

An Interview with Robert Centor, MD

Amanda Clark, MD

Dr. Clark is a member of the Forum Editorial Board and an academic hospitalist at the Louis Stokes VA in Cleveland, Ohio. She can be reached at amandavclark@gmail.com.

Robert Centor, MD, completed medical school, internal medicine (IM) residency, and chief residency at the Medical College of Virginia (MCV). He has served as the chair of the division of general internal medicine (GIM) both at MCV and the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). He is currently the regional dean of UAB Huntsville Medical Campus where he is a professor of medicine. In the past, he has served as president of the Society for Medical Decision Making, the Association of Chiefs of General Internal Medicine, and the Society for General Internal Medicine. He currently serves as chair of the Board of Regents of the American College of Physicians. Follow his blog at www.medrants.com or on Twitter @medrants.

Tell us about a career accomplishment and its impact on general internal medicine?

Local accomplishments are always the most important. Creating the division of GIM at UAB has, I believe, had a major impact on our institution, our students, and our residents. We have focused on clinical education and helped develop major local, regional, and national leaders in medical education. Impacting GIM is best done through the people we impact.

Who/what influences your work?

Since my first week as a third-year medicine student on the IM rotation, I have loved IM. The field has al-

lowed my to have a vocation that is also an avocation. I have the opportunity to give back to IM, and that influences my attitudes and daily work. When students and residents enjoy IM, I beam with joy.

Do you think maintenance of certification (MOC) should be changed? If so, how?

To me the major point of MOC is for physicians to provide better care for their patients. Thus, we should be looking at a formative process—one that encourages us to improve rather than just pass a test.

What made you decide to start blogging and using social media? What, if any, impact has it had on your career?

I started blogging to improve my writing. I went through a period of writer's block, and the blog was my method for overcoming that obstacle. Along the way, I found that frequent writing stimulated my thought processes. I have written several articles that arose from blog posts. Social media has provided me brand recognition. My readers understand the breadth of my interests better because of the brand.

Other than social media, what is a hobby or something you are passionate about?

While my traditional answer is golf, recently I have become a passionate runner. I ran in my first 5K at age 65 and loved it.

You've been to the SGIM annual meeting 34 times. How do you use this meeting to support your career, and why should others consider attending the meeting?

It is impossible to overestimate the impact SGIM has had on my career. SGIM members have served as my support group, intellectual stimulators, and colleagues for many years. Each SGIM meeting allows me to get ideas, exchange ideas, and re-fuel my batteries. SGIM provides validation that what we are doing has great importance. Many colleagues look forward to the meetings for the same reasons.

How do you suggest other members receive maximum value from SGIM?

Simple answer—attend and participate. Start with regional meetings—meet people and learn how things are done at other institutions. Then “borrow” ideas to improve your own institution.

What piece of advice regarding leadership do you wish you had known 20 years ago?

You cannot do everything. When you are offered a new responsibility, you must decide what you are going to replace. You should regularly figure out what parts of your job you love and what parts you like. If at all possible, do more of the love and less of the like.