

2010 Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient: Dr. Everardo Cobos '81



Dr. Everardo Cobos '81 (second from left) receives the Distinguished Alumni Award from Dr. Valerie Pronio-Stelluto (President), Francisco González-Scarano (Dean), and David Perryman (Alumni Relations Director).

Dr. Everardo Cobos '81 grew up in El Paso, where he and his family regularly took grandparents and other relatives into their home to care for them when they were sick. This practice reinforced Cobos' early interest in helping other people and later fueled his desire to go to medical school.

As he neared his graduation from the University of Texas at El Paso, Cobos interviewed at a number of medical schools, including the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. "When I visited San Antonio, my father went with me," Cobos recalled. "He tagged along on a campus tour and was made to feel very welcome by the staff at the School of Medicine. My father was very impressed with the school and staff and he believed I should strongly consider going there. I trusted his intuition and I, too, felt the Health Science Center was the place for me. We also fell in love with the city of San Antonio on that trip."

Cobos's favorite memories from his four years in medical school are the camaraderie and strong ties that developed among his classmates. "We were a diverse group of students from all walks of life, but over the period of four years we became very close, and all these years later we still share that bond."

Among the many professors who made a lasting impact on Cobos were Dr. Anatolio Cruz, Dr. Leonard Lawrence, and Dr. Carlos Pestana, whose medical knowledge and anatomical drawings were "simply amazing." "All our faculty members were compassionate physicians who served as excellent role models, cared passionately about students, and instilled the proper values in all of us," he said.

As for the most important skill or lesson he learned as a medical student, Cobos noted several: "The love of learning everything I could about medicine; the value of reading every day; and the special privilege we are given by our patients who allow us to take care of them."

As a medical student at the Health Science Center, Cobos initially thought he would pursue obstetrics and gynecology as his specialty. But after completing a transitional internship at Texas Tech University Health Science Center in 1982, he changed his mind. He subsequently served as a General Medical Officer in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, 2nd Infantry Division, in the Republic of Korea before completing an internship in internal medicine and a fellowship in hematology/oncology at Letterman Army Medical Center in San Francisco. “After starting my internal medicine residency, I rotated through oncology and immediately fell in love with the specialty,” he noted. “It had everything I was looking for: complicated medical cases, rapidly developing new medical breakthroughs, and the privilege to care for sick patients and their families while forming close relationships with them as well.” From 1988 to 1991, he served as Staff Hematologist/Oncologist and later Chief of Hematology at Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma, Washington.

In 1991, when Texas Tech Health Science Center posted an opening for an academic oncologist, Cobos jumped at the opportunity to pursue his academic passion and move closer to his family, who still resided in El Paso. Some two decades after his return to West Texas, Cobos has established himself as a stellar teacher and a nationally renowned researcher and clinician. He has won numerous awards as an outstanding teacher, physician-mentor, and clinician at Texas Tech, where he currently serves as Associate Dean of Oncology Programs and Professor of Internal Medicine. In addition, he is Director of the Southwest Cancer Treatment and Research Center, where he leads the center’s Bone Marrow/Stem Cell Transplantation Program.

“I love watching students absorb the vast volume of information, dissect it, process it, and ultimately grow as they make sense of it all,” he said. “The most amazing experience for me as an academic physician is when I see my students complete their residencies. Some of them have become physicians in my community, and others are now faculty colleagues of mine who teach me new things about medicine.”

The School of Medicine Alumni Association recognized Cobos’ myriad accomplishments by selecting him as the recipient of the 2010 Distinguished Alumni Award. Upon receiving this honor, Cobos responded in a self-deprecating manner true to his West Texas upbringing and family values: “I felt so honored

and humbled to receive the award last fall,” he noted. “This school gave me an opportunity, allowed me to accomplish my goal, set the standard of how to fulfill my role as a physician. As I look around the state and the country, the Health Science Center at San Antonio has so many talented alumni who are much more deserving of this award. This realization drives me to continue to make as many contributions to my field and to strive every day to maintain the high standards of our medical school so I can help enhance its stellar reputation.”

As for career advice he would offer medical students and young physicians, Cobos commented on the importance of taking it one day at a time: “You get up in the morning and try to be the best you can be that day. Try to learn something new and live up to the high standards of our profession every day. Treat your patients with humility and compassion. Seek advice and treat others with respect each day. Before you know it, several years have gone by and you have a body of work that you can be proud of.”