidance, based on the mentor’s previous experience. This may include direction for residency and fellowship applications, to providing critical review of a research proposal. Second, providing a strong letter of recommendation. It is important to identify people who will be able to speak honestly, in detail, and provide examples that demonstrate your work ethic, knowledge, character, technical ability, and research endeavors. Third, being supportive in helping a mentee secure the right job after training. As a resident nears the end of residency and/or fellowship, mentors become crucial in taking the next step towards finding a community or junior faculty academic

position. Many jobs are obtained based on “word of mouth” – a personal word from your mentor is paramount during this important time of your career. Finding a mentor that will place you in a position to succeed (i.e., having you chair a session at a conference, placing you first author on a high impact manuscript, offering a journal editorial board position, etc.) provides a launching pad for a resident’s young career. Mentors who take joy and satisfaction in your success are important and invaluable.

A significant and enlightening moment is when you transition from strictly being the mentee to becoming a mentor. As senior residents, we are educators – of each other, of junior residents and of medical students. As someone with academic urology aspirations, some of the most rewarding moments include taking a junior resident through a procedure, working on a research project with a medical student, and counselling medical students who are considering a career in urology. Becoming a mentor is important and it happens before you know it!

There is insufficient space in this column to list all the people I consider mentors, but those of you who have helped me to this point know who you are and I am indebted to you! Above all, I am thankful that you have helped shape my future and that we have become great friends along the way.

Correspondence: Dr. Zachary Klaassen, Resident, Department of Surgery, Section of Urology, Medical College of Georgia – Georgia Regents University, 1120 15th St., Augusta, GA 30912; zklaassen@gru.edu