Professor of the Year 2012

Don M. Benson, Jr., MD, PhD

The Class of 2012 has had the opportunity to learn invaluable lessons from many individuals during our four or more years at the College of Medicine. All of these dedicated and devoted teachers have played a significant role in shaping our medical education and helping us achieve and reach our goals. Since 1931, the senior class of The Ohio State University College of Medicine awards a single faculty member with the Professor of the Year Award. As the highest honor a faculty member can earn from the graduating class, the Professor of the Year Award is given based on the demonstration of excellence and commitment to teaching and mentoring in medical education. Today, the Class of 2012 is proud to present Dr. Don M. Benson, Jr., MD, PhD, and assistant professor in the Department of Internal Medicine, with the 2012 Professor of the Year Award.

Dr. Benson obtained his BA degree magna cum laude in 1992 from Wheeling Jesuit College where he was also an Academic All-American on the men’s varsity soccer team. In 1999, he earned his MD from Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine and his PhD from Kent State University. He was elected to Alpha Omega Alpha in his junior year as a medical student and subsequently served as chapter President. He completed internship and residency training in Internal Medicine at the University of Virginia and served a year on the faculty there as Chief Medical Resident. He came to The Ohio State University in 2003 to complete clinical fellowship training in Medical Oncology with a focus in hematologic malignancies and stem cell transplantation. He then undertook post-doctoral laboratory training under Dr. Michael Caligiuri’s mentorship in innate immunity and cancer immunotherapy.

After joining the Ohio State University College of Medicine as a faculty member in the Department of Internal Medicine in 2006, Dr. Benson is now in his sixth year as an attending physician. In addition to his daily clinical responsibilities, Dr. Benson also provides leadership for medical and post graduate medical education through positions such as coordinator of education for the Division of Hematology/Oncology, section leader for the Internal Medicine Honors Elective Program, and hematology section leader for the Integrated Pathway Program’s Host Defense Module. He has won ten awards for his teaching activities including the Student Mentor of the Year in 2010 from the Department of Internal Medicine.

Dr. Benson’s clinical practice focuses on the care of patients with multiple myeloma, amyloidosis, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma as well as blood and bone marrow transplantation. He ranks in the 99th percentile nationally in terms of reported scores for patient satisfaction with their physician. In addition, he maintains a vibrant research laboratory developing novel immune-based therapies for blood cancers. He has been principal or co-principal investigator on over one hundred clinical trials for patients with blood cancers and has published 50 peer-reviewed, original manuscripts in the leading journals of his field, including: Blood, Journal of Clinical Investigation, Cancer Cell, and the Journal of Clinical Oncology. He has presented over 70 peer-reviewed research abstracts at scientific meetings in the United States, England, France, Italy, Denmark, and Israel.
In 2009, Dr. Benson received the Chairman’s Citation Award from the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and the DiscoverMMORE award from Multiple Myeloma Opportunities in Research and Education for his volunteer work with these non-profit foundations. He has cycled every year in Pelotonia and remains actively involved with all three charitable organizations.

In his free time, Dr. Benson enjoys competing in endurance events, including seven full marathons to date and coaching his son’s and daughter’s soccer teams. Dr. Benson and his wife, Laura, and children, Evan, Christopher, and Leeanne, reside in Lewis Center, Ohio.

When asked to share their experience with Dr. Benson, graduates of the Class of 2012 affirm that Dr. Benson is deserving of this honor. One student in our class credits Dr. Benson with inspiring him to “work with medical students in the future so that I can be as influential in their career paths as he was in mine.” Another student tells a story about how after asking only one question during one of Dr. Benson’s lectures, Dr. Benson began a mentorship and engaged the student in research because he saw potential from that initial conversation. This student reflected that, “…his manifest ability to engage the next generation of students and allow them to sense their abilities is the kind of elusive and sustaining force every university clamors for. The Ohio State College of Medicine is fortunate to have such a character on its staff and would do well to recruit many more like him.” Additionally, all of the students in the Integrated Pathway will forever remember natural killer cells, thanks to Dr. Benson. Our class has experienced firsthand how “his dedication to our education and his obvious passion for his work will be well remembered by his students.”

Thank you, Dr. Benson, for being a part of our experience here at the College of Medicine. It is your commitment to excellence and compassionate leadership that serves as an inspiration to us all. The Class of 2012 regards you as a wonderful advocate, educator, and role model. On behalf of the Class of 2012, I am honored to present Don M. Benson, Jr., MD, PhD, with the Professor of the Year Award.

Ashley Scheffer
President, Class of 2012