Laureate Award

THOMAS H. NIETHAMMER, MD, FACP

October 16, 2020
Dr. Niethammer is a Casper native who decided early in life to pursue a career in medicine. He graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1976 with a degree in electrical engineering with the intention of entering medical school. He was accepted to the University of Utah School of Medicine as part of the first class of the Wyoming contract program with Utah. He participated in the honors program in internal medicine as a senior and was fortunate to match for his internship and residency at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics where he was befriended by an outstanding group of fellow physicians.

He decided to forego fellowship training as return to Wyoming where he could practice the full range of general internal medicine. He settled his young family in Riverton where he started an old fashioned solo private practice caring for his patients in all settings and knowing he had the training to really do comprehensive internal medicine. It was a fun time to be able to do significant ICU care, routine primary care and really feel like an important part of the lives of families and patients. After 19 years he relocated his practice to Sheridan hoping for a better lifestyle. During this time he served as chapter governor and had a great time. In 2008 after meeting with the congressional delegation at the annual meeting in Washington DC it became apparent that the solo practice of medicine was no longer going to be viable. He was fortunate to be recruited by the VA in Sheridan where he served as the associate chief of staff for primary care for several years. He is now working as a hospitalist as he winds down his career.

During his time as governor he was able to establish working relationships for annual meetings with the South Dakota chapter and one year coordinated a chapter meeting with Alaska, Idaho, MT and Wyoming. The concept of the medical home was initiated during his time as governor and as a representative of a small state and small practice his input into what a medical home should look like was appreciated by the working groups developing the concept. He presented talks at several chapter and joint chapter meetings.

During his first several years at the VA the facility served as a clerkship site for third year students at the University of Washington and he served as the clerkship site director with a faculty appointment. Several of the Wyoming students who served clerkships there went on to obtain excellent training and are now key physicians in Sheridan and seeing their success is extremely gratifying.

After the death of his oldest son in Riverton he developed a keen interest in hospice care and was founding director of Little Wind Hospice in Riverton. He has served in medical staff leadership positions prior to moving to the VA. Community service includes Rotary with a term as president in Riverton, board membership at CES in Riverton and the senior center in Sheridan. He has been an active leader in his Lutheran Churches in both communities.

He has been married to his wife, Elizabeth, for 44 years and she has been a tremendous help running his practices and was very helpful while he was Governor. His son, the Rev. Mark Niethammer and his family live in Austin, MN. At least semi-retirement is looming and he looks forward to more time with his grandchildren, Julia and Miles. Membership in the ACP Wyoming chapter has been an extremely important part of his life. The relationships formed early in his career with some of the greats in other parts of the state were very sustaining of his ability to keep practicing through adversity. The mentorship and leadership of senior physicians is key to sustaining the profession in Wyoming and he is very honored to receive this award.
The Laureate Award honors Fellows and Masters of the College who have demonstrated by their example and conduct an abiding commitment to excellence in medical care, education, or research and in service to their community, their Chapter, and the American College of Physicians.

Previous Recipients:

1986    Lloyd R. Evans, MD, FACP
1992    Donald B. Hunton, MD, FACP
1997    Joseph Patrick Murphy, MD, FACP
2003    Daniel S. Klein, MD, FACP
2005    Darryl D. Bindschadler, MD, FACP
2007    Harmon H. Davis II, MD, FACP
2008    Robert J. Davis, II, MD, FACP