

## **Acceptance Speech from Dr. David Huang, 2024 I.B. Harrison, M.D. Humanitarian Award Recipient**

*Managing Editor's Note: These are Dr. Huang's notes and not a formal write-up. Please excuse spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.*

Thank you Ray and Bud for that gracious introduction. I'd like to thank CMS (Tom Block, Rosalie Carlin, Helen Paulson, and especially Shannon Boyle) for this special night for honoring myself and Dr. Mazziotta. I am humbled to be held in such high esteem as my predecessors, many of whom are sitting in this room. As you know, I.B. Harrison was an icon. I never met him, but I am quite familiar with his ideals.

I'm gonna do this kind of backwards. First, I'd like to thank the joy of my life, my wife Brenda, for her never ending support. Thank you for helping me be a better person and for putting up with medical talk at the dining table. I have lived in Tallahassee for 32 years and I have been married for 31 years. The only thing that I could have done better is if I had proposed to you a year earlier. And thank you to my four kids Andrew (Misty), Eric, Brian, and Helen, for providing so many adventures that have made life interesting and exciting. Thank you Dad and Mom, for being such great role models for your 4 children. Also, thank you to all my former partners and current partners. You are my second family, and I truly appreciate all the good times we have spent together, all the things I've learned from you all, and all the hard work you've done for this community.

Life is full of opportunities and I am grateful for every one! Thank you America for giving my parents the opportunity to emigrate here, get a green card, and eventually become citizens of the US. My grandfather told my father to study hard because if he didn't, then he might end up being the person who tends to the water buffalo in the rice fields. My father became the first child in his village to go to college and then to medical school. If he hadn't studied hard, I might not be here in America, I might be tending to water buffalo in Taiwan.

I am grateful to the University of Florida. In college, I became interested in sociobiology and my freshman semester term paper commented that certain traits, like altruism and cheating, may be built into our genes, but that I hoped that humans could control their destiny and that the altruism genes could prevail over time. After medical school at UF, I traveled to the big city Dallas to do my residency. There, I bought cowboy boots and 2 suits at the Dallas Short Men's Store, which I can still wear. Then I moved back to Florida for my fellowship at UF, where 2 of my mentors Dr. Jay Block and Dr. Eloise Harman made a lasting impression on my career. I am grateful for their guidance.

Thank you, Tallahassee Pulmonary Clinic. I have learned so much from you all. Dan Davis told me to take a good social history and to take the high road when I was frustrated by a bad situation. Ken Wasson showed me what an Apple computer was.

Now I have an iPhone and an Apple watch. Ray Dolly told me not to buy a boat, horse, or beach house. And Bud Bailey told me that water is your worst enemy. Thank you for being my friends. When I moved here, I was very naive and definitely not business savvy. Tallahassee Pulmonary Clinic and my partners “forced me” to get disability insurance, health insurance, life insurance, and contribute to a retirement plan. OMG, thank you!

I came to Tallahassee ready to conquer the world, thinking I would be an expert on asthma, laser and video bronchoscopy, and cardiopulmonary stress testing; but instead I gravitated towards sleep medicine, end of life care, and anticoagulation issues. Thank you TMH, you are my hospital. I appreciate being able to work with so many outstanding doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other health care personnel. Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to practice medicine and to hone my skills.

I love to learn and I love to teach one on one, especially patients who want to listen. I give them the whole package - I do a thorough interview, give lengthy explanations, and give them at least 2 handouts each. I am the king of handouts - I have handouts for living wills, good sleep, OSA, and RLS. I even gave a handout to my kids when they became teenagers. Here are some things I have learned over the years:

- Treat everyone the same, whether it be the homeless person, the president, or Bobby Bowden.
- Care, believe you can make a difference, show you care, it means the world to patients. Spending an extra 15 minutes with a patient today may give them better peace of mind and save hours in the future.
- For fellow physicians, it is easy to burn out. So be kind to yourself. Take time for yourself, to play, and to cultivate friends and hobbies. If you feel overwhelmed - and you will sometime during your career - CMS has an excellent self-care program founded by Dr. Faisal Munasifi.
- Also, accept praise. I had a hard time accepting praise in the past (I would say it's no big deal), but my wife said you should accept praise from others graciously. It makes them feel good. Now when a patient or family member or colleague says “thank you,” I just say, “you’re welcome.”

I fear 3 things in Medicine: the waste, the cost, and the suffering. It is estimated that MCR spends at least 13% of its budget in the last 365 days of a MCR patient's life. We know that the United States is #1 in high tech and that makes us great! However, other countries laugh at how we spend so much of our GNP > 17% on healthcare, yet our longevity and overall quality of healthcare and our healthcare outcomes is 13th or lower among the world's 35 “industrialized” countries. In essence, we have high tech and we

tend to gravitate towards it. If a procedure can be done, we tend to perform it. It is as if we are the slaves of the technology rather than the master of the technology. Be mindful of this, it makes us better physicians.

In 2001, I was frustrated in the ICU taking care of dying patients and I was recruited to take part in EPEC training, which stands for Education for Physicians on End-of-life Care. This involved a 12-hour drive to Chicago and back because my wife forbid me to fly on a plane after 9/11/01. I began teaching others on how to approach end of life care. I always strive for two goals when caring for patients: cure what I can cure; but if I can't cure their illness, then try to help them feel better. That is the principle of palliative care. And if the patient is near the end, the goal is to help them die with dignity, i.e. To avoid unnecessary pain, suffering, and distress. Every night when I come home, I sleep well because I know I did the best I could and because I am sleep deprived from being on call.

Thank you John Thabes and George Slade; John for encouraging me to take the sleep medicine boards; and George for sponsoring me and giving me a good foundation in sleep medicine. I became board certified in sleep medicine in 1999, and it was my dream to help build a sleep center that our city could be proud of. Finally, my dream came true 10 years later in 2009 when TMH built a new 12-bed sleep center. It has been accredited 3 times 2010, 2015, 2020 and we are aiming for #4 next year. I hope everyone realizes that good sleep is important for all of us. I've tried to spread this message within our community.

In closing, I'd like to thank our sponsors tonight - without all of you this program would not be possible. So many of you have helped me personally and I am grateful. Thank you to my current partners: Bud, John, Carlos, Albert, Muhanad, Ruby, Cybelle, Tony, and Andrea. I truly enjoy the camaraderie that we share and I value you greatly, because I know you will be there to take care of me when I get old and sick. Thank you to my pickleball friends, my tennis friends (Coach Kevin Record, Victor Kumar, Everett Teague, Terry Lewis, and the late Ray Bellamy), and to all my friends. Without you all, none of this is possible or fun.

Someone asked me "what motivates you?" To help someone and to expect nothing in return, that is what motivates me. I guess I still feel like that 17-year-old college freshman who believes that we can control our destiny, that good will overcome evil, and that altruism can exist. Thank you all and have a great weekend.