

BLUE SKY FACULTY FOLIO

INSPIRED





Mentee to Mentor

Early influences
helped one physician
create a learning
environment for
others

Christopher Hoyte, MD, spent his formative years in Plano, Texas learning valuable life lessons from his parents. His father Edward, a now-retired probation officer, often brought a young Chris along with him for overnight shifts at the county's detention facility. That up-close view of the lives of incarcerated individuals made a distinct impression.

"I learned a lot about discipline in those days," Hoyte recalls, who preferred to spend his time on sports field, going on to play soccer at an elite level in high school. "I said, 'I want no part of this.'"

Hoyte also occasionally tagged along to work with his mother, Dorothy, who managed the radiology office at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. There, a few physicians took an interest in him. By shadowing providers as they did patient rounds, Hoyte received an early education about the body and the power of teaching.

"I remember those people even now, and I probably will for the rest of my life," Hoyte says. "One of the highlights of my life was returning years later to UT Southwestern to meet up again with my early mentor, neurosurgeon Bruce Micky, MD."

STUMBLING BLOCK

When Hoyte was just 10 years old, his father fell seriously ill due to heart valve damage caused by an early bout of rheumatic fever. Post-operative complications of valve replacement surgery led to a difficult, years-long recovery for the elder Hoyte.

"I had a hard time processing what was going on because my dad was always a tough guy and my role model," Hoyte says, recalling his grades were even affected during that time.

Supported by his mother and guided by the physicians at UT Southwestern, he was eventually able to get back on track, buckling down at school.

"My mom really came through for me. There were times I was angry and distracted, and my focus waned on school and sports," Hoyte says. "She really held it together and didn't let me feel sorry for myself."

He said the difficult experience taught him to appreciate the gifts of everyday life. "I learned not to take anything for granted," he says, "and to be grateful for what you have."

His skill on the soccer field earned him an invitation to the elite Olympic Development Program. Several universities recruited him to play the sport, but he "locked in" on his academic pursuits, heading to Princeton University in New Jersey to study molecular biology. By that time, he says he was "95 percent" settled on medical school.

Sticking to the plan, he attended medical school at Rutgers University in New Jersey. Hoyte originally thought he'd pursue neurosurgery like his mentor and traveled down that path for a few years — until a rotation in emergency medicine changed everything.



BRINGING THE A-GAME

In the high-intensity emergency room at University Hospital, the young Hoyte hopped room to room, learning to juggle a variety of cases, and fueling his passion for the field. Often encountering terrified family members seeking out hopeful information about their loved ones, he drew on memories of his father's medical struggle to comfort them.

"I've been on the other end of that, and I know what it feels like," Hoyte says.

"THERE IS NOTHING LIKE THE FEELING OF STEPPING UP AND DELIVERING WHAT YOU NEED TO DO FOR FAMILIES. I LOVED THE CHALLENGE OF WALKING INTO THE ROOM AND HAVING TO BE MY BEST EVERY SINGLE TIME."

Hoyte completed his emergency medicine residency in at the venerable Cook County Hospital in Chicago. The public health

hospital's high-volume Level I trauma center was a fertile urban training ground, and Hoyte saw people suffering from all manner of disease and injuries. It reinforced his belief emergency physicians are front-line stalwarts of the healthcare system.

"I saw Chris take care of patients at the bedside, where he would talk directly to people with care and concern. He carried himself with integrity," says Steven Aks, MD, who was the hospital's director of Emergency Medicine and Toxicology and one of Hoyte's mentors.

As chief resident at Cook County, Hoyte committed to the same set of values and passed them on to other providers, he adds.

"He was a positive-energy individual who was always there to bring other people up," Aks says. "He was always teaching, always supporting others."

Hoyte discovered medical toxicology was an intriguing subspecialty during his time at Cook County. He was drawn in to learning the physiology and pharmacology driving the myriad poisoning agents that included chemicals, medications, biologic agents, and environmental exposures, as well as determining how to treat them.

The challenges of treating regular people harmed by too much of a good thing, such as a pregnant patient who overdosed on an iron supplement, captivated him.

“That hooked me,” he recalls.

In 2009, Hoyte took his passion for medical toxicology west to Denver for a two-year fellowship at Rocky Mountain Poison & Drug Safety (RMPDS). He became the center’s fellowship director in 2015.

“MY MAJOR GOAL IS TO HELP OTHERS BE AT THEIR BEST TO REACH THEIR GOALS. I BELIEVE THAT I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE LEARNERS IN MY CHARGE,” HE SAYS. “TRAINING OTHERS TO BECOME MEDICAL TOXICOLOGISTS AND EMERGENCY MEDICINE PHYSICIANS IS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE.”

Four years later, he became RMPDS medical director, where he strives to help the organization deliver the highest quality of care to those they serve. He also serves as the organization’s fellowship director.

He began working toward a Master of Business Administration at the University of Colorado Denver, earning his degree in 2021. He was encouraged along the way by Richard Zane, MD, Chair of Emergency Medicine at University of Colorado School of Medicine, where Hoyte now serves as Professor of Emergency Medicine.

Today, Hoyte is taking the valuable lessons gleaned from his mentors to help others succeed through teaching and research roles within emergency medicine, toxicology, and sports medicine. ■

