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Sidney Barsky, M.D., Honored for Contribution to Dermatology

The Dermatology Foundation (DF) Board of Directors recently recognized the profound impact Dr. Sidney Barsky, M.D. has had on the specialty of dermatology at their recent annual membership meeting in Miami. The DF's prestigious Clark W. Finnerud Award was presented to Dr. Barsky and recognizes a dermatologist whose volunteer service as a part-time teacher and a practitioner embodies the highest ideals of the specialty, and serves as an example for generations to come.

Dr. Barsky—now approaching his 92nd birthday—has been a practicing dermatologist since 1950, and a well-known and respected member of the teaching community in the Chicago area. His love for what he does is so clear and inspiring that a fellow dermatologist nicknamed him “*joie de dermatology.*”

Dr. Barsky's interest in medicine and skin disease stem from his childhood. His mother suffered with chronic stasis dermatitis, “I used to see doctors coming to our house and taking care of her,” he recalls. “I was awed by their knowledge and their ability to help people—that got me interested in medicine.” He graduated from the University of Illinois Medical School, interned at the Cook County Hospital in 1944, then spent two years as a medical officer in the

U.S. Army. After his discharge, Dr. Barsky entered a one-year dermatology fellowship at the Cook County Hospital Graduate School of Medicine while he waited for a residency position to open up the following year.

He entered private practice in the fall of 1950, and decided he also wanted to contribute to the specialty by teaching. “I wanted to give something back and maintain a connection with academics,” he explains. He became a clinical instructor at Rush, then transferred to the University of Illinois where he eventually became Clinical Professor of Dermatology. Dr. Barsky also became an attending at the Cook County Hospital, and ultimately became Chairman of the Division of Dermatology. He retired from both positions in 1986 and moved to Israel with his wife to go into private practice. Returning to Chicago after two years, he became an associate attending at the Cook County Hospital—now called Stroger Hospital—and accepted a volunteer position there as consultant dermatologist. “I’m still there—and I thoroughly enjoy it!” Dr. Barsky comments.

One of Dr. Barsky’s enduring passions is jazz. He has played clarinet and saxophone since his youth and played professionally to help pay his way through college. He no longer plays the clarinet or sax since “you need a band for that.” Seventeen years ago he took up the piano, noting that “with a piano you’re a band in itself!”

Reflecting on his years in dermatology, Dr. Barsky talks about “the great pleasure” he has always derived from his patients, and from teaching residents. He has received several honors for his contributions to dermatology, including the Gold Medal Award for a lifetime of outstanding service and academic excellence presented by the Chicago Dermatological Society. Dr. Barsky’s enthusiasm for his field appears to have had a positive effect on his family too. His children, Drs. Bonnie and Gary Barsky, followed in his footsteps and are both practicing dermatologists.

The Dermatology Foundation was created in 1964 and is the leading private funding source for skin disease research. It provides funding that helps develop and retain tomorrow’s teachers and researchers in dermatology and enables advancements in patient care.

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