

RESIDENCY

 | *Becoming a Doctor*
– Part II

IN THE LAST ISSUE OF *FRONTIERS*, we introduced you to the first step in educating physicians – medical school and the passing of medical board exams. Upon successfully completing the three stages of exams, these medical students become licensed physicians and enter the next phase of the educational process for physicians. They are now residents. In this issue, we offer you a look at what it means to be a resident physician and the importance of residency programs to physicians and the quality of our nation's health care.

Cedric Palmer, MD, and Robin Huskey, MD, UT Graduate School of Medicine resident physicians

PERSPECTIVES...*of a Faculty Physician*

Alfred D. Beasley, MD

WHEN I STARTED TO MEDICAL SCHOOL, I was embarrassed to ask the difference between an “intern” and an “internist.” In time, I learned that there was a tremendous difference, and I have spent my professional career helping others understand the differences, too.

“The enterprise of teaching, research, and academic inquiry is the stimulus that brings out the best in those involved. It becomes the passion to be passed to the next generation.”

The educational process of turning undergraduate students into practicing physicians is actually quite simple. First, students must complete a collegiate pre-med program before qualifying to apply to medical school. The medical school curriculum is a four-year commitment and requires successful completion of medical board examinations. Students are then awarded a graduate degree—the Doctor of Medicine, or MD.

In the old days, earning the MD degree often entitled the new physician to practice medicine. Now, however, 3-8 years of post-graduate training, called a residency period, is required to qualify for licensure to practice any specialty and to qualify for membership on a hospital staff.

Residency education occurs in teaching hospitals and academic medical centers like the University of Tennessee that have been certified for that purpose. Together, the UT Graduate School of Medicine and UT Medical Center provide the critical clinical setting that prepares residents for their role in the delivery of high-quality patient care.

At the UT Graduate School of Medicine, all doctors are supervised by attending faculty physicians. During the early years of residency, each new physician is observed first hand to ensure that procedures are correctly and efficiently performed and to maintain patient safety and comfort. In later years of residency, physicians are allowed to acquire more responsibility as they function more independently. This progressive process requires a carefully crafted curriculum, constant supervision and critical feedback by UT faculty physicians and administrators.

The enterprise of teaching, research, and academic inquiry is the stimulus that brings out the best in those involved. It attracts the brightest minds. It becomes the passion to be passed to the next generation.

Alfred Beasley, MD



Dr. Alfred Beasley is Emeritus Professor of Medicine and Director of Graduate Education at the UT Graduate School of Medicine. He is also an avid photographer whose publication-quality images are on display in the resident quarters at UT Medical Center.

PERSPECTIVES...

of a Medical Resident

Robin Huskey, MD

It's hard to describe the typical day of a medical resident. Each physician has selected a specific educational program, has an individualized work schedule, and is assigned to certain patient cases. One can bet, though, that the day is busy and trying, starting somewhere around 6 a.m. at the hospital and ending long after dinnertime for most Americans.

Each day across this country, physicians are completing required residency periods that place them face-to-face with patients with whom they are unfamiliar. These residents are full-fledged physicians in jobs that put their medical school training to the test, drain their energy reserves, and strain their emotional well-being. Welcome to the on-the-job training world of the medical resident.

It's 9 a.m. on a Tuesday morning and Dr. Robin Huskey is preparing to go home. She started her family medicine residency shift at 6 p.m. Monday evening where she worked on team reports, maneuvered through three personnel shift changes, answered pages from clinic patients, advised medical personnel caring for her nursing home patients, responded to hospital floor and emergency room pages, made notations in patient charts

From the diary of Robin Huskey, MD

Tuesday

6 p.m. At the hospital & heading for rounds with the day team
8 p.m. Answering pages from patient floors, ER, nursing home and clinics. Helping medical grad student assigned to be on call with me.

9:15 p.m. Very, very busy in the ER.

Wednesday

2 a.m. ER has been extremely busy since 7 p.m. Have admitted many patients including Patient with mild mental retardation and Schizophrenia being evaluated for possible dehydration and stroke.

- Toddler with pneumonia in need of IV antibiotics and fluids
- Middle-aged female with cryptogenic cirrhosis who requires withdrawal of fluid from her abdomen due to liver failure

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- Paralytic with new onset of a rash who needs observation to rule out Rocky Mountain spotted fever
- Young adult with chronic diarrhea and severe abdominal pain

and hospital records, and participated in patient checkout rounds with the inpatient team. All in all, this has been a rather light-duty day made unusual because she did not need to admit any of the patients she cared for during this shift.

Robin had taken care of several personal chores before starting her shift on Monday. General household duties had to be done before taking her mother to a medical appointment. Now on Tuesday morning, she makes her way to the Tennessee Department of Motor Vehicles to obtain a new driver's license before heading to bed where a few hours of welcomed rest are waiting.



Dr. Robin Huskey is the co-chief resident for the UT Graduate School of Medicine Department of Family Medicine. She completed her undergraduate and medical school studies at UT and plans to stay in East Tennessee following her residency. Dr. Huskey enjoys the mountains, playing flute and piano, and sharing life with her family, friends and dog, a Havanese named Emma.

Robin's next few days as Dr. Huskey, resident physician, start in just nine hours. And they are going to be arduous.

Robin Huskey, MD with Lea Anne Law, APR

8 a.m. Check-out rounds with day inpatient team.

10 a.m. Leaving hospital for some time off. Heading to bed after a stop at the gym for a workout. Must get a haircut today plus do some shopping before dinner with friends. Then early to bed tonight.

Thursday

8 a.m. Examine patients as part of clinic duties at University Family Physicians (4.5 days a week).

9:30 a.m. Interview residency candidate as part of my co-chief resident duties.

10 a.m. Back to University Family Physicians clinic

12 p.m. Finished clinic. Today's patients included:

- Elderly patient with diabetes, high cholesterol and congestive failure
- Middle-aged p... with a history of stroke, muscular dystrophy, and ref... se who currently is experiencing chest pressure

- Young adult needing an an... smear and pelvic exam

PERSPECTIVES...

of a Medical Resident

Cedric Palmer, MD

So much of my journey to becoming a physician has been an exercise in faith and perseverance. I grew up in New Orleans, where I had the duties of an eldest child—raising a young brother and sister while my mother worked two and three jobs, and of parent-substitute, filling the void my father left when he abandoned the family.



I did not have time for the distractions of the sometimes mean streets of New Orleans. My free time was spent pursuing my fascination with literature and science, and at the age of 16, my aspiration became to serve families in the capacity of family physician.

A graduate of Xavier University and Meharry Medical College, Dr. Cedric Palmer is a UT Graduate School of Medicine Department of Family Medicine resident. As of this writing, twenty-one of his family members displaced from their New Orleans Ninth Ward homes are living in Knoxville and he shares his apartment with brother, Poree, whom he is helping complete a degree in fine arts. Dr. Palmer enjoys fishing, creative writing, and collecting limited first edition books.

I wanted to be a glimmer of hope to families affected by circumstances of health.

As an undergraduate student, I worked to gain entrance into medical school and to continue aiding my family

financially and spiritually. At Meharry Medical College, I plunged into the rigors of medical training.

Fueled by determination and God's grace, I have found myself in East Tennessee at UT Graduate School of Medicine. My residency here is filled with the things that define me as the eldest child and as the country doctor I hope to become. I have persevered through long-hour

“My residency here is filled with the things that define me as the eldest child and as the country doctor I hope to become. I have persevered through long-hour weeks balancing a host of responsibilities.”

weeks balancing a host of responsibilities. I have tended to the medical and psychiatric needs of my clinic patients. I have delivered the newborn and pronounced the dead, cared for the emergently ill patient, and been a collaborator with my attending physician. I have cared for the mothers and fathers of generations.

About my residency, I feel gratification, knowing that I have had a tangible role to play in some of the most important moments in the lives of my fellow human beings.

My goal—to practice family medicine in a rural or inner-city setting—is providing the enviable opportunity to move beyond being a “glimmer of hope” and become a real force for the betterment of the lives of families and communities. I want to make a difference.

I am ready.

Cedric Palmer, MD

Additional Training Period Required After Completion of Medical School

Specialty	Years following MD degree	Specialty	Years following MD degree
Anesthesiology	4	Oral Surgery	4
Dentistry	1	Pathology	4
Family Medicine	3	Radiology	5
Medicine	3	Surgery	5
Nuclear Medicine	2	Transitional	1
OB/GYN	4	Urology	5

If you missed “BECOMING A DOCTOR: PART I—MEDICAL SCHOOL” in the last issue of *Frontiers*, you can read the article at <http://gsm.utmck.edu/about/frontiers.cfm> or call the UT Graduate School of Medicine at 865-544-9190 for your copy of the November 2005 issue. IN THE NEXT ISSUE, FOCUS ON FELLOWSHIPS.