Giants in Chest Medicine

Marvin I. Schwarz, MD, FCCP

*Editor’s Note: This series recognizes and highlights the accomplishments of individuals who have contributed greatly to chest medicine. To view the video interview with Dr Schwarz, go to journal.publications.chestnet.org*

Marvin I. Schwarz, MD, is the James C. Campbell Professor of Pulmonary Medicine at the University of Colorado. He was born to immigrant parents from Vienna, Austria, a mere 2 weeks after their arrival in this country upon their successful flight due to the Nazi invasion. Although Dr Schwarz (“Marvin” to many of us) had originally dreamed of being a basketball player, he found himself drawn to medicine, as his father was an obstetrics and gynecology practitioner. When asked why he did not follow directly in his father’s footsteps, Dr Schwarz replied, “I never liked women,” in a tongue-in-cheek fashion demonstrative of his whimsical irony. Dr Schwarz graduated from Bard College and was an Alpha Omega Alpha graduate of the Tulane University School of Medicine. He completed his internal medicine training at the Charity Hospital of Louisiana and was most influenced by his earliest mentor, Morton Ziskind, MD, at Tulane. Importantly, he was captivated by the clinical prowess exhibited by Dr Ziskind in the care of patients with pulmonary diseases. Following his pulmonary fellowship, Dr Schwarz completed his military obligations in the US Army. He was then recruited to the University of Colorado by Tom Petty, MD, in 1972, and his career in Colorado has flourished ever since.

Dr Schwarz’s early scientific efforts focused on his true passion and were largely influenced by his interactions with Drs Ziskind and Petty. His contributions can be summarized by his astute clinical correlations of radiography and pathology. Along with one of his trainees, Talmadge King, MD, he authored five editions of one of the most prominent textbooks of pulmonary diseases, *Interstitial Lung Disease*. Dr Schwarz acknowledges the tremendous growth in the field of interstitial lung diseases over the course of his 42-year career. Early hypotheses were generated based on pathologic interpretation leading to theories of the pathophysiology of the disorders. Dr Schwarz was influenced early by his observations that the pathology of interstitial lung diseases was similar to the findings in rheumatologic lung diseases. Some of his early investigations involved descriptions of immune fluorescence within the lungs of patients with selected types of pulmonary interstitial diseases. He noted that these patients often responded to corticosteroid treatment.

As a leader in the Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis Network, Dr Schwarz has been centrally involved in the design and analysis of numerous clinical trials of selected agents for the treatment of pulmonary fibrosis. More recently, he undertook a 2-year senior fellowship in the laboratory of David Schwartz, MD, from 2009 until 2011. Together, these investigators have leveraged
the extensive basic science background of Dr David Schwarz and the clinical-pathologic expertise of Dr Marvin Schwarz to provide paradigm-changing discoveries in the field of pulmonary fibrosis. Indeed, Dr Schwarz notes that personalized treatment approaches for lung diseases are the hope and future of pulmonary medicine and that in the future, diseases would be categorized by phenotypes based on particular genotypes. Dr Schwarz has won numerous awards, but most prominent are his selection to the Colorado Pulmonary Hall of Fame, his award of the Edward Livingston Trudeau Medal from the American Thoracic Society, and his election in 2013 to the Association of American Physicians. When asked what his most outstanding achievement is, Dr Schwarz expands his answer, as demonstrated in the video interview (http://youtu.be/NwH02Uydy8E). He quite succinctly notes that his most outstanding achievement has been the success of the numerous trainees he has had an impact on over the past 40 years. Dr Schwarz’s selfless dedication to training academicians has yielded unprecedented results. Over the past 30 years and under the leadership of Dr Schwarz, 17 division heads and six department chairs have emerged from the training program at the University of Colorado. When discussing the future of academic medicine, Dr Schwarz advises young trainees to keep a focus on what provides long-term satisfaction for each individual and to give an academic career “a damn good shot.”

In conclusion, the pulmonary world and the basketball community have both greatly benefited from Dr Schwarz being 6 inches too short in his own mind. Throughout Dr Schwarz’s career, he has made major contributions to the diagnosis and treatment of interstitial lung diseases through leadership in clinical care, research, and education. His clinical acumen and critical analysis of interstitial diseases have resulted in enlightening insights of these disorders. His avuncular personality, warm generosity, and mentorship transcend many generations and have resulted in the formation of a strong future cohort of academic pulmonary leaders.

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Additional information: See video interview of Dr Schwarz online at: http://youtu.be/NwH02Uydy8E

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SUGGESTED READINGS