AZ-ACP Monthly MACP Showcase

Masters comprise a small group of highly distinguished physicians, selected from among Fellows, who have achieved recognition in medicine by exhibiting preeminence in practice or medical research, holding positions of high honor, or making significant contributions to medical science or the art of medicine. Masters must be highly accomplished individuals. Evidence of their achievements can come from many types of endeavors, such as research, education, health care initiatives, volunteerism, and administrative positions. The Master must be distinguished by the excellence and significance of his or her contributions to the field of medicine.

Dr. Robert H. Moser graduated from Georgetown University Medical School in 1948 and went on to DC General Hospital for a fellowship in pulmonary diseases. His residency was interrupted in 1950 by a tour in Korea as a battalion surgeon. He was awarded seven battle stars and other commendations for duty during the war.

Dr. Moser then finished his residency at Georgetown University Hospital followed by a fellowship in cardiovascular diseases at Brooke Army Medical center and a fellowship in clinical hematology at the University of Utah, Salt Lake County Hospital.

Over the course of some 17 years, Dr. Moser became an expert in the rescue of ailing internal medicine residency programs. His innovative teaching techniques permeated all Army teaching hospitals. Subsequently he wrote a book on how to establish and maintain internal medicine teaching programs in academic health centers. Later, the Army established the annual “Dr. Robert H. Moser Award” which is given to a resident in general internal medicine selected from all the Army teaching hospitals at the annual ACP Army chapter meeting.

In 1959 Dr. Moser was selected as one of the original medical flight controllers for the NASA Mercury program. His task was to monitor the physiological and psychological performance of astronauts during orbital flight.
Upon retirement from the military in 1969 as chairman, department of medicine at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Dr. Moser entered private practice. In 1971 Dr. Moser served as chief-of-staff at the Maui Memorial Hospital in Hawaii.

Dr. Moser became the Editor-in-Chief and Director, Division of Scientific Publications for the Journal of the American Medical Association in 1973. Under his leadership the Journal not only flourished but also published the first Spanish language edition and began arrangements for French and Italian versions.

From 1977 to 1986 Dr. Moser served as the Executive Vice President for the American College of Physicians where he created a division of public policy to carry the message of internal medicine to the public. The most notable accomplishment of the division was the award winning “Healthscope” video series. Created in 1984 and sponsored by a grant from Upjohn, the series was the premier College adventure into pubic education and was made available free to the visual media where it gained significant popularity.

Now retired and living in Green Valley, Arizona, Dr. Moser graciously agreed to be interviewed for the Arizona Chapter.

**Arizona Chapter, ACP:** I’d like to start by having you speak a little bit about your career -- how did you originally become interested in pursuing medicine?

**Robert H. Moser:** It was a “foregone conclusion” in our family that my brother and I would become doctors. My father’s family had been too poor to send him to medical school – so he became a chiropractor. He always expressed his sense of frustration at his limited ability to help truly sick patients. He referred most who came to see him to physicians whom he knew. I recall that even in grammar school when I was asked about “What do you want to become?” - “physician” was always the answer. It was the same for my brother.

**ACP-AZ:** And what are some of the different settings in which you’ve practiced medicine? How did you get where you are today?

**RHM:** I have had many diverse opportunities. I “practiced” medicine in Army teaching hospitals for about 15 years. I saw patients and I ran residency training programs in four Army hospitals. I was in private practice in a small group on Maui for about four years. Other careers related to medicine were being Executive Vice President of the American College of Physicians for 10 years, editor of the JAMA for three years and medical director of the NutraSweet Company for 5 years.

“Where I am today” is the product of all that preceded. I am retired. My interest in medicine is limited to reading journals, attending Grand Rounds at the local medical school, writing occasional articles and reviewing manuscripts for the journal The Pharos and others.

**ACP-AZ:** How long have you been a member of the American College of Physicians?

**RHM:** I became a Fellow in 1960 and a Master in 1985.

**ACP-AZ:** Why did you originally decide to join the ACP and why have you remained a member throughout the years?

**RHM:** Early in my professional life I identified certain criteria that I considered important to pursuing a career in academic/teaching medicine. These included being invited to join Alpha Omega Alpha as a medical student; being certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine; becoming a Fellow of the ACP; being invited to join the
Clinical and Climatological Association; being invited to become a member of the Institute of Medicine; becoming a Master of the ACP.

I have remained a member because it is an organization that represents the finest traditions of professionalism, academic achievement and concern for patient welfare. As stated above I was EVP of ACP for a decade, and became acutely aware of the critical role the College bore in advancing the quality and availability of medical care in the United States. This mission has remained its cardinal function.

ACP-AZ: What are some of your proudest academic or professional achievements?

RHM: That is a complex question. I believe my proudest achievement is to have set up programs that guided the education of several generations of internal medicine house officers by integrating university-level residency training standards in Army teaching hospitals. Many of those educated in my programs have progressed on to teaching, by these criteria, in other Army and university hospitals. We raised the quality of internal medicine education in all military teaching hospitals that has remained in place ever since.

I am proud that in September 1956 I published my first article on iatrogenic diseases in the Medical Progress section of the New England Journal of Medicine – that article alerted the profession to the problem of drug-induced diseases. Prior to this publication there had been very little on the subject in the medical literature. I expanded this subject into book form a few years later (“Diseases of Medical Progress: A Study of Iatrogenic Disease”), that went through two subsequent revised editions. I lectured in many cities throughout the world on this subject for the next decade. I chaired an FDA committee that was devoted to this subject – to try to set up a reporting program on adverse reactions to new drugs. I was not (and still am not) satisfied with the mechanism that the FDA devised.

I am proud of my accomplishments in revitalizing the JAMA at a critical time in its history.

I am proud of the many patients I helped to cure or just make feel better – over the years.

ACP-AZ: How do you maintain a healthy balance between work and the rest of your life?

RHM: Since I am retired such “balance” is not a problem. I spend more time reading and writing, and doing things (travel, exercise, etc) that interest me, much of it aside from medicine. Occasionally I miss the “action” of active teaching/practice/lecturing, but this has not been a problem.

ACP-AZ: What are some of the challenges that you think the current health care system is facing, on the state or local level?

RHM: I have written extensively about this. In a nutshell, we are obliged to bring adequate health care to all citizens regardless of income. I feel this can only be accomplished with a single payer system – similar to Medicare. We must try to eliminate the “profit-motive” for providing medical care for doctors and hospitals. No one should get obscenely rich for caring for sick people.

ACP-AZ: What advice would you give to our physicians in training?

RHM: Quite simply, regard patients as sentient human beings who have granted you the trust and confidence that you will place their welfare and well-being above all other considerations. Take time to listen, reflect and then deploy the powers (diagnostic and therapeutic) at your command to provide the most thoughtful, compassionate, state-of-the-art management. Considerations of finances, personal problems, social obligations or other matters should never mitigate your management. It is not an easy road, but it is our calling.

ACP-AZ: Thank you, Dr. Moser for taking the time to correspond with us!