2024-2025 Golden Stethoscope Nomination

Nominated for: Outstanding DOCS Preceptor

Name of Nominee Dr. David Klimpl

I am writing to nominate Dr. David Klimpl for the 2025 Outstanding DOCS Preceptor Golden Stethoscope Award.

I am immensely grateful to Dr. Klimpl and his compassionate, intellectually curious approach to the art of medicine for keeping me anchored to the values I love about this career path, even as I trudged through the prep-for-EOW, prep-for-EOC cycle of preclinical year. In both his care for patients and role as my preceptor, Dr. Klimpl has far exceeded my highest expectations for what makes a great physician and educator. Working with him has offered unique insights on how medical knowledge and communication skills we are taught as students look when practiced at the highest level. Dr. Klimpl ' s mentorship has ensured that our time together will shape how I practice medicine for years to come.

Dr. Klimpl ' s passion for learning, for both his patients ' health and its own sake, elevated my preceptorship experience and is best seen in his personal preference for admitting shifts. Meeting new patients, developing wide differentials, and crafting initial plans has exposed me to a wide range of diseases and treatment paradigms, often before encountering them in class.

From the beginning, I found this variety in patients exciting. However, Dr. Klimpl ' s ability to foster and celebrate new learning is what truly shaped my experience. From early on, I still recall his face lighting up as he explained how his favorite medication, insulin glargine, precipitates under the skin as tiny crystals to slowly release insulin over time. When I brought up a recent lecture on parasitic infections, he enthusiastically recounted when he saw neurocysticercosis for the first time, back in residency. This genuine excitement has persistent in our conversations about SIADH, budesonide, hepatorenal syndrome, HFREF, and more. Dr. Klimpl is very capable of breaking down technical concepts for an audience of any level, be it a curious patient or healthcare trainee. A defining aspect of learning from Dr. Klimpl is how he turns learning opportunities into conversations rather than lectures. When a patient taking lamotrigine presented with a full-body mucocutaneous rash, I hadn ' t yet learned about Stevens-Johnsons Syndrome. Dr. Klimpl gave me the tools to not only connect the dots myself, but also come up with diagnostic approaches to evaluate other etiologies I had been considering. These impromptu activities have helped me become familiar with resources like UpToDate to support my clinical decision-making skills. With Dr. Klimpl, not knowing exactly how to interpret a patient ' s presentation is an opportunity to learn more rather than a source of shame.

Any recognition of Dr. Klimpl ' s excellence in medical student education would be incomplete without acknowledging the attentiveness and honesty framing his interactions with patients and colleagues alike. Lectures have shown me the logic underpinning medicine, but Dr. Klimpl repeatedly demonstrates how to transform that logic in service of real people under one ' s care.

On my first day of preceptorship, we met an older gentleman living with heart failure. His medications were working, but suboptimal. Dr. Klimpl impressed upon me that we could recommend more effective medications on paper, but dramatically changing his prescriptions without weighing the risks of change could overwhelm a patient and cause serious harm. I ' ve seen him apply this thoughtfulness time and time again. When a patient was unfamiliar with the medications they were taking for their type 1 diabetes, he altered his approach by asking based on frequency and timing of medication use. Simple acts like asking for permission to sit with an agitated patient with dementia, or buying a disgruntled patient a cup of coffee from the Dazbog downstairs characterize Dr. Klimpl ' s approach to easing the stress of hospitalization patients face.

Dr. Klimpl ' s communication skills are just as impactful with trainees and fellow healthcare workers. After a rapid response team helped stabilize a patient under our care, he made a point commending their hard work. It was abundantly clear that the team was used to their role being an uncelebrated one. For his learners, Dr. Klimpl ' s feedback is similarly thoughtful, pairing focused, constructive feedback with praise for where a learner excelled. Dr. Klimpl understands that the best feedback is digestible and makes a conscious effort to not discourage learners by giving too much feedback all at once.

What I especially appreciate is findings ways to tie his approach to medicine back to curricular elements of DOCS, just executed at such a high level and in a deeply natural way. On my last day with him, I had the privilege of watching him apply these skills in one of the most difficult conversations I ' ve witnessed.

" How am I doing, doc? " This last-minute question, coming out the blue as Dr. Klimpl and I were leaving to round on our next patient, began the first conversation. It, more than anything else, revealed our patient ' s unspoken fear to me. It felt as if both the idea of knowing and not knowing the answer terrified him, and he didn ' t know which was worse. " Steve, " a young man in his mid-20s had been hospitalized that day with new-onset cirrhosis in the setting of alcohol use disorder. His jaundice was so severe that his hospital gown stained yellow where it rested on his skin. Had somebody less experienced been in Dr. Klimpl ' s place, they might have interpreted this question as carte blanche to deliver an unfiltered prognosis, no matter how well-intentioned. But Dr. Klimpl didn ' t do that.

Instead, he gentle closed the door, asked permission to be open with Steve, and slowly navigated the conversation with honesty and care. He asked Steve what he understood about his condition, then asked if he could share some more. In simple, clear language, he affirmed that Steve was seriously ill, and openly acknowledged the limits that we have in understanding how he may fare weeks or days from now. That in spite of this, we are doing everything we can to look after his health. Dr. Klimpl acknowledged how challenging a hospitalization like this one can be, and emphasized that alcohol use disorder is a terrible disease, and not at all Steve ' s fault. He encouraged Steve to lean on his family and friends during his stay. When it was all over, Dr. Klimpl apologized for having to deliver such painful news, and told Steven that he appreciated him asking these questions. The words were powerful, but what stuck with me more was the silences Dr. Klimpl used to give Steve the space to process such difficult news. His compassionate tone and absolute lack of judgement are what really elevate Dr. Klimpl as both physician and mentor.

The considerate way Dr. Klimpl carries himself in the hospital, regardless of whether it ' s in front of patients like Steve, or his team members, has quietly become my long-term goal of how I seek to carry myself as a physician. I feel incredibly fortunate to have been his mentee and am so excited for the many other medical students who I hope will get to spend their formative first year learning with him. His openness about both the beauty and challenges inherent to medicine and patient-centered approach to the medical arts mark him as a clear asset to medical student education at the University of Colorado and deserves broad recognition.

Written by: Evan McKee

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