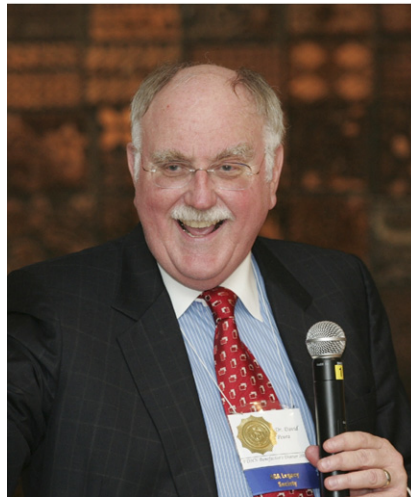


Presentation of the Julius M. Friedenwald Medal to David A. Peura, MD, AGAF



David A. Peura, MD, AGAF

The Julius M. Friedenwald Medal is the highest honor bestowed by the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) Institute. It is awarded in recognition of lifetime service, achievement, and contribution to the AGA and the field of gastroenterology. We were thrilled but not surprised by the announcement that **David A. Peura** has been awarded the 2011 Friedenwald Medal. In addition to serving our field with distinction as a master teacher and clinician, clinical researcher, and leader of organized gastroenterology, he has been an inspiring role model and fast friend for 2 generations of colleagues and trainees.

We are honored to provide a brief account of Dr Peura's remarkable career of service. We previously described the qualifications that led to his election as AGA's 100th president in 2005.¹ His subsequent contributions continue to be both substantial and enduring.

The Formative Years

The qualities that help explain Dr Peura's contributions are rooted in his upbringing and training. His development was shaped by the influences of a multigenerational household of parents and grandparents of Finnish descent. Finnish was spoken in the home; he did not learn English until entering grade school. His mother, an artist and schoolteacher, and father, a dental technician with an office in the home, together with his omnipresent grandmother, instilled in him a strong work ethic and sense of responsibility. This household of men-

tors emphasized the values that serve him well to this day. The Reverend George F. Lobien, who knew the family well, commented on learning of Dr Peura's election to the AGA presidency: "He is more than the biological son of Warren and Mary Peura. David reflects the warmth, compassion, and generosity of his parents. He absorbed many of their spiritual values from the environment they created in their home and he added to what he observed in them by intellectual pursuits which are characteristic of his personality."¹

As a student at the University of Vermont, 2 seminal events occurred that shaped the rest of Dr Peura's life: he met and married Kristin, and he enrolled in ROTC. The first was the personal tiller for his navigation along a career path less traveled, and the latter launched his first career as an officer in the US Army.

Moving Up the Ranks in the Army

As a medical resident at Letterman Army Medical Center in San Francisco, Dr Peura fell under the influence of 3 formidable mentors: Jack Dellar, Marvin Sleisenger, and Walter "Pete" Peterson. Jack Dellar was his chief of medicine, Marvin Sleisenger was a consultant at Letterman and chief of medicine at the San Francisco VA Medical Center, and Pete Peterson was stationed at Letterman at the time. Through their example, Peterson and Sleisenger influenced Dr Peura to pursue a career in gastroenterology rather than neurology. His next stop was a gastroenterology fellowship at Walter Reed Army

Medical Center in Washington, DC. He rose through the ranks quickly, becoming chief of gastroenterology in 1986. He held the rank of colonel and associate professor of medicine at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

As described in more detail previously,¹ Dr Peura's prowess as a teacher and master clinician can be traced to his early years at Walter Reed. He received several outstanding awards, including the Eddie Palmer Endoscopy Award for Excellence in Endoscopic Research and Training and the "A" Professional Designator Award for Excellence in Clinical and Professorial Work. Frank Moses, then director of gastrointestinal endoscopy, described Dr Peura as the "heart and soul" of the fellowship program because of his example as a teacher-clinician who also conducted clinical research.¹ He encouraged trainees to participate in research projects and to present their work at meetings and to publish manuscripts, and he engaged them in his pioneering studies of the use of intravenous cimetidine to prevent stress-induced ulcers. Roy Wong, who succeeded David as chief of gastroenterology, recalls that Dr Peura "stood head and shoulders above most practicing gastroenterologists. He became a super consultant, handling the most difficult cases referred to the Army's premier hospital and performing an array of exacting procedures. He was among the first in the country to place stents in the esophagus to bypass carcinomas. He was an expert in ERCP, laparoscopy, and dilating advanced strictures." When he departed Walter Reed for the University of Virginia in 1990, he was awarded the Legion of Merit Award for Outstanding Contributions to Military Gastroenterology, the highest recognition a departing physician can receive.

Lengthening His Stride at the University of Virginia

Dr Peura did not miss a step when he transitioned to a civilian academic career at the University of Virginia. He came onboard as the director of clinical services and the medical director of the Endoscopy Unit with a commitment to promote clinical excellence in the Division of Gastroenterology. He became the cornerstone of leadership in the division, soon recognized as a formidable academic "triple threat": inquisitive clinical researcher, esteemed clinician, and learned teacher.

Dr Peura's scholarly contribution to gastroenterology is evidenced by his many publications and the breadth of his research endeavors. He has published 83 abstracts, 118 full articles, and 33 book chapters, an enviable record for one who has shouldered a full clinical, teaching, and administrative load throughout his career.

Dr Peura's clinical research interests focused on acid-related disorders, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug-induced gastropathy, and *Helicobacter pylori*. On his arrival at Charlottesville, he began a rich collaboration with Dr Barry Marshall. Together with a host of auspicious GI

fellows, their research covered basic science (eg, gastric epidermal growth factor and prostaglandin E₂ levels in *H pylori*-infected individuals) and clinical issues (eg, serologic and 14C-urea breath testing and optimal treatment strategies). When Dr Marshall was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2005, he invited David and Kristin to Oslo to participate in the weeklong festivities.

Dr Peura's clinical research endeavors have been an inspiration to many; his abundant, novel ideas made him a favorite among GI fellows who regularly sought his advice about research projects. Vanessa Shami, associate professor and director of endoscopic ultrasound at the University of Virginia recalls: "Dr Peura is the reason I went into GI. I attended his grand rounds on *H pylori* when I was a medical student . . . I was so intrigued in the subject matter, that I approached him after the talk" and later worked together on a research project evaluating gastric juice polymerase chain reaction to determine *H pylori* colonization. To cultivate clinical research at the University of Virginia, Dr Peura served as the chair of the Investigational Review Board for Health Sciences Research (formerly known as the Human Investigation Committee) from April 1997 to June 2003. During his tenure, the institutional review board grew from an administrative staff with one secretary to a thriving organization with many professional-level positions. Members of the board remember Dr Peura as a powerful advocate for the rights of research subjects.

Students and fellows who have had the privilege of training with Dr Peura will always think of him as our best clinical teacher and mentor. He taught us how to be well-rounded gastroenterologists: to be skilled endoscopists, to be meticulous and to use common sense when working up a patient, and to have compassion when dealing with illness. Rounds were a pleasure. The "colonel" was always on time and organized, and he knew the patients. Year after year, fellows competed for his Tuesday morning clinic or fellow's clinic with the "Big Kahuna." Dr Peura has an exceptional depth of knowledge of gastroenterology and this, combined with his extensive clinical experience, endoscopic prowess, and willingness to share his knowledge, makes him an extraordinary teacher. David Balaban, a practicing gastroenterologist, writes:

In thinking about what Dr Peura has meant to me, I need only spend a week in my office. On a regular basis, patients will ask me, with some incredulity, why I chose to become a gastroenterologist. I invariably reflect on my first elective rotation as a second-year resident on the GI consult service. Dr Peura was my attending, having recently joined the faculty at UVA from Walter Reed. By the end of the rotation, having seen the breadth of the discipline and Dr Peura's mastery of applying evidence-based medicine to the bedside, I knew my future career course.

Dr Peura's clinical skills are also valued by colleagues in gastroenterology and in other specialties. He understands the importance of collegiality and a "team" ap-

proach to clinical medicine. Early after his arrival at the University of Virginia, he initiated a popular multidisciplinary clinical conference (involving gastroenterology, surgery, radiology, pathology, and nutrition support) that continues to this day. Dr Charles Friel, associate professor of surgery at the University of Virginia, reflects:

Working with David has always been a great joy and privilege. He has a “no-nonsense” approach to patients with GI diseases, which included the surgical management when appropriate. Frequently he would call me and simply say “This guy needs surgery” and invari-

ably I would agree with his assessment. He has the ability to see the “big picture”. . . to develop an assessment and plan that was simple, concise and directly addressed the active issues.

Professional Accomplishments Outside the University

Similar to his accomplishments in the academic setting, work for the profession outside the university has been near legion. He was “the face of GI” as “Dr Dan” in the American Digestive Health Foundation’s enormously

Table 1. David A. Peura’s Remarkable and Continuing Record of Service to Gastroenterology Organizations

Activity	Dates	Role
American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy Postgraduate Education Committee	1986–1993	Member
American College of Gastroenterology Board of Governors	1988–1992	Co-chair/Chair; planning 5 regional CME programs annually
AGA Constitution and Bylaws Committee	1986–1989	Member
AGA Public Policy Committee	1987–1989	Member; reimbursement policy development and advocacy
AGA Clinical Practice Section	1991–1995	Co-chair/Chair; planning and oversight of AGA’s Clinical Education Program at DDW
AGA Training and Education Committee	1991–1994	Member
AGA Education Committee	1997–2001	Chair-elect/Chair; oversight of AGA’s CME and non-CME education programs
Digestive Health Initiative of the American Digestive Health Foundation	1994–1997	Co-chair of Ulcer Education Campaign for physicians and the public
AGA CME program: The Contemporary Gastroenterology Practice: Managing Change	1995	Editor, CME multimedia program
AGA CME Program: The Academic Gastroenterologist: Meeting the Challenges of Change	1995	Editor, CME multimedia program
American Digestive Health Foundation	1994–1997	Digestive Health Initiatives Steering Committee to identify new education initiatives for physicians and public
AGA Nutrition Task Force	1999	Identifying and planning educational programs in clinical nutrition
AGA International Relations Task Force	1999–2000	Identifying and planning international educational opportunities
AGA “Got Guts” programs	2000–2001	Organized consumer education programs at DDW in San Diego and Atlanta
AGA Industry Relations Task Force	2000	Explored opportunities for and planning collaborative educational programs with industry
FDHN	2001–2004	Board of Governors and Vice Chair for Public Health Programs
AGA Finance & Operations Committee	2005–2007	Member
AGA Perspectives Editorial Board	2005–2007	Member
DDW Council	2005–2006	Member
AGA Governing Board	2005–2006	Chair-elect
AGA	2005–2006	100th President
AGA Governing Board	2006–2007	Chair
AGA Executive Committee	2006–2007	Chair
AGA Public Affairs & Advocacy Committee	2006–2007	Ex-officio
AGA Leadership Cabinet	2007–2008	Member
AGA Nominating Committee	2007–2008	Chair
AGA Audit Committee	2007–2008	Member
FDHN Board of Directors	2007–2009	Vice-chair
AGA Postgraduate Course at DDW	2010	CME course: Upper GI Disorders
AGA Maintenance of Certification Course at DDW	2011	Speaker
Friedenwald Medal Award Recipient	2011	AGA Plenary Session at DDW

CME, continuing medical education.

Modified with permission from Freston and Yoshida.¹

successful campaign to educate physicians and the public about the importance of *H pylori* in ulcer pathogenesis and treatment. He was chosen for this vital role because of his ability to communicate clearly and convincingly. As a footnote, his favorite plaything as a child was a toy named “Dr Dan.”

Throughout his career, Dr Peura traveled to hospitals across the country to generously share new advances in gastroenterology with academicians and practicing gastroenterologists. When home at the University of Virginia, he regularly receives telephone messages or e-mails from clinicians all over the world asking for clinical advice about challenging cases or difficult *H pylori* infections. As an authority in acid-related diseases, Dr Peura has organized many scientific symposia and postgraduate educational programs throughout the country and world, greatly benefiting both the national and international GI communities. The programs include acid-related issues but have enlarged to involve all pertinent topics in gastroenterology. He is the recipient of AGA’s Distinguished Educator Award and the Mentor Honoree Award from the Foundation for Digestive Health and Nutrition (FDHN). Both were based on his documented excellence in teaching over 2 decades at continuing medical education conferences, AGA and Digestive Disease Week (DDW) meetings, and hospital conferences throughout the country, as well as at the bedside.

Dr Peura’s service to the profession is distinctly remarkable, and his leadership, particularly through the AGA and its foundations, is perhaps the most extraordinary of his qualifications for this award. The lengthy list of AGA and related assignments only begins to indicate the magnitude of Dr Peura’s influence on the profession (Table 1). In addition to his 5-year service in the AGA presidential succession, he has served the AGA’s Nominating Committee, Committee on Constitution and By-laws (co-chair), Clinical Practice Section (co-chair and chair), Education and Training Committee, Education Committee (chair), National Digestive Health Initiative (co-chair), and National Digestive Health Steering Committee and as vice chair of the FDHN. He is a founding member of AGA/FDHN’s Legacy Society. It is noteworthy that, although he is no longer an officer of the AGA or FDHN, he personally recruited more new members to the Legacy Society last year than all of the other recruiters combined. Such is his continuing dedication to the mission of the AGA and the betterment of our field.

Dr Peura’s contributions continue. Showing no signs of entropy, he served as chair of the AGA Postgraduate

Course at DDW 2010, he was a featured speaker at the AGA’s Maintenance of Certification Course at DDW 2011, and he continues to raise money for research training for the FDHN. In addition to these vast endeavors, he has maintained his clinical practice, seeing patients consistently for 40 years.

Dr Peura’s personal life has likewise been an example for others to follow. He has been married for 41 years and has two grown children and two grandchildren. Since his recent retirement to part-time at the University of Virginia, he has become an enthusiastic grandfather and chef with his own published cookbook and personal sous chef: Kristin.

Role Model, Colleague, and Friend

The record of Dr Peura’s service to the profession as well as his academic and personal accomplishments is indeed remarkable. It more than justifies award of AGA’s highest honor, the Friedenwald Medal. However, his accomplishments are also an expression of his character, forged and molded in a value-based family and nurtured by strong mentors along the way. It is his skill and commitment as a teacher, his genuine concern as a mentor and friend, and his consistency as an honorable leader and role model that best describe him. His time and talents are given freely, even joyously, to lift others.

As the Friedenwald Medal is awarded to Dr David A. Peura, we honor both his professional and personal accomplishments. He embodies the qualities the Friedenwald Medal is intended to recognize: contributions to our field that are broad, deep, and sustained over a career.

JAMES W. FRESTON
Department of Medicine
University of Connecticut Health Center
Farmington, Connecticut

CYNTHIA M. YOSHIDA
Private Practice
Charlottesville, Virginia

Reference

1. Freston JW, Yoshida CM. Our new president – David A. Peura, M.D. *Gastroenterology* 2005;128:1462–1467.

Conflicts of interest

The authors disclose no conflicts.

© 2011 by the AGA Institute
 0016-5085/\$36.00

doi:10.1053/j.gastro.2011.04.039