

BOARD NEWS

The American Board of Family Medicine Foundation Inaugurates the G. Gayle Stephens Keystone Conference Series

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Dr. Gayle Stephens (August 6, 1928, to February 20, 2014), one of the founders of family medicine in the United States, provided consistent intellectual leadership that profoundly affected the specialty. He connected history, philosophy, religion, psychiatry, the family, the community, and the sciences to the practice of medicine, and he explained how family medicine was a “counterculture” within medicine, manifested in personal relationships and rooted in social change. He particularly advanced the importance of relationships in clinical practice and the role of the personal physician as a trusted and trustworthy agent for patients. His obituary proclaimed: “Through his practice, teaching, writing, editing, and advocacy, Dr. Stephens acted on his belief that, ‘Medicine is a moral vocation that is practiced best when patients have a personal physician who can help them get what they need from the larger system in a manner that does not demean or exploit them, a personal physician who is able and willing to attend to their patients’ life experiences and individual preferences.’”

Dr Stephens was a prolific writer, and his extensive body of written work was highlighted in a 2011 *Family Medicine* article, “G. Gayle Stephens Festschrift,” written by John Geyman, MD, another founding leader in family medicine and a contemporary of Dr. Stephens. Dr. Geyman wrote that Dr. Stephens, “has been . . . by far the most original, thoughtful, and eloquent voice in our field and among the few who best represents the moral conscience of the entire medical profession. His wide-ranging intellect connects us with history, gives context for where we are now, and envisions alternative futures for our specialty, our profession, and society. Truly a renaissance man among us.”

Obviously, his contributions were recognized by many, and were confirmed by his election to the US National Academy of Science’s Institute of Medicine, now known as the National Academy of Medicine. For many, Dr. Stephens was the “poet laureate” of family medicine.

In addition to his institutional leadership, textbooks, scientific articles, essays, visiting professorships, and invited lectures, Gayle initiated an unusual invitational conference, known as “The Keystone Conference,” where a relatively small group of colleagues could discuss ideas and discern important challenges and opportunities meriting the attention of family physicians and medicine as a profession. The third Keystone Conference inspired the Future of Family Medicine project that guided family medicine through the first years of the 21st century. In an effort to support the continuation of Dr. Stephen’s life-long work and service, the American Board of Family Medicine Foundation established “The G. Gayle Stephens Keystone Conference Series” in 2014. The aim of this series is to continue his legacy of occasional, carefully constructed, invitational conferences focusing on relevant, challenging, perhaps neglected topics worthy of substantial consideration by family physicians, other health care professionals, and the public.

The inaugural conference in this series, the fourth Keystone Conference, was held June 5 to 7, 2015, near the Stephens’s family home, at the Keystone Resort in Colorado. It followed the basic purpose and strategies used by Dr. Stephens in the first 3 Keystone Conferences and focused on the question, “What promises will a personal physician make to her/his patients going forward in the evolving health care system of the United States, particularly in terms of when and where they will be there for their patients?” It was conceived and planned by a multigenerational planning committee comprising family physicians, in-

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cluding the remaining members of the “Keystone Quartet” that included Dr. Stephens and organized the third Keystone meeting.

This conference featured conversations stimulated by 4 plenary speakers. Dr. Rosemary Stevens placed the conference into the ongoing history of medicine in the United States; Dr. Will Miller illuminated the role of relationships in personal doctoring; Dr. Kim Griswold examined the importance of place in personal doctoring, and Dr. David Loxterkamp reflected on how time affects personal doctoring. Most of the conference was streamed live and recorded. It is archived at www.gaylestephensconference.com, where it can be viewed by those interested in how their own answer to the conference question compares or contrasts with what emerged. The recordings of the conference will remain available indefinitely.

From time to time, future G. Gayle Stephens Keystone Conferences will be held to investigate the issues that Gayle held so closely and that were so formative for the specialty. These issues remain foundational to the delivery of health care in this country, as so aptly summarized by Howard Stein, PhD, in the announcement of Gayle’s passing by the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine: “Gayle’s prescient and prophetic voice is needed as much now as it was beginning in the late 1960s—not only for family medicine, but also for all medicine. The torch is now ours.”

The American Board of Family Medicine is honored to carry on the tradition of the Keystone Conferences and deeply grateful to the Stephens family for their permission to use their name to ensure such reflective efforts continue in perpetuity.