

Washington's own Dr. Rich Kovar Named 2012 Family Physician of the Year

Seattle physician earns prestigious national award for providing culturally competent and compassionate care to the poor and underprivileged, locally and globally



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On Wednesday, September 14, The American Academy of Family Physicians named Richard D. Kovar, MD, AAFP 2012 Family Physician of the Year. The award, presented at the opening ceremony of its annual Scientific Assembly, honors an outstanding family physician who provides patients with compassionate and comprehensive care, and serves as a role model professionally and personally.

The Beginnings

Dr. Kovar became interested in medicine as a young boy. He admired his father—who was a hard working dentist—and he deeply respected a close family friend who practiced pediatrics in an underserved area. His passion for family medicine grew from his desire to provide the full spectrum of primary care to patients of all ages.

After completing an undergraduate degree in American Indian studies at Rochester, Rich Kovar attended medical school at George Washington University in Washington D.C. After a year of residency at Hunterdon Medical Center in Flemington, New Jersey, Dr. Kovar worked as a general practitioner at a small rural practice on the coast of Oregon and with the Haulapai and Havasupai tribes in the Grand Canyon. Dr. Kovar completed his residency at

the Oregon Health Sciences University, providing sound basis of training in diverse settings which he has continued to pursue throughout his medical career.

A Family Doctor to the World

After residency, Dr. Kovar worked for two years providing medical services for children in refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border, in Sudan and directed a drug detox and rehab program for refugees in Thailand. Returning to Seattle, Dr. Kovar began his practice as a full spectrum family doctor in a community health center. He continues to provide volunteer medical services to the underserved. Dr. Kovar has provided refugee relief services in nine countries on five continents, and has cared for patients at five Native American reservations and a migrant farm-worker's clinic.



In addition, Dr. Kovar performs pro bono physical evaluations for people seeking political asylum in the United States. Because of his careful forensic documentation, nearly 300 people have been prevented from returning to countries where they may be tortured or executed.

Model for Culturally Appropriate and Compassionate Care

Kovar has served as a practicing family physician and medical director

of Country Doctor Community Health Centers in Seattle for more than 20 years. CDCHC is a private non-profit organization that serves an urban, low income, underserved and largely uninsured patient population. The practice is committed to patient access—to minimize the barriers to health care services for a population for whom every day can be a struggle. This includes never turning someone away because they can't pay, providing



care in the patient's language, and employing staff that are reflective of the ethnic backgrounds of patients provide culturally appropriate healthcare. CDCHC also specializes in the treatment of HIV/AIDS—a mission it has been fulfilling since the early years of the epidemic. Rather than relegating care for individuals with HIV to subspecialists, treatment for the disease is completely integrated into CDCHC's primary care delivery system.

Dr. Kovar and his staff have committed themselves to delivering patient centered care, paying close attention to the individual's concerns in the context of their unique environment. Using an electronic health record system, extended office hours, weekend appointments and addressing a broad range of health issues across the entire age spectrum, this innovative approach to community health and

preventive medicine education offers an excellent model for health care access.

Commitment to Family Medicine

Dr. Kovar's patient advocacy efforts extend well beyond his practice into his community. He advocates for improved mental health services in community health centers in Washington state, as well as improved access to sub-specialty medical care for low-income uninsured and underinsured patients.

Kovar additionally serves as an educator and mentor. As a clinical professor of family medicine in the University of Washington Department of Family Medicine, Dr. Kovar teaches medical students in their core family medicine clerkships, works with family medicine residents in their community medicine rotations, and has been instrumental in the expansion of residency training sites in community health centers. He has precepted nearly 200 medical students during their third-year family medicine clerkships and enjoys providing clinical shadowing experiences to high school



and college students interested in careers in medicine. As a result of his efforts, Kovar has influenced many young people to pursue family medicine as their specialty and to practice in underserved areas.



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Awards and acclaim

Dr. Kovar has received many awards, including Washington Family Physician of the Year (2010), the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project Golden Globe Award (2004), the University of Washington Humanism



in Medicine Award (2002) and the Northwest Regional Primary Care Association Helping Us Help You Award (2006). He is also a member of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society.

Family Physician of the Year

In recognition of Dr. Kovar's service to his patients, his community and to the profession, the Washington Academy of Family Physicians is very proud to see Rich honored as the AAFP 2012 Family Physician of the Year. Dr. Kovar is an example of how today's family physician can combine interests in a way that provides an outstanding contribution to the betterment of their patients, colleagues, and future

physicians. The WAFP commends him for the strength of his passion and conviction to care for the less fortunate in his community, and thanks him for his inspiration to students and residents.

Washington's Leadership in Family Medicine

This is a special moment in history for the Washington Academy. WAFP is bursting with pride at the accomplishments and achievements of its members. In addition to the well-deserved recognition of Dr. Rich Kovar as AAFP Family Physician of the Year, 2012 sees the installation of Dr. Glen Stream as AAFP President. If that weren't enough, Dr. Bill Phillips is being recognized as the American Academy of Family Physician Foundation's Philanthropist of the Year and Dr. Tom Norris will receive the John G. Walsh award recognizing dedicated, long-term leadership advancing the development of family medicine.

