

Bassett Faculty Teaching Award

As each graduating class of chief residents comes to the end of their training at Duke, they take time to reflect on the faculty who have impacted their development as orthopedic surgeons. Of the many who dedicate their time to education, one faculty member is selected by the chief residents to be recognized for their outstanding teaching abilities. The 2017 graduating class of chief residents selected Dr Robert Lark as the recipient of the annual Bassett Faculty Teaching Award.

Dr Lark's commitment to Duke, his patients, and the education of orthopedic residents has earned him this prestigious distinction. Dr Lark was born and raised in Dallas, North Carolina (not Texas!), a small town outside of Charlotte. He is one of three children and has two loving sisters. His father worked at Duke Energy for many years, and his mother was a labor and delivery nurse who encouraged and inspired his future career in medicine.

Upon graduating from North Gaston High School, where he was an accomplished trombone player, Dr Lark attended The Citadel in South Carolina where he continued his trombone talents and earned a bachelor's degree in Physics. After leaving The Citadel, he furthered his education at North Carolina State University where he obtained a master's degree in physiology.

Following his undergraduate education he had a number of jobs that led to his eventual career in medicine. He worked as a mechanic at a textile plant, and then as an Emergency Medical Technician in Cary, North Carolina. He was accepted to the University of North Carolina (UNC), Chapel Hill (we won't hold it against him). As a medical student at UNC he won the Michiko Kuno Research Award and was the recipient of the Holderness Research Fellowship. Despite this, his greatest accomplishment while at UNC was meeting his future wife, Dr Amy Lark, who is currently a pathologist at the Durham VA Medical Center. Together, they have a son, Luca, 1, who we hope will be a great future physician like his parents!

He ultimately decided to pursue orthopedic surgery, matching to Duke University Orthopaedic Surgery residency program, under the guidance of Dr William Hardaker. Dr Lark is remembered for his diligence and hard work during his time as a resident. Dr Robert Fitch, a past Bassett Teaching Award recipient, said about Dr Lark: "Rob was a typical Duke Orthopedic resident, outstanding. Even then, I saw in him a passion for teaching. I was extremely pleased that he chose Pediatric Orthopedics as his specialty and now I am fortunate to have him as a partner. For Rob, Resident education is a high priority, and it is great that he has been recognized for his efforts." After Duke, he completed a pediatric orthopedic fellowship at Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego, California, before returning on faculty at Duke.

While at Duke, Dr Lark has become a national leader in Pediatric Orthopedics. He is a member of both the Pediatric Orthopaedics Society of North America (POSNA) and the Scoliosis Research Society (SRS) where he holds roles on the Industry Relations Committee and Education Committee, respectively. He has also received multiple grants for his work on physis stimulation, serving as a Young Investigator for the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons/Orthopaedic Research Society/Research Symposium on The Physis: Fundamental Knowledge to a Fantastic Future through Research.

Despite his numerous achievements, the Duke Orthopaedic residents recognize Dr Lark mostly for his outstanding dedication and passion for teaching and education. Brian Dial, MD, a member of the Class of 2020, summarized the residents' gratitude: "Dr. Lark is everything a student needs in a teacher. He is patient and willing to teach the important details at every level. More importantly, he teaches more than just the textbook. He teaches us how to best care for our patients and sets that example for us every day." It is fair to say that all the orthopedic residents strive to replicate that example when treating patients.

There is no question that Duke Orthopaedics has a long, sustained tradition of graduating excellent orthopedic residents, which is a reflection of the dedicated and passionate faculty. Dr Lark has undoubtedly continued this tradition and the residents have greatly benefited from his own dedication and passion to orthopedics, Duke, and, most importantly, his patients. Congratulations to Dr Lark on this great accomplishment!

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